

who consider it *haram* cite some *hadiths* in support of their position, but researchers have proven that chess did not appear until after the death of the Prophet (pbuh), thus all such *hadiths* must have been fabricated.

The Companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with them) themselves held differing views about playing chess. Ibn `Umar said that it is worse than backgammon and `Ali regarded it as gambling (perhaps meaning when it is played for money), while some others merely expressed disapproval of it.

However, some Companions and some of the second generation scholars allowed it. Among these were Ibn `Abbas, Abu Hurayrah, Ibn Sirin, Hisham ibn `Urwah, and Sa`id ibn al-Musayyab. We agree with these great jurists, since the original principle is the permissibility of acts and no text is to be found prohibiting it. Moreover, in addition to being a game and recreation, chess is also a mental exercise which requires thought and planning. In this respect it is the opposite of backgammon, for while backgammon is a game of chance and therefore comparable to divining with arrows, chess is a game of skill and strategy which may be compared to archery.

However, playing chess is permissible only if the following three conditions are met:

1. One should not get so absorbed in it that he delays his Prayer; chess is well-known to be a stealer of time.
2. There should be no gambling involved.
3. The players should not utter obscenities or vulgarities.

If any of these conditions are not met it should be considered *haram*.

Singing and Music

Singing is one of the means of entertainment that may comfort the soul, please the heart, and refresh the ear. Islam permits singing under the condition that it not be in any way obscene or harmful to Islamic morals.

In order to create an atmosphere of joy and happiness, singing is recommended on festive occasions such as the days of *`Id*, weddings and wedding feasts, births, *`aqiqah* (the celebration of the birth of a baby by the slaughter of sheep), and on the return of a traveler.

`A'ishah reported that when a woman was married to an *Ansari* man, the Prophet (pbuh) said,

"O `A'ishah, did they have any entertainment? The Ansar are fond of entertainment."⁽¹⁾

Ibn `Abbas said, "`A'ishah gave a girl relative of hers in marriage to a man of the *Ansar*. The Prophet (pbuh) came and asked, 'Did you send a singer along with her?' 'No,' said `A'ishah. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) then said,

'The Ansar are a people who love poetry. You should have sent along someone who would sing, 'Here we come, to you we come, greet us as we greet you.'"⁽²⁾

`A'ishah reported that during the days of Mina, on the day of *`Id al-Adha*, two girls were with her, singing and playing on a hand drum. The Prophet (pbuh) was present, with his head under a shawl. Abu Bakr then entered and scolded the girls. The Prophet (pbuh), uncovering his face, said to him,

"Let them be, Abu Bakr. These are days of `Id."⁽³⁾

In his book, *Ihya' `Ulum ad-Din*,⁽⁴⁾ Imam Al-Ghazali mentioned the *hadiths* about the singing girls, the Abyssinians playing with spears in the Prophet's Mosque, the Prophet's encouraging them by saying, "Carry on, O Banu Arfidah," his asking his wife, `A'ishah, "Would you like to watch?" and standing there with her until she herself became tired and went away, and `A'ishah's playing with dolls with her friends. He then said,

"All these *hadiths* are narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim in the two *Sahihs*, and they clearly prove that singing and playing are not *haram*. From them we may deduce the following:

First: The permissibility of playing; the Abyssinians were in the habit of dancing and playing.

Second: Doing this in the mosque.

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

2. Narrated by Ibn Majah.

3. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

4. In the section dealing with "Habits" in the book "Listening to Singing".

Third: The Prophet's saying, '*Carry on, O Banu Arfidah,*' was a command and a request that they should play; then how can their play be considered *haram*?

Fourth: The Prophet (pbuh) prevented Abu Bakr and `Umar from interrupting and scolding the players and singers. He told Abu Bakr that *Id* was a joyous occasion and that singing was a means of enjoyment.

Fifth: On both occasions he stayed for a long time with `A'ishah, letting her watch the show of the Abyssinians and listening with her to the singing of the girls. This proves that it is far better to be good-humored in pleasing women and children with games than express such disapproval of such amusements out of a sense of harsh asceticism.

Sixth: The Prophet (pbuh) himself encouraged `A'ishah by asking her, '*Would you like to watch?*'⁽¹⁾

Seventh: The permissibility of singing and playing on the drum..." It is narrated that many Companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with them) as well as of the second generation Muslim scholars used to listen to singing and did not see anything wrong with it. As for the *hadiths* which have been narrated against singing, they are all weak and have been shown by researchers to be unsound. The jurist Abu Bakr al-`Arabi said, "No sound *hadith* is available concerning the prohibition of singing," while Ibn Hazm said, "All that is narrated on this subject is false and fabricated."

However, since singing is in many cases associated with drinking parties and nightclubs, many scholars have declared it to be *haram* or at least *makruh*. They stated that singing constitutes that kind of idle talk which is mentioned in the verse,

﴿ And among the people is the one who buys idle talk (at the expense of his soul) in order to lead (people) astray from the path of Allah without knowledge, holding in mockery; for such there will be a humiliating punishment. ﴾

(Luqman: 6)

Ibn Hazm said,

"This verse condemns a particular behavior, that of doing something to hold the path of Allah in mockery. Anyone who does this is an unbeliever;

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari.

if he even should buy a copy of the Qur'an, doing so in order to make it the object of his mockery and thereby leading people astray, he would be an unbeliever. It is this type of behavior which is condemned by Allah and not the talk in which one may indulge for mere relaxation, without intending to lead people astray from the path of Allah."

Ibn Hazm also refuted the argument of those who say that since singing is not of "the truth" it must be of "error," referring to the verse, ﴿And what is beyond the truth except error?﴾ (Yunus: 32). He Commented,

"The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, '*Deeds will be judged according to intentions, and everyone will get what he intended.*'⁽¹⁾ Accordingly, the one who listens to singing with the intention of using it in support of a sin is a sinner, and this holds true of anything other than singing (as well), while one who listens to singing with the intention of refreshing his soul in order to gain strength to do his duty toward Allah (Glorified be He) and to do good deeds, is a good and obedient servant of Allah, and his action is of the truth. And he who listens to singing intending neither obedience nor disobedience is doing something natural and harmless, which is similar to going to the park and walking around, standing by a window and looking at the sky, wearing blue or green clothes, and so on."

However, there are some limitations to be observed in the matter of singing:

1. The subject matter of songs must not be against the teachings of Islam. For example, if the song is in praise of wine and invites people to drink, singing or listening to it is *haram*.
2. Although the subject matter itself may not be against the Islamic teachings, the manner of singing may render it *haram*; this would be the case, for example, if the singing is accompanied by suggestive sexual movements.
3. Islam fights against excess and extravagance in anything, even in worship; how, then, can it tolerate excessive involvement with entertainment? Too much time should not be wasted in such activities; after all, what is time but life itself? One cannot dispute the fact that spending time in permissible activities consumes time which ought to be

1. Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

reserved for carrying out religious obligations and doing good deeds. It is aptly said, "Excess is always accompanied by a neglected duty."

4. There remain certain things concerning which each individual is the best judge of himself. If a certain type of singing arouses one's passions, leads him towards sin, excites his instincts excessively, and dulls spirituality, he must avoid it, thus closing the door of temptations.
5. There is unanimous agreement that if singing is done in conjunction with *haram* activities - for example, at a drinking party, or if it is mixed with obscenity and sin - it is *haram*. The Prophet (pbuh) warned of a severe punishment for people who sing or listen to singing in such a situation when he said,

"Some people of my Ummah will drink intoxicants, calling them by other names, while they listen to singers accompanied by musical instruments. Allah will cause the earth to swallow them and will turn some of them into monkeys and pigs."⁽¹⁾

This does not mean that they will be physically transformed into the bodies and outward form of monkeys and pigs but rather in heart and soul, carrying the hearts of monkeys and the souls of pigs in their human bodies.

Gambling, the Companion of Drinking

While permitting a variety of games and sports, Islam prohibits any game which involves betting, that is, which has an element of gambling in it. We have already quoted the saying of the Prophet,

"He who says to his friend, 'Come, let us gamble,' must give charity."

It is not lawful for the Muslim to seek relaxation and recreation in gambling, nor is it lawful for him to acquire money through it.

There are sound and noble objectives behind this strict prohibition of gambling:

1. The Islamic teachings urge the Muslim to follow Allah's directives for earning a living, to use natural laws and direct means for the attainment of his objectives, and to employ such causes to produce the desired effects. Gambling, which includes raffling or the lottery, on the other

1. Narrated by Ibn Majah.