

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of Allah,  
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

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## Publisher's Note

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may Allah's praise and peace be on our Prophet Muhammad, and his followers and companions.

This book, written by Shaykh 'Abdullah bin 'Abdul-Hamid Al-Atharî, clearly and succinctly argues why music and singing is only allowed under certain strict conditions in Islam. The learned shaykh qualifies his arguments with evidence from the Qur'an, Sunnah, the sayings of the pious *Salaf* and the Imams and scholars of the four schools of *fiqh*.

He outlines how most music and singing harms the *ummah*, particularly vulnerable and impressionable young people, because it promotes immorality and corruption and takes Muslims away from the worship of Allah, the Most High.

Thanks should go to the translator Ahmad Abdel-Hameed, English editor Abdul Waghied Misbach, senior designer Shahzad Ahmad and other members of the production team for bringing this book to the market. May Allah accept and bless all our efforts.

Abdul Malik Mujahid  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
March 2013





# Foreword

by the Noble Shaykh  
Dr. 'Abdur-Rahmân bin Sâlih Al-Mahmood

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may Allah's praise and peace be upon the most noble of the prophets and messengers, our Prophet Muhammad, and his followers and companions.

I have reviewed this book, written and compiled by our noble brother and Shaykh 'Abdullah bin 'Abdul-Hamîd Al-Atharî, regarding a matter which is not new, yet has caused great tribulations in our recent day and age. This is due to several reasons, including:

## 1. Media outlets:

Many media companies have made singing, musical instruments, music, and all that accompanies these matters – from scandalous attire and shameless, nude dancing – the main content in their programs, advertisements, shows, and so forth. They are doing this to attract viewers.

## 2. Odd Fatwas (religious verdicts) and misleading, biased books:

Authors of these *fatwas* and books have raced to make songs and musical instruments permissible. They claim that there is proof for their opinions. For the most part, these verdicts and books do not address the sinners, for they are already lost in their amusement. Rather, they intend to influence devout Muslim youth and those who already know the rulings on singing and musical instruments from the evidence found in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and from the clear opinions of legitimate scholars past and present. These scholars' *fatwas* and opinions are widely available and can be found by anyone who is sincerely seeking the truth and the path of success granted by Allah, the Most High.

**This compelling and beautifully researched book clarifies the rulings on singing and music** and the harm they inflict on the heart, the individual, the family, and the *ummah*. It warns Muslims about the danger of these matters, which causes corruption and immorality. These things turn people away from the Qur'an, worship, and obedience - the keys to the beautification and serenity of the heart; the removal of all worries and distress; and happiness in this world and the next.

I was delighted when I read this book because it is distinct in several ways:

1. The simplicity of its language, making it appropriate



He spoke the truth, may Allah have mercy on him. So listening, contemplating, teaching and acting on the words of Allah the Most High, has a great effect on hearts and souls!

May Allah the Most High grant the noble brother, 'Abdullah, the best of rewards for this book. I ask Him, the Most High, to ensure the *ummah* benefits from it.

And may Allah praise and grant peace on our Prophet Muhammad, his family, companions and followers.

**'Abdur-Rahmân bin Sâlih Al-Mahmood**

Vice President of the Muslim Scholars Association

05 Dhul-Hijjah, 1431 AH.

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia



# Foreword

by the noble Shaykh and great scholar  
Muhammad Sâlih bin Ahmad Al-Gharsî

All praise is due to Allah, and may Allah's praise and peace be upon Allah's Messenger, his family and companions.

I have looked over the book, *Singing and Music: A study in Islamic perspective*, by our brother, the researcher and caller to Islam, Shaykh 'Abdullah bin 'Abdul-Hamîd Al-Atharî, may Allah protect him and grant him steadfastness and success.

The author collected reports on the prohibition of singing and music from the Qur'an, the *hadeeths* of the Prophet ﷺ, statements of the noble companions and the great *tâbi'een*, the opinions of great scholars and *Imams* of *Ijtihâd*, and from the *fatwas* of their followers, both traditional and contemporary.

He has truly excelled in compiling and organizing the information. And where it was needed, he has digressed



Many scholars have written about the danger and harmful effects on the community and individuals of songs and musical instruments; and how many people have been tested with songs and music? These scholars include Ibn Al-Jawzī, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Al-Qayyim and Ibn Rajab.

This is a beautiful, well-researched book written by the noble Shaykh 'Abdullah bin 'Abdul-Hamīd Al-Atharī, may Allah the Most High, protect him. He clarifies the ruling on music, based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, statements of the *Salaf*<sup>1</sup>, and statements of the great scholars and *Imams* from the legitimate schools of Fiqh. He also presents a knowledge-based refutation of those who oppose the ruling on music, and debates them in a constructive way. He clarifies the truth regarding this issue, which is incumbent on everyone to follow. It is obligatory for Muslims to abide by the truth, to "ride its caravan" and to cast falsehood away, even if it has many supporters.

"Allah says the truth, and He guides to the [right] way."<sup>2</sup>

**'Abdullah Shākir Al-Junaidi**

General Director of

Ansār As-Sunnah Al-Muhammadiyah (Egypt)

8 Rabī' Al-Awwal, 1432 AH

1 TN: The word *Salaf* means predecessors, and it either refers to the Companions, their students, and their students' students, or just the Companions. The meaning is understood in context.

2 TN: Surat Al-Ahzāb 33: 4



## Introduction

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense, the God of people from the past and present. May Allah's praise and peace be on the Messenger of Allah, the seal of the prophets, the leader of the monotheists; the one sent as a mercy to the world, and on his beautiful and pure family, his noble and blessed companions, and those who follow him from the people of piety, *Tawhīd*, and *Jihād*, until the Day of Judgment.

We seek refuge with Allah from *Iblīs* – the enemy of Allah and the greatest enemy of the sons of Adam. We seek protection from his plans, plots, doubts, footsteps, and his possession, with which he has misguided, humiliated, and belittled his followers. One way in which he has diverted them from the straight path of Allah and the methodology of His blessed Prophet ﷺ, is through singing and music.

This is especially true in the age of technology, which *Iblīs* and his soldiers from among humans and *Jinn* have used to misguide and corrupt the land. Allah, the Most





## The Definition of *Singing and Music*

### Chapter 1



# The Definition of Singing & Music

**T**he definition of *ghinâ'* (singing) is to utter words with a rhythm; to repeat the sound through poetry, or prose, or something similar; to raise one's voice and prolong the sound, repeating it over and over, with a tune, or without a tune, whether it is accompanied by music or not.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Al-Athîr, may Allah have mercy on him, said, "If anyone raises his voice and repeats it, then the Arabs consider his voice *ghinâ'* (singing)."<sup>2</sup>

However, *ghinaa'* in the Arab language, and in the language of the righteous Imams of the *Salaf*<sup>3</sup> included (reciting) poetry, folk songs of the camel drivers, chants, and rhyming speech, which is called *nasheeds* in our age.

1 See *Lisân Al-'Arab*, vol. 15, p. 136, and *Fath Al-Bâri*, vol. 10, p. 55.

2 *An-Nihâyah*, p. 390.

3 TN: "The *Salaf*" in the Arabic language means past. Here it refers to the first three generations from the time of the Prophet; the companions, their students, and their students.



They would call all of this *ghinâ'* if one beautifies it with (a melodious) voice. This is the meaning they intended in their *Fiqh* statements and the poetry that has been relayed from them. This meaning is clearly manifested in the statement of the chosen Prophet ﷺ:

"Whoever does not *taghanna* (sing) the *Qur'an* then he is not from us,"<sup>1</sup>

**“**  
If anyone  
raises his voice  
and repeats it,  
then the Arabs  
consider his  
voice *ghinâ'*  
(singing).  
**”**

meaning beautify his voice when reciting it. The majority of the *Qur'an* rhymes and this is why this word is used here.

The Islamic texts (the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*) and the statements of the Imams of the *Salaf* should be understood in light of the pure Arabic language, before it was tainted with foreign languages and mistakes. This correct meaning which was understood by the Imams of the *Salaf* became problematic for many later generations. They started

thinking that when they (the *Salaf*) used the word *ghinâ'* they intended its later meaning (the meaning that is used today)! This is a mistake and a clear misunderstanding, because the *ghinâ'* which now includes musical

1 Reported by Al-Bukhari in *Kitab At-Tawhid*, number 7526.

instruments, corruption, and shamelessness, did not exist during the first three virtuous generations. Rather, this appeared and became known at the end of the third century (after *Hijrah*).

The great scholar and historian, Ibn Khaldun, may Allah the Most High have mercy on him, said,

"The Arabs used to break up their speech into equal parts according to the poetic meters, and the number of silent and non-silent letters. Then the camel drivers among them would sing it as they steered their camels, and the youth when they were alone. They used to call the intonation of their poetry *ghinâ'* (singing). When Islam came, they abandoned all this. They only found pleasure in the recitation of the Glorious *Qur'an*. They found in it what they could not find anywhere else. However, they sought a life of luxury after steadily getting the spoils of war gained from the (defeat of) other nations. Then the singers of Persia and Rome started moving around and ended up in the *Hijâz*. They became slaves of the Arabs<sup>1</sup>. They all sang with lutes, mandolins, *ma'azif*, and flutes."<sup>2 3</sup>

1 TN: As a result of the conquests, they became prisoners of war.

2 *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, p. 423.

3 Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah have mercy on him, said, "Know that during the prime period of the three virtuous generations - in *Hijâz*, *Shâm*, Yemen, Egypt, *Maghrib* (north-western Africa), Iraq, and *Khurâsân* - none of the people of religion, piety, asceticism, and worship would gather to listen to things like whistling and handclapping, not with a *duff* (tambourine), *kaff*, or flute. Rather, this innovation only came afterwards at the end of the second century. When the Imams saw it, they denounced it." See *Majmû' Al-Fatâwâ*, vol. 11, p. 569-591.



It increases the Satanic elements inside a person.

It makes a slave resemble sinners and disbelievers.

It incites the soul, which persistently commands one to do evil, to fall into sins and desires. This is definitely due to the plots and traps of Satan and his beautification of bad deeds and statements. This means that the person who listens to music is overcome by Satan.

It commands lewdness, immorality, heedlessness, bad manners, and lack of shame (in front of) Allah and His creation.

It beautifies obscenity, fornication, and prohibitions in general. It is a direct way to fall into these wrongdoings.

It wipes out the (life of the) heart, and scales it backwards; and thus does not approve of good and condemn evil.

It causes one to be cursed, which is to be expelled and removed from the mercy of Allah.

It results in a bad ending, may Allah protect us.

It results in divine punishment on individuals and the community.

Allah, the Most Exalted and High, says in His Perfect revelation,

﴿إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرًا لِمَن كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْفَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ سَمِيعٌ﴾

"Indeed in that is a reminder for whoever has a heart or listens while he has a present [heart]."<sup>1</sup>

1 Surat Qâf 50: 37.



## The Types of Singing

There is permissible and prohibited singing under Islamic law.

### 1. Permissible singing

A concession has been made, on the condition that it does not encompass anything that contradicts Islamic law in any small or big way. It should be void of all forms of evil and temptations.

It is merely raising one's voice, repeating it with a tune and intonation, with permissible lyrics, or beneficial lyrics such as admonitions and words of wisdom. It resembles the singing of cameleers, chants and *nasheeds* that have precise tunes and meters. It is called *ghinaa'* because it involves singing or humming the words.

It is permissible on the condition that it does not exceed the norm, and is not accompanied by musical instruments. Another condition is that it does not contain lyrics that contradict Islamic law, such as *shirk*, disbelief, hypocrisy, corruption, immorality, lewdness, sins, desires, shamelessness, ill manners, erotic descriptions of women, flirtation, describing women's beauty, or describing wine, pornography, prostitution, or immorality.



It cannot be sung by an adult woman who is heard by non-*mahram* men, whether she sings directly in front of them or behind a veil. It must not, or be a way, to divert one from fulfilling obligations (prayer or other obligations) and acts of worship. It must not become such a habit that the person becomes known for it.

If singing follows these guidelines, then there is no difference of opinion among the scholars that it is permissible. This form of entertainment is allowed by the Wise Legislator (Allah), with heavy stipulations and strict conditions. It is allowed because it gives the soul energy to carry out hard tasks, strengthens determination, removes boredom, eases the difficulty of travelling far distances, counters loneliness, increases one's happiness, among other permissible reasons.

This type of singing is recommended if it serves a religious purpose and fulfills the Islamic code. It only invokes good characteristics, noble manners, courage and so forth.

At times, it can be commanded, if it is done in the defense of Islam and the honor of the *ummah*.

This is why the Prophet ﷺ said to Hassân ibn Thâbit ؓ,

*"O Hassân! Reply on behalf of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ!  
O Allah! Support him with the Pure Spirit (Jibreel)!"*<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, there is wisdom in some poetry."<sup>2</sup>

It was said to Imam Ahmad, may Allah have mercy

1 Reported by Al-Bukhari.

2 Reported by Al-Bukhari.

on him, "O Abu Abdullah! These heart-softening poems which mention Paradise and Hellfire; what do you say about them? He said, 'Like what?' I said, 'They say,

إذا ما قال لي ربي      أما استحييت تعصيني  
وتخفي الذنب من خلقي      وبالعصيان تأتينني

If my Lord tells me:

Weren't you ashamed when you disobeyed me?

You hide your sins from my creation

And you came to me with disobedience.'

"He said, 'Repeat it to me?' So I repeated it to him. He stood up, entered his house, and closed the door. I heard him weeping inside his house as he repeated the verses."<sup>1</sup>

### Some types of singing are allowed:

1. Singing for traveling is called *ghinaa' ar-rukban* (the singing of the travelers). It is also called *al-hidâ'*. It is what the Arabs would recite from different types of poetry and chants as they steered their camels, to urge the camels to walk faster, to pass the time, to lessen the burden of travel, and to relax.
2. Singing during work includes the singing of poetry and chants, to remove boredom, ease the burden of work, increase one's motivation, keep one entertained, and to give one energy to carry out hard tasks.
3. The songs to remove feelings of loneliness, or to

1 Reported by Ibn Al-Jawzî in *Talbîs Iblîs*, page 278.



# The Proof from the Prophetic Sunnah

The statements of the Prophet ﷺ regarding the prohibition of singing and musical instruments explain these noble verses clearly. Below are a few of the authentic *hadeeths* on the matter:



## The First Hadeeth

The Prophet ﷺ said,

*"Verily, there will be from amongst my ummah groups who will make permissible: fornication, silk, wine, and musical instruments. Verily, a group (from them) will camp near a high mountain, and (a shepherd) will come to them in the morning with his herd. He will come to them for a need, and they will say to him, 'Come back to us tomorrow.' Allah will then destroy them at night, and will make the high mountain fall upon them. He will transform others<sup>1</sup> into monkeys and pigs until the Day of Judgment."<sup>2</sup>*

1 TN: From the same group of people, as mentioned in some of the narrations, as those mentioned by Ibn Hajar in his commentary on Sahih Al-Bukhari.

2 Reported by Al-Bukhari. See *Fath Al-Bâri* by Ibn Hajar – may Allah have mercy on him – vol. 10, p. 55.



## The Second Hadeeth

The Prophet ﷺ said,

*"Verily, a group from my ummah will drink wine, and call it by other than its name. Around them musical instruments will be played and female singers will sing. Allah will make the earth swallow them, and will make some of them (turn into) monkeys and pigs."<sup>1</sup>*



## The Third Hadeeth

The Prophet ﷺ said,

*"Verily, in my ummah there will be khasf, maskh, and qadhf<sup>2</sup>." They said, "O' Messenger of Allah! Will they testify that there is no (true) god but Allah?" He said, "Yes; (this will occur) when musical instruments (ma'âzif), wine, and the wearing of silk become widespread."<sup>3</sup>*

*Ma'âzif* is the plural of *ma'zafah* and means musical instruments.

The word *ma'âzif* is from the comprehensive, Prophetic speech and encompasses all types of old and new musical instruments, in all of its forms, including string and wind instruments.

Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy on him, said regarding the meaning of this hadeeth:

*"The way proof is established from this (hadeeth)*

1 Sahih Sunan Ibn Majah, no 4020.

2 TN: *Khasf* is when the earth opens and swallows everything on it, *maskh* is the transformation of humans into animals, and *qadhf* is being cast by stones from the sky.

3 Hasan. Reported by Ibn Abi Shaybah in his *Musannaf*, vol. 15, p. 164.



“Do not sell female (slave) singers, do not buy them, and do not teach them. There is no good in trading them, and their price is prohibited.”

“There is no benefit in false deeds. A concession is made for the souls who do not have the patience to do beneficial (deeds). It is okay if it is done only when needed, during Eid celebrations, weddings, when a traveler returns, and so forth. These (weaker souls) are the souls of women and children, for they are the ones who sang and beat the *duff* on these occasions during the time of the Prophet ﷺ and his Caliphs. Men did not do this. Rather, the *Salaf* used to call a male singer effeminate because he resembled women.”<sup>1</sup>

The Shaykh said on another occasion:

“Every pleasure which leads to pain, or prevents one from pleasure in the Hereafter is prohibited, including:

The pleasure gained by the disbelievers and sinners as they are haughty and corrupt on earth.

The pleasure gained from disbelief and hypocrisy.

The pleasure gained by those who take partners with Allah; and whom they love the way Allah should be loved.

The pleasure they gain out of their corrupt beliefs and prohibited acts of worship.

1 Al-Istiqamah vol. 1/p. 277.

The pleasure they gain when they are victorious over the pious believers, or when they unjustly kill a soul.

The pleasure gained out of fornication, stealing, and drinking intoxicants.

“This is why Allah mentions that their pleasures are misleading them and only bring them more sins. It is a plot against them, and it leads progressively to destruction. This is similar to eating good food that has poison in it.

“The pleasure that does not lead to either pleasure or pain in the Hereafter, or prevents one from the (eternal) pleasure of Paradise, is a false pleasure. This is because there is no benefit or harm in it. It is short-lived and the soul does not gain much pleasure out of it. Without a doubt, it occupies one from doing something better for the Hereafter, even if it does not prevent one from the essential pleasure of the Hereafter. This is what the



Prophet ﷺ intended when he said,

*‘Every source of entertainment that a man entertains himself with is false, except his throwing of his bow (and arrow), training his horse, and playing with wife; for they are from the truth.’*

“Similar to this is the Prophet’s statement to ‘Umar ؓ when he (arrived at his house) and found some young girls beating on the *duff*. He told them to be quiet when ‘Umar ؓ entered, and said,

*‘Verily this is a man who does not like falsehood.’*

This type of entertainment has some pleasure. Otherwise, no one who would have sought it.



## The Fatwas of the Contemporary Scholars

**T**he noble Shaykh, 'Abdul-'Azîz ibn Bâz, may Allah have mercy on him, was asked: "What is the ruling on listening to songs?" He replied:

"Listening to songs which contain any type of music is prohibited for anyone who intentionally listens to it, whether it is a man or a woman, whether it is in his home or outside of his home, such as in his car, in public places, and in private places. This is because he chooses to take part in something that Islamic law has prohibited. Allah, the Most Exalted and High, said,

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

'And of the people is he who buys idle speech to mislead [others] from the way of Allah without knowledge and who takes it in ridicule. Those will have a humiliating punishment.'<sup>1</sup>

1 TN: Surat Luqmân 31: 6.

"What the questioner mentioned is 'idle speech'; it is a tribulation upon the heart and entices him towards evil, diverts him from good, is a waste of a person's time and has no benefit. Thus, it is included in the general meaning of 'idle speech'. The one who sings and the one who listens to these songs is also included in the general meaning of 'the one who buys idle speech to mislead himself and others from the way of Allah'.

"Allah the Most High has condemned this, and threatened the one who does it with a humiliating punishment.

"The Qur'an and the Sunnah generally proves that there is a prohibition on singing and listening to it. The Prophet ﷺ said,

*'Verily, there will be from amongst my ummah groups who will make permissible: fornication, silk, wine, and (ma'azif) musical instruments. Verily, a group (from them) will camp near a high mountain, and (a shepherd) will come to them in the morning with his herd. He will come to them for a need, and they will say to him, "Come back to us tomorrow." Allah will then destroy them at night, and will make the high mountain fall upon them. He will transform others into monkeys and pigs until the Day of Judgment.'*

Reported by Al-Bukhari and other Imams of hadeeth.

"Ma'azif are music and its instruments; and includes singing and listening to it. Allah's Messenger ﷺ condemned those who allow fornication, a man wearing silk, drinking alcohol, (playing) musical instruments and listening to them. He mentioned musical instruments along with other