

122790 - He is arguing about the prohibition on singing, and claims that songs do not do any harm

the question

I have a brother in Islam who follows what some people say about music being permissible. When I presented to him the evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah, he said: As for the verse, there is no specific mention of music in it; rather it is the interpretation of the commentators. As for the hadith, I do not know whether it is sound; I will look into that. He came to me with a strange specious argument in which he said: What I know is that Islam is the religion of reason and logic, and it did not prohibit anything unless it is harmful to people; what is the harm in music? Why don't you want me to use my reason, and you want me to blindly accept the texts? Please note that I sent to him your lecture, "The fitnah of giving reason precedence over the texts," and he did not benefit from it, even after listening to it in full. What is the response to someone like this brother? May Allah bless you.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah

The objections that your friend made to the prohibition on music may be summed up under three headings, as follows:

1. His objection to quoting the verse as evidence by saying that this is the interpretation of the commentators
2. His hesitation about the soundness of the hadith which indicates that musical instruments are prohibited

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3. He does not think that music does any harm, so why does Islam prohibit it?

With regard to his objection to quoting the verse as evidence, the verse in question is (interpretation of the meaning):

“And of mankind is he who purchases idle talks (i.e., music, singing, etc.) to mislead (men) from the Path of Allah without knowledge, and takes it (the Path of Allah, or the Verses of the Qur’an) by way of mockery. For such there will be a humiliating torment (in the Hell-fire)”

[Luqmaan 31:6].

The response to that is as follows:

Who are the commentators who quoted this verse as evidence for the prohibition on music? They are the majority of commentators, foremost among whom are three of the scholars, fuqaha’ and mufasssireen among the Sahaabah, namely: ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbaas, ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ood and ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with them).

Undoubtedly the Sahaabah were the most knowledgeable of this ummah about what Allah meant in His Book, for it was revealed among them and they were the first ones of this ummah to whom it was addressed. They witnessed its interpretation from the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in his words and actions, and they were the true eloquent Arabs, so their interpretation cannot be ignored so long.

Ibn al-Qayyim: Ighaathat al-Lahfaan (1/433).

So how can it be permissible for your friend to turn away from these Sahaabah’s interpretation of the Qur’an?

Especially when among them is ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbaas, the most knowledgeable of this ummah about the interpretation of the Qur’an (tafseer), by virtue of the blessing of the Prophet’s

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supplication for him, “O Allah, teach him the meaning of the Qur’an.” Narrated by al-Haakim; he classed it as saheeh and adh-Dhahabi agreed with him. Also classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in as-Silsilah as-Saheehah (2589).

With regard to your friend’s objection to quoting the hadith as evidence, it is not really an objection; rather it is a hesitation to accept its soundness until he researches the matter.

The one who is unsure about the soundness of a hadith has no right to deny what the hadith indicates, which is the prohibition on musical instruments.

He should not have denied the prohibition on songs with musical accompaniment until he researched the hadith and concluded that it is da’eef (weak) and not sound. As for hesitating to accept that the hadith is sound until he researches it, then denying the prohibition on music, this is not right.

The hadith which speaks of the prohibition on musical instruments that is narrated in Saheeh al-Bukhaari is undoubtedly a saheeh hadith, and it is not the only hadith narrated concerning that. Rather there are many other hadiths, which were quoted by Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) in his book Ighaathat al-Lahfaan.

If the hadith is saheeh, then it is obligatory for the believer to accept it and act upon what it says, and it is not permissible for him to hesitate to accept the hadith until he examines it from his rational point of view and accepts it. Therefore your friend’s saying, “Why don’t you want me to use my reason, and you want me to blindly accept the texts?” is a serious matter, that cannot be uttered by a believer who testifies that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. What point is there in affirming his being the Messenger of Allah if he is going to refrain from accepting what the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) says until he examines it from his rational point of view?

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Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed in to a plain error”

[al-Ahzaab 33:36]

“But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission”

[an-Nisa' 4:65].

There is no difference of opinion among the leading scholars of Islam concerning the prohibition on musical instruments. The four madhhabs are agreed that they are prohibited, and whatever has been transmitted to suggest that there is a difference of scholarly opinion concerning this matter comes under the heading of odd views to which no attention should be paid.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The view of the four imams is that all musical instruments are prohibited... and none of the followers of the imams mentioned any dispute concerning musical instruments.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (11/576, 577).

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Anyone who has the slightest knowledge should not have any reservations about that - i.e., singing and musical instruments. The least that may be said is that it is the symbol of evildoers and drinkers of alcohol.

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Ighaathat al-Lahfaan (1/228).

Al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Hence the four madhhabs are agreed that all musical instruments are prohibited.

As-Silsilah as-Saheehah (1/145)

We have quoted the evidence for that from the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the words of the Sahaabah, in the answers to questions no. 5000 and 50687.

After knowing the shar'i ruling that is based on sound shar'i evidence, the Muslim has no choice but to say, We hear and we obey. He has no right to argue on the basis of falsehood or to hesitate about responding until he examines the matter on the basis of his limited reasoning to see whether he will accept it or not.

With regard to your friend's objection on the basis that singing does not do any harm, this is a strange objection and is worthless, because it is contrary to reality and what is observed, in addition to being contrary to Islamic teachings.

These songs prevent one from remembering Allah, create hypocrisy in the heart, and stir one to do immoral and vile deeds. We will quote to you some of what the leading scholars of knowledge and guidance have said about the harm done by singing and musical instruments, such as the following:

1. It creates hypocrisy in the heart.

This was narrated in a saheeh report from Ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) and others. This is the greatest harm that may befall the one who transgresses the laws of Allah, may He be exalted. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) discussed the way in which singing creates hypocrisy in the heart, in a lengthy and valuable discussion.

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He (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If it is said: How does music cause hypocrisy to grow in the heart, and not other sins?

The answer is: This is one of the clearest indications of the Sahaabah's understanding of the workings of the heart and their knowledge of diseases of the heart (i.e., spiritual diseases) and their remedies. It highlights the fact that they were indeed doctors of the heart, unlike those who deviate from their path.

It should be understood that singing has specific characteristics that affect the heart, instilling hypocrisy in the heart and causing it to grow, just as water causes plants to grow. Among its characteristics:

It distracts the heart and prevents it from understanding and reflecting upon the Qur'an and acting upon it. For the Qur'an and singing can never coexist in the heart, because they are diametrically opposed. The Qur'an forbids following whims and desires, and enjoins chastity and restraint, and staying away from the evil inclinations of the nafs and causes of misguidance. It forbids following in the footsteps of the Shaytaan, whilst music enjoins the opposite of all that and makes it fair-seeming; it motivates people to follow desires and evil inclinations, so it provokes hidden desires and motivates one to commit all kinds of evil acts.

Addiction to music makes the Qur'an heavy on the heart and makes one reluctant to listen to it. If that is not hypocrisy, then what is hypocrisy?

The crux of the matter is that singing is the "book" of the Shaytaan, so it cannot coexist with the Book of the Most Gracious in the same heart.

Moreover, another sign of hypocrisy is not remembering Allah much, feeling lazy when getting up to pray, and praying in a hasty and careless manner. It is rare to find anyone who is enchanted by singing who is not like this.

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'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azeez wrote to the one who was in charge of educating and disciplining his children, saying: Let the first thing you try to instil in them be hatred of entertainment, which is initiated by the Shaytaan and ends with the wrath of the Most Gracious, for I have heard from trustworthy scholars that the sound of musical instruments, listening to singing and repeating their songs causes hypocrisy to grow in the heart, just as water causes plants to grow.

Singing corrupts the heart, and if the heart becomes corrupt, hypocrisy will take hold of it.

To sum up: if a man of understanding reflects upon the condition of singers and the condition of people who remember Allah and read the Qur'an, the intelligence of the Sahaabah will become clear to him, and he will realise how much knowledge they had of spiritual diseases and their remedies. And Allah is the source of strength. End quote.

Ighaathat al-Lahfaan min Masaa'id ash-Shaytaan (1/248-251).

2. Singing is a means that leads to zina or is a motive for zina.

This is another of the great harms caused by singing and musical instruments. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) explained that when he said:

With regard to calling it a motive for zina, this is very accurate, for there is no other means that could lead to zina that is more effective than it.

Yazeed ibn al-Waleed said: O Banu Umayyah, beware of singing, for it takes away dignity, increases desire and undermines chivalry. It works like alcohol and does what intoxicants do. If you must do that, then keep your womenfolk away, because singing leads to zina.

Muhammad ibn al-Fadl al-Azdi said: The poet al-Hutay'ah stayed at the house of an Arab man, and his daughter Mulaykah was with him. When night came, he heard singing, so he said to the owner of the house: Keep this away from me. He said: What is wrong with it? He said: Singing is one of

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the things that encourage immorality, and I do not want this one – meaning my daughter – to hear it. Either you make it stop, or I will leave your house.

If this poet, who was known for lack of restraint in his poetry and whose mockery and insults the Arabs used to fear, was afraid of the consequences and negative impact of singing, and was worried that its influence could reach his daughter, then what do you think about other people?

If the influence of this singing is combined with the hand drum, flute and dancing with enticing movements, then if a woman could become pregnant as a result of singing, it would happen under the influence of this type of singing!

End quote from Igthaath al-Lahfaan (1/245-247).

The type of singing of which the scholars highlighted the evil consequences is the type of singing that was known at that time, not that which is known nowadays. What exists nowadays is something about which even immoral people and evildoers have begun to complain, such as singers and composers. They have begun to oppose music video clips, which are very popular nowadays and which contain such obscenity, filth, nakedness and complete lack of decency that even some of the people in the music industry are demanding that they stop being shown on TV screens, because of what they cause of provoking desire and spreading mischief!

Finally, we may note that the matter is as clear as day with regard to the ruling on singing and music, and the negative impact and great harm that results from that.

And Allah knows best.