# 222730 - Ruling on singing and musical instruments

## the question

I watched a debate on a satellite channel between two shaykhs, one of whom issued a fatwa saying that all songs with musical accompaniment are prohibited, regardless of the words that are being sung, and he quoted as evidence the fact that there is scholarly consensus regarding that.

The view of the other shaykh was that songs with musical accompaniment are permissible if there are no indecent words or mixing between men and women [among the performers], and he objected to the first shaykh citing scholarly consensus as evidence. In fact, he said that there is no such thing as scholarly consensus in Islamic jurisprudence, and perhaps he was not aware of those who had issued fatwas saying something different to the view he supports. He also quoted as evidence for it being permissible the hadith about the two young girls when they sang in the house of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

## Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The majority of scholars – including the imams of the four madhhabs (Abu Hanifah, Malik, ash-Shafa`i and Ahmad) and their followers – are agreed that scholarly consensus (ijma`) constitutes proof in Islamic jurisprudence, and they cited it as proof to support their views regarding many issues. They quoted many texts from the Quran and Sunnah to prove that scholarly consensus constitutes proof. For a discussion of that, please see the answer to question no. 197937.

Hence saying that there is no such thing as scholarly consensus is not right.

For more information, see *Ar-Radd `ala al-Qardawi wal-Judayyi`* by `Abdullah Ramadan Musa (p.

81 ff).

Secondly:

The prominent Shafa`i jurist Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Stringed instruments – such as the tanbur (mandolin), oud (lute) and sanj (harp), and other types of instruments that are well-known to those who indulge in idle entertainment, foolishness and evil – are all prohibited, and there is no difference of scholarly opinion regarding that. The one who narrated that there was a difference of opinion was mistaken or was influenced by his whims and desires to the extent that he no longer wanted to consider the evidence, and that prevented him from reaching the sound conclusion and caused him to drift away from the straight path.

The scholars who narrated that there was consensus on the prohibition of all these things include Imam Abul-`Abbas al-Qurtubi, who was trustworthy and of good character. He said – as was narrated from him by our leading scholars, who affirmed it –: As for woodwind instruments and hourglass drums, there is no difference of scholarly opinion regarding the prohibition on listening to them, and I have not heard of anyone whose view carries weight among the early generations or any leading scholar among the later generations who allowed that. How can it not be prohibited when such things are closely associated with those who drink alcohol and do evil, and they provoke desire and motivate people to do evil and immoral things. Whatever is like that is undoubtedly prohibited, and those who do that are evildoers and sinners.

Those who narrated that there was scholarly consensus on this matter also include the imam of our later companions, Abul-Fat-h Sulaym ibn Ayyub ar-Razi, who said in his book *At-Taqrib*, after quoting a report about the prohibition on the hourglass drum: Indeed Allah may forgive every sinner except one who plays the lute or hourglass drum. Moreover, this is a matter of scholarly consensus.

End quote from *Kaff ar-Ri`a` `an Muharramat al-Lahw was-Sama`*, p. 118.

Another of those who narrated that there was consensus regarding this matter is Abul-Husayn al-

Baghawi, who said:

The scholars are agreed on the prohibition of wind instruments, stringed instruments and other musical instruments.

End quote from *Sharh as-Sunnah*, 12/383.

Ibn Qudamah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Musical instruments such as the tanbur (mandolin), reed flute and other wind instruments, are associated with sin and promote it, according to scholarly consensus.

End quote from *Al-Mughni*, 9/193.

A number of scholars from different madhhabs that are followed by Muslims – such as Imam Ibn Jarir at-Tabari, Abu Bakr al-Ajurri, Abut-Tib at-Tabari ash-Shafa`i, Abu `Amr ibn as-Salah and others – narrated that there was consensus on the prohibition of singing accompanied by music.

You may find their statements and books that document those views in *Ar-Radd `ala al-Qardawi wal-Judayyi`* (p. 351 ff). See also: *Ighathat al-Lahfan* by Ibn al-Qayyim (1/415).

Thirdly:

As it is proven that there is scholarly consensus regarding the prohibition on singing with musical accompaniment, the matter is clear, and rejecting such consensus is taking a great risk, especially since so many scholars narrated this consensus and many jurists cited it as proof regarding this matter. Even if we assume that consensus is not proven and there are different views, this does not mean that singing with musical accompaniment is not prohibited, because the evidence of those scholars who hold the view that it is prohibited is not limited to the scholarly consensus regarding the matter; rather they also quoted many texts from the Quran and Sunnah as evidence, as well as the words and actions of the early generations.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) discussed in detail the evidence and views of the scholars, and referred to some of the negative consequences that result from listening to songs

and music, in *Ighathat al-Lahfan* (1/415). See also the answer to question no. 5000, which quotes some of these texts and scholarly views.

Fourthly:

As for the evidence quoted by those who think that singing and music are permissible, namely the hadith about the two young girls singing, quoting that as evidence is based on a misunderstanding, because this hadith more clearly indicates that singing is prohibited and blameworthy than suggests that it is permissible. That is because when Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: “Singing of the Shaytan in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)?”, he called singing attributed singing to the Shaytan, and the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) approved of him describing it in such terms, and undoubtedly attributing something to the Shaytan indicates that it is blameworthy and puts people off it. So how could anyone say that the singing that is attributed to the Shaytan is permissible?

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not object to Abu Bakr describing singing as something attributable to the Shaytan; rather he said to him: “Let them be, O Abu Bakr, for these are the days of Eid.” That happened during the days of Eid al-Adha. Narrated by al-Bukhari (988) and Muslim (892).

In this hadith it is narrated that these two young girls were beating hand-drums.

The hadith does not constitute evidence that singing is permissible in all situations, as some people understand it. Rather it indicates that such singing is permissible during the days of Eid only. It should be noted that the hadith states that they were young girls (meaning that they had not yet reached puberty), and it was during the days of Eid, and they were singing some lines of verse that spoke of courage and war.

This is what the hadith indicates is permissible; how could we conclude from the hadith that the singing of adult women with beautiful voices, with musical accompaniment that could corrupt and influence the heart, is permissible?

Rather the hadith – as noted above – indicates that singing is disallowed, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) approved of Abu Bakr calling it something attributable to the Shaytan, but he granted a concession allowing young girls to sing, especially during the days of Eid. Hence the Mother of the Believers `A'ishah said of the two young girls: there were two of the young girls of the Ansar with me who were singing the verses that the Ansar had composed on the day of Bu`ath, but they were not known to be singers. She said that to ward off any misunderstanding that they were like regular singers concerning whom it is established that listening to their singing is prohibited.

Abu Sulayman al-Khattabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It is clear from this report that they were not singers in the sense of women who take singing as a profession and regular practice, because that would not be appropriate in the presence of the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). As for singing a line or two of poetry, making the voice melodious in such a way that does not reflect indecency or mention anything unlawful, that does not come under the heading of that which undermines dignity or causes one's testimony to be rejected.

`Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) did not object to the singing or chanting of travellers or camel drivers and the like, and more than one of the early generations (may Allah have mercy on them) granted concessions allowing that.

The ruling on occasional singing, in contrast to the ruling on singing as a regular practice, is like the ruling on poetry.

The Prophet's words "This is our Eid" gave a justification on behalf of the two young girls; what he meant is that expressing joy on Eid is one of the symbols of Islam and comes under the heading of celebrating Eid openly and making it renowned, for it is not the same as other days.

End quote from *A`lam al-Hadith Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, by al-Khattabi, 1/594-595).

Al-Hafiz Ibn Rajab (may Allah have mercy on him) said, after quoting these words of al-Khattabi:

This hadith indicates that [such singing] is prohibited on days other than Eid, because the Prophet

(blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) gave as the justification for allowing it the fact that those were the days of Eid. This indicates that the reason for making it disallowed still applies, but it may be permitted on some occasions, and this is the joy and happiness that occur temporarily during the days of Eid. However, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) approved of Abu Bakr calling the duff (hand-drum) something attributable to the Shaytan, which indicates that the reason that it is prohibited still applies, were it not for the fact that there is a reason to allow it temporarily.

End quote from *Fat-h al-Bari* by Ibn Rajab, 8/433.

Fifthly:

As for the view that singing is permissible, most shaykhs state in their fatwas that singing is prohibited, by way of barring a means that may lead to evil, but that is not correct. Rather they have evidence from the Quran and Sunnah, and the evidence from the Sunnah clearly indicates that all musical instruments are prohibited.

Whoever reflects on the evidence for the prohibition of singing and the evils that result from it, and how it corrupts hearts, will clearly see that it is prohibited, and some of this evidence is sufficient to proof that it is prohibited.

And Allah knows best.