228486 - Why do some of the scholars regard as haram acting that is not accompanied by free mixing or music?

the question

What is the wisdom behind the prohibition on acting that is not accompanied by free mixing or music? Because, as far as I know, some of the scholars regard it as haram.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Yes, the scholars differed regarding the ruling on acting that is free of prohibited elements.

Those scholars who did not allow it gave several reasons for that, the most significant of which include:

I.

Acting is a kind of lying, and the lying is twofold in this case: firstly because the actor takes on a personality or character that is not his, so he is lying, and he also attributes to that character words and deeds that never happened, so this is another lie.

Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

Does that mean that you are advising our Muslim children to study these fields – that is, media – so that they can take up positions in this field that is filled with corrupt people?

He said: Yes; the scholars should not leave these matters to the ignorant, and the scholars should take it upon themselves to call people to goodness and virtue in all fields. But there is the issue of acting. I do not advise anyone to become an actor; rather the scholars should explain the rulings of Allah and His Messenger. As for someone pretending to take on the character of another person

or be called by the name of another person and say: I am `Umar, I am `Uthman and so on, this is lying and it is not permissible to do it.

End quote from *Majmu` Fatawa ash-Shaykh `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Baz*, 5/271-272.

Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Acting can never be free of lying, whether in actions or words…

The reason why it cannot be free of lies is as follows:

1. If the story is mythical, then it is fabrication from the outset, and it is a bad way to show the path of guidance to the ummah and entertain them by lying to them and trying to fool them.
2. If the actor acts the part of a specific person, such as Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi and other great men of history from the times before or after him, then they will say that he said and did things that he did not say or do, and behaved in ways in which he did not behave. This is pure fabrication and attributing words and actions to him falsely.

When Allah forbid a thing, such as lying, He also forbids anything that is based on it and whatever leads to it. Acting is a means that leads to lying, because it contains lies, as you can see. And it is Allah Whose help we seek.

End quote from *At-Tamthil*, 39-40.

II.

Usually what happens in acting is that the actor will present shameful and undignified actions, whilst the Muslim is required to maintain his dignity.

Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Maintaining dignity is one of the objectives of sharia, and acting or speaking in a manner that is contrary to dignity leads to a person’s testimony not being accepted by the Islamic court. Islamic teachings enjoin us to attain sublime characteristics and forbid low and ignoble characteristics.

How often does the audience see the actor behaving in an undignified manner, such as using make-up and prosthetics, and making silly movements and speaking in a silly voice, or shaking parts of his body. He may even play the role of someone who is insane, or mentally handicapped, or is a fool, and so on.

The jurists have stated, under the heading of testimony, that the testimony of one who is a comedian, or mocks and ridicules others, or jokes too much, is to be rejected. This is often stated by the jurists of the four madhhabs and others.

Based on that, no rational person can doubt that acting is one of the foremost things that undermine dignity, hence it is one of the things that lead to a person's testimony being rejected by the Islamic court. Whatever is like that, Islamic teaching does not approve of it at all.

It is a given that people of dignity do not take acting as a career and profession, and neither do any of those who are possessed of wisdom and religious commitment.

End quote from *At-Tamthil*, p. 35-36.

Some of the scholars are of the view that if acting adheres to the guidelines of Islamic teachings, and is free of prohibited elements, and it serves a shar`i interest, then it is permissible. This is the view of Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him), when he said:

Many of our fellow scholars forbid acting altogether, and say that it is not permissible because it involves lying, and it may involve ridiculing religious symbols, such as if the actor plays an old man and puts on a beard made of wool, and the like.

However, some scholars say that if the dramatic production has a message or a purpose, and does not involve anything that is prohibited, such as lying about someone, or a man playing the role of a woman or vice versa, or imitating animals, then there is nothing wrong with it. Thus they say that acting is permissible subject to some conditions.

It should be noted that the basic principle regarding actions other than acts of worship is that they are permissible; by His grace, Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, has made flexible things

that He has not forbidden. As the basic principle is that things are permitted, evidence must be produced to prove that they are prohibited. If some scholars say that this thing is prohibited, and other scholars say that it is permitted, then the correct view is that of those who say that it is permitted, unless there is evidence to prove that it is prohibited, in which case, we must follow the evidence. This applies to matters other than acts of worship.

As for acts of worship, they are actions that are aimed at drawing closer to Allah, and the basic principle regarding them is that they are not allowed and are prohibited, because acts of worship are the way to Allah, may He be Glorified and exalted, and they are the path of Allah, and we cannot falsely ascribe to Allah anything that He did not prescribe as a way that leads to Him.

Hence there is a famous principle that the scholars follow, and it is a sound principle that is indicated by the Qur'an and Sunnah, and by sound reasoning. The basic principle regarding acts of worship is that they are not allowed and are prohibited, unless proof is established that an act of worship is prescribed. In contrast, the basic principle regarding actions, words and beneficial things other than acts of worship is that they are permissible unless proof is established that they are not allowed.

End quote from *Fatawa Nur `ala ad-Darb* by Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin, 2/24.

This is a controversial matter concerning which there is no definitive text to say that it is permissible or otherwise. Whoever follows a scholar who says that it is permissible, not by way of following whims and desires and personal preference, but because he believes that this is a well-founded view and is closer to the truth, may do that. And whoever follows a scholar who says that it is prohibited because he believes that this is correct, may do that.

For more information, please see the answers to questions no. 10836 and 144322.

And Allah knows best.