

Music and Ghinā'

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Q1121. What are the criteria by which one can distinguish ḥalāl from ḥarām music? Is classical music ḥalāl?

A: Any music which is lahwī and deviates people from the way of Allah is ḥarām whether it is classic or not. To distinguish the subject of a ruling depends on the view of the mukallaf as a part of common people. There is no objection to other kinds of music in itself.

Q1122. What is the ruling on the issue of listening to cassettes sanctioned by the organization of Islamic propagation or other Islamic institutions? What is the ruling on the matter of using musical instruments, such as a violin, or flute?

A: The permissibility of listening to a cassette depends on mukallaf's view. If he maintains that it does not contain ghinā' and lahwī music — which deviate people from the way of Allah — or untrue speech, then there is no objection to listening to it. Therefore, its sanction by the Islamic Propagation Organization or any other Islamic institute does not serve by itself as a shar'ī proof of being permissible. It is not allowed to use musical instruments to produce ḥarām lahwī music which deviates people from the way of Allah. However, it is ḥalāl to use them for rational purposes. To distinguish the instances rests with the mukallaf.

Q1123. What is meant by lahwī music which deviates people from the way of Allah? And how best can one recognize it?

A: Lahwī and deviating music is that which due to its characteristics keeps human beings away from Allah, the sublime, and away from moral merits and drives them towards sinful acts and carelessness. Its recognition rests with the common people.

Q1124. Do such things as the personality of the musician, the place where music is conducted, and the aims of the music have any say in the ruling in the matter of music?

A: The ḥarām type of music is lahwī music which deviates people from the way of Allah. However, the personality of the musician, the vocalized words accompanying the music, the venue, and all other circumstances may contribute to place it in the category of ḥarām, lahwī, and deviating music, or another ḥarām category, e.g., if the music, due to the mentioned things, leads to certain corruption.

Q1125. Is lahwī nature of a particular type of music the only criterion for judging that it is ḥarām or should one consider the element of excitement also? If it causes the listener to feel sadness and eventually make him cry, what is the ruling then? And what about listening to love poems that are vocalized to the accompaniment of music?

A: The criterion is to observe how the music is being played in all its characteristics and whether or not it is lahwī and deviates people from the way of Allah. Any music categorized due to its nature as lahwī and deviates people from the way of Allah is ḥarām, irrespective



of whether it contains the element of excitement or not. Whether it engenders in the listener a state of melancholy and crying is also immaterial. Should reciting love poems to the accompaniment of music take the form of ghinā' and lahwī songs which deviates people from the way of Allah, it is ḥarām to sing, or to listen to, them.

Q1126. How do you define ghinā'? Is it just the human voice or does it cover the sound of musical instruments?

A: Ghinā' is the voice of the human being, which is produced in a rise and fall pattern and deviates people from the way of Allah. It is ḥarām to engage in this type of singing; as well as to listen to it.

Q1127. Is it permissible for women to rap on things, other than musical instruments, such as kitchen utensils, in wedding parties? And what is the ruling if the sound is heard outside by men?

A: Such [rapping] should be judged by the way it is conducted, i.e., if it is of what people used to do in traditional wedding parties, is not considered lahw and deviating from the way of Allah, and no bad effect follows it as a consequence, there is no problem in doing so.

Q1128. What is the ruling in the matter of women using the tambourine in wedding parties?

A: To use musical instruments to play lahwī and deviating music is not permissible.

Q1129. Is it permissible to listen to ghinā' at home? And what is the ruling if one does not get affected by such songs?

A: Listening to ghinā' which is lahwī and deviates people from the way of Allah is absolutely ḥarām, be it at one's home alone or in the presence of others, even if one does not get aroused.

Q1130. Some youth, who recently became mature, follow in taqlīd some mujtahids who are of the opinion that music is absolutely ḥarām, even if it is broadcast from the official radio and television of the Islamic state.

What is the ruling in this matter? Is sanctioning, by the Jurist Leader, of certain ḥalāl types of music enough by itself, as a government ruling, to override the fatwā of the other mujtahids who espouse a different view? Or should those youth follow the fatwā of their respective marji's?

A: Passing a fatwā in favor of, or against, listening to music is not a hukm — governmental ruling — rather a shar'ī jurisprudential one. It is the duty, therefore, of every mukallaf to adhere to the fatwā of his/her marji'. However, should the music not be of the type which is lahwī, deviates people from the way of Allah, and leads to bad consequences, there is no evidence for making it ḥarām.

Q1131. What is the definition of music and ghinā'?

A: Ghinā' involves the rise and fall of the voice in a way that is lahwī and deviates people from the way of Allah. It is a sinful act, which is ḥarām for both the singer and the listener. As for music, it is to play musical instruments. If it is done in a way that is lahwī and deviates people from the way of Allah, it is ḥarām for both the musician and the listener. Otherwise, it is permissible in itself and there is no objection to it.

Q1132. I work for an employer who made a habit of listening to ghinā' played from a cassette recorder. I find myself listening to what is being played, although unwillingly. Is it permissible for me to do so?



A: Should the cassettes contain lahwī ghinā' or music which deviate people from the way of Allah, it is not permissible to listen to them. However, if you are forced to attend such a place, there is no harm in your going and working there provided that you do not listen to the ghinā', albeit the sound reaches you and you hear it.

Q1133. What is the ruling in the matter of music that is broadcast from the radio and television of the Islamic Republic? And is there any truth in what has been circulated that the late Imam Khomeini (may his soul rest in peace) ruled that music in general is ḥalāl?

A: Attributing the ruling of absolute permissibility of music to the late great leader Imam Khomeini (q.) is baseless and a fabricated lie. He was of the opinion that a piece of music, which is suitable for the gatherings of sin, is ḥarām. However, the difference of opinion stems from varying identification of rulings' subject matter which rests with mukallafs.

For example, the musician may disagree with the listener's point of view. In this case, what the mukallaf regards as lahwī which deviates people from the way of Allah is ḥarām for him to listen to. As for the sounds which fall in a grey area, the ruling in their regard is that it is permissible to listen to them. The mere broad-casting [songs and music] by the radio and television is not legitimate evidence that it is ḥalāl and permissible.

Q1134. From time to time radio and television broadcast music that, I think, is suitable for gatherings of lahw and sin. Is it incumbent on me not to listen to such music and should I prevent other people from listening to it?

A: If you are convinced that it is a lahwī type of music which deviates people from the way of Allah, you are not allowed to listen to it. As for preventing other people from listening to it, by way of forbidding that which is the evil, this depends on their view, i.e., if they consider it a ḥarām type of music as well.

Q1135. What is the ruling in the matter of listening to Western lahwī songs and music and working as a distributing agent for such products?

A: It is ḥarām to listen to ghinā' or music that is lahwī and deviate people from the way of Allah, regardless of the language it is composed in or the country of origin. Accordingly, it is not permissible to buy, sell, or distribute such cassettes, should they contain the lahwī ḥarām type of music and singing. By the same token, it is not permissible to listen to them.

Q1136. What is the ruling in the matter of men or women singing in the way of ghinā' on radio or cassettes, and irrespective of whether or not such singing was done to the accompaniment of music?

A: Ghinā' is ḥarām if it is lahwī and deviates people from the way of Allah. Thus, it is neither permissible to sing ghinā' nor to listen to it, regardless of whether the singer is a man or a woman. Whether singing is broadcast live, or to listen to its cassettes, and whether it is accompanied by tunes from musical instruments or not, does not change the ruling in any way.

Q1137. What is the ruling in the matter of playing music to serve sensible lawful aims in a holy place like a masjid?

A: It is not at all permissible to play lahwī and deviating music, even in venues outside the masjid and for a sensible lawful reason. However, there is no objection to revolutionary



martial chanting to the accompaniment of musical tunes in holy places on the occasions which warrant that provided that it does not go against the sanctity of the place or pose any nuisance to the worshippers and praying persons in such places as masjids.

Q1138. Is it permissible to learn to play music, especially a dulcimer? What is the ruling on encouraging other people to do so?

A: There is no objection to using musical instruments to play non-lahwī tunes if it is for revolutionary or religious chanting or carrying out useful cultural and other programs aiming at rational and ḥalāl purposes provided that no bad consequence may result. Also, learning and teaching playing music for the above mentioned causes are no problem.

Q1139. What is the ruling in the matter of listening to a woman's declamation, regardless of whom the audiences are, i.e., men or women, old or young? And what is the view if the woman is one's mahram?

A: If her voice is considered as ghinā' which is lahwī and deviate people from the way of Allah, listening to it is not driven by lust, or it leads to a bad consequence, it is not allowed. What is mentioned in the question makes no difference.

Q1140. Is traditional national Iranian music ḥarām?

A: Should it, according to the common view, be judged as a lahwī form of music that deviates people from the way of Allah, it is absolutely ḥarām, regardless of the nationality of music, i.e., whether Iranian or otherwise, traditional or otherwise.

Q1141. Some Arabic broadcasting stations air musical tunes. Is it permissible to listen to such tunes for the love of the Arabic language?

A: Listening to lahwī deviating music is absolutely ḥarām. Yearning to listening to the Arabic language per se is not a shar'ī justification for such an act.

Q1142. Is it permissible to recite poems which are being sung but without the music?

A: Ghinā' is ḥarām, even if it is not carried out to the accompaniment of music. What is meant by ghinā' is that type of vocalizing with rise and fall which deviates one from the way of Allah and is suitable for dissolute gatherings of sin. As for reciting poetry in itself, there is no problem in it.

Q1143. What is the ruling in the matter of buying and selling musical instruments? And what are the limits of their use?

A: There is no problem in buying and selling musical instruments that serve dual purposes, intending to use them in playing non-lahwī tunes.

Q1144. Is it permissible to recite the Holy Qur'an, supplication, and adhān, in a ghinā'-like manner?

A: Ghinā' — i.e., a voice accompanied by a rise and fall, which is suitable for gatherings of lahw and sin — is absolutely ḥarām, even if it is used in reciting supplications, the Holy Qur'an, adhān, elegies, etc.

Q1145. Nowadays, music is used to treat a host of psychological diseases, such as depression, anxiety and sexual problems of females. What is the ruling in this matter?

A: Should sincere medical opinion be supportive of this, in that treating an illness depends



solely on it, there is no problem in that provided it is in keeping with the requirements of the treatment.

Q1146. If listening to ghinā' stimulates man's sexual desire for his wife, what is the view on that?

A: Increasing husband's libido per se is not a lawful excuse for listening to ḥarām ghinā'.

Q1147. What is the ruling in the matter of a woman singing in a concert with a women orchestra in the presence of an all-women audience?

A: If singing is accompanied by deviating lahwī rise and fall of voice or the music accompanying it is lahwī and deviates people from the way of Allah, it is ḥarām.

Q1148. If the criterion for ruling that a music is ḥarām is its being lahwī and suitable for gatherings of lahw and sin, what is the ruling in the matter of tunes and chanting which may cause some people to move their body with joy, even the non-discriminating child? Is it permissible to listen to vulgar cassettes in which women sing in the form of ghinā' if it is not enrapturing? And what should passengers, who use public buses whose drivers play such cassettes, do?

A: With due consideration to the status of the musician or the singer during playing music or singing, the content, and the nature of music or song, any lahwī type of music or vocalization with a rise and fall in voice that is suitable for the gatherings of lahw and sin is ḥarām, even if it does not lead to stimulation in the listener. The users of vehicles and buses must not listen attentively to what is being played of ḥarām lahwī music and ghinā' songs; they should also practice forbidding the evil.

Q1149. Is it permissible for a man to listen to a non-maḥram woman's ghinā' in order to enjoy being with his wife? Also, is it permissible for the wife to sing ghinā' for her husband and vice versa? Is there any truth in what is said that the Divine Legislator made ghinā' ḥarām because it is intrinsically tied in with the gatherings of lahw and la'ib and that such a prohibition made because such gatherings are themselves ḥarām?

A: It is absolutely ḥarām to listen to ḥarām ghinā' which is characterized by rising and falling voice which deviates one from the way of Allah, even if it is done by wife or husband for the other. The purpose of enjoying being with one's wife per se is not a justifiable reason to make listening to ghinā' permissible.

However, prohibition of ghinā', and the like has been proven by way of being bound to Sharī'ah law and it stands on firm ground in Shī'ah jurisprudence. Thus, it is not contingent on imaginative reasons and psychological and social factors. Rather, as long as the word "ghinā'" or the like is applied to a case, it is ruled to be absolutely ḥarām and should be avoided.

Q1150. As a requirement of the curriculum of a major subject, students of the college of education have to take music classes whereby they are introduced to an outline of the subject of revolutionary music and chants. This includes classes in musical notations and playing the organ. What is our duty in respect with buying and using such a musical instrument? And what is the view on learning this subject as part of the compulsory program? What is the obligation of female students who are required to practice before the opposite sex?

A: In itself, there is no problem in using the musical instruments for composing revolutionary recitals, making religious programs, and holding useful cultural and educational activities, nor is there any harm in buying and selling these instruments for these stated purposes. Also, there is no objection to teaching and learning it for such aims,

nor is there any objection to female students attending such classes provided that they uphold the obligatory ḥijāb and other Islamic regulations.

Q1151. On the face of it, some songs give the impression that they are revolutionary, and the common view suggests that as well. However, one cannot tell whether the singer is really aiming at instilling revolutionary values or entertaining the audience. What is the view on listening to this type of songs, especially if the singer is not a Muslim, yet his songs are national and contain words which denounce occupation and encourage resistance?

A: If the listener maintains that as per common view they are not lahwī and deviating from the way of Allah, there is no problem in listening to the songs. Thus, neither the intention of the singer nor the content has anything to do with this ruling.

Q1152. A person works as a trainer and an international referee in some kind of sport. His work could require his presence in clubs where ḥarām kind of music and singing are played. Is it permissible for him to carry on with this work, especially, if it provides him with some income where jobs are hard to come by?

A: There is no harm in this person's work, albeit it is ḥarām for him to listen to ghinā' and lahwī music. In circumstances where he is compelled to enter places where the ḥarām type of singing and music are taking place, he is allowed to do so provided he avoids listening to them. There is, though, no problem in hearing such singing and music involuntarily.

Q1153. Is listening to music alone ḥarām, or is hearing also ḥarām?

A: The ruling on hearing ḥarām lahwī singing and music is not the same as that of listening to them except in certain situations when, according to the common view, hearing amounts to listening.

Q1154. Is it permissible to recite Qur'anic verses while playing music using instruments other than those usually suitable for gatherings of lahw and la'ib?

A: There is no objection to reciting Qur'an in a beautiful and melodious voice commensurate to the greatness of the Holy Qur'an; it is, indeed, preferable so long as it does not amount to unlawful singing. However, playing music, while the recitation is in progress, has no shar'ī justification.

Q1155. What is the view on beating on drum in birthday parties and similar occasions?

A: The use of musical instruments in a lahwī manner that deviates one from the way of Allah is absolutely ḥarām.

Q1156. What is the ruling in the matter of musical instruments used by groups of chanting composed of school students overseen by the department of education and culture?

A: Musical instruments which, according to the common view, are of dual — ḥalāl and ḥarām — purpose, can be used in a non-lahwī manner for lawful purposes so that it does not deviate one from the way of Allah. Instruments, which the common view regards as special to the production of lahwī deviating music, are not permissible to use.

Q1157. Is it permissible to: (a) work in manufacturing the dulcimer, a musical instrument, in order to make a living; (b) to teach Iranian classic music in order to revive and promote it?

A: There is no harm in the use of musical instruments to play tunes for revolutionary



chanting, national anthems, or any other ḥalāl and useful pursuit provided it is not lahwī nor deviates people from the way of Allah. Also, in itself, there is no problem in manufacturing musical instruments or teaching and learning music for the aforementioned purposes.

Q1158. Which instruments are considered as lahw and therefore not permissible to use at all?

A: Instruments used mainly for lahw and producing what deviates people from the way of Allah, which causes deviations in thoughts and beliefs and have no ḥalāl benefit, are regarded as lahw instruments.

Q1159. Is it permissible to charge money for making copies of cassettes that contain ḥarām material?

A: It is ḥarām to copy any audiocassette listening to which is considered ḥarām, or to charge for that service.