

Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of Music in Islam

حلة الموسيقى وحرمتها في الدين

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Abstract:

Islam is a heavenly religion that has never imposed any compulsion on basic needs of human being. No one can say that after embracing Islam, he is facing undue sanctions. Islam addresses all needs of human being with some conditions. For example, if adultery is forbidden then Marriage is allowed, Fruit and juices are useable but wine is forbidden. Travelling and recreation is possible within limitations. Same is the philosophy of Islam with music. If immoral poetry is involved with music, then it is strictly forbidden of course. Otherwise music is allowed on marriage ceremonies.

Islam is a magnificent and eternal religion, which has not imposed any restriction on any human need without any rationale. Rather, Islam has identified the principle methods of the use of any human need along with legitimate means of procurement of the human needs, so that humans may not think that they have been entangled into undue chains by the nature. For instance, Adultery (zina) is an illegitimate activity but marriage (Nikah) is not. Similarly, activities like vagabond, wondering from here to there, are prohibited as per Islamic teachings. But it has not imposed any restriction on touring, exploring and travelling. Human nature does require both kinds of aforementioned activities but Islam has put merits of Nikah and demerits of adultery in front of humans along with declaration of one (adultery) as a sin while second one (Nikah) as a worship activity. Islam has taken care of human recognition and self-esteem so that humans may not become out layers of the circle of respect and dignity.

Music and singing have been smeared into reins and veins of the world population. And deliberations on its legitimacy and

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illegitimacy are kept open round the clock and around the below. In this scholarship (research dissertation) every serious and earnest attempt has been made to unfold the root cause of the legitimacy and illegitimacy of acts in the light of history and sharia and it hoped that it would prove to be a piece of guidance for the general public as well as scholars. If there is found any deficiency by readers of this very paper, educational stance would be seriously awaited therefrom. Everything be it in heavens and earth, has been created by Allah for the service of humanity (1). Then everything has been made conquerable by humans along with the declaration of limits of its merits and demerits, so that humans may remain aware of benefits and harms thereof. Allah has openly declared evil things along with its repercussions, forbidding their use thereafter. As per the majority of Islamic jurists, everything is amoral (Mubah) unless and until it has been made forbidden by any argument in the light of sharia (2).

As Islam is a balanced religion, devoid of excesses and deficiencies. It has cured monasticism through abstinence and God Fearing (3). Adultery and immorality have been discouraged by promoting Nikah. Humans not only avail amoral things they do enjoy the use thereof. There is a special treatment in Islam for the things and factors which do provide pleasure and comfort but serve as a hindrance in the execution of duties (فرائض). As per the scholars of Fiqh, there are two types of prohibitions. Namely Prohibited per say. (قبيح لعينه). For example, atheism, backbiting and polytheism. Induced Prohibition (قبيح لغيره). For example, sale and purchase immediately after Friday prayer, as they do cause procrastination in offering Friday prayer. Otherwise sale and purchase is not a bad activity per say.(4)

The Holy prophet has openly declared musical instruments as prohibited ones. Similarly, instruments of singing also fall in some category which cause humans forsake the day of resurrection and their belief in God.(5) Nonetheless, singing and music is lawful in the situation wherein they do serve any material and concrete benefit like in the events of marriages, before the prayers of Eid as an expression of joy, likewise lyrics of National anthem are also do fall in the aforesaid category. As beating drums as a means of relaxation after a tiresome journey is permissible. There are long discussions on the permissible and non-permissible grounds of music in the books of Hadith and Fiqh. Although there are numerous and strong arguments of invalidity thereof. But the

group of scholars who consider music and its related implications as an amoral category in the light of logics and conditions does find logics in its ordain.

Following is a detail account of above mentioned both categories.

It is proved that singing and music is absolutely objectionable as per Islamic teachings in the light of Quran, Sunnah, teachings of sahaba, followers thereof, scholars, good doers and collective actions of Muslim Ummah.(6)

Allah said in the Holy Quran in surah Luqman;

”ومن الناس من يشتري لهو الحديث ليضل عن سبيل الله بغير علم“

“some people are purchasers of such words which render people unaware of Allah”. (7)

Ibn e Masood has taken the purchase “لهو الحديث” on terms of “هو الغنا”. Mindful use of the things which mislead people from God, and make fun of the right path, there is a humiliating torment declared for such people.

According to Hazrat Abdullah Ibn e Abbas “لهو الحديث” comes in the sense of “هو الغنا و اشباهه” as “لهو الحديث” is equivalent to singing and its related things.

Author of Tafseer Rooh ul Muaani has quoted Hazrat Hassan Basri’s quote:

”ان لهو الحديث كل ما شغلك عن عبادة الله و ذكره“.

“Everything which renders you forgetful of Allah and his mentioning”.(8)

A famous scholar Imam Mujahid explains “لهو الحديث” meaning as:

”هو اشترا المغنى والمغنيه والاستماع اليه مثله من الباطل“.

He explains that “لهو الحديث” means those who sing, buy servants and listen other nonsense. (9)

A famous Islamic researcher Ibn e Qayyim advocated the stance of Ibn e Umar about “لهو الحديث” by singing that “هو الغنا”.(10)

Imam Tirmzi copies a hadith which is explanation of “لهو الحديث” which was quoted by Imam Bahli

”لا تتبعوا القينات ولا تشتروهن ولا تعلموهن لا خير فى تجارة فيهن و
ثمنهن حرام“

Translated as: “Do not transact singing maids, do not teach singing, there is no good in the transaction thereof, paying the price thereof is unlawful. (11)

In another verse of Surah Bani Israeel, Allah almighty ordains:

”واستفز من استطعت منهم بصوتك“ translation of which is: “De-track and mislead through your voice those from them you have control on”.(12)

According to Hazrat Mujahid, (صوت) “voice” implies for singing, drumbeating and vagabond trashing.

Famous scholar Allama jalal ul Din Al sayouti copied the words of Imam Mujahid in Al-Akleel,

” قال مجاهد، صوت الغنا والمزامير، وقال الحسن النصرى، الدف “

Imam Mujahid has implied from (صوت) in terms of musical instruments while Hazrat Hassan Basri has taken (صوت) in the meanings of drumbeating.

Writer of الجامع لاحكام القرآن has copied the words of Hazrat Zihak which comes in the meaning of “flute”.(13)

In surah Al-Najm, Allah ordains:

”افمن هذا الحديث تعجبون و تضحكون ولا تبكون وانتم سمدون“

which means: “Do you not wonder at the fact that you laugh but not weep and you keep on playing”.

According to Hazrat Akrama, “سمود، سآمد“ means singing songs as per Arabic dictionary “الحمير”.

Imam Bukhari has quoted the words of Hazrat Akrama in the same sense.(14)

Ibn e Manzoor, famous African researcher writes in”لسان العرب“:

”روى عن ابن عباس قال السمود الغنا لغة حمير يقال امسدى لنا غنى لنا ويقال للقينة اسمدينا ائ الهيئا بالغنا“

Hazrat Ibn e Abbas narrates; that (سمود) implies for singing songs. This is as per dictionary “الحمير”.(15)

” لا يشهدون الزور“

Amongst the signs of believers in the light of Holy Quran one is:

“They do not engage in abusive and non-sense talks”.

Muhammad Bin Hanfia and Imam Mujahid have taken afore-said word “الزور” in the sense of “الغنا” i.e. singing. Similarly, Imam Abu Bakr Jassas has copied the words of Imam Abu Hanifa, “وعن الغنا الزور هو الغنا”. Imam Abu Hanifa narrates that الزور is الغنا (singing).(16)

According to four Imams (ائمه اربعة), any participation in any event (sitting) is unlawful wherein there are arrangements of singing, dancing and music.

Hadiths:

Hazrat Abdul Rahman Bin Ghnam narrates that Holy Prophet said: “soon there would be a time when there would be such people who will consider adultery, vine, drinking and drumbeating as valid, lawful and un-objectionable”

According to another narration, “soon there would be people in my Ummah who would drink vine by changing its name. They would be engaged in dancing and singing. Allah would bury them in the earth. Some of such people would be converted into pigs and monkeys.(17)

Complete hadith which has been quoted above is:

”عن عبد الرحمن انه سمع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول ليكونن من امتي اقوام يستحلون الحر والحريير والخمر والمعازف، وفي اللفظ يشترين ناسا من امتي الخمر يسمونها بغير اسمها يعرف على روسهم بالمعازف والمغنيات يخسف الله بهم الارض ويجعل منهم القرد والخنازير“

According to another narration of jame Tirmzi, translation of which is:

Imran Bin Hussain narrates that Holy prophet said: “In this Ummah, events like getting buried into earth, deformation of faces and stone storming would occur. A person asked Holy prophet that when these events would do occur? In the reply to which Holy prophet said, “When singing women would be common, when there will be customs of singing and drumbeating and excessive use of vines.(18)

Above mentioned complete Hadith goes as:

”عن عمران بن حصين قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم في هذه الامة خسف و مسخ وقذف وقال رجل من المسلمين يا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ومتى ذلك قال اذا ظهرت القيان والمعازف وشرب الخمر“

Hazrat Abu Huraira narrated a Hadith, Translation of which is:

“when there would be customs and traditions of singing by ladies and practice of drumbeating, when there would be excessive use of wine, when people curse the former ones, then you should wait red storms, earthquakes would occur, earth would be subjective to unusual changing of layers, faces would be deformed and such symbols and signs of day resurrection will appear as any string of locket is broken and its beads get dispersed in result thereof.

Complete hadith is as under:

” وظهرت القينات والمعازف وشربت الخمر ولعن آخر هذه الامة اولها فارتقبوا عند ذلك ريحا حمرا وزلزلة وخسفا ومسحا وقذفا وآيات تتابع لنظام بال قطع سلكه فتتابع بعضه بعضا “ (19)

There are many narrations by Abu Huraira, Ibn e Hiban and Ali Bin Abi Talib (God be pleased), which carry same meaning as was discussed in the above quoted Hadith. However there is a difference of opinion by Muslim scholars in (عقوبات) i.e. deformation of faces, the mention of which is necessary here. Some Muslim scholars take (عقوبات، مسخ) i.e. deformation in the sense of actual and real deformation; that faces and appearances will be altogether changed into appearances of animals as Allah is controller of all affairs. But according to some Muslim scholars (عقوبات، مسخ) means implied deformations. They are of the opinion that “deformation” it means that as a result of committing frequent sins; habits and modes of people would become like those of animals.

According to narration of Musnad Ahmad Bin Hanbal, Music has been declared prohibited mentioning singing and its instruments.

” ان الله حرم على الامة الخمر والميسر والمزرر والكوبة والقنين “

In the light of above mentioned Hadith and afore narrated verses of holy Quran it is proved that music, musical instruments and singing is not only prohibited and un-Islamic but also it causes wrath of Allah Almighty.

Hazrat Sahl Bin saeed narrates in “مجمع الزوائد” that there would be events of (خسفا، مسخ) and stone storming. To the question, when these events will occur? He replied, “When there

would be custom of lady singers and vine would be considered lawful and permissible".(20)

”عن عبد الله ابن عمر رضى الله عنه ان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال ان الله حرم الخمر او الميسر ولكوبة والغبير وكل مسكر حرام“

Translation of which is: Hazrat Abdullah Bin Umar narrated that Holy prophet said “verily Allah has declared vine, gambling, drumbeating, alcoholic products and music as objectionable, unlawful, un-Islamic and non-permissible.

Views of Islamic Jurists:

Islamic Jurists have divided music instruments and singing into three types.

1. Those musical instruments which are made just for recreation, entertainment and excitement, which serve no fruitful purpose, cordial satisfaction and spiritual gratification which arouse unusual cognitive excitement like flute etc. Musical drums are excluded from this category. In every age, Muslim ummah is unanimously agreed upon the unlawfulness, invalidity and prohibition of those instruments.
2. Any such musical lyrics which cause sinfulness and forgetfulness and which hinder the fulfillment of religious duties (فرائض و واجبات) are unanimously prohibited.
3. Any such singing which is heard from uncover and naked jacks and which involves derogatory abusive language i.e. mentioning organs of females and content of which comprises illegitimate affairs, for example, characteristics and attributes of vine is also illegitimate one. Drumbeating which is random and purpose of which is only announcement is unanimously allowed.

Views of scholars of Hanfi school of Thought:

Imam Abu Hanifa’s interpretation regarding “لا يشهدون الزور” has been quoted in a famous book احكام القرآن, i.e. الزور implies for غنا (singing).(21) Imam Sarkhasi has declared the testification of singers as invalid and rejected one. (22) Writer of خلاصة الفتاوى has declared listening of music like flute as an illegitimate and sinful act. And he has declared that attentive and programmed listening of flute is equivalent to a heinous sinful act (فسق و فجور).

Furthermore, he has declared joyous enjoining of listening music as an un-Islamic act (كفر). (23) The very singer around whom people gather for listening music is untrustworthy in Islamic affairs and testification by him or her is rejected one. The only exception is that, this very activity is only carried out to discard loneliness and fear. (24) Imam Muhammad Bin Hassan shebani's stance is that creating music by flute and singing songs is an illegitimate, immoral, sinful, un-Islamic and unpardonable act. (25)

Testification of singer (male or female) for a heinous crime/sin of someone is objectionable and rejected one. (26) Singing near scholars of Hanfi school of thought is allowable. The group of scholars which has considered it disgusting assumes it so, when it consists of un-Islamic couplets and content. If the content of couplets is not in synchronization with sharia and in accordance with sinful activities (فسق و فجور), then it is un-Islamic, objectionable and prohibited.

There is a famous book "Islam and Music" written by a famous scholar and author Mufti Muhammad Shafi in which he mentions an incident with respect to Imam Abu Hanifa wherein it is narrated that once Imam Abu Hanifa was going for a walk in a garden along with Qazi Ibn e Abi Laila. Meanwhile they happened to pass near ladies singers who became silent having seen aforementioned personalities. Imam Abu Hanifa said: "You did well" (احسنتن). After some days, a case was filed in the court of Qazi Ibn e Abi Laila wherein Imam Abu Hanifa was eye witness, whose observation was rejected by above said Qazi on the ground that he had said to lady singers "You did well". Imam Abu Hanifa said in his defense, that he had not said "you did well" while they were singing, rather he said the very words after they had become silent i.e. "You did well by becoming silent" (احسنتن بالسكوت). (27)

Views of scholars of Shafie school of Thought:

According to scholars of shafie school of thought, listening music from a stranger (male or female) be it music, or non-music is a sinful act. Famous Imam of shafie school of thought, Namely Ibn e Hajar has testified and elaborated the aforementioned stance in **كف الرعاع** and similar is the stance of Qazi Abu Tayyab shafie and Abul Hussain.

According to them, singing by singers (male or female) either it cause fuss or not, is equivalent to spoiling the inner self.

So it is illegitimate and un-Islamic as well as an objectionable activity even to the extent that if Quranic verses are heard from a stranger (woman) amounts to an un-Islamic cause. (28)

According to shafie school of thought any singing activity (songs, music) which causes the procrastination and abandoning religious duty or which involves any un-Islamic and disgusting element is a sinful activity.(29)

Views of scholars of Malki school of Thought:

المدونة الكبرى is a famous and authentic book of Fiqh, near Malki school of thought. It is considered of the rank of Sahih Bukhari near Malki scholars.

According to a reference of the book *الاجاره* it was asked from Imam Malik bin Anas, regarding singing, that either it is an objected sin or an amoral activity? To which Imam Malik replied that even reciting The Holy Quran in the tune of songs is objectionable. Hence, singing and reciting verses (poetry) are the matters of extreme nature in this light.

Imam Malik Bin Anas, furthermore, declares the transactions of singer ladies as forbidden and un-Islamic ones. (30) Imam Malik Bin Anas even considered beating drums and singing at the occasions of marriage as an objectionable activity. As it was feared that people would become habitual of it apart from the occasions of marriage. (31)

Voicing of couplets and verses, full of wisdom and advice and adjoining different meters of verses without musical instruments does not amount to an un-Islamic activity. As companions of Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon him) recited following verses while digging the trench on the occasion of battle of Khandaq (*غزوه خندق*). (32)

نحن الذين بايعوا محمدا
على الجهاد ما بقينا ابدا

And Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) responded with the recitation of the following couplet:(33)

اللهم لا خير الاخر الاخره
فاغفر الانصار والمهاجره

Views of scholars of Hanbli school of Thought:

According to Ali bin Sulaiman Madavi and Imam Ibne Jouzi(Hanbli scholars), there are three narrations regarding singing

from Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal. From one, is proved amoral nature of singing. Whereas, other two narrations prove the immorality, illegitimacy and invalidity of singing. They are of the view that in the era of Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal, most of the forms of singing were comprised of abstinence, wisdom and advice. If singing in the era of Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal had been of the same nature and intensity as is being observed now a day, he would have not declared the singing as an amoral activity rather, it would have been declared as absolute immoral activity by him.

Scholars of Hanbali school of thought have mentioned accounts of abstinence while referring them to the amoral ones. Famous Jurist of Hanbali thought, Namely Abu Bakar Khilal Hanbali shares the same belief. Stance of Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal regarding musical instruments is that he broke the musical device having seen it in the hands of slave of Nasr Bin Hamza. (34)

Views of scholars of Sufi's school of Thought:

Any hearing rather listening activity which causes the removal of nobility of people is absolutely forbidden and prohibited one.

Sufis never go beyond the Islamic jurists and experts of Fiqh; they declare singing as an illegitimate activity. Any singing activity which abandons the sincerity in worshipping, gratifies and satisfies the lusty desires and which causes people to become habitual of holding such events and arguments is objectionable and un-recommended one. And it is not allowed for both torchbearers and followers. (35)

Famous researcher of Hadith, namely Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlvi quoted that followers of sheikh Naseer ul Din charagh Dehlvi were of the view that anyone who listens in any arrangement accompanied with lyrics and music should be considered as an extraneous entity of our circle. (36)

Conclusion

There are many arguments in favor of and against singing but it would be a better option to choose the middle way. i.e. Those arguments which are against the singing should be practiced more. If people would come up with numerous arguments in declaring singing is an amoral activity, it is feared that people would infer

many new ways accordingly which would likely in danger the followers of Islam.

Correlation and Interdependence

Evidence of narrations quoted so far, and authenticity of all the references we have come up with here above is collectively affirmed. There has been delineation on the content of few narrations along with elaboration on the authenticity of others. It is impossible and improbable to refute all the narrations or declare them faulty. So, it is advisable to declare few as “Right” (صحيح) along with admiration and adoration of others i.e. (حسن). Amoral and illegitimacy of singing and its related instruments are proved from the teachings of Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). It is necessary for a critic to ponder on the narrations in such a way as to conform to the teachings of Holy Prophet so that there may be left no incongruity and controversy in between the teachings and deeds of Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

It is essential for a critic to assume and opt such a sagacious way as may open up new avenues of pure and sincere action for common people and which may render the sinful acts as an avoidable ones.

May Allah Almighty enable all of us to act sincerely. Aameen!

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