



MUSLIM JUDICIAL COUNCIL

P.O. Box 38311, Gatesville 7764, Cape Town, South Africa
Tel : (021) 696 5150/1/2 Fax : (021) 696 5154

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Solar heating: permissible or not

A Question has reached us as to the permissibility of solar heating for water. We requested the questioner to come and demonstrate to the fatwa committee the functioning of the particular model of solar heating referred to in his question. This demonstration was scheduled for 10 am on the 8th of November at the offices of the MJC. The demonstration showed two manners in which the solar heating works:

- a) The water runs through copper piping in the solar panels where it is heated and then deposited in a storage tank from where it flows into the piping system.
- b) The second manner is that instead of the water running through the copper piping an anti freeze substance flows through it which becomes heated by the heat of the sun and then flows into the storage tank acting there like an element which heats the water

In both these systems the storage tank is also fitted with an electrical element which can heat the water in the event of lack of sunshine or as a back-up. But it is noteworthy that in none of these two systems the sun's rays fall directly onto the water or onto standing water and in none of these systems the sun is allowed to impact directly onto the surface of the water in order to heat it

The reason for there being doubt as to the permissibility of solar heating is the hadeeth reported that Rasulullah said to Sayedah Ayesha when she placed a bucket of water in the sun: "Do not do that for that causes leprosy."

Accordingly some Ulema have expressed the opinion that it is makrooh to place water for heating purposes in the sun. Imam Nawawi discussing this hadeeth states that the hadeeth is a weak one which does not permit us to use it as a proof of what is prohibited or obligatory. However from the writing of Imam Shafi in al Um it appears that the Imam had accepted the hadeeth as being above board. But Imam Shafi has also mentioned that he leaves it to men of the medical profession to confirm. However Sayeduna Umar also indicated that he does not prefer using such water in view of the prohibition. It seems then that there is a strong body of opinion in favour of the use of such water being makrooh

Another opinion expressed in this regard is that the karahiyat is concerned with water being in a bucket or container that is of a metal substance. In other words it refers to water left in a utensil or container made of iron, brass, copper or an alloy made of such substances, where the water is exposed to the direct rays of the sun. Apparently this is the cause for it being makrooh to use such water and not if it is kept in a container made out of clay or mud. (See Tuhfatul Baari by Maulana M. Ebrahim)

Another opinion expressed is that the karahiyat concerns using such sun-heated water for wudoo or ghusl purposes and does not necessarily refer to using such water for washing clothes or general cleansing purposes and for cooking or baking.

Having looked at the demonstration of this particular device we are of the opinion that in both these cases, and most especially the second scenario, the system does not conform to

the system that has been declared makrooh by the Ulema in accordance with the hadeeth mentioned.. In the first place there is no direct impact of the sun's rays upon the surface of the water. Moreover water in a pond or a pool does nor fall into this category of karahiyat. Secondly, if the effect of the sun's heat upon the copper piping renders it makrooh this goes for every water carried in pipes into domestic piping systems irrespective of whether those pipes are inside the house, under the ground or outside the house leading to a tap in the garden or the back-yard., because all heat comes from the sun, directly or indirectly.

We therefore conclude that the use of solar heating for heating water in the manner demonstrated to us is NOT makrooh and is permissible for Muslims to install in into their homes. It is most definitely NOT haraam or prohibited.

We show a definite preference for the system using the anti-freeze substance and consider it more further removed from what would be makrooh.

As such we also state that for anyone to make a living from installing these systems or earning a living from such activities is permissible.
AND ALLAH KNOWS BEST.

Signed 
FOR THE MIC FATWA COMMITTEE

Dated 21. 11. 2006

*MB This reply is not for all solar heating systems
It only refers to the specific one discussed by us*

