



Navigating Halloween: Balancing Fun and Faith in Islam

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In the Name of Allah, the All Compassionate, the All Merciful

Introduction and History

As Halloween¹ approaches, parents may find themselves grappling with questions from their children about dressing up, going trick-or-treating and other aspects of this event.

It is important for us to understand our children's society-induced desire to participate in these and other festivities that take place in Canada. They see their friends doing it; it is promoted all around them on TV, the Internet, the stores, and in their neighbourhoods. But should we, as Muslim parents, encourage these activities, or allow our children to partake in such events?

Halloween, celebrated on October 31st, has ancient roots, and has evolved over centuries into the modern holiday we know of today. Its origins are a combination of cultural and Christian influences. Historians note that Halloween can be traced back to the Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced Sau-ihn), celebrated in November to

¹ Information for this article have been taken from:

1. www.history.com/topics/halloween/history-of-halloween.
2. Lecture notes provided by Shaykh Jaffer H. Jaffer from the Masumeen Islamic Centre in Brampton, ON.

mark the end of the harvest season, and believed to be a time when the boundary between the living and the dead was blurred – with “spirits” being able to manipulate the living. Christian influence reshaped it, with Pope Gregory III (d. 741) establishing *All Saints’ Day* and *All Souls’ Day*. The night before *All Hallows* became *All Hallows’ Eve*, eventually evolving into ‘**Halloween**.’

Irish and Scottish immigrants in the 19th century brought these traditions to the United States and Canada, including the practice of carving jack-o’-lanterns. Halloween gradually took on its modern form in the 20th century, with the rise of trick-or-treating and more elaborate costumes.

Today, Halloween has become a bizarre blend of its historical pagan roots mixed with Christianity and contemporary festivities and is “celebrated” in various parts of the world in varying degrees as a secular day of celebration, emphasizing “fun” which includes dressing up in costumes, going house to house collecting candy and other treats, carving pumpkins, and many other things – a combination of ancient myth and superstition and commercial, profit-making elements.

The Islamic Angle

First and foremost, it is crucial to recognize that children are naturally drawn to all the holidays celebrated around them – most notably Halloween – for various reasons. Peer pressure plays a significant role; they want to fit in and have fun just like their other friends. They are bombarded by images of Halloween in the media, making it seem exciting and appealing. It is like the allure of Christmas, Valentine’s Day, and Easter where gifts, decorations, and festivities capture their imagination.

An extremely important question arises: Is it forbidden (*ḥarām*) or permissible (*ḥalāl*) to “celebrate” Halloween? Are **we** allowed, or are our **children** allowed to dress up and go trick-or-treating on Halloween, and to partake in the other Halloween-based activities?

“Just because something is not classified as *ḥarām* does not necessarily make it a recommended or ideal activity.”

From a purely Jurisprudential (*Fiqhī*) perspective, we **cannot** label it as being outright *ḥarām*, unless it is done with the intention of embracing its pagan origins, Christianity-inspired aspects, or engaging in activities associated with the occult and the like. Obviously, taking part in Halloween dance parties, music parties, or mixing with the opposite gender are all impermissible as this may impact some people in the workplace.

We must realize that participating in many if not all of the events surrounding Halloween does not align with our Islamic teachings which are rooted in reality – far from superstitions and

the occult. Embracing Halloween also has the potential to open the door for our children to crave other festivities

such as Christmas, leaving us in a difficult position to say no, having already allowed one secular celebration into our house.

Considering this fact and that at face value, it **may not** be *ḥarām* to partake in Halloween, the statements of the Prophet and his family (blessings of Allah be upon them all) and the guidance of our senior scholars (*marāʿijī*) have told it is an obligation to maintain and preserve our religious identity – especially when we live as minorities. Thus, it is mandatory on every parent to instill a sense of pride in their children of our Muslim identity and culture – reflecting on Halloween in this light **may** make it *ḥarām* to partake in Halloween!

In this respect, rather than looking to non-Islamic events for a time of celebration, we must aim to make Islamic celebrations fun, engaging, and fulfilling for our children, providing them with better, and more meaningful alternatives to enjoy their faith. By doing so, we can create an environment where they feel content and fulfilled in their Islamic practices, reducing the allure of external festivities like Halloween.

Conclusion

With that said, what should you as a parent do?

Obviously, **you** are free to bring up your child(ren) as you wish, however from the perspective as a Muslim parent, religious scholar, and educator, I would suggest the following three points:

1. **Maintaining our Muslim Identity:** From an extremely young age, we must emphasize to our children the importance of preserving and upholding our Muslim identity. Halloween, with its historical ties to pagan rituals, irrational supernatural themes, and Christian influences, conflicts with the Quran and the established teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (prayers of Allah be upon him and his family), and the Ahlul Bayt (peace be upon them all). Acknowledging this day, even for the “fun-factor” – whether for ourselves at work or for our children - goes against our theology (*ʿaqīda*) and morals (*akhlāq*). We would encourage you, as a parent, to consider whether Halloween is consistent with your desire to raise your children to be like Abūl Faḍl al-ʿAbbās or Lady Zaynab binte ʿAlī (peace be upon them both)? Do we not want our children to grow up in accordance with the pure Islamic teachings, making them strong believers and followers of the Quran, the Prophets, the Ahlul Bayt (peace be upon them all) and someone to be in the service of Imam al-Mahdī (may Allah hasten his noble return)?
2. **Educational Alternatives:** All throughout the year, but more so during holiday seasons, I would encourage you to focus on activities that foster a sense of belonging within the Muslim community – ensuring that you celebrate the important historical events of Islam and other joyous occasions. Such programs can either be held privately with like-minded parents, or on a larger scale, with your AZIA community, or the Islamic Centre you frequent. These events can be both educational and entertaining– **EduTainment** - creating a positive environment for our children. There are many things which can be

done in such programs: short speeches, permissible entertainment, food, treats, interactive games, and more to keep our children engaged and in a celebratory mood.

3. **Respect for Differences:** I must remind you, the parents, that Canada is a beautiful multicultural and diverse society, and as such, it is essential to respect the beliefs and practices of others – even if we do not accept or practice them. You must explain to your children that while some people celebrate Halloween – and they may also be Muslims – that this day (or other celebrations like Valentine’s Day, Easter, Christmas, etc.) do not align with **OUR** family values. We can use such days to teach our children the importance of respecting differences and being accepting of various cultures and faiths and their holidays and days of celebration, while maintaining our own identity as Shia Muslims.

In closing, may Allah, the Grand and Majestic, make it easier for all of us to bring up our children in this secular society of Canada while allowing them to appreciate the diversity of views, all the while holding on to the two weighty things that will assist us in this world and the next: The Quran and the Ahlul Bayt (peace be upon them all).

Wa Salam Alaykum,



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