50687 - He loves Islam but he cannot give up classical music!

the question

I am a person who believes in the existence of Allaah; no matter how far I stray from Allaah, I turn back to Him with humbleness. But I listen to classical music and I think that it is the best thing in my life. It does not provoke desire, rather it helps me to review myself and my mistakes. I feel that Islam is a backward religion when I hear those who say that all kinds of music are haraam.
What is your opinion of a person who prays, fasts and calls non-Muslims to Islam, but he listens to clean music that is free of immoral content, or even of human voices?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We were very happy to read your introduction and what you say about your belief in Allaah, may He be exalted, and that no matter how far you stray you come back to Him with humbleness. This is a characteristic that befits the wise who humble themselves before the greatness of their Lord, may He be blessed and exalted, who are certain of their weakness and the greatness of their need for Allaah to help them and guide them.

Secondly:

We were saddened by some of the phrases in your question, which we would not like to hear from such a wise believer, but when we thought about how many people there are who block the path of goodness, and how many there are who lead people astray and propagate corruption, we felt that such things are to be expected, but we are sure that they will soon cease.

One of the things in your letter that saddened us was the fact that you listen to music, and say

that it is the best thing in your life, and that it helps you to review yourself and your mistakes, and that you accuse Islam of backwardness when you hear that music is haraam.

If you had thought hard about these phrases and sentences before writing them, your hand would never have written them and your lips would never had uttered them. But you have written them and sent them so we must pause and examine them, because of the duty of offering sincere advice that Allaah has enjoined upon us, and so as not to conceal knowledge that Islam has forbidden us to conceal.

1 – With regard to music:

It is forbidden and is not permissible to play musical instruments or listen to songs and tunes. The majority of scholars say that it is haraam, including the four imams of fiqh: Abu Haneefah, Maalik, al-Shaafa'i and Ahmad (may Allaah have mercy on them all).

The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Among my ummah there will be people who will regard as permissible adultery, silk, alcohol and musical instruments." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (5590). See also: al-Silsilah al-Saheehah by al-Albaani (91).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

This hadeeth indicates that musical instruments are haraam; this includes all types of instruments.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (11/535).

And he said:

It is well known that during the best three generations of which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "The best of generations are my generation among whom I was sent, and the one that follows them, and the one that follows them", neither in the Hijaz nor in Syria nor in Yemen nor in Iraq nor in Egypt nor in Khorasan was there anyone among the people of goodness and religious commitment who would gather with others to listen to this innovated type of singing

for the purpose of purifying the hearts. Hence it was regarded as makrooh by the imams such as Imam Ahmad and others, and al-Shaafa'i regarded it as one of the innovations of the zindeeqs (heretics) when he said: In Baghdad I left behind something that was innovated by the zindeeqs who called it taghbeer (a type of singing) and diverted the people from the Qur'aan thereby.

Majmoo' al-Fataawa (10/77).

See also the answer to question no. 5000 and 5011.

Ibn al-Qayyim said: If the zamr (a kind of pipe or flute),which is the least evil of musical instruments, is haraam, then what about those which are worse such as the 'oud (a stringed instrument), tambour (drum) and yaraa' (a reed instrument)? No one who has had the slightest whiff of knowledge should hesitate to regard them as haraam, and the least that can be said is that they are the symbol of corrupt evildoers and wine drinkers.

Ighaathat al-Lahfaan (1/228).

2 – With regard to your saying that it is the best thing in your life, this is something astounding. What about the Qur'aan? What about the hadeeths of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)? How can you prefer the words of man to the words of Allaah, may He be exalted? How can you think that musical instruments are better for your heart and soul and mind than the words of Allaah, may He be exalted, and the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)?

Remember – may Allaah guide you and enlighten you – that the Qur'aan of the Most Merciful and the "recitation" of the Shaytaan – namely songs – cannot be joined together in the heart of the believer. You would not say that music and songs are the best thing in your life unless you have been deprived of the Qur'aan of the Most Merciful. Remember that the Shaytaan cannot make songs and music attractive to you in your heart and in your life until after he has turned you away from the Book of Allaah, may He be exalted. So you have to hasten to set your heart aright and turn back from what you are doing, so that you can strengthen your heart by obeying the Most Merciful and His words, and humbling yourself before His rulings.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

What is meant is that forbidden songs are the “recitation” of the Shaytaan, because when the enemy of Allaah wanted to bring together these wrongdoers, he resorted to making music and musical instruments attractive to them, and if it comes from a beautiful woman or a handsome boy, that is more likely to make his “recitation” attractive to them, and to replace the joy of the Glorious Qur’aan with the joy of listening to music.

Ighaathat al-Lahfaan (1/254)

3 – With regard to your saying that music helps you to review yourself and your mistakes, this is also very strange. What about reviewing yourself when you wrote these words? Did you review yourself when you said “it is the best thing in my life”? or that “Islam is backward if it forbids it”?

Did you review yourself and your mistakes with music and then offer prayers on time, or observe voluntary fasts, or pray at night when people are sleeping, or uphold family ties, or spend your money for the sake of Allaah, or seek Islamic knowledge? We are certain that music did not help you with these things and that whatever you did of them, music was not the cause behind them.

Remember that thinking of death, the grave, the meeting with Allaah and what Allaah has prepared for the sinners is what makes the Muslim review himself time after time, and improve his life for the better, and erase his sins and mistakes from his life. You should be certain that if what you say had any shred of truth, you would see the musicians and those who listen to music among the best and most moral of people, but is that in fact the case?

4 – As for your accusing Islam of being backward when you hear of the prohibition on music, this is the most serious thing that you have said. You have read what your Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, and you know what all the scholars, including the four imams, have said. So all you have to do is be obedient to your Lord, may He be exalted, and respond to the command of your Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), following the way of goodness, knowledge and obedience that was followed by the Sahaabah, Tabi’een and those who came after them. How can you compare between the ruling of Allaah and your own

reasoning? How can you spurn the way that was followed by the best of mankind and follow a different way that none of the righteous ever followed?

Remember that the religion of Allaah does not follow the whims and desires of anyone. Allaah is the One Who has created the universe and mankind, and He knows what is best for them in this life and in the Hereafter, so He issues commands and prohibitions for what is best for them in both realms.

Thirdly:

We are happy to learn that you are one of those who call people to this religion, and that you are among those who pray and fast, but we wish you well and whatever advice we give is that which is best for you. Carry on with your worship and calling people to Islam, but beware of sin and beware of this music and the immoral words that may accompany it. Songs generate hypocrisy in the heart and make it sick; they do not guide to any good or forbid any evil, on the contrary these songs promote love and haraam meetings, and even if these instruments are not accompanied by words, they still make the heart sick and do it no good.

Allaah has given you something better than this, namely His Book, in which He speaks. So read it and listen to it being read by readers whom Allaah has blessed with beautiful voices, and you will see a great difference in your heart and your life after that. Allaah has guided many people who were kuffaar after they listened to the verses of the Qur'aan, and you are more deserving of being guided in this manner than others.

You can also listen to permissible nasheeds, which are filled with good words, wisdom and exhortation, and you can enjoy listening to sounds that Allaah has created, such as the sounds of birds and waves, for they are what still the heart, not the sounds of musical instruments that Islam has forbidden us to use.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him) discussed singing in detail in his book Ighaathat al-Lahfaan min Masaa'id al-Shaytaan; try to get a copy and read it, for you will find much useful material in it, in sha Allaah.

Finally:

The best advice we can give you is to fear Allaah, may He be exalted, and to seek knowledge from sound sources. Read Qur’aan a great deal and listen to it being read by those who read it well. Turn to Allaah with du’aa’, asking Him to set your affairs straight.

We ask Allaah to guide you to all that is good.

And Allaah is the Source of strength.