

“Music: What is Evil Looks Good”

By: Ahmad Musa Jibril
(introduction by student)

Introduction

“Habibty, please mama, wear this hijab for me for five minutes? Please, just for five minutes?” pleaded the mother. The mother had a sorry look on her face. She seemed overwhelmed by the rebellion in her 8 year old daughter’s eyes. “No! It’s ugly! It does not match my pink pants!” Rasha responded as she crouched back in the corner of the leather sofa. Back and forth, back and forth the bargaining droned on.

Embarrassment appeared on her parents’ faces as I stood there witnessing in silent shock. The little girl refused to wear what seemed to her as just a piece of cloth, up until her baba bribed her to wear it for a measly five minutes. Hearing the words “I will buy you a new toy if you do”, the little girl’s face finally lit up.

She tugged his arm and said in a small voice, “Baba is our visitor riding with us in the car? I wanna show her my new Sami Yusuf CD.”

I visited an old family friend I had not seen in many years. I became sorrowful to find that they too had been affected by the wave of corruption that plagues Muslims in the west today.

As my visit went on, it dawned upon me that the couple had also done something strange in their deen. Five years ago, both were clad in full modest clothing waving the banner of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Today, they live on a mortgage and a conscious effort to make their children blend into the western society. They genuinely believed they were improving and doing the right things.

My afternoon finally ended with a ride to a family dinner. The car speakers blasted a blend of Arabic musical instruments and the words of dhikr, the latest “Islamic” CD that’s hit the shelves. The little 8 year old girl sitting next to me winded about her hips to the music.

At that moment, I realized what was killing this little girl’s heart from loving Allah and His messenger.

Watching her imitate half-naked women she has seen on television while doing dhikr of Allah, it was made clear to me the direction her parents were taking their Islam- the confusing version. The little girl was unsure about her Islam, therefore her rebellion no longer came as a shock to me.

I imagined myself living at the time of the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) and telling the people that there will come a day when all the faire and flair of musical instruments of jahiliyah will be merged with the dhikr of Allah. I imagined the reaction, and realized that we have come to that.

Music. The shaitan, indeed, makes what is good look evil and what is evil look good.

This paper by Sheikh Ahmad takes a look at the impermissibility of listening to Music from the stand point of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Proof from the Qur'an and Sunnah

1st Proof from the Qur'an

[31:6] "ومن الناس من يشتري لهو الحديث ليضل عن سبيل الله

“But there are, among men, those who purchase idle tales, without knowledge (or meaning), to mislead (men) from the Path of Allah and throw ridicule (on the Path): for such there will be a humiliating Penalty.” [31:6]

Ibn Abbas (radhi Allahu anh) said idle tales in this verse “lahu al hadith” is evil and music.¹

Mujahid (rahimahu Allah) said idle tales in this verse “lahu al hadith” was the drum.²

Hassan AlBasri said this verse was revealed about music and musical instruments. Also included in this evil talk and musical instruments.³

Ibn al Qayyim (rahimahu Allah) said, “The interpretation of the sahabah (companions) and Tabi3een (their followers) of idle tales in this verse “lahu al hadith” is sufficient in that it means music.

Abu Alshabaa' said I asked Ibn Masood about Allah's verse. He said, “Wallahi the one and only one its music – repeating it three times.” (this is authentic in being attributed to Ibn Masood and Ibn Abbas)

Ibn Umar (radhi Allahu anh) also said it means Music.

Therefore, if you take time to observe around you you will see that music is a path to adultery and fornication. It plants the seed of hypocrisy, the seed of polytheism. When people turn to music, like it and get addicted to it, it becomes the alcohol of the mind. One turns away from the Qur'an more than anything else once their hearts become addicted to music.

Allah says, “..for such there will be a humiliating Penalty .” for those who replaces the Qur'an with idle tales.⁴

2nd Proof from the Qur'an

¹ Tafseer Al-Tabary 21/40

² Tafseer Ibn Katheer 3/451

³ Tafseer Alsaady 6/150

⁴ Ighathet Allahfan 1-258-259

وقال تعالى : { واستفز من استطعت منهم بصوتك واجلب عليهم بخيلك ورجلك وشاركهم في الأموال والأولاد وعدهم وما يعدهم الشيطان إلا غرورا } الإسراء : 64

"Lead to destruction those whom thou canst among them, with thy (seductive) voice, make assaults on them with thy cavalry and thy infantry; mutually share with them wealth and children; and make promises to them. "But Satan promises them nothing but deceit." 17:64

Mujahid (rahimahu Allah) said, “..and his voice is music and evil.”

Ibn al Qayyim (rahimahu Allah) said, “everyone who speaks in disobedience to Allah and or user of musical instruments, flute, haram duff, drums is the voice of the shytan.”⁵

3rd Proof from the Qur’an :

وقال تعالى : " أفمن هذا الحديث تعجبون ، وتضحكون ولا تبكون ، وأنتم سامدون " النجم 59:53 61

“Do ye then wonder at this recital? And will ye laugh and not weep. Wasting your time in vanities?” 53: 59-61

Ikrimah (rahimahu Allah) said Ibn abbas said Sumood in the verse mean music; when you say usmud lana it means sing to us.

He said they used to when they heard the Qur’an sing, so Allah revealed the verse.

Ibn Katheer (rahimahu Allah) said in his tafseer under this verse, sufian Althawry narrated that his father heard Ibn abbas say usmud for us means sing for us.

Proof from the Sunnah

1st Proof from the Sunnah:

The prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) said “There will be in my ummah those who make it halal (permissible) adultery/fornication, silk, alcohol and musical instruments.”⁶

This hadith shows that music is haram through two avenues:

- a. The prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) mentioned that they will make permissible, meaning its haram/prohibited and they will make it permissible. Note all the examples in the hadith are issues that are haram.

⁵ Ighathet Allahfan 1-258-259

⁶ Narrated by Albukhary tal3leekan # 5590; Tabary; Baihaky; See the Silsilat Alsaheeha for Albany 91

b. The prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) combined the musical instruments with that which is decisively haram like adultery/fornication and alcohol. Had music not been prohibited then it would not have been combined to that which is prohibited.⁷

Had there not been other than this hadith to show music was haram it would have been enough.

Sheikh Al Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahu Allah) said this hadith proves musical instruments to be haram and “magazif” (the term in the hadith is a term used for all musical instruments.)

Then, he went on to say of those who play music or listen to it in the name of Islam, “And know that in the first three centuries whether in Arabian Peninsula, Sham, Yemen, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq, or Khurasan there were none of those who were religious and righteous of worshippers who gather to listen to music whether with a duff, clappings or flute. And, it was done after the first three centuries, when the imams saw this, they refuted it.”⁸

2nd Proof from the Sunnah:

Nafe3 (rahimahu Allah) said Ibn Umar heard a musical instrument so he (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) placed his fingers in his ears and walked away from the area and said, “Nafe3 can u hear anything?” I said, “No!” He took his fingers out of his ears and said, “I was with the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) and he heard like this and did as I did.”⁹

Some claim this hadith is not proof on the prohibition of musical instruments because had it been haram the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) would have plugged his ears and ordered Ibn Umar to do so, and Ibn Umar would have ordered Nafe3 to do that as well.

The reply to that is there is a difference between “sama3” and “istima3” “Sama3” is to unintentionally hear music and “Istima3” is to purposely listen to music or go in a setting where there is music. Here, Ibn Umar and the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) did not purposely listen and neither did did Nafe3.

Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahu Allah) said, “What one does not intend of listening to is not haram as all scholars agree. Therefore, the prohibition or reward is based on whether it’s istima3 or sama3. Someone who purposely listen to Qur’an “istima3” will get reward; yet another who listens accidentally (or not wanting or seeking) does not get reward. Likewise, with musical

⁷ The ruling on Musical instrument by Albany; correcting misunderstanding regarding the hadith by raed saby 1/176.

⁸ Majmood 11/535; 11/569

⁹ Saheeh Sunan Abu Dawood

instruments. Listening to it unintentionally and without seeking it will not hurt him.¹⁰

Ibn Qudamah AlMaqdise (rahimahu Allah) said that Ibn Umar (radhi Allahu anhuma) did not intend to listen since he was just a passer-by and the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) walked away from that street. He (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) would not have come back had he not known the music ended and neither would he have taken his fingers out of his ears. Therefore, it was necessary for Ibn Umar (radhi Allahu anhuma) not to place his fingers in his ears to let the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) know when the music ended.¹¹

3rd Proof from the Sunnah:

The prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) walked with Abdur-Rahman bin 'Awf in between pine trees. The prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) then placed his son Ibrahim on his lap and began to cry. Abdur-Rahman bin 'Awf said, "Oh prophet of Allah do you cry when you stop us from crying?" He said, "I did not deter you from crying. I deterred you from two evil sinful voices – a voice with musical devilish instruments and a voice at a misery with scraping of the face and shredding of the clothe."¹²

Saying of the Imams Regarding Music

1. The Madhab of Imam Abu Hanifa:

The Madhab of Imam Abu Hanifa is among the most critical and harshest quotes on music. Imam Abu Hanifa's students clearly declared musical instruments haram and anyone who listens to it is considered a fasiq whose testimony is not accepted.

Some went on to say that listening to music is fisq (astray) and enjoying it is kufr. They used weak hadith to support that statement.

They also said one must strive not to listen to it if he passes by it or if its near him.

Abu Yusuf, one of Abu Hanifa's most famous teachers, said, "A house that music is heard from can be raided without permission because ordaining the good and forbidding the evil is fard, and if we require permission for entry in such situation then people would not be able to perform the fard of forbidding the evil."¹³

2. The Madhab of Imam Malik:

¹⁰ Fatawa 10/78

¹¹ AlMughny 10/173

¹² Narrated by Altirmithy 1005; Alhakem in Mistadrak 4/43; Baihaky in Sunan kubra 4/69; Tayalisy in Musnad 1683; Tahawy in Sahrh Almany 4/29; and Albany Considered it authentic.

¹³ Ighathet Allahfan 1/425

Imam Malik (rahimahu Allah) was asked about those who play the drums and flute and those who enjoy listening to it as one passes by.

He said one must get up and leave unless he is sitting for something extremely urgent or cannot get up. If he hears it in his pathway then he should go back or speed forward.¹⁴

He said music is something the fusooq (astray) do.¹⁵

Ibn Abdal Bar (rahimahu Allah) said scholars agree by ijma3 on the issue of riba, that the dowry of the prostitution is taking payment for weeping over the dead, fortune tellers those who claim to know unforeseen and news of the skies, musical instruments, and all wrongful play.¹⁶

3. The Madhab of Imam Shafi'i:

His students and those truly knowledgeable of his madhab clearly declared music and musical instruments haram and denied that he ever said it was halal.¹⁷

The author of "Kifayat al Akbar", who is a Shafi'i scholar, considered musical instruments an evil that needed to be forbidden upon those who hear or see it. He said that a person is not excused if scholars who go with the flow are present (make a fatwa for it) or if they are poor (meaning the Sufis as that was one of their names back then). Because they are ignorant followers of everyone who barks. They never follow the brightness of knowledge but bend to every wind.¹⁸

4. The Madhab of Imam Ahmad:

Imam Ahmad's son, Abdullah, asked his father about music. His father said, "It grows hypocrisy within one's heart and I dislike it." And, then he said Imam Maliks quote that only fusooq (astray)¹⁹ do it.²⁰

Ibn Qudamah, who is considered among the biggest Imam of the Hanbali Madhabs, said, "Musical instruments are haram like guitar, trumpets, flutes, drums and so on. Whoever continues to listen to it, his testimony is rejected."²¹

¹⁴ Aljame3 lilKairawany 263

¹⁵ Tafseer Alkurtuby 14/55

¹⁶ Alkafy 342

¹⁷ Ighathet Allahfan 1/425

¹⁸ Kifayet AlAkhyar 2/128

¹⁹ Fasik is one who persists on doing a major sin.

²⁰ Ighathet Al lahfan

²¹ Almughny 10/173

And then he goes on to say, “If one goes to a wedding with prohibition like alcohol musical instrument and can forbid evil then he must otherwise he should not attend.”²²

5. Ibn Taymiyyah:

He said, as evident with the four imam’s Madhab, that all musical instruments are haram. As the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) said in AlBukhari that there will be those who make halal musical instruments and that they will be transformed into apes and pigs. He notes that none of the followers of the four imams mentioned a dispute amongst them on this matter.²³

Ibn Taymiyyah also said musical instruments are alcohol to one’s soul, and it does to one soul more than what alcohol does.²⁴

6. More Scholars:

At-Tabary (rahimahu Allah) said the scholars of all countries have made ijama3 that music is hated²⁵ and must be avoided. He mentioned quotes by Abul Faraj saying that “Alkafal, from our madhab, said ‘that one who listens to music or dances, his testimony cannot be accepted, as we have shown it is not permissible. Therefore, taking salary for it is haram as well.’” AlQasem said, “Music is of evil.”²⁶

Alhassan (rahimahu Allah) said if people invite u to a marriage that contains music then their invitation should not be accepted²⁷

Scholars on destroying musical instruments:

a. Ibn Taymiyyah (rahimahu Allah) said “It is permissible to destroy musical instruments according to most scholars, and it is the mathab of Imam Malik and the selected chosen two among the Hanbalis.”

He also said it was not permissible to manufacture musical instruments.²⁸

b. Ibn Shaibah narrated that a man broke a musical instrument for another. They disputed the matter to a judge, and the judge found that the owner of the instrument receives nothing in compensation since it is a haram instrument with no value.²⁹

²² Alkafy 3/118

²³ Fatawah 11/576 Ibn Taimieh rahimahu Allah means none of the reputable scholars of the mathabs mentioned any dispute on this issue up to his time.

²⁴ Fatawa 10/417

²⁵ Many of the previous scholars used to refer to many issues as hated but mean haram. The following statements and elaborations clearly show he dose not mean its hated as in makrooh but rather haram.

²⁶ Tafseer Alkurtuby 14/56

²⁷ Tafseer alhurtuby 14/56

²⁸ Fatawa 22/140

²⁹ Musanaf 5/395

c. AlBahawy (rahimahu Allah) issued a fatwa in declaring all musical instruments haram and that they cannot be sold unless they are destroyed , They cannot be used for musical purpose but would be sold for its value of wood or metal.³⁰

EXCEPTION:

Once we know from the solid proof mentioned that musical instruments are haram, then anyone who mentions a musical instrument to be halal must present proof.

Among the exception, and the only one in fact, is the use of a duff (a small hand drum) with no metallic tones on them.

The prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) made an exception to that instrument for 'Eid and weddings.

It is not correct to claim that since he (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) permitted that, then drums must be halal, or other similar instruments are halal. They had drums then, and scholars named drums specifically among the haram. The scholars even specified the duff (small drum) with metal on its sides to make noise as being haram as well.

In one hadith narrated by Aisha (radhi Allahu anh) two young girls were chanting with the duff on 'Eid while the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) had his back turned to them because he was preoccupied. Abu Bakr (radhi Allahu anh) walked in and scolded them for using instruments in the prophet's house which the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) forbade. The prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) told Abu Bakr to let them be for it was the day of 'Eid.

We learn from that hadith that the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) heard the duff play, meaning its not haram. Therefore, it is not haram upon men to hear it even though it was known that men never played it.

Misconceptions from those who think music is halal:

1. They claim all the hadith on music are weak.

The reply is that they are all strong ahadeeth. Some ahadeeth are in the 2nd most authentic book after the Qur'an such as Sahih Bukhari. Although some ahadeeth are weak, there are more solid authentic hadith that prohibits music. We mentioned a few in this paper.

The scholars of the past have all united on the fact that the hadeeth on musical instruments are authentic, with the exception of Abu Hamed Alghazaly, who was not known to be a scholar of hadith, and Ibn Hazm.

³⁰ Sharh alsunnah 8/28

Ibn Hazm said, “Had he known the hadith to be authentic he would consider music haram, we have no solid proof that it is authentic.”³¹

2. Some say music is not haram for itself but only haram if combined to setting where there is alcohol or other issues that are haram.

The rule that it must be combined to an additional matter is wrong. With this argument, we could also say fornication is not haram unless you drink alcohol and listen to music because that is all included in the hadith.

According to their rule we say, “Why would fornication be haram in itself when it is combined in prohibition of musical instruments and alcohol?”

There are verses in the Qur’an where Allah says, “He never believed in Allah and never encouraged to pay to the poor.”

According to their rule we can also argue that “Not believing in Allah is not haram unless you do not pay the poor.”

That is a ridiculous rationale.

3. Some say music and musical instruments are not idle tales (lahu alhadith) as mentioned in the verse, or the verse is not clear on it being music.

Music was the interpretation of the sahabah. On it, Ibn Masood gave an oath three times. Scholars followed and agreed in what he said.

The Qur’an is not for me and you to guess its meaning, the Qur’an interprets each other or the prophet Muhammad (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) interpreted it or the sahabah interpreted it.

The rule in Usool is that that when the sahabah say “this is meant by this in the Qur’an or this is the ruling on this”, it has hukm alrafa3. Meaning, the ruling on what they said is as though the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) said it, simply because they would not give commands or prohibitions without knowing or hearing it from the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam). Allah commanded us in the Qur’an “and a praise to those who follow them righteously” 9:100. Hence, if we do not follow them righteously, we are not worthy of the praise. We can only follow them righteously by following their interpretation of Islam, the Qur’an in particular.

4. Some use the authentic hadith we mentioned where two girls were chanting warrior lyrics with a duff on the ‘Eid while the prophet (sallah allahu alieh wasalam) listened as proof music is halal.

The reply is that they were two young girls who had not reach puberty and even Aisha herself was very young. Ibn Al Qayyim (rahimahu Allah) stated that we do not know of Aisha’s sayings except that she hated music and

³¹ Fateh Albary 2/442-443

degraded it. In fact she taught her nephew AlQasim bin Muhammad the hatred of music as he was her student and who had express quotes against it.³²

This situation was on 'Eid and using the duff only (small drum), therefore, it is tolerable if one uses only the duff and on the 'Eid or wedding. Because this was an exception. To add more exceptions proof must always be present.

5. Some of those addicted to music go on to say the sahabah and tabe3een listened to music

The reply is what Imam Muslim in his introduction said quoting Ibn Abdal Bar, "The chain of a narration is part of Islam, without it, people would have said what they want, when they want."

This is a call to bring solid authentic proof for every claim. If the proof is not available on the issue, then it must not be valid.

In conclusion, looking at it rationally, people who were with the prophet (sallallahu alayhi wa sallam) in his days and nights are the most knowledgeable people in Islam. Around them the Qur'an was revealed, and unto them it was recited first. They are the purest of the pure in the Arabic language. We do not leave their to that of people who come seven centuries later, or even 14 centuries later, who most likely are not well versed in the Arabic language.

Here in this paper, a story has been narrated. It is brief yet equivalent to what happens when matters of the deen are compromised. I have brought forth proof from the Qur'an, from the Sunnah, and from the scholars. I have also brought forth arguments from the other side, as well as what scholars in the past have said about musical instruments, those who listen and those who play and make them.

May Allah increase us in our strength to obey Him. Ameen.

³² Talbees Iblees 229