



MUSIC AND DANCING

JURISPRUDENCE

LEVEL 5

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the things that make music ḥarām
- Know the rules of dancing for men and women in brief
- Discuss some commonly raised questions related to music and dancing

Music and Dancing

In this lesson, we will review the rules related to music, singing and dancing, before considering some commonly asked questions about these issues.

WHAT MAKES MUSIC ḤARĀM?

The criteria of whether music is ḥarām or not is the following:

- If the music is usually played or listened to in gatherings of sin (e.g. nightclubs) then it is ḥarām
- If the music is not primarily used in gatherings of sin, then it is okay to listen to
- Remember that with issues like music, there is always room for taking precaution by not listening to music



As for the words of a song, they make the song ḥarām if:

- They talk about sinful things such as sex, drugs, alcohol
- They include vain words, this includes 'love songs' or 'romantic songs'
- It is also important to remember that it is ḥarām for a man to listen to a woman singing.

Once a man asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) about what kind of singing was ḥarām. The Imam (as) said: 'when you are listening to something, ask yourself that on the Judgment Day, will these words be words of truth or words of falsehood?' The man understood the meaning of the Imam (as).

DANCING

Dancing encourages immoral deeds and arouses lust and it can also lead to a person losing their dignity. It is usually associated with gatherings of sin.



For men, dancing is forbidden in all situations. It is also forbidden to women to dance in front of men (with the exception of a woman dancing in front of her husband if there is no other *ḥarām* act being committed).

As for women, some scholars rule that it is okay for women to dance in front of other women if there is no other *ḥarām* act being committed (e.g. *ḥarām* music or songs). However, other scholars rule that it is forbidden for women to dance even in front of other women.

FAQS

This section of the lesson is dedicated to answers given by the office of Ayatollah Sistāni to questions about issues related to music and dancing. The text is quoted directly from the official website of Ayatollah Sistāni.ⁱ

LEARNING MUSIC AND DANCING

Question: Is it permissible for a Muslim to send his son to a music institute to learn music as an art, provided that he does not use his artistic skills in *haraam* matters?

Answer: There is no harm in children learning *halal* music as such. However, when sending children to music schools, there must be the guarantee that this would not adversely affect their upbringing. Allah is All Knowing.

Question: Some schools in Western countries compel pupils to learn dancing. Such dancing is not accompanied by singing and it is not for pastime, rather a component of the curriculum. Is it *haraam* for the parents to permit their children to attend such classes?

Answer: Yes, if it contravenes religious upbringing, rather in general, as a matter of *ihtiyat*. That is, with the assumption that the student be adult. The exception to this is that the *mukallaf* has a valid reason permitting his learning, such as following in *taqleed* (The following, by a lay person, of a learned scholar "*mujtahid*" in matters of religious practice). Such a *mujtahid* may have ruled on the

permissibility of this act; there will, therefore, be no objection to him attending such a study.

Question: In government schools of the United Kingdom and may be some other countries also, students have to take part in dance classes to the sound of special musical tunes that synchronize the movements of the students while they are dancing. Is it permissible to attend such classes? Is it obligatory on the parents to prevent their children from attending such classes if the young boy or girl is inclined towards attending them?

Answer: It is not permitted, if it has any negative effect — which is quite common— on their religious upbringing. Rather, it is not permitted at all, as a matter of obligatory precaution.

Question: Is it permissible to learn dancing?

Answer: It is not allowed at all, as a matter of obligatory precaution.

GATHERINGS INVOLVING MUSIC AND DANCING

Question: It is permissible to visit places where *halāl* music is being played, and it is permissible to listen to it as long as it is *halāl*.

Answer: It is permissible to visit public places where music is being played, even if it is suitable for entertainment and amusement gatherings, provided that one does not intentionally listen to it: for example, passengers on course, waiting areas for visitors, public parks, restaurants and cafes, etc... —even if the music played there is suitable for entertainment and amusement gatherings— because there is no problem in hearing forbidden tunes without intending to listen to it.

Question: is it permissible to applaud?

Answer: It is permissible to applaud in a marriage ceremony, religious gatherings, seminars, and other functions. This is equally permissible for women and men.

Question: Is it permissible for women to sing in the wedding party in whatever tune, even if it is suitable for the gatherings of sinful people? Is it permissible for them to use musical instruments while singing that night? Is it permissible for them to sing, wearing henna [on the bride's hand and feet], or on the eve of the seventh night [after the marriage]? Or is the permission restricted to the marriage eve?

Answer: Based on compulsory precaution, they should refrain from it, even on the marriage eve, let alone other occasions. As for the issue of music, its rules have already been mentioned earlier.

Question: Is it permissible to organize dance parties where each husband dances only with his own wife to the sound of soothing musical tunes, wearing dresses that are not indecent?

Answer: It is not allowed.

'RELIGIOUS' SONGS

Question: Is it permissible to listen to religious songs in praise of Ahlul Bayt (as) that are accompanied with music?

Answer: Songs (al-ghinā') are harām absolutely. However, singing praise [of the Prophet or the Ahlul Bayt] that is sung with a good tune but is not in ghinā' form is without problem. As for the music, it would be allowed, if it is not suitable for entertainment and amusement gatherings

Question: Is it permissible to soothe the senses by listening to the reciter of the Qur'an who recites in a vibrant, quavering tone?

Answer: If the tune used in its recitation is not ghinā', there is no problem in listening to it.

Question: Some of the reciters, singers or chanters adopt the tunes of sinful people [i.e., harām entertainers] and then sing or chant with their tunes poems in praise of the Prophet (saw) and his family—the result is that the context is different from that of the sinful people, yet the tune is suitable to theirs. Is it forbidden to sing in this way? Is it forbidden to listen [in this case]?

Answer: Yes, based on obligatory precaution it is forbidden.

TRANSACTIONS RELATED TO MUSIC

Question: Musical instruments are of different kinds. Sometimes they are used in musical gatherings and sometimes for soothing the soul. Is it then permissible to buy these instruments, manufacture them, deal in them, or play them to soothe the soul or listen to the sounds when someone else is playing them?

Answer: It is not permissible to deal in the instruments of harām entertainment: neither selling nor buying, just as it is not permissible to manufacture them and accept remuneration for making them. "An instrument of harām entertainment" means that its physical shape—that gives its value and eventually the purpose for acquiring it—is not suitable except for use in harām entertainment.

Question: Is it permissible to manufacture, sell, or buy musical instruments that are made for children's play? And is it permissible for adults to use them?

Answer: If the music that is suitable for entertainment and amusement gatherings comes out of it, then it is neither permissible to deal in, nor are adults allowed to use them.

Question: Certain makes of watches have a device fitted in them whereby you can listen to musical phrases. Can one trade in such watches as well as listen to the type of music they play?

Answer: Yes, it is permissible.

ⁱ Sistani.org/english