

A Faasiq as an Imaam

Q: Salaah-42: Our Imaam has engaged in fornication and matters went as far as the woman falling pregnant. He then married her and she delivered her child only four months after marriage. He also keeps his beard only an inch long. Is it permissible to perform salaah behind such an Imaam. People have started to debate the issue and a conflict is brewing. Please give a reply as soon as possible.

Answer: An Imaam must be religious and abstain from public sins. A Hadith reported by Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Umar RADI. states that the best of you should be appointed as your Imaams because they serve as ambassadors before Allaah. Another Hadith states that Rasulullaah SAW. said, "If you wish that your salaah reach the highest levels of acceptance. you should appoint your learned ones as your Imaams so that they could serve as messengers between you and your Rabb.

A fornicator is guilty of a major sin and is therefore a Faasiq. He will not be worthy of the post of an Imaam because Rasulullaah SAW. said that a Faasiq cannot lead a Mu'min in salaah . Kabeeri (pg.479) also states that people will be guilty of a sin if they appoint a Faasiq as their Imaam.

It is necessary to keep a beard that is at least equal to one's fist in length. The commentator of Mishkaatul Masaabeeh, Shah Abdul Haqq Muhddith Dehlawi RAH. writes that it is Waajib (compulsory) to keep a beard that is equal in length to one's fist. It is said to be Masnoon only because it was a practice of all the Ambiyaa ALY. and of Rasulullaah SAW. as well. It can therefore not be said that one is not sinful for not keeping a beard because leaving out this Sunnah is a sin and continuously doing so is a major sin. It is Haraam to trim the beard to less than a fist's length. The Imaam is therefore a Faasiq from this point of view also and for him to lead the salaah is Makrooh.

The Imaam must be dismissed and if the trustees of the Masjid do not do so, you should perform your salaah at another Masjid. If there is no other Masjid, you will be forced to perform salaah behind this Imaam because it is improper to forsake salaah with Jamaa'ah on account of the emphasis the Ahadeeth place on it. In act, Ulema state that performing salaah in Jamaa'h is Waajib (compulsory). It must therefore not be left out, but a concerted effort should be made to have the Imaam relieved of his post. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

Fatawa Rahimiyyah vol.2