

Module 4

Class Title: Music and Islam

Aim of Lesson: To define what is “music & analyze the rulings on prohibition of music

Category: Popular Culture

Lesson Format: Power point presentation and discussion

Handout: List of Nasheeds without instrumental music (in folder)

(Greeting to students) *Assalam alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

(*Ta’awwudh*) *Aoodhubillahi min AsShaytanir Rajeem*

(*Tasmiyah*) *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*

(*Du’a*) *Rabbish rahli sadri wa yassirli amri wahlul uqdatum millisani yafqahu qawli* (Surah At Ta-Ha 20: Verse 25-28)

(Note to teacher: This transcript is for 3 classes. As music is a very important concern for pre-teens/teens, you may need several sessions for this class. Allow the students to ask questions and voice their concerns even if it means taking up to four 45 minute sessions)

Slide 1:

What am I talking about? What do u think our topic is? Yeah, music.

Slide 2:

For a vast majority of people today – life is incomprehensible without some *jinga ling* happening around. Our lives – it seems – are incomplete without a soundtrack.

Slide 3:

Today *inshaallah*, we will look at the pet question of teenagers – Is listening to music allowed in Islam? That’s why you lot are here right?

Slide 4:

In order to understand the Islamic perspective on music, we will look at several things *inshaallah*.

1. A fundamental Principle of our *deen*. Kinda thumb rule if you like.
2. Definition of quote unquote “music” – we need to establish our understanding of the word “music”. What do you mean when you say “music”?
3. How sound affects us human beings.
4. Lives of some who make “music.”

While discussing these aspects, we will look at the “evidence” for or against “music” in the texts of Islamic law – i.e. the Qur’an and the sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh).

Only then will we understand what is going on here. In fact, after this discussion hopefully *inshaallah*, this music issue should pretty much sort itself out in your pretty little heads.

Slide 5:

Everything in Islam has limits – because we have what is called ‘halal’ and ‘haram’ – that means there are limits. There are things that are permissible in Islam. And there are things which are not.

Slide 6:

And by the way – all civilized systems of living, any civic system worth its salt has certain rules and regulations. Some things are allowed and some are not. In fact, countries that enforce these “not allowed” elements effectively are the ones considered truly “civilized” and we appreciate the order and harmony in their daily lives. Rightly so. Without any checks and balances our lives would be chaotic, there would be unrest and anarchy.

Slides 7 & 8:

Now, there is a fundamental Principle of Islam. Our *deen* is built on certain principles. One of which governs our actions. Our actions are of two types.

Ibadah (worship): the action that is the sole right of Allah (swt) e.g. *salah*, fasting, Hajj etc.

and *M’uamilah* (interaction): the action that has other people or Allah’s creation involved as well. e.g. marriage, going to school, eating, shopping etc etc.

The great thing is that any *m’uamilah* can be converted to *ibadah* if done for the pleasure of Allah (swt). We will not go into more detail about this here as it will divert us from our topic, but we need to understand this if we are to get to the bottom of the music issue.

Ok. The other thing about acts of “worship” is that they **must** be found in the Qur’an or sunnah. You cannot invent an act of worship. You cannot say praying 6 times a day is obligatory or that I am going to pray the way **I choose**, for e.g. **You** must prove your act of worship by giving clear evidence from the Qur’an or sunnah.

So, you are standing for *‘asr salah* and I come and ask, “what you doin’?” You say: “I’m praying.” I say: “ why?” you say: “Allah (swt) has said in Surah Al Baqarah, *And establish As Salah and give Zakat and whatever good you send before for yourselves, you will find it with Allah, Allah is certainly the Seer of what you do.* (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2: Verse 110)

You cannot add anything to what Allah (swt) has said – this is worship. So when it comes to worship – don’t do any worship unless you have a clear evidence for it.

When it comes to *m’uamilah* – tables are turned. You can do whatever, invent technology, have all sorts of interactions with people etc and if someone prohibits you from doing that – **he** has to bring you evidence from the Qur’an or sunnah.

So for e.g. At the time of Rasool Allah (pbuh) there were no microwave ovens. You are heating your food in a microwave oven, I come and ask you: “what you doin’?” you say: “heating food!” I say: “This is not allowed in Islam?” you simply say to me: “why not – you tell me. You have to prove to me this is not allowed.” There is nothing in Islam against using a microwave – certain kinds of fire can’t be used – no. So, no problem.

Is this general rule clear to you all? Great, *alhamdulillah*.

Slide 9:

When it comes to music. It is one of those things that is permissible – **but with a whole lot of limitations**. There is not a general statement banning all music – but there is a lot of limitations. So some people might say – forget about it I don’t want to get close to it ‘cause I don’t want to slip, not even for a second, in case I cross the line and end up in a nasty place.

Slides 10 & 11:

Depends on how we define music.

Slide 12:

Definitions are of extreme importance, as they show what we understand a thing to be and therefore that would establish our relationship or interaction with it.

We need to see that those who oppose music and have been doing so since the time of Rasool Allah (pbuh) and those who support music now and have been supporting it in the past – what exactly are they opposing and supporting?

Why is it deadly distraction for some, innocent entertainment for others, and a means of getting closer to Allah for still others?

Are they all talking about the same thing?

This is a question of terminology or definition.

Slide 13:

So, there is music – and there is music.

Slides 14 & 15:

The simplest definition of “music” is - An aesthetically pleasing or harmonious sound or combination of sounds. This could be chirping of birds, or rustling of wind in the trees or the sound of water flowing in a mountain stream or even lapping of waves at the beach.

(play clip of chirping bird)

Another, more sophisticated definition is: The art of arranging sounds in time so as to produce a continuous, unified, and evocative composition, as through melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre.

Slide 16:

The word music is derived from Greek *mousike*, “art of the Muses.” Urdu word – *musiqi* is its arabicized form. We have come to accept a certain definition when we hear these words – music or *musiqi* – i.e. singing accompanied by musical instruments or melody from musical instruments. Right?

The thing is, we do not find this word in the source texts of Islamic law – i.e. the Qur’an or hadith narrations.

Slide 17:

Some terms related to “music” and entertainment used at the time of Rasool Allah (pbuh) were:

- *Ghina*
- *Mazamir*
- *Malahi*
- *Ma’azif*
- *Lahw*
- *Tarab*

Lets quickly go through the meaning of each of these terms

Slide 18:

Arabic language is deep and vast and one word encompasses many meanings.

Ghina: has several meanings. It means song, vocal music, an utterance of the voice with prolonging and sweet modulation, raising of the voice and continuing without interruption. It also refers to poetry or verse sung or chanted.

The root word of *ghina* also means being independent and not being in need of others - *ghani*

Slide 19:

There is a famous hadith of Rasool Allah (pbuh) narrated by Abu Hurayrah (ra) reported by Bukhari:

ليس منّا من لم يتغنّ بالقرآن

(Laysa minna mun lum yatghanna bil Qur’ani)

Slide 20:

Now this same hadith has been interpreted by two scholars in two different ways – each scholar taking a different meaning of the word *ghina*.

So, Imam Shafi' interpreted it as meaning: He is not one of us who does not recite the Qur'an in a beautiful & gentle voice. And this is the meaning which is commonly used.

Whereas, Sufyan ibn Uyaynah – who is also a respected scholar, gave the interpretation: He is not one of us who is not content or satisfied with the Qur'an.

For this particular hadith, both interpretations could be just fine. How do we know this? Scholars have told us this. We cannot come to such conclusions ourselves, without solid grounding in Islamic knowledge.

Slides 20 & 21:

When it is referred to singing or music - *Ghina* can have a positive or negative connotation. It may refer to reciting loudly by an amateur or it may refer to professional singing.

We know dual meaning or ambiguous words – that have many meanings, in the English language as well. Their meanings are interpreted according to how and where they are used. We must look at the context of its usage to derive the correct meaning for that particular instance.

Can anyone give me an example?

One common example is “wicked.” The “wicked” witch in snow white is an evil woman, whereas the “wicked” haircut your friend got is “cool” not like in cold cool, but “hot”- again that has nothing to do with the temperature! See how it goes.

Other literal differences are seen in words like – break.

We cut you a break by breaking the breaks on "break" and a bunch of other ambiguous words, without taking a break!

You get the idea here? Great. Keep it in your head somewhere, because this whole so-called “controversy” about music and Islam really boils down to this usage and understanding of certain terms.

Slides 23, 24 & 25:

Two other words related to *ghina* that we find from Rasool Allah (pbuh)'s time are *mughanni* and *mughanniyah*.

Mughanni is the professional male singer and *mughanniyah* – a professional female singer. There is a hadith of Ayesha (ra) where she says:

Abu Bakr came to my house while two small Ansari girls were singing beside me the stories of the Ansar concerning the Day of Buath. And they were not (*mughanniyah*) singers. Abu Bakr said protestingly, "Musical instruments of Satan in the house of Allah's Apostle !" It happened on the 'Id day and Allah's Apostle said, "O Abu Bakr! There is an 'Eid for every nation and this is our 'Eid." [Bukhari]

Incidentally, those who say all “music” is allowed by Islam usually quote this very hadith – that girls were singing in front of Rasool Allah (pbuh) and Aisha (ra) and they were playing a musical instrument. So there, that is that, all “music” is allowed!

The Hadith expert, Ibn Hajr al-Asqalani has refuted this claim at length in his Fath al-Bari, 2/345).

Note 3 things here. Firstly, these were young girls who were singing – Aisha (ra) made a clear distinction here from *Mughanniyah* – professional singers (words of the Hadith clearly indicate). Right. These kids got together and sang about this long drawn war between Ansar clans. So, note another thing – **content** of the song. Then the “musical instrument” they were using to accompany their song was a duff not an entire orchestra!

Slides 26 & 27:

Duff brings us to another aspect of “music” – when we sing we need something to keep beat, you know boom, boom, boom so we wanna tap on something dun dun dun dun ...

The words used for musical instruments were: *mazamir* – plural of *mizmar*, *malahi* and *ma'azif* – plural of *miz'af* or *'azf*

Mazamir are wind instruments, something you blow in to make sound. Again this word is also used to describe someones beautiful voice. And we see in the ahadith of Rasool Allah (pbuh), this same word used in different meanings – in different contexts.

Slide 28:

In a hadith narrated by Abu Musa Al Ash'ari (ra) -

Abu Musa Al Ash'ari (ra) narrates, that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said to him: you have been given a *mizmar* (sweet melodious voice) out of the *mazamir* of Prophet Dawud [Agreed Upon]

Slide 29:

If we look at the wording in Arabic, they are:

و عن ابي موسى الاشعري رضى الله عنه ان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال له : و لقد اوتيت مزمارا من مزامير آل داود

Wa 'un abi Musa Al Ash'ari (ra) anna Rasool Allahi (pbuh) qala lahu: wa laqad ooteeta mizmaran min mazamiri aal e Dawud

Now, here Rasool Allah has used the words *mazamir* and *mizmar* but in the meaning of melodious voice. How do we know this? We have several evidences.

This is confirmed by another hadith about Abu Musa where Rasool Allah (pbuh) is praising his recitation – he had an amazing voice *mashaallah* and recited the Qur'an beautifully.

Slide 30:

Sahih Muslim, Book 4, Number 1735

Abu Burda narrated on the authority of Abu Musa that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) had said to Abu Musa (ra): If you were to see me, as I was listening to your recitation (of the Qur'an) yesterday (you would have felt delighted). You are in fact endowed with a sweet voice like that of David himself.

Slide 31:

Also Rasool Allah (pbuh) has used the word *mazamir* in the meaning of “musical instruments” in ahadith where he prohibits them and therefore has used the negative connotation of this word.

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: الجرس مزامير الشيطان

Un Abi Hurayrah (ra) anna Rasool Allahi (pbuh) qal: Al Jarasu mazamiruShaytan

It is reported by Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (pbuh) said: Bells are part of *mazamir* of Shaytan. [reported by Muslim, no. 5670]

Slide 32:

Another hadith supports the negative use of *mazamir* here.

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: لا تصحب الملائكة رفقة فيها كلب ولا جرس

Un Abi Hurayrah (ra) anna Rasool Allahi (pbuh) qal: la tashabul malaaikatu rufqatan fiha kalbun wa la jarasun

It is reported by Abu Hurayrah (ra) that the Prophet (pbuh) said: The angels (of mercy) do not accompany a caravan that has dogs or bells.[reported by Muslim, no. 5668]

Slide 33:

Next – *Malahi* and *Ma'azif*

They both mean all musical instruments. *Malahi* has a special meaning of being instruments of diversion.

Lets see how Rasool Allah (pbuh) used the word *ma'azif*.

Slides 34 & 35:

Abu Malik al Ash'ari narrated that he heard the Prophet (pbuh) say: “There will be groups of people from my *ummah* who will seek to declare fornication, adultery, silk, wine and musical instruments to be lawful” [Sahih Bukhari, Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will seek to declare wine halal by naming it something else, no.5649]

سمع النبي يقول: ليكونن من أمتي اقوام يستحلون الحر و الحرير و الخمر و المعازف

Sam'ea annabiya yaqool: layakunanna min ummati aqwamun yastahilloona al hira wa al hareer wa al khamar wa al ma'azif

So basically what Rasool Allah (pbuh) is saying is that these things are unlawful. There are 2 other ahadith that further support the meaning of this one.

Slide 36:

On the authority of Abu Musa Al As'ari (ra), the Messenger (pbuh) said: Some people from my ummah will drink alcohol, calling it something else. Mughanniyat (female professional singers) will be playing in front of them. Allah will make the earth devour some of them and some of them will be turned into apes and pigs. [Sunan Ibn Majah, Book: Trials, Chapter: Punishments, no. 4156]

Slide 37:

On the authority of Imran ibn Husayn (ra), the Messenger (pbuh) said: In this ummah there will be incidents of people being swalled by earth, being deformed (into apes and pigs), and being rained with stones. A man from among the Muslims asked: “When will that be?” He replied: “When songstresses and musical instruments will appear and alcohol will be consumed.” [Sunan Al Tirmidhi, Book: Trials, Chapter: What has come down regarding the signs of being deformed and swallowed by earth, no.2373]

So as we look at meaning of words related to “music” don't you feel a picture is emerging on what the Islamic viewpoint is?

Slide 38 & 39:

Arabs in olden days had *ghina* around. The cameleers, pilgrims and soldiers used to sing. According to one scholar (Ibn al Jawzi): “pilgrims used to recite poems on their way to Hajj in which they praised the Ka’ba, Zamzam and Maqam of Ibrahim. Sometimes they drummed along with the recitation. Listening to such poetry is permissible but not the singing that creates *tarab* and moves away from moderation”.

Slides 40 - 44:

Tarab is identified by Ibn Al Jawzi (a renowned scholar) as the “problem ingredient” in music. It means ecstasy, trance, extreme emotions – extreme joy, extreme sorrow and sensual pleasure.

You know sometimes you get a not-in-control emotional high, when you listen to certain sounds, you feel out of control, your feet begin tapping & your body sways almost involuntarily. This “tarab” thing produces that effect.

Have you seen people in a rock concert? They go crazy – screaming, howling, sometimes tearing their clothes off, crying - just by listening to the music. Ok so you may argue that that is really extreme behavior. So, look at how our “mood” sways by what we listen.

So, this *tarab* thing was and is used in “sufi music” which is allegedly quote unquote “deeni music” – we see it in the famous twirling dervish of Turkey and at home at our shrines (*mazars*). Other genres like *qawwali* also has this effect.

And this feeling of abandon also comes by listening alone as well. Doesn’t necessarily have to be a group situation to get high on sound.

Slide 45:

Lastly, comes the word “sama’.”

“It (*sama’*) is a slippery stone; only the feet of ‘*ulema* can stay firm on it” – Quoted in ‘Awarif al Ma’arif by Shihab al Din al Suhrawardi - a famous Persian Sufi

Let me quickly give you a little lesson in history here. Music for fun and entertainment was imported from Persia and Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) into the Muslim world and sponsored by corrupt kings, beginning in the Umayyad Period.

(**Note to teacher:** no need to dwell on the Umayyad Dynasty here, around 744 – 750 AD).

There was no doubt in that it was wrong, although one group tried to justify it on religious grounds. These were the Sufis – who were initially known as *zuhhad* (ascetics) – you know people who renounce the world and just pray. The love of Allah (swt) was the defining attribute in their lives. Some of them discovered the power of a good song to nurture that love. To distinguish this “religious” song from sensuous singing – they named it “*sama’*.”

So to sum it up - “*sama*” is a term used by Sufis to define the song or music that allegedly helps them remember Allah (swt). Earlier Sufis referred it to a sudden flash of understanding whether it resulted from listening to poetry or prose. The goal of ‘*sama*’ was to reach a state of ecstasy called *wajd* in which a person becomes totally absorbed in the love of Allah (swt).

Now the concepts of ‘*sama*’ and *wajd* are not found anywhere in the Qur’an or *sunnah*.

We don’t see Rasool Allah (pbuh) or any of his companions ever practicing a song and a dance to get closer to Allah (swt) or to preach Islam or for any other reason. And the life of Rasool Allah (pbuh), his ‘*ibadaat*’ and *mu’amilat* are all very much known to us to the extent that his very personal life with his wives and his personal hygiene habits – matters that are private – are also known in detail.

Remember our thumb rule?

If you do something as an act of worship, you’d better have evidence from Qur’an or *sunnah*. So, people who take this *sama* business as proof of permissibility for all kinds of music are standing on very thin ice – in fact, no ice at all!

And those who are doing this as an act of worship – well, where is the evidence guys?

Slides 46 - 50:

After going through all this terminology, I don’t know about you but I am wondering where does the “music” you hear today stand?

Let us have a look at a video clip, where this gentleman Julian Treasure talks about how sound affects us.

{**Note:** No need to say all this – brief intro will be fine.

He is author of the book *Sound Business*, the first map of the exciting new territory of applied sound for business, and he has been widely featured in the world’s media, including *TIME* Magazine, *The Economist*, *The Times*, UK national TV and radio, as well as many international trade and business magazines. His three TED talks have been viewed an estimated four million times. The first is on the four effects of sound; the second on sound and health and the third, which has over a million views on the TED website alone, is on conscious listening.

Julian is chairman of The Sound Agency, a UK-based consultancy that helps clients like BP, Harrods, Helm Bank, Sonae Sierra, Nokia, Bank Muscat, Honda, Unilever, Marks & Spencer, London InterContinental Hotel Park Lane, Saga, Colgate-Palmolive, Nestlé and BAA achieve better results by optimising the sound they make in every aspect of business – for example making sound in branding and marketing communication congruent with visuals, or designing and installing effective and appropriate soundscapes for branded spaces such as shops, offices and corporate receptions }

The man knows sound.

(Play clip 1)

Wow! did you guys realize what a profound affect sound has on us?

Slides 51 & 52:

And by the way, this is not the only research on effect of sound – particularly music. There is a whole lot of data out there.

Music or any type of sound creates pressure waves. This is actually why we can hear it. The air vibrates and hits the inner ear, and that vibrates, and our brain interprets this vibration as sound. Any sound that creates a pressure wave can communicate emotion.

Have you ever tried watching a horror film with the sound off? You don't feel half as scared as you would if the soundtrack was on. It is true.

The thing that takes a hold of our heart and squeezes it around is sound.

Slides 53 & 54:

Clyne, a pianist from Australia, discovered he could make people cry by how he played the piano. It wasn't what he was playing that affected people, but *how* he played it. This realization led him to do research on what exactly was creating this effect.

Clyne's research led to his **Sentic Form Theory**, which is basically the study of the relationship between pressure waves and emotion.

Powerful stuff this. And according to these sound experts – music is the most powerful sound we have. So if someone wants to play with our emotions, push our buttons a particular way – hey, all they gotta do is rev up the music with that *tarab* thing in it!

Slide 55:

Its no wonder then that Allah (swt) has said:

وَأَسْتَفْزِرُ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمُ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكُهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ
وَعَدُّهُمْ وَمَا يَعْدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا عُرُورًا

And lead to destruction with your (seductive) voice those of them whom you can {Surah Al Isra 17: Verse 64}

This is from the 5 verses in Surah Al Isra that are describing the story of creation. After Shaytan refuses to prostrate to Adam (as), he asks Allah (swt) for respite until the Last Day so he could misguide the children of Adam (as). This is granted. Then Allah (swt) tells him that he can use

all the weapons at his command for this purpose; Hell has ample space for those who would decide to follow him. But he will have no power over the true servants of Allah (swt).

Among the weapons of Shaytan is his *sawt* – his voice as mentioned here. It refers to the calls of Shaytan for sin in all forms, from whispers to loud music and every decibel in between.

This is one verse.

Slides 56 - 59:

Now, you may have been wondering, she's going on and on and hasn't said anything about what the Qur'an itself says about music. We looked at ahadith first, because the terminology used in them is very specific, and is very useful in establishing a definition of music.

Lets just stop for a minute, breathe deeply and analyze what we have seen so far, in terms of:

- a) evidence from ahadith about definition of music that is allowed.
- b) Aspects of music not allowed
- c) and effect of music according to scientific evidence.

The “music” allowed by Rasool Allah (pbuh) as we see in the hadith of Aisha (ra) is clean songs, sung by regular people – with perhaps keeping beat on a duff – simple. When some people use this same hadith as evidence for listening to or making any music it doesn't make sense. As the words here are so clear. I don't see any ambiguity in them.

Is that the “music” we know or listen to?

(play Clip 2, Nouman Ali Khan)

Slide 60:

Musical instruments are not allowed. There are many other ahadith where Rasool Allah has talked about particular instruments like we saw one about bells, then theres one about flute one about drums.

Abdullah Ibn Umar (ra) heard the sound of a shepherds flute as he was going somewhere with his companion Nafi' – so Nafi' says, Abdullah (ra) put his fingers in his ears and moved his camel away from the road. He kept asking Nafi' can you still hear it? Nafi' says he took his fingers out only when told OK can't hear it now and said: I saw the Messenger (pbuh) hear the sound of a shepherd's flute and he acted like this. [Musnad Ahmad]

Ibn Abbas (ra) reported that the Prophet (pbuh) said: Verily Allah prohibited, wine, gambling, and kubah, and every intoxicant is haram. (*Kubah* is *tabl* – drums)

Slide 61:

We must understand one thing clearly – what Rasool Allah (pbuh) says is what Allah (swt) Himself wants him to convey to His servants. Hadith of Rasool Allah (pbuh) are called *wahi ghair al matloo* – meaning revelation that is not recited.

So, we need to pay serious heed to what he is saying or conveying here. In fact, Allah (swt) Himself has said so.

Slides 62 - 66:

Then, we saw how music affects us big time and the thing called *tarab*. Can any of us deny this? Are we going to stick our heads in the sand and say – no the affect is not negative at all or that I can handle it?

- Be honest with yourself:
What effect is the music you are listening to having on you, on your behavior, your character, personality?
- *Does it make you angrier, happier, emotive, hyper, or peaceful?*
- *What is the effect?*
- *Or you listen to 'that' track to 'cause' some effect? Has it become an addiction listening to that tune?*
- *Do you find yourself hooked on certain songs?*
- *Do you find yourself very often singing that tune? Anywhere? Everywhere?*
- *Is it impregnated in your brain in such way that you have to think of other things in order to forget the song?*
- *If you answer at least one of the questions above 'YES', you've gotta do something about it ASAP.*
- *This means you are being affected by music.*

Allah (swt) says to us in Surah Al Mulk: Would He who has created not know?

How can we pretend that we are above being affected by this sound play? How can we pretend that it does not distract us from Allah (swt)?

Slide 67:

The verse of the Qur'an used most by those who say music is not allowed is this:

Surah Luqman 31: Verse 6

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْحَدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

And of mankind is he who buys discourses of **distracting amusement**, so that he may, without knowledge (of the consequences of his actions), mislead (people), from the way of Allah, and make a mockery of it. For such people there is a disgraceful punishment.

Slide 68:

The key words here are *lahw al hadith*.

Looking at the Qur'anic use of the word *lahw* – it means anything that absorbs a person to such an extent that he forgets other important and serious things. In other words, it is a distraction. It is used for past times and amusements.

Slide 69:

However, for this particular verse, we find exegesis (*tafseer*) of serious *tafseer* scholars from among the Companions of Rasool Allah (pbuh) – like Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) and Abdullah Ibn Abbas (ra) and then from the generation after them Ikramah and Mujahid and Hasan al Basri (*rehmatullah*) that say that *lawh al hadith* means *ghina* – yup “music.”

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (ra): I swear by the One other than Whom there is no god, it refers to *ghina*. To emphasize the point, he repeated his statement 3 times. {Tafsit Al Tabari, Surah Luqman, verse 6, 18:534-35}

Abdullah ibn Abbas (ra): It means *ghina* and the like. {Tafsit Al Tabari, Surah Luqman, verse 6, 18:535}

Mujahid: It means *ghina* and listening to it. {Tafsit Al Tabari, Surah Luqman, verse 6, 18:537}

Hasan al Basri: This verse was revealed in relation to *ghina* and musical instruments. {Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Surah Luqman, verse 6, 11:46}

Now, when these gentlemen comment on verse of the Qur'an, they do so with solid reasons.

The interpretation flows from the context of revelation of this verse. According to several commentators, the particular person referred to in this verse was Nadr ibn al-Harith.

Have you heard of this chap?

He is the original inventor of HBO and MTV. Seriously. He saw that people of Makkah were taking the message of Rasool Allah (pbuh) rather seriously. He was like – hey, whats going on here? He was a one-man think tank. Quraysh were trying everything – ridicule, false propaganda, persecution but the message was going on. So Mr Nadr went to Persia and brought back his solution – a “charm offensive”. He got stories of Rustum, Bahram and other fascinating tales to counter the Qur'an. And then his trump card – singing dancing slave girls to distract those who got inclined to the message seriously!

So, this was the revelation background and we have already seen how Rasool Allah (pbuh) was about “music” so therefore these gentlemen gave us this explanation.

Again, take it or leave it. But, think very carefully before coming to a conclusion.

Slide 70:

You must have heard about the “Difference of Opinion” among scholars on various issues in Islam. Actually, the differences are very minor, mostly ignorant people play them up now and again.

So any way. Listen to this by Kemal al Makki

(play clip 3)

Slide 71:

There is another aspect of this debate. If music is food for the soul, how come many many many many people involved in it seem to be so messed up?

(Note to teacher: please stress on this) Please note. When we talk about real people or celebrities it is to take a lesson from their lives or lifestyles NOT to demean them in any way or make fun of them – no. Allah (swt) guides whom He wills.

We want to simply test this hypothesis that music is food for the soul.

I am simply going to read you news reports without adding any personal analysis. See for yourself and tell me whats happening here.

Slides 72 – 89:

Note to teacher: Read out reports of singers/musicians on slides. Few comments are on notes of slides. Refrain from personal comments.

Slide 90:

See, if music is food for the soul, these people should be “well fed” and content and happy and together, no?

But unfortunately, we don’t see that.

I specifically talked about western music and musicians because that’s what you guys listen to more than Urdu songs! In our part of the world – in the sub-continent – “classical music” was associated with mainly courtesans (prostitutes) and people on fringes of society. Hmm.. wonder why?

Slides 91- 94:

Conclusion

So where do we go from here?

Music is everywhere. In elevators, restaurants, shopping malls, on TV etc etc. Everyone is “doing it” and if you are not, they probably think there is something seriously unhinged in you!

I am not here to tell you what to do. You need to decide for yourself.

But for that you need to pray to Allah (swt) for guidance, sit yourself down with the facts and sift through your own feelings.

You see this question of to do or not to do music is a serious concern for those who are serious about their *deen* and those who want to please Allah (swt). Otherwise it is just academic.

For you today, the peer pressure is huge. You feel the need to blend in, do in Rome as the Romans do – today Rome is everywhere! While the pressure is new, the mentality that gives in to it is not. Ibn Mas’ud (ra) addressed that mentality – He said: “Do not be a crowd follower.” When asked who was crowd follower? he replied, “He is the one who says I am with the people. If they follow the right path so will I. If they go astray so will I.” (Tabarani)

Slides 95 – 96:

Some people have come up with a kind of solution as a bridge from the haram to the halal. It is called “Nasheeds” – Islamic songs. However, others say that this is not really a viable solution because if you make a bridge from one place to another – the likelihood of traffic flowing both ways is very high!

And unfortunately, we do see that happening – there are many a “Nasheed” with a full blown orchestra and all kinds of musical instruments playing. That definitely falls in the prohibited territory. Today we see people putting a halal label on popular music and selling it as “Islamic”! beware of that deception.

They insist that music is a “controversial subject.” Even if for arguments sake – we accept this – does this mean we should indulge in it?

Some say – “lets agree to disagree”. This has become a cliché. Lets get one thing straight – not ALL matters fall under this category. Yes, certain things where scholars have different interpretations of legal rulings of the Qur’an and Sunnah do fall in this category of lets agree to disagree – but hey, music isn’t one of those. When a great majority of scholars have categorically *agreed to condemn something*, it is not correct to ask to “agree to disagree” on that matter!

Some say, we use music for da'wah – inviting people to Islam. Excuse me, what Islam are we inviting people to, when using a prohibited tool of invitation. Islam teaches us that means of achieving an end are as important as the end itself.

We even hear recitation of the Qur'an with music! Where are we heading people? Qur'anic recitation is a serious act of worship. It follows certain rules preserved in an unshakable tradition going back to the Prophet (pbuh).

You know the best way to give up smoking is to go cold turkey – simply STOP. Trying to wean yourself off usually never works. This is my personal opinion – not a fatwa guys. So if you do choose the Nasheed option for yourself – that I simply cannot do without any kind of music – then be real careful.

Keep the criteria of permissibility in mind. There must be no musical instruments and the content of the song must be clean too. So you cannot sing anything you fancy and say Oh I'm not using any musical instrument so its OK.

Slide 97:

The Prophet (pbuh) said:

Halal is clear and haram is clear and in between them are doubtful things. Most of the people have no knowledge about them. So whoever saves himself from those suspicious things saves his religion and his honour. And whoever indulges in these suspicious things is like a shepherd who grazes his animals near the private pasture of someone else; at any moment he is liable to step in it. Beware! Every king has a private pasture and the private pasture of Allah (swt) on earth is the things He has declared forbidden.

[Narrated by Nu'man ibn Bashir in Sahih Bukhari]

A great scholar, Al Shawkani, said:

After all the arguments are considered, it is obvious that even if the object of dispute (music) is cleared of a judgment of prohibition, it is not cleared of doubt. And believers are the ones who stop in the face of doubt as made clear by the hadith.

So, even if you consider music to be “doubtful matter,” approach it with **extreme** caution at best.

Du'a for end of a gathering) *Subhana Rabbika Rabbul Izzati 'amma yasifun wa salamun 'alal mursaleen, walhamdulillahi Rabbil 'alameen*

(Parting salutation to students) *Assalam alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh*

References for Teacher:

Slippery Stone: an inquiry into Islam's stance on music, Khalid Baig, Openmind Press, ISBN 0-9755157-1-3