

MUSIC AND ITS EFFECTS

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F O R E W O R D

Nowadays, people are getting more and more involved in Music and for them, it has become a part of their daily life. Their mind has become so saddled with tension, and tempo of life is so fast that they seem to accept high blood pressure and nervous breakdown as the unavoidable side effects of modern civilization. It is a pity that they do not pause to think the adverse effects of music on their physical and mental health.

I have endeavoured to present in this booklet the scientific and spiritual points of views on music and dance etc. These observations have been quoted from various books of Persian, Urdu and English languages.

I am very grateful to Maulana Seyyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, the Chief Missionary of the [Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania](#) for editing and scrutinizing this effort of mine

I hope this booklet will help the readers in understanding the philosophy of the rule of Islam which forbids music.

A.H. Sherriff

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WHAT IS MUSIC ?

Music, according to the New National Dictionary, means "Art of combining sounds or sequences of notes into harmonious patterns pleasing to the ear and satisfying to the emotions; melody"

According to the Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary, this combining of sounds is "for reproduction by the voice or various kinds of musical instruments in rhythmic, melodious and harmonious form so as to express thought or feeling and affect the emotion;" and the word is also used for the "sound so produced," and for 'written or printed score of musical compositions.'" Not so technically, it is also used for "pleasant sound, e.g., song of a bird, murmur of a stream, cry of hounds."

In Islam music is called Ghina, and in Shia shariat is counted as one of the 'great sins'. At first, it may seem unrealistic to ban every "pleasant sound"; but there is no need to be alarmed. The Sheriat has defined 'Ghina' in a different way. In Islam, vocal music means: "Prolongation and vibration of sound with variation of the pitch to such an extent that people may say that 'he/she is singing'."

It is evident from the above definition that the shariat does not forbid 'pleasant sounds'; but if someone recites any thing with prolongation of sound and variation of pitch so much so that a common man thinks that he/she is singing, then and only then it will be 'Ghina' and sin.

And it makes no difference whether the thing recited was the Qur'an, religious poem or love song.

ORIGIN OF MUSIC

No doubt music is one of the most ancient methods of merrymaking and enjoyment, of expressing feelings and emotions. It is called 'international language', because it encompasses the whole world and does not know any geographical or political boundary.

Let us find out what is the reason for its worldwide prevalence. We have it on the authority of Imam Jafer Sadique (a.s) that when Hadhrat Adam (a.s) died, his infamous son Cain (Quabil) and Satan were very happy. Both gathered at a place and invented some musical instruments to celebrate the death of Hadhrat Adam (a.s). And in the words of Imam (a.s), all such musical things which people now use for merrymaking have originated from that. (*Wasa'el-us-Shia; Babu Tahrim-e-Istimal-il-Malahi*).

So, religion and anthropology both agree that music is a very ancient thing; and therefore, no wonder it has spread widely with the spread of the human race. But how dare a sensible 'child of Adam ' especially if he is a Muslim) "enjoy" music, which is an invention of Satan and Cain, the rebellious and disloyal son of Adam?

Here one may ask: But what is the harm in music? Why it has been forbidden in Islam?

The answer is that music does have harmful effects on nervous system and is the cause of many ailments including ulcer, diabetes and madness. It creates imbalance in human faculties, retards spiritual development, and lowers the ethical values.

For details, read the following chapters.

EFFECTS OF MUSIC ON NERVOUS SYSTEM

Before explaining its effects on nerves it is necessary to briefly describe an intricate and awe-inspiring part of the nervous system itself. These details are quoted here from the "Foundation of Biology" (by William D. McElory & Carl P. Swanson and others; published by Prentice-Hall, Inc; Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey U.S.A. 1968) and "How your Nervous System Works" (by J.D. Ratcliff; Reader's Digest — Book of Human Body) :-

"Many reflexes that help control the internal environment involve a special part of the nervous system (ANS). This system consists of nerves making up the motor pathway to the heart, stomach, intestine and other internal organs. These nerves are not under voluntary control; that is, you can not make your heart beat faster on command."

"The two major divisions of the automatic nervous system are called the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems."

Sympathetic nerves leave the middle regions of the spinal cord

"Parasympathetic nerves leave the central nervous system from the upper regions where they travel in cranial nerves (i.e., 12 pairs of nerves attached to the brain and serving head and neck), and from the lowermost regions of the spinal cord where they travel in spinal nerves.

"Most internal organs of your body are supplied with both parasympathetic and sympathetic nerve fibres."

"In general, these two types of nerves work in opposite ways. For example, impulses travelling along sympathetic nerve fibres toward the heart increase your heart-beat rate, whereas impulses travelling along the parasympathetic nerves leading to the heart decrease its rate.

"When we examine the effects of sympathetic stimulation of various organs, a pattern begins to emerge. We find that sympathetic stimulation causes a number of events:

1. Widening of air passage leading to the lungs;
2. Constriction or narrowing of blood vessel in the skin and in the intestinal tract,

resulting in blood being shifted from the digestive organs and skin to the muscles;

3. A general slowing down of movements in the intestinal tract;
4. An increase in the force and rate of heart-beat:
5. Release of the blood sugar from the liver;
6. Release of the hormones adrenaline.

All of these activities prepare the human being for emergencies such as running or fighting. The widening of air passages makes it easier for the human being to breathe faster and get more oxygen. Blood is shifted from regions where it will not be needed during the emergency (the intestinal tract, for example) to skeletal and heart muscle which will need oxygen and blood sugar.

The heart beats faster and stronger so that blood circulates through the muscles at a higher rate. Blood sugar is released from storage in the liver into the blood stream where it will be available to supply muscles with energy.

In short, sympathetic stimulation prepares the man for emergencies, and in this process, increases the blood pressure, retards the function of digestive system and increases the sugar contents of the blood.

The function of Parasympathetic nerves system is opposite to the sympathetic system "It widens the veins, releases noradrenalin hormones and generally retards activities.

"The two nervous systems run parallel to each other and in co-operation from one part of the body to another. The co-operation of the two systems is essential for maintaining the equilibrium of the body, which in turn has a great bearing and effect on the physical and mental health of man.

Should at any time there be a lack of co-operation between these two systems, physical or mental disorders could arise resulting in one disease or another."

Some actions or movements outside human body can adversely affect the natural equilibrium of these two systems. One of those things is music.

A brisk and lively musical programme, particularly if it is accompanied by musical instruments, disturbs this equilibrium of the various systems; digestion is badly

affected; palpitation of the heart is increased; blood pressure goes high and abnormal secretion of hormones leaves a lasting bad effect upon general health.

Music stimulates mostly the sympathetic nervous system; and it may create insomnia (lack of sleep); it may cause tempers to flare up; sudden laughter or nonsensical talks are amongst its possible effects. It may even lead to mania (a kind of madness)..

Such people may be seen to move their hands and feet in dancing pattern even when not listening to music.

Dr. Volf Adler, who was a professor in the Columbia University, found out that a best melodious record of music can badly harm the nerves of a human body; and the warmer the weather the more the harm. He proved that music upsets the nervous systems unnaturally, and causes considerable fatigue.

This research of Dr. Adler had a widespread effect on many Americans; many stopped listening to music altogether. The belief that music was harmful for a progressive nation like U.S.A., reached a stage when a member of the Senate proposed a resolution to ban the music in the country. Relevant proofs and arguments were put before the Senate. But in a nation steeped in lust and materialism, not many senators could be found to vote for that resolution.

(Illustre Dimanche; No. 630; Paris; as quoted in, "Falsafa-e-Tahrim-e-Musiqui", published by the institution "Dar Rah-e-Haqq", Qum, Iran)

SOME OTHER AILMENTS AND MUSIC

It is an accepted fact that mental tension creates many ailments. Excitement and tension are like a fire which destroys the natural functions of human body.

And it has already been shown that music creates excitement and tension.

Not only madness and nervous breakdown, but even ulcers and heart diseases are caused by mental tension.

It has been mentioned earlier that music releases the hormone 'adernalin' in abnormal quantity. This hormone clots the bloodvessels, and finally leads to heart attack. This relation between excessive release of adernalin and heartattack was discovered in France in 1957. (*Falsafa-e-Tahrim-e-Musiqui*).

Professor Celie experimented by injecting adernalin into a monkey. Its skin became paralysed and the animal suffered a heartattack (*Ibid*).

Dale Carnegie quotes Dr. Joseph Montagu to have said that stomach ulcer is caused by mental tension and violent anger. (*Ibid*).

Many of the presentday common diseases are the legacy of our socalled civilization which creates tension and exhausts the tolerance of physical and mental faculbes. One of the main causes of this tension and exhaustion is music. The ailments, which are caused by such condition, are diabetes, rheumatism, and even the birth of deformed or disabled children. (*Ibid*).

Concentration on listening to musical concerts or Jazz bands at times causes such violent tension that mental stability is thrown out of window.

The daily 'Kayhan' (Tehran), in its issue No 6626, published a news of the Reuter Agency: About 50,000 youths had gathered in Melbourne (Australia) for a musical concert. The concert overwhelmed them so much that they started assaulting each other with fists and knives. Many were seriously injured; some girls were molested. The police was called in and with much difficulty controlled the situation. The point to ponder is this: The youths were so much excited that they did not know what they were doing.

Now that we have come to Jazz, and important finding must be quoted here from *The Reader's Digest* (Vol. 49, No. 565, May, 1969):

"Otologists say that youngsters are going deaf by blasting their ears with electronic pop music. Experts know that prolonged exposure to a noise level above 85 decibels will eventually result in a reduction of hearing acuity in the frequency range most important for understanding human speech. Dr. Charles Lebo, of the Pacific Medical Centre took measuring instruments into two San Francisco dance halls where the cacophony from amplified instruments caused sound intensity from 100 to 119 decibels in the low frequency range.

"Lebo estimates that under such conditions 80 per cent have their hearing sensitivity temporarily reduced by 5 to 30 decibels; 10 per cent suffer a temporary 40 decibel impairment. Some might suffer permanent damage after a year of steady listening. (Time).

In short high blood pressure, insomnia, emotional instability mania and madness, nervous break downs, ulcers, heart troubles, diabetes, rheumatisms temporary permanent deafness and birth of deformed or disabled babies are the effects of music. No wonder, Islam, being a religion from Allah, has warned us against this disabling habit.

FROM PHILOSOPHICAL POINT OF VIEW

According to the philosophy of Islam, man has been endowed with two main faculties:

(i) Intellect; and (ii) Emotions.

Emotions may be divided into two categories: Positive and Negative. We may call them 'Attraction' and 'Repulsion', or 'Love' and 'Hate'; or 'Desire' and 'Anger' respectively. Let us call them here 'Desire' and 'Anger'.

Thus, we have three faculties in all :

1. Intellect: Its function is to think and understand;
2. Desire: Through it man tries to attain things which are beneficial to him or which give him satisfaction and enjoyment;
3. Anger: By this facility man defends himself against, and repulses the things which he considers harmful to himself.

Of the above three faculties, the first one, i.e., Intellect, has been designed by Allah to guide and control the remaining two, i.e., Desire and Anger. If a man wants to remain on right path, he must ensure that the two perform their functions under the guidance of Intellect.

For example, the ambition to get rich is the result of Desire. But it is the Intellect which guides the man that the wealth should be obtained by honest labour, hard work and not by robbery or fraud.

Likewise, the Anger inspires the man to resist pain. But it is the Intellect that tells him, for example, to submit to the surgical operation, so that he may avoid greater pain in future.

When the Faculty of Intellect is sufficiently developed and dominates over the other two faculties, the man advances spiritually and ethically; and surpasses the angels, because angels have got only the Intellect and do not have to contend with desire and anger.

Uncontrolled desire and anger are dominating factors of animals. If these faculties were to be nourished by the man beyond the ethical limit, and freed from the control

and guidance of Intellect, he would sink to the abysmal depth of depravity, and would become worse than animals.

After understanding this principle, it is easy to appreciate the reasons behind laws of Islam forbidding various actions.

It has been already described that the music is among those things which boost the emotions and arouse the sensual powers beyond their natural limit; music gives desire or anger an upper hand, and makes them dominant over the Intellect. As has been shown with a few examples, this state could reach a stage where Intellect ceases to function altogether; man becomes the slave of his emotions — desire and anger.

A time comes that he forgets his Creator and does not remember the real aim of his life (which is to know his Creator and obey Him).

The Love and Fear of Allah promotes virtues and good deeds, and restrain the man from sins and evils. Islam aims at producing best of the characters in its followers; and therefore, it has forbidden those things which tend to divert attention from Allah and from man's divine duties. Music is one of those things which have toxic effect on human mind. Therefore, Islam has forbidden not only the playing of music, but also listening to it; also forbidden is participation in musical programmes whether it be in places like theaters, night clubs and cinemas or in one's own home.

Incidentally, the same is the reason behind the law forbidding liquor and gambling.

FROM ETHICAL POINT OF VIEW

In the last chapter, I explained the harm which music brings upon the spiritual wellbeing of a man. Connected with it, is the effect of music on the ethics and morals. Those intoxicated by the music should try to reply these questions:

Why those engaged in singing and dancing profession almost always sink to the lowest level of immorality?

Why the film actors and actresses change their wives and husbands with every change of weather ?

Why singing and dancing was considered a 'Must' for prostitutes in Indian subcontinent?

Why marital sanctity and conjugal bliss are words without meaning in the world of singers and dancers ? Why ? Oh ! Why ?

The following quotations from '*The Bridal Bed*' (by Joseph Braddock; published by Corgi books, Ransworld Publishers Ltd., London; 1960) will provide an answer to these questions :-

(Dance) is the start of culture. Though some of these dances are sensationally erotic, the sexual element is present in most of the world's dancing. It is sublimated even in ballet.

Many primitive dances, the world over, serve as preliminaries to mating, being closely connected with the choice of a marriage partner.....A description or two will make this clear.

The Dinka, a gentle pastoral tribe, live on the east bank of the White Nile. They are astonishingly tall, sometimes more than six and a half feet high. Blacker than charcoal, often above a naked body, the hair glistens a longish pale gold mop, when it has been dyed with cow's urine....Dinka buy their wives.....But first they see the women in dance.

Within a village clearing the drums and gourd rattles are ready. Possibly as many as three hundred Dinkas have been waiting an hour or more under the yet powerful and declining sun, the tall girls standing together in a line, by now worked up to a pitch of excitement bordering on hysteria as they await the moment for the dance to develop. But what is strange here is that, although the dance will mirror by no means deeply buried sexual desires, it remains curiously abstract and impersonal.

The magnificent nubile Negresses, with narrow hips and slim limbs, suggest bronze antequely proportioned statues Full of shy giggles, they begin to shuffle with their

feet, beads and bracelets jangling on smooth wrist and dusty ankle. A laughing girl retreats, advances, invites her warrior partner, her arms tapering into the narrow palms of clasped simian hands stretched out behind her, her pointed breasts trembling. Her bead skirt rattles and sways, as she jerks her lacquer-like thighs forward and backwards as in love. Her partner guides her movement with his spear, thrusting his loins forward in a mime of pursuit."

In Sierra Leone the 'Dance of the Susu Bundu girl's has much more actual colour. Previously, the girls will have been circumcised in the Bundu Bush according to the ancient rites, and instructed in household accomplishments to prepare them for marriage. They are presumed to be virgins. It is night, but little fires flicker red in a moon-lightened darkness. Parents and relations of the participants cluster together with the rest of the village to watch. Monkeys chatter noisily from the trees.

As the girls step forward, they show gleaming teeth and the whites of their eyes. They are wearing their best finery: lengths of garish flower-patterned cloth are wound about their thin waists to the ground; high turbans composed of flaring coloured silk scarves decorate their small vivacious heads. Behind, over their skirts fall black velvet kirtles sewn with rows of bells. Each girl carries a showy handkerchief in one hand. Naked above the waist, her breasts, with prominent nipples, are thrust forward. Valleyed between the shoulder-blades, her upright back shines as though oiled. She dances with a proud, unspoiled grace of carriage.

No sudden crash of drums heralds the opening of this dance. Instead, a sweet wailing music from a native instrument, almost bell-like, blends with the controlled drums and the gentle swish of calabash, as the girls sway like dark columns of smoke, bending, skimming the earth with the fingers of first one hand, then the other. More instruments join the rhythmic theme, emphasizing the flowing snake-like movements. On the girls' now serious faces appears entranced concentration. The orchestra speeds the tempo; the sensuous vigour of the Negresses changing to such a vibrating single energy of supple writhing forms that individually the dancers can hardly be separated. The speed is so great that the girls appear to be mingled in one florid streak of colour.

But from among the audience the boys have been watching with aroused attention,

picking out the girls they would like for brides. Often at the end of such a dance, a girl will fall to the ground exhausted. Then, in a flash, a boy will dash out, pick her up in his arms and carry her into the bush nearby, where, with a sigh, she may thank the darkness for preserving the myth of her virginity.

The reader should not think that these rites of the primitive tribes have no connection with the 'refined' dances of the so-called civilized world. It has been quoted above that "the sexual element is present in most of the world's dancing."

European civilization celebrates a marriage with dancing. The bride is obliged to dance with the guests. Have you ever stopped to think what is the significance of this custom ?

In early feudal times the bride might have spent her wedding night not with her husband but with her feudal lord, who had the right to deflower her.

For example:

Old writers of the history of Scotland say that King Eadgar III — contemporary with the emperor Augustus — 'made a law by which he and his successors in the throne were authorized to lie with every bride, if a woman of quality, before her husband could approach her; and in consequence of this law the great men of the nation had a power of the same kind over the brides of their vassals and servants.

It would seem that this law remained effective throughout the kingdom, for more than ten centuries, until St. Margaret persuaded her husband King Malcom III to have it abolished. After this, any vassal or servant who wished to redeem the first night of his bride had to pay a tax in money.

In almost all countries of Christendom, "sometimes even monks, who were feudal lords, held the right of sleeping with the bride on her first night as a married woman. Now, such customs have been diluted, and the dance with the bride has been substituted in place of sleeping with her on her first night.

At Swedish country weddings it is still usual for the bride to dance with all the men; elsewhere in Europe, as in parts of Germany, there is tradition that every guest who dances with the bride must pay her some money !

In Hungary, on the day of marriage, many rites are performed. "At last about

midnight, comes the ritual putting bed. First every man present dances with the now almost exhausted bride, each giving her money for this privilege." Not only in weddings but even in social dances the erotic factor dominates and survives. You must have seen in Western countries (and in their blind `followers) that when a state guest arrives, the wife of the host stands with the guest and the wife of the guest stands with the host. And the same thing happens during the dances given in honour of the guest. Do you know the origin of this custom ? In ancient times there was a custom which still survives in the Chukchee tribe of Asiatic Eskimos. It is the system of "Group marriage" which anthropologists believe to be the most primitive form of marriage.

(Dr. Bogoras) states that marriage among the Chukchee does not deal with one couple only but extends over an entire group. The men belonging to such a marriage union are called 'companions in wives'.....but takes advantage of his right comparatively seldom, namely, only when he visits for some reason the camp of one of the 'companions'. Then the host cedes him his place in the sleeping room.

As the author says, "the custom of loaning wives to strangers or friends, for a fee or just as an act of hospitality, has been common and widespread over many lands from time immemorial, and not only among savage tribes."

And this system survives in the form of loaning the wife to the guest in the danceroom, in place of the bedroom.

Now that we have seen the relation between the dance and music on one hand and sexual promiscuity on the other, we can easily understand the following tradition of the Holy Prophet of Islam: Music is the magic of fornication.

EFFECT ON THE CHILDREN

It is no secret that the songs music and films depend upon sex-appeal for their success. The more sexy a song the more its sale; the more suggestive a music, the more its market value. And also it is no secret that building the character of the children begins from their very tender age. If they are exposed to obscene songs sexy music and suggestive dances in their childhood, their entire outlook on the matters of sex morality and marriage-sanctity will become jaundiced. They will lose the capacity to distinguish between moral and immoral modesty and immodesty chastity and promiscuity.

Some people think that the children do not understand these things! Such people are wrong.

Thus, by listening to the songs and seeing the dance on television, we ruin the moral uprightness of our children. If we believe that the children are given to us by Allah as a trust and that we are responsible to give them such a training that they become good Muslims and virtuous servants of Allah, then we must abstain from songs and music; and must keep them safe from the evil influence of these sinful habits. You will find this subject adequately explained in the [Appendix](#).

