

Recitation Behind The Imam: Opinions Of The Four Schools

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The Hanafi school of thought

In the opinion of Imam Abu Hanifa (ﷺ), Abu Yusuf (ﷺ), and Imam Muhammad (ﷺ), under all circumstances—be it jehri (audible) salaah or sirri (silent) salaah, and whether the muqtadi (follower) is listening to the Imam’s qirat (recitation) or not—it is not jaiz (not permissible) for the muqtadi to recite Surah Fatiha behind the Imam; in fact it is makrooh tehreemi.

Sahib Hidayah mentions that Imam Muhammad (ﷺ) relates it is ‘good’ for the muqtadi to read Surah Fatiha in silent prayers (sirri salaah). However, Durr Mukhtaar refutes this report as follows: **“Qirat should not be recited by the Muqtadi at all. There is unanimous agreement (bil-ittifaaq) that one must not recite Surah Fatiha in silent prayers (sirri salaah). The report which has been attributed to Imam Muhammad (ﷺ) is weak (dha’eef). Ibn Humaam (ﷺ) describes in detail: it is makrooh tehreemi for the muqtadi to recite qirat. However, according to the most authentic view, salaah will be correct.”**

Durr Bihaar relates from the Mabsoot of khawaahar-zada that the salaah will become faasid, and the Muqtadi who recites qirat will become faasiq (sinful). Numerous Sahaabah kiraam have related it as ‘fasaad’, due to which greater caution lays in it being unlawful (i.e. in ‘adam-e-jawaaz). Therefore, when the Imam recites qirat loudly, then the Muqtadi (followers) should listen; and when the Imam recites qirat silently, then the Muqtadi should not speak. The proof of this is stated in a Hadith: Hadrat Abu Hurayrah (ؓ) reports that we would recite qirat behind the Imam; thereafter, an Ayat was revealed **“When the Quran is recited, listen to it and remain silent.”**

Allamah Shaami (ﷺ) writes in his haashiya (marginal notes):

- Sahib Durr Mukhtaar wrote “fis-sirriyyah” from which it is automatically understood that in loud prayers (jehri salaah) qirat is prohibited (mamnoo’).

- And ‘bil-ittifaaq’ refers to the agreement of Aamma-thalaatha (the three Imams).

- And the report attributed towards Imam Muhammad (ﷺ) means that it is istihbaab to read Surah Fatiha in silent salah as a precautionary measure (ehtiyaatan).

- And the result of Allamah Ibn Humam’s (ﷺ) contradiction was that Imam Muhammad says in Kitaabul aathaar that we do not deem qirat permissible behind an Imam in any salaah at all, whether it is jehri (loud) salah, or sirri (silent) salaah. And to say there is caution (ehtiyaat) in it is not worthy, for caution (ehtiyaat) is in not reciting qirat, because that is acting upon the stronger of the two daleel (proofs). Also, numerous Sahabah kiraam have related that salah becomes faasid by reciting qirat, therefore it is unlawful (which holds the stronger view). [Shaami, p.402, v.1]

The Maliki school of thought

According to Imam Malik (ﷺ), it is also makrooh for the muqtadi to recite Surah Fatiha in jehri salaah (loud prayers)—whether or not the muqtadi is listening to the Imam’s qirat. And it is mustahab (desirable) to read Surah Fatiha in sirri salaah (silent prayers). It is stated in Kitaabul Fiqh ‘alal mazaahib al-arba’ah: **“Maliki say that it is makrooh for the muqtadi to recite qirat in jehri salaah even if one is not listening to the Imam’s qirat or if the Imam has paused/silenced.”** [vol.1, p.254]

It is stated in Sharah Sagheer of Allamah Dardeer (ﷺ) that: **“The fourth fardh of salah for the Imam and individual is to recite Surah Fatiha, but not for the muqtadi because the Imam undertakes the responsibility of reciting Fatiha on behalf of the muqtadi.”**

“Silent qirat behind an Imam in a sirri salah (silent prayer) is Mustahab (desirable), and also in the last rakat of Maghrib, and in the last two rakats of Isha.”

The Shaf’iee school of thought

Imam Shafi’s (ﷺ) former opinion was that Surah Fatiha is not wajib upon the muqtadi in jehri namaz. Nevertheless, during the last stages of his life, two years before his death whilst in Egypt, Imam Shafi told his new opinion that it is wajib upon the muqtadi to recite Surah Fatiha in a jehri salaah. And according to the Shawaafi’, fatwa is upon this new opinion. As for sirri namaaz (without any contradictory opinions) it is wajib upon the muqtadi to recite Surah Fatiha. It is written in Muhazzab:

“Is it wajib upon the Muqtadi to recite Fatiha? In this series, it will be observed that...

§ If it is sirri salaah, then Fatiha is wajib

§ If it is jehri salaah then there are two opinions:

§ Imam Shafi has said in Kitaablul-Umm and Buwaytee that it is wajib

§ And Imam Shafi’s old opinion is that the muqtadi should not recite qirat. Imam Nawwi says that we have mentioned earlier that our mazhab is that **“Fatiha is wajib upon the muqtadi in all rakaats of both sirri (silent) and jehri (loud) salaah; and this is the correct mazhab in our opinion.”**

The Hanbali school of thought

In the opinion of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (ﷺ), if the muqtadi is listening to the Imam’s qirat in jehri salaah, then it is not jaiz to read Fatiha. And if the muqtadi is so far that the Imam’s recitation cannot be heard, then it is jaiz (permissible) to recite Fatiha. Furthermore, it is mustahab (desirable) to recite Fatiha in sirri salaah and between the Imam’s silent-pauses in jehri salaah. It is written in Mukhtasar al-kharqi: **“When the Muqtadi is listening to the Imam’s qirat, then he should not read Surah Fatiha or any other Surat; whereas, to recite in between the Imam’s silent-pauses and in**

sirri salaah (silent prayers) is Mustahab (desirable). Hence, if the Muqtadi did not recite Fatiha, his salaah is complete because 'for whosoever is an Imam; the Imam's qirat is also his qirat'. And if the Muqtadi is not listening to the qirat due to distance, then one should recite Surah Fatiha."

[REFERENCE: Adalla-e-Kaamila yani ghair muqallidoun kai 10 sawaalaat aur unkai tehqeeqi jawaabaat, by Shaikul-Hind Hadrat Moulana Mehmud Hasan Sahib Deobandi, P.g 60-64]

The Statements of the Sahaabah (أجمعين عنهم الله رضي) About Not Reciting Behind the Imam

When Hadrath Ata ibn Yasaar (عنه الله رضي) enquired from Hadrath Zaid bin Thaabit (عنه الله رضي) concerning reciting behind the Imam, he replied, **"There is no recitation whatsoever behind the Imam."** [Muslim, vol. 1, pg. 410]

Hadrath Jabir (عنه الله رضي) mentioned, **"There is no salaah for him who does not recite Surah Fatiha in salaah, except for the one who performs salaah behind an Imam (he will not even recite Surah Fatiha when following the Imam)."** [Tirmidhi]. Imam Tirmidhi (الله رحمه) says that this Hadith is Hasan and that from this Hadith Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (الله رحمه) deduced that the salah of the person who does not recite Surah Fatiha will not be valid when he performs salah individually.

Imam Tahaawi (الله رحمه) has narrated from Hadrath Ali (عنه الله رضي) **that the person who recites the Quran while following the Imam is not a follower of the natural Deen.**

Hadrath Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (عنه الله رضي) is reported to have said, **"Remain silent for the recitation of the Quran because salaah is an occupation and the Imam will suffice for you."**

Hadrath Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (عنه الله رضي) is also reported to have said, **"If only the mouth of that person who recites while behind the Imam is filled with soil."**

Abu Jamra (عنه الله رضي) asked Hadrath Abdullah ibn Abbas (عنه الله رضي) whether he should recite the Quran while behind the Imam. **He replied in the negative.**

Hadrath Abdullah ibn Umar (عنه الله رضي) never recited Quran behind the Imam and when it was asked of him whether one should recite, he replied, **"When any of you perform salaah behind an Imam, then the recitation of the Imam will suffice for him as well."**

These Hadith together with the Quranic verse in Surah al-'A'raaf **"When the Quran is recited, then listen attentively to it and remain silent so that mercy be shown to you"** (7:204) establish the rule that the Muqtadi should listen to the Imam's qirat and keep silent.

[REFERENCE: Anwaarul Bayaan/ Illuminating Discourses on the Noble Quran p.g 101-103, vol. 4]

It is compulsory for a muqallid (adherent of a particular madhab) to follow the ruling of his madhab. He cannot do as he likes.