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Fifteenth Greater Sin: Music

Playing instruments of music is a Greater Sin. It is *Harām* to play instruments like guitar, piano, tambourine, drums etc. Listening to music is also a Greater Sin. Music as a Greater sin is reported by Fazl ibn Shazān from Imam ‘Ali ar-Riḍā (a.s.):

“And to be engrossed in musical instruments is also a Greater Sin.”

All the Mujtahids are unanimous in their opinion that the manufacture, sale and purchase of musical instruments is *Harām* and the income derived from musical activity is also *Harām*. The transactions involving these (instruments) are invalid. It is *Harām* even to keep instruments of music in one’s possession. It is obligatory to destroy them. This is revealed in a lengthy tradition of Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) as recorded in the book “Tohafful Uqūl”. Similarly, Shaykh Hurr al-‘Īmili records the following tradition from Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.):

*“The Almighty Allah has prohibited the manufacture of all such things that are exclusively used in *Harām* ways; and things that only create evil like pipe, flute, chess and all types of instruments of gambling, images, statues. The manufacture of all such articles is *Harām*.”*

Imam (a.s.) concluded, *“Then even learning to sing or play music and teaching it, to sing and play music, to be paid for these things or to be in any way engrossed in these vices is *Harām*.”*

Music, According to the Traditions

Some more traditions prohibiting music are given below.

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) reports from the Holy Prophet (S) that he said:

*“I prohibit for you dancing and playing flute, drums and tabla.”*¹

The Holy Prophet (S) has also said,

“The Almighty Allah has sent me as a mercy to the worlds, to guide the people. And He ordered me to eradicate the playing of flute and other instruments of music, all games of vice, idol (worship) and all practices of the days of ignorance.”²

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) says,

“A person who has received blessings from Allah and while having these blessings, he plays flute. It is as if he has been thankless of the blessings.”³

Every moment of our lives, we are enjoying Allah (S.w.T.)’s unlimited benevolence.

Music Causes Shamelessness and Hypocrisy

The Sixth Imam (a.s.) has also stated,

“The playing of violin promotes the growth of hypocrisy in the heart like water assists the growth of vegetation (algae).”⁴

Imam (a.s.) also says,

“If drums and cymbals are played at one’s house for forty days, Allah will impose a satan by the name of ‘faqandir’. The satans will infiltrate into every cell of the person’s body. With the spread of this evil, the person loses all sense of dignity and self-esteem. He will then not care as to what he says or what is said about him. Then, this satan blows into this person. As a result, he becomes utterly shameless. So much so that he is not concerned or affected even if his women are dishonoured.”⁵

It is usually observed that the people in whose homes music is played with regularity either using musical instruments or by radio or cassettes are absolutely shameless and wanton.

Musician and the Song

Muadda Ibn Ziyad says, “I was in the company of Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) when a person said, “When I go to the toilet, I can hear the singing girls of my neighbour. Sometimes, I remain (in toilet) longer so that I may listen to more of it.”

Imam (a.s.) said:

“Desist from listening to music and songs attentively.”

Then this man further said, “Master, I do not go to music gatherings! I only hear the sounds!”

Imam Ja’far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said,

“Have you not read this Qur’anic verse...

“Surely, the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these shall be questioned about that?”

(Surah al-‘Isrā’, 17:36)

The man replied, “I was not aware of this ayat. I regret my actions. I shall not do so in the future. I repent for my past sins and I seek forgiveness from my Lord.”

Seeing his condition, Imam (a.s.) said,

“Get up ! Go and perform ghusl and offer Salāt and pray for forgiveness. You have certainly been involved in a deadly sin and a terrible situation. You have repented for it and I thank Allah for that; and I seek forgiveness of Allah for all those things that He dislikes. Certainly, Allah only dislikes the evil things. Leave the evil things to the evil people because there are different people suitable for different things.”⁶

Divine Bounties (Barakat) are Removed

Amir ul-Mu‘minīn ‘Ali (a.s.) says,

“Angels do not even enter a house that has wine, drum, tambourine or a flute. Even the prayers of the inhabitants of this house are unacceptable. They are deprived of barakat.”⁷

Hazrat Imam ‘Ali ar-Riḍā (a.s.) has said,

“To listen to a musical instrument is one of the Greater Sins.”⁸

The Blackened Face of the Musician

The Holy Prophet (S) has stated,

“A person who possesses a sitar, on the day of Qiyāma will be raised with a black face. His hands will be holding a sitar of fire. Seventy thousand angels with maces of fire will be hitting him on the face and the head. The singer will arise from his grave, blind, deaf and dumb. The adulterer will be similarly raised. The player of flute will also be made to rise in this way as will be the drum player.”⁹

It means that all such people will appear on the field of “Mahshar” (on the day of reckoning) as blind, deaf and dumb.

A House Where Music is Played for Forty Days

Hazrat Imam ‘Ali ar-Riḍā (a.s.) remarks,

“A person invites Divine wrath when in his house instruments like flute, drum and chess are played for forty days. If this man dies within these forty days, his death would be of a sinner and a transgressor.

His place shall be in Hell. And what a dreadful place it is!”¹⁰

Music and the Last Period of Time

The traditions concerning the signs of the last stage before the Zuhūr of our Imam (a.s.) mention music:

“And you shall see that music will be so prevalent that no one will dissuade others nor will he find in himself the need to do so. And you shall see that music would be openly played even in the two sanctuaries (the city of Makkah and Madinah).”¹¹

This is what we see in the present age where obscene music is openly played in the markets, on the streets, in shops and houses and even cars and no one bothers to prevent it!

So far we have mentioned the punishment of the hereafter for the sin of playing or listening to music. Now, we shall discuss the evils of music that affect life on earth. These evils too are numerous. Scholars have compiled complete books on this subject. For example we have the following books in Persian, “Munazrah Doctor-o-Pūr”, “Balahaḡ Ijtemai”, “Mausḡqi-o-Islam”, etc.

Effects of Music on the Nervous System

Expert Doctors, Scientists and biologists have defined two types of nerves, the principal nerves and the arterial nerves. The principal nerves stretch from the neck to all vital organs. The arterial nerves spread from the main nerves to all parts of the body. The secondary nerves are connected to outward parts of the body and convey the messages to the brain. When the veins enlarge the blood pressure decreases. Due to the shrivelling of blood vessels, the blood pressure increases. When the blood pressure varies at different parts of the body it affects the health.

When the secondary nerves work they produce heat whereas the functioning of the central nerves produces the opposite effect. It is due to these nerves that feelings of sloth, sleep, thoughtlessness, forgetfulness, grief, sorrow, fainting, unconsciousness and even death occur. Obviously, when music can affect various nerves, it can give rise to various maladies. Mental diseases as well as physical ailments can occur. These mental effects can destroy man’s reasoning capacity. It is for this reason that one who listens to music is unable to perform work that can be accomplished by a sane person.

Music creates vibrations in the body and these are conveyed to all the parts of the body through the nervous system. As a result of this, indigestion occurs. Music affects the heart in such a way that the heartbeats become irregular. The blood pressure goes awry. All such ailments make a person permanently ill. Consequently, even modern medical science, in spite of its astonishing progress, fails in such a situation. Sometimes, the music is so intense that the listeners lose their sanity. They become dumb and various kinds of mental diseases occur. In places where music is more prevalent, we find that there are more neurotic illnesses. It is for this reason that more mental hospitals are to be found in

Europe and America.

Dr. Adlen writes against music, “Even though it seems pleasant, the effect of music is profound upon the nervous system. Especially, when the temperature is high, the ill effect of music is more. This is the reason that ill effects of music are more in the hot areas of Iran and Saudi Arabia. The American people are so disgusted with the bane of music that they have united to demand from the senate a permanent ban on music. It is a pity that the whole world clearly perceives the evils of music and yet adopts music as entertainment.”¹²

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1. al-Kāfi
 2. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il, Chapter 79
 3. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 4. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 5. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 6. al-Kāfi Chapter of Music
 7. Wasa'il ul-Shia
 8. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il
 9. Mustadrak ul-Wasa'il
 10. Mustanad al Taraqi
 11. Mustanade Naraqj
 12. Refer to the booklet; “Tasir Mausiqi bar As'ab” pages 3,6,10.

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