

444120 - What is the ruling on going to public places where there are objectionable things?

the question

Is it permissible for us to go to public places which are permissible to go to in and of themselves, such as libraries and cafés, where there are pictures on the walls or statues, and also places where they play music, if the individual is not able to put a stop to it? Or should he not go to these places?

Detailed answer

The one who reflects on the state of people nowadays will realise that there is hardly any public place but there will be some objectionable matters in it, to a greater or lesser extent, and this is becoming a widespread problem, which makes some people reluctant to go to these places when there is a need to go to them, whether that is because of a necessity or a need, or for some other reason.

What appears to be the case – and Allah knows best – is that the issue needs some discussion, and it is not right to issue one ruling to cover all places, situations and people.

Firstly:

There are public places that people cannot avoid going to, otherwise it will be detrimental to their well-being, such as hospitals, workplaces and public transit. It is not possible to prevent people from going to such places because of what may be present in them of matters that are objectionable according to Islamic teachings.

However, the individual is required to avoid going to them as much as possible. So in the case of those places that he can avoid going to without that causing him undue hardship and inconvenience, he is required to refrain from going to them and to keep away from them. In the case of those places that he needs to go to, he should strive to not let himself be affected by any objectionable matters in those places, when he does need to go to them. So he should not look at

or listen attentively to those objectionable matters, and so on, as much as he can avoid them, and he should seek Allah's forgiveness for what he could not avoid of those objectionable matters.

This was the practice of the Sahabah (may Allah be pleased with them) in dealing with that which it is very difficult to avoid. It was narrated from Abu Ayyub al-Ansari that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "When you go to relieve yourselves, do not face towards the qiblah or turn your backs towards it, whether you are urinating or defecating; rather face towards the east or west." Abu Ayyub said: We came to Syria and we found latrines that had been built facing towards the qiblah. So we turned ourselves away and asked Allah for forgiveness. Narrated by Muslim (264).

The Permanent Committee were asked about similar things and they replied:

If you cannot put a stop to music on the bus, and you need to take the bus because the distance is far and you have no other means of transportation, then there is no blame on you for that, but you must denounce the evil as much as you can, even if that is only in your heart."(*Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Da'imah* 26/241).

Secondly:

With regard to places where the main activity is the open practice of objectionable and haram things, such as parties with music in which there is a combination of music, immodesty and free mixing, then the ruling on such places is that it is haram to go there, whether by oneself or with one's family and children. More emphatically prohibited are places that are set up for the objectionable and haram matters that are done in those places.

It is haram for the Muslim to organise parties or celebrations which involve objectionable and haram matters such as singing, music, mixing between men and women, and bringing charlatans and magicians to perform, because of the abundant religious texts which indicate that these things are prohibited, and that they are causes of falling into what Allah has prohibited of immoral and evil acts.

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has warned those who like to see immorality spread among the believers, and those who promote and help in such things, of a painful punishment, as He, may He be glorified, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Indeed, those who like that immorality should be spread [or publicized] among those who have believed will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter} [Al-Nur 24:19].

Once it is established that organising such parties and celebrations is haram, we should understand that attending them is also haram, because it is a waste of money and time on things with which Allah, may He be glorified, is not pleased, and it comes under the heading of cooperating in sin and transgression. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and transgression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty} [Al-Ma''idah 5:2].

Concerning that, there is also the hadith of which the soundness is agreed upon, according to which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to forbid wasting wealth." (*Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Da'imah* 26/225).

Thirdly:

With regard to places which were basically set up for permissible leisure, such as public parks and seafronts (corniches), there may be some objectionable and haram matters in these places, such as immodesty and the like, but not everyone who goes there will necessarily be affected by that. Hence preventing people from going to such places is obviously too strict and causes extra hardship for people, as their need for such places has become something essential nowadays.

So there is nothing wrong with going to such places; however the individual should make sure that his conduct and that of the people with him, and anyone over whom he has any authority, is appropriate and is in accordance with Islamic teachings. And he should strive to make sure that neither he nor his family or those who are with him get involved in anything that is objectionable and haram. So he should avoid taking part in any objectionable matter or

watching it, and he should try to forbid any evils that he sees around him as much as he is able to.

The greatest good conduct that he should try to do in the places to which he goes out and during his leisure time is establishing prayer on time. Perhaps with the presence of good people, evil will be reduced. This is something that we see in real life. You will find a man giving the adhan in such places, and other people will follow him and pray with him. The reason why they get up and join him is because of his adhan and his openly giving the call to pray in congregation. When evil people find a righteous person in such places, or they see women observing correct shar'i hijab, many of them will be influenced by those righteous people, especially those who have not yet become fully accustomed to bad conduct. One should also offer advice and exhortation to whomever he can advise and exhort in those places of those who are doing objectionable things. However, we should be keen to seek out the times and places where objectionable and haram matters are least expected.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The prohibitions relating to listening to what is not appropriate have to do with what one actively listens to and focuses on, not merely hearing it. Something similar applies to looking at what is not appropriate; the prohibition has to do with looking deliberately, not an involuntary glance... The same applies to doing haram deeds that involve any of the five senses, namely hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching. The prohibitions apply to when one intentionally and actively does those things. As for what happens involuntarily, the prohibitions do not apply to it."(*Majmu' al-Fataawa* 5/566).

And Allah knows best.