

MAWLIDUN NABAWI: FACT OR FICTION?

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَالصَّلَاةِ وَالسَّلَامِ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ
وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَمَنْ وَالَهُ

To proceed:

Indeed Allah sent his messenger, Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, as a warner and as a bearer of glad tidings, with the true religion that is to prevail over all other religions no matter how much the polytheists hate it. So he advised his Ummah, fulfilled the trust and strove in the way of Allah as He ought to be strived for, until there came to him the certainty. So countless salutations be upon him, his family, his companions and those who follow them in goodness up until the day of judgement.

WHAT IS THE MAWLID (MILAD-UN-NABI)?

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم "Mawlidun Nabawi" was used to refer to the time or place of the birth of Muhammad Ibn Abdullah صلى الله عليه وسلم. It was not until the 4th century AH that the term took on another meaning- the gathering of people to listen to specific recitations culminating in the story of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم's birth. Nowadays in some countries it is a national holiday.

The Mawlid ceremony was first introduced by the Shi'ah Fatimids of Egypt during the 4th century AH (**al-Maqrīzi (d. 845 AH): Mawā'iz al-i'tibār fī khiṭaṭ Miṣr wa-l-amṣār v.1 p.490. Also Ibn al-Ṭuwayr (d. 617 AH): Nuzhat al-Muqlatayn fī Akhbārt al-Dawlatayn p.217-219**). However, it was brought to a halt when the Ayyubis came to power in the 5th century AH and it was not until the 7th century AH that the Mawlid was revived by Muzaffar al Kawkaburi, the king of Irbil (**Ahmad Bin Muhammad al-Misry: al qawl al mu'tamad fi 'amal al mawlid**). He is reported to have prepared a feast of 5,000 roasted sheep, 10,000 chickens, 10,000 bowls of cream and 30,000 dishes of sweets [**As-suyuti: Al hawi lil fataawi 1/251**]. He gave 1000 gold dinars for a composition prepared for the Mawlid called *at-tanwir fii mawlid il bashiir in nadhiir* (**Ibn Kathir: Al Bidaaya wan Nihaaya pg. 144-146**). He personally joined the Sufis in their whirling dervish dances.

Ibn Hajr Al Asqalani (d.852 AH) commented on him: **"He was a liar, lied frequently, and a fabricator. He often slandered the scholars and the jurists of the past, used evil tongue and lacked insight into religious issues. This was reported by al hafiz Ibn Dihya."** (Lisan al Mizan V.4 p.295).

The Mawlid, thenceforth, spread amongst people who had fell to misguidance and blind following. During this period, prevailing ignorance and alien influences led to the acceptance of new philosophies and practices to be valid within Islam and thus the Mawlid became part of the "religion" of many Muslims.

The Mawlid today, with certain cultural variations, follows a similar pattern. People will

gather in a Masjid or other 'suitable' place. Portions of the Seerah, the Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم characteristics and physical appearance are all sung and chanted often with a chorus or the beating of a duff drum. This is followed by a traditional story about the birth of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When the awaited birth is announced, everybody in attendance will stand up in reverence. The recital is concluded with words of praise and thanks and then the food is served. Often processions (Juluus) are held through the streets in which banners are raised, flags are waved and litanies are chanted.

THE ISLAMIC RULING UPON THE MAWLID

The Messenger of Allah explained to us the matters of this religion in such detail that one of his companions, Abu Dharr (d.32 AH), said:

"The Messenger of Allah did not even leave a bird flapping its wings in the sky except that he narrated to us some knowledge concerning it"(Ahmad 5/153).

And the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"There has never been a Prophet except that it was his duty to command the people with everything that he knew was good for them and to warn them against everything he knew was evil for them" (Muslim 1844)

So did the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم command us with it?

If he did, then the Sahaabah would have been the first ones to celebrate it because they were the best of Muslims, and we have also been commanded with the Sunnah of the Sahaabah:

"Adhere to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided Caliphs. Clench it with your molar teeth."(Tirmidhi 2676)

In reality, the Mawlid was not commanded by Allah and his Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It was not observed by the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم nor the first three generations of Muslims or the Muslims after them until 400AH. If it was permissible, then surely the Sahaabah would have been the first to celebrate it because they were the best, the most knowledgeable, and the most noble of the Muslims. It is therefore a Bid'ah, which has been defined as:

"A newly invented way (in beliefs and actions) in the religion, in imitation of the Shari'ah, by which nearness to Allah is sought, not being supported by any authentic proof neither in its foundation nor in its practice." (Al-I'tisam ash-Shaatibi 1/37)

EVERY Bid'ah is forbidden and to be avoided. There is no such thing as a "good Bid'ah" because it goes against the statement of Allah: **"This day I have perfected your religion and have completed my favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion"** (Holy Qur'an 5:3). If something is already perfect, can it be any more perfect? Since Allah has perfected the religion, it cannot be claimed by anyone thereafter that further additions are beneficial or even allowable as this would be a statement of disbelief. That is why the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

"The worst of all affairs are the novelties (Bid'ah), and every Bid'ah is a deviation and every deviation is in the hellfire". (Abu Dawud 4607)

THE EVILS OF CELEBRATING THE MAWLID

The ceremony has been described in its general framework above. In reality, however, it is often not exempt from specific forms of Shirk in varying degrees, such as the recitation of litanies accompanied by drum beats excessively praising the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم in which certain divine characteristics are attributed to him; intercession is sought from him or seeking favours from Allah through his position or similar expressions which infringe upon the exclusive rights of Allah. This is despite the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم saying:

"Do not excessively praise me as the Christians praised the son of Mary. I am only a human so call me the slave of Allah and His Messenger." (Bukhari 3445)

Among such objectionable things is the act of rising from one's seat upon the mention of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه و سلم birth, for indeed he said:

"Whoever likes that people should stand in respect for him then let him take his seat in the hellfire." (Bukhari: Adab al Mufrad 977)

An important point to mention is that, although most of those who celebrate the Mawlid, celebrate it on 12th Rabi' al-Awwal, historians dispute the exact date of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه و سلم birth. Some hold it to be on the 8th Rabi' al-Awwal, and others on the 9th, 10th and 12th. Some scholars even put forward different months. Nevertheless, the Mawlid in reality, arose as an imitation of the Christians in their celebration of Christmas and the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم warned us against this:

"You will follow the practices of those that came before you inch by inch, yard by yard, so much so that if one of them was to enter the hole of a lizard you would run after." When asked if he was talking about the Jews and the Christians, he replied: "Who else?" (Ibn Maajah 3994)

However, it must be noted that the early Christians rejected the celebration of birthdays, even till this day some Christian groups refuse to celebrate it.

WHY YOU SHOULD NOT CELEBRATE THE MAWLID:

1. It was not legislated by Allah and his Messenger صلى الله عليه و سلم

2. The Sahaabah did not celebrate it, and they were the best of the Muslims:

"The best generation is my generation, then those who come after them, then those who come after them". (Bukhari 3650)

"Whoever contradicts the Messenger after the guidance has reached him and follows a way other than the believers (the Sahaabah), then he will be left to that path and will be landed in hell fire- what an evil destination!" (Holy Qur'an 4:115)

3. It is an imitation of the Christian Christmas. It is forbidden to imitate them in religious affairs and we have been commanded to differ from them. In fact, the origin of the birthday celebration pre-dates Christianity and is rooted in pagan astrology! They believed that evil spirits visited a person on the anniversary of their birth and to drive away such evil they used to gather around the person and make merry and they engaged in astrology to determine ones fate.

The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

"Whoever imitates a people is from them" (Abu Dawud 4031)

4. Celebrating the Mawlid is a means towards exaggerating the praise of Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم and therefore is an avenue to shirk. The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

"Do not praise me as the Christians praised the son of Mary, I am just a slave, so call me the slave of Allah and his Messenger" (Bukhari 3445)

5. A small Bid'ah leads to a big Bid'ah, a small sin leads to a big sin, then the sinner becomes pleased with his sin until he considers it permissible and he becomes destroyed! A classic example of this is the incident which occurred during the time of the Sahaabah:

'Amr ibn Salmah said, "We used to sit by the door of Abdullah ibn Mas'ood before the morning prayer, so that when he came out we would walk with him to the masjid. (One day) Abu Moosa al-Ash'aree came to us and said, 'Has Abu 'Abdurrahmaan come out yet?' We replied, 'No.' So he sat down with us until he (ibn Mas'ood) came out. When he came out we all stood along with him, so Abu Moosa said to him, 'O Abu Abdurrahmaan! I have just seen something in the masjid which I deemed to be evil, but all praise is for Allaah, I did not see anything except good.' He enquired, 'Then what is it?' (Abu Moosa) replied, 'If you live you will see it. I saw in the masjid people sitting in circles awaiting the

prayer. In each circle they had pebbles in their hands and a man would say, "Repeat Allaahu Akbar a hundred times." So they would repeat it a hundred times. Then he would say, "Say Laa ilaaha illallaah a hundred times." So they would say it a hundred times. Then he would say, "Say subhaanallaah a hundred times." So they would say it a hundred times.' (Ibn Mas'ood) asked, 'What did you say to them?' (Abu Moosa) said, 'I did not say anything to them. Instead I waited to hear your view or what you declared.' (Ibn Mas'ood) replied, 'If only you had ordered them to count up the evil deeds they acquired and assured them that their good deeds would not be lost!' Then we went along with him (Ibn Mas'ood) until he came to one of these circles and stood and said, 'What is this which I see you doing?' They replied, 'O Abu Abdurrahmaan! These are pebbles upon which we are counting takbeer, tahleel and tasbeeh.' He said, 'Count up your evil deeds. I assure you that none of your good deeds will be lost. Woe to you, O Ummah of Muhammad sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam! How quickly you go to destruction! These are the Companions of your Prophet sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and who are widespread. There are his sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam clothes which have not yet decayed and his bowl which is unbroken. By Him in Whose Hand is my soul! Either you are upon a religion better guided than the religion of Muhammad sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam or you are opening the door of misguidance.' They said, 'O Abu Abdurrahmaan! By Allaah, we only intended good.' He said, 'How many there are who intend good but do not achieve it. Indeed Allaah's Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam said to us, "A people will recite the Qur'aan but it will not pass beyond their throats." By Allaah! I do not know, perhaps most of them are from you.' Then he left them."

Amr ibn Salmah (the sub-narrator) said, "We saw most of those people fighting against us on the day of Nahrawaan, along with the Khawaarij." (Sunan ad-Daarimi 1/79)

6. It causes hypocrisy and not love to grow in the heart. Hence, you will find the innovators, when it comes to the waajibaat they are negligent, but when it comes to their Bid'ah they are the first in the queue!

7. It brings death to the Sunnah, that is why you will find that those who celebrate the Mawlid once a year, they rarely observe the Sunnah of fasting on Mondays. Ibn Abbas (d.67 AH) said:

"When Bid'ah is created then the Sunnah dies, and continues to die until Bid'ah is alive and the Sunnah is dead" (Tirmidhi 187).

8. It causes chaos and divisions within the Ummah. No group has ever split from the Jamaa'ah except by way of an innovation. So when they return back to the Qur'an and Sunnah then Allah will give them back their honour and will establish them upon the Earth. Allah said:

"Allâh has promised those amongst you who believe and do righteous actions that He will certainly grant them Khilâfah (succession) on the earth, as He granted it to those before them; and that He will grant them authority to practice their religion, the one that He has chosen for them; and He will change their state from one of fear in which they lived to one of peace and security, providing they will worship Me alone, not associating any partner with Me. But whosoever disbelieves after this, then they are the rebellious ones."

(Holy Qur'an 24:55)

9. Claiming that the Mawlid is a good innovation is tantamount to accusing the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم of either ignorance or treachery. Either he was ignorant, therefore could not convey the information to us or he was treacherous because he knew about it but failed to tell us. We know he was not ignorant about the religious issues because Allah said:

"And We have revealed to you the Book, as a clarification and explanation for every single matter" (Holy Qur'an 16:89)

We know he was not treacherous because he said:

"There is not a good that will take you closer to paradise except that I have commanded you with it, and there is not an evil that will take you closer to the hell fire except that I have warned you against it" (Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah 97/7)

Imaam Maalik (d.179 AH) said:

"Whoever thinks that there is such thing as a good innovation in Islam, has accused the Prophet's صلى الله عليه و سلم of treachery because Allah said "This day I have perfected your religion...". So what was not religion then, is not religion today" (Al-'Itisaam as-Shaatibi 1/38)

10. It brings about wastage of wealth: A great amount of wealth is expended in this celebration, as is witnessed in our societies. If only that wealth was spent on that which Allah is pleased with:

"And spend not like that of a spendthrift. Indeed they are the brothers of the devils." (Holy Qur'an: 17:26-27)

REFUTING THE ARGUMENTS OF THE INNOVATORS

Since neither the prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم nor his companions ever celebrated the Mawlid, there exists no evidence for it neither in the Qur'an nor in the Sunnah. So what the Ahlul-Bid'ah now do is that they resort to the ayaatul mutashaabihaat (the verses that are ambiguous in our perception) to prove their stance. Allah said:

"It is He Who has sent down to you the Book: In it are verses which are Muhkam (clear), they are the foundation of the Book. And others which are Mutashaabihaat (ambiguous). As for those in whose hearts is perversity, they follow the Mutashaabihaat thereof, seeking discord and searching for its meanings. But none knows its meanings except for Allaah. And those firmly grounded in knowledge say: 'We believe in it all as being from our Lord.' And none will grasp the message save men of understanding." (Holy Qur'an: 3:7)

However, when we return these aayaatul mutashaabihaat back to the aayaatul muhkamaat, we find that the reality is other than the one which the Ahlul bid'ah are trying to prove. That

is why Imam Ahmad (d.240 AH) said:

“If a person was to ponder over the Qur’an, he would be able to refute every innovator in the innovation that he has fallen into.” (Sunnah al-Khallal 1/547)

After realising that the Ahlus Sunnah will not be deceived by their fallacies, they despair and they resort to intellectual and emotional arguments which we shall see here:

Q. Is not celebrating the Prophet's صلى الله عليه و سلم birthday an expression of faith and love, a means of keeping his memory alive? Does it not bring joy and happiness? Does it not contain valid acts of worship such as Zikr and duat?

A. Our love for the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم is naturally on a different plane than that of others because our debt to him is greater and exceptional in kind. However, any act performed with the sincere intention of drawing closer to Allah must first be prescribed by Him either through His book or through His Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم, then it must be done correctly, precisely as demonstrated or instructed by the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم. If one's pleasure is derived from the coming of Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم into the world, then it must be a continual pleasure manifested in gratitude to Allah and obedience to Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم at all times. Just as Allah said:

"Say (O Muhammad to mankind): ‘If you truly love Allah THEN FOLLOW ME, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins...’" (Holy Qur’an: 3:31)

This however, is not the case, as we see many of those who celebrate the Mawlid they are lax concerning the duties which Allah and his messenger صلى الله عليه و سلم have made obligatory such as the 5 Salah, growing the beard, keeping the clothing above the ankles...

If, however, one considers the day itself as an occasion of happiness, it should be remembered that this day was also the day of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه و سلم death, an event besides which the Sahaabah found all other disasters light in comparison and could not possibly have celebrated.

Question: How can something in which the ingredients are permissible (ie.the valid acts of worship) be Haraam (ie. the Mawlid)? The answer is understood with a simple example: the two rakah Sunnah pray after the Salatuz Zuhr is recommended to perform. Also it is well known that pray in congregation is 27 times better than pray by itself. Does that now mean that we can perform these two rakah Sunnah in congregation???

Al-Bayhaqi (d.458 AH) narrates:

“Sa’iid Ibn al Musayyib saw a man praying more than two rakah after sunrise with excessive ruku’ and sujuud, so he forbade him from that. The man replied: ‘Ya Aba Muhammad, will Allah punish me for praying? He said: ‘No, BUT HE WILL PUNISH YOU FOR DIFFERING WITH THE SUNNAH!’” (Sunan al-kubra 2/466).

So yes, maybe the Mawlid does contain valid acts of worship for which we hope for Allah's reward, however, the Mawlid itself as a whole is an innovation for which no reward can be hoped for.

Q. Did not the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم used to fast on Mondays and Thursdays citing the reason "as for Monday, it was the day I was born." (Muslim 1162)?

A. The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم commemorated the day of his birth NOT THE DATE. Monday is a weekly occurrence but the Mawlid is celebrated yearly. He did not follow up his fast by any celebration nor did he encourage it. Besides, this was not the only reason why he used to fast on this day. Other narrations mention that he also fasted on these days because Monday was the day when he started receiving the revelation (**Muslim 1162**), and Mondays and Thursdays are the days when the record of our deeds are raised up to Allah (**Tirmidhi 747**). Also, it is forbidden to fast on an 'Id day; if the Mawlid was a legitimate 'Id then why did the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم fast on it?

Furthermore, there is not a single narration from the 6 collections which mention an exact date for the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم birth. It is important to mention here that within Arab custom, an individual is recognised by the date of his death and not by the date of his birth. In fact, the date of birth is often not known, hence, the difference of opinion with regards to the date of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه و سلم birth:

1. 2nd Rabī al-Awwal. Abū Ma'shar al-Sindī (d. 171 AH), Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463), et al.
2. 8th of Rabī al-Awwal. Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456 AH), Imām Mālik (d. 179 AH), Az-Zuhrī (d. 128 AH) Ibn Diḥya (d. 610 AH), et al.
3. 10th of Rabī al-Awwal. Ibn Asākir (d. 571 AH), Abū Ja'far al-Bāqir (d. 114 AH), et al.
4. 12th of Rabī al-Awwal. Ibn Ishāq (d. 150), who reported it without any reference.
5. 17th of Rabī al-Awwal. This is the opinion of some Shi'ite scholars.
6. 22nd of Rabī al-Awwal. This opinion has also been attributed to Ibn Ḥazm.
7. In the month of Ramaḍān, without a specific date, in the 'Year of the Elephant'. This was the opinion of the famous early historian al-Zubayr b. al-Bakkār (d. 256).
8. 12th of Ramaḍān, in the 'Year of the Elephant'. This opinion was reported by Ibn Asākir as being held by some early authorities.

The fact that his date of birth is unknown is a proof in and of itself that the Muslims never used to celebrate his birthday, because if they did, they would have recorded his date of birth and we would have known it. It just so happens that when the people first started celebrating the Mawlid they chose the date of 12th Rabī' Al-Awwal due to the popularity of Ibn Ishaq with them; so when this celebration spread, so did the date. However, the other dates that have been put forward by the scholars cannot be denied, even though the 8th Rabī' Al-Awwal seems to be the weightiest position.

Q. The Prophet's used to celebrate their own birthdays. Allah quotes 'Isa عليه السلام as saying: "And the peace on me the day I was born and the day I die and the day I am raised alive". (Holy Qur'an: 19:33)

A. This ayah does not mention anything about celebrating Birthdays! The Muslims never understood this verse to mean celebrating birthdays otherwise we would have found the Sahaabah celebrating the Birthday of 'Isa عليه السلام and the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would have commanded it.

If **"peace on me the day I was born"** was an evidence for the permissibility of celebrating the Mawlid then using the same logic, the day on which the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم died is also a day of celebration because the ayah continues **"...and the day I die..."** (We seek Allah's refuge).

Q. Did not the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم celebrate the birthday of his son Ibrahim by freeing a slave [Ta'rikh Ibn Kathir, 'Birth of Ibrahim']?

A. No, the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم only celebrated the birth of his son, not his birthday since this narration mentions nothing about any annual commemoration.

We are recommended to celebrate our children's birth but not commemorate it annually.

Q. Is there not a narration that states that a person saw Abu Lahab in a dream and asked him about his punishment and Abu Lahab replied that his punishment in hell is reduced every Monday because he rejoiced at the birth of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and freed a slave girl?

A. The hadith in question is:

Al-Bukhari said: "Urwah said: 'Thuwaibah was the freed slave of Abu Lahab and she was freed to suckle the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When Abu Lahab died, some of his family members saw him in a dream in a bad state and asked him 'What have you encountered?' Abu Lahab replied 'I have not found any rest since I left you except I have been given water to drink between my fingers because I freed Thuwaibah.'" (Bukhari 5101).

Al-Bukhari did not say: **"Every Monday Abu Lahab is released from punishment..."** rather, this is additional information from one of the narrators in the chain and is not actually part of the hadith itself.

Then regarding this report al-Haafiz Ibn Hajr said:

"In the Hadith there is an indication that the Disbeliever may receive benefit in the Hereafter on account of a righteous deed, however this is contrary to what is apparent from the text of the Qur'aan. Allaah said:

'And We shall attend to whatever deeds the Disbelievers did, and We shall make them as scattered dust particles' (Holy Qur'an: 25:23)

And this is responded to firstly by the fact that the report is mursal (disconnected), it was reported in mursal form by `Urwah, and he did not mention who narrated it to him; and even if it were taken to be connected, then what occurs in the report is a dream, and therefore there is no proof in it; and perhaps the one who saw the dream had not accepted Islaam at that time, so there would be no evidence in it; and secondly, even if it were accepted, then it is possible that anything relating to the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم is a specific exception to that, as indicated by the story of Aboo Taalib, as has preceded- that the punishment will be lessened for him, such that he is transferred from the lowest depths to a shallow part; and al-Bayhaqee said: 'What occurs regarding good being rendered null and void for the Disbeliever, then its meaning is that they will not escape the Fire, nor enter into Paradise on account of it; but it is possible that the punishment which they became deserving of for the crimes which they committed besides Shirk, may be lessened for them on account of the good deeds which they did....' (Fathul-Baari 9/145)

In addition, this Hadith doesn't contain any information about when Thuwaibah was freed, whether it was on the day of the Prophet's صلى الله عليه و سلم birth or even when Abu Lahab heard about the Prophet's صلى الله عليه و سلم birth. Such claims of the Ahlul Bid'ah contradict historical accounts in the Seerah:

"What has come in the Seerah contradicts this narration because Abu Lahab did not free Thuwaibah until a long time after she suckled the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم just prior to the Hijrah..." (Ibn Hajr: Fathul-Baaree 9/84)

If, for arguments sake, we do accept this mursal narration; it still would not prove the celebration of the Mawlid. This is because the hadith does not mention anything about the Mawlid, never mind an annual celebration.

Q. Did not Allah command us to rejoice in His mercy: "Say: In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy let them rejoice, that is better than what they accumulate"(Holy Qur'an: 10:58) and was not Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم the greatest of his mercies?

A. The "mercy" referred to here is not the "mercy" claimed by the innovators.

Ibnul Qayyim (d.751 AH) said:

“Ibn Abbas, Qatadah, Mujahid, al-Hasan and others have said ‘and His mercy is the Qur’an’ “(Madarij as-salikiin 3/97)

Ibn Kathir (d.774 AH) said:

“Rejoice in what has come from Allah. Let them rejoice in the guidance and the religion of truth. It is better than anything they might rejoice in”. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

This verse does not prove the celebration of the Mawlid in any way whatsoever because if this was the case the Sahaabah would have celebrated it because they best understood the Qur’an after the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم.

Q. If Jumuah is special because Aadam was created on it then is not the birthday of Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم worthier?

A. The hadith being referred to is:

"The best day the sun has risen is on yawmul Jumuah, and (not "because") Aadam was created on it, on it he entered Jannah, on it he was expelled from it and the hour will not begin except on it" (Muslim 854).

It is not always the case that when a day comes, in which a significant historical event took place, that we take that day as a day of celebration because if that was the case then we would have taken the day in which the legislations of the Shari'ah became complete as a day of celebration:

"Ibn Abbas said that a Jew said to Umar: 'There is a verse in your book that if it was revealed to us we would have taken it as a day of celebration' Umar asked which verse it was and he replied: 'This day I have perfected your religion...'(Holy Qur'an 5:3) Umar replied: 'Indeed it was revealed on yamul 'iidain: yamul Jumuah and Yamul Arafat'"(Bukhari 45)

The point is that the same ruling should not be given for both events because Islam legislated for one but not the other. Also, Yawmul Jumuah is not honoured because Aadam was created on it; the hadith just states that this event took place on this day but does not mention that it is honoured because of this.

Q. The majority of the Muslim Ummah have united upon the permissibility of celebrating the Mawlid and Ibn Mas'ud said: “Whatever the Muslims collectively deem as good is good with Allah and whatever the Muslims collectively deem as bad is bad with Allah”. How can such a large majority be wrong?

A. This hadith has been taken out of context. The full hadith is:

“Allah looked into the hearts of mankind and found that the heart of Muhammad صلى الله عليه و سلم was the finest, so He chose him to be his beloved and sent him with His message. Then Allah looked into the hearts of everybody else and found that the hearts of

Muhammad's صلى الله عليه و سلم companions were the finest, so He made them succeed His Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم and made them fight for His religion. Therefore, anything which the Muslims collectively deem to be good is good with Allah and anything which the Muslims collectively deem to be bad is bad with Allah." (Ahmad 3600).

As- Sindhi said: "The 'Muslims' in this narration is obviously referring to the companions. Therefore, the consensus must be that of the companions and the consensus of others cannot be included, let alone the agreement of a single group of people on one opinion..."

The notion that the Ummah as a whole are united upon celebrating the Mawlid is a fallacy. The scholars of the Ummah never united upon misguidance, rather they spoke in refutation of this celebration ever since it's invention. From them we have the likes of:

-Shaikhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (d.728 AH), who wrote a refutation against it in 'Iqtida al-siratal Mustaqim'.

-Imaam ash-shaatibi (d.790 AH), who wrote a refutation of it in 'al-'itisaam'.

-Shaikh Taaj al-deen al-lakhami, who wrote an entire book denouncing it.

-Imam al-Faakihaani (d.734), who wrote a letter (al mawrid fi amalil mawlid) in refutation of it.

Allah said: "And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah" (Holy Qur'an: 6:116)

The prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

"Indeed Islam began as something strange and it will return to being something strange just like it began. So glad tidings to the strangers." When it was asked 'Who are the strangers?' He replied "A righteous FEW amidst an evil majority, those who oppose them are GREATER IN NUMBER than those who follow them" (Ahmad 6650)

The prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

"Indeed the Jews split into 71 sects, all of them in the hell-fire except one. The Christians split into 72 sects, all of them in the hell-fire except one. My Ummah will split into 73 sects, all of them in the hell-fire except one, and it is the Jamaa'ah." (Ibn Maajah 3992)

Here the prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم is informing us that the majority of the Ummah will end up in the hell-fire. Furthermore Abu Shaamah (d.665 AH) said:

"The order to stick to the Jama'ah means sticking to the truth; even if those who stick to the truth are few and those who oppose it are many, since the truth is that which the first Jama'ah from the time of the prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم and his companions were upon. No attention is given to the great number of the people of futility coming after them." (Al baa'ith 'alal bid'ah wal hawaadith P.19)

Q. What about the numerous scholars who have written in support of the Mawlid. Such as Shah Waliullah Dehlvi (in: al qawl al jaleel p.74) and Shah Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlvi (in: Madarij an-nubuwwah v.2 p.34)?

The same question can be asked about all those scholars (mentioned above) and others who have written in refutation of the Mawlid.

If what is attributed to these scholars is indeed authentic, then we respond with the saying of Imam Maalik (d.179 AH) who said:

“Every person’s sayings may be accepted or rejected except for his (pointing towards the grave of the prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم)” (Al Ihkaam Fii Usool Al Ahkaam 1/145)

So how do we determine who is correct? Allah said:

"O you who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger and those of you who are in authority. If you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination." (Holy Qur'an: 4:59).

So let us refer this affair back to Allah and His messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم :

Did Allah command the Mawlid? No

Did His messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم command it? No

Whoever claims otherwise needs to bring their evidence, as Allah said:

“Bring your proof if you are truthful” (Holy Qur'an: 27:64).

Q. What do you say about the narration of As-Suyutee (d.911 AH) wherein which he said: "Another primary text has occurred to me by which the legitimacy of the Mawlid can be derived, namely what is reported by al-Bayhaqee from Anas that 'the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم performed Aqeeqah for himself after his prophethood.' And it occurs that his grandfather Abdul Muttalib performed the Aqeeqah for him when he was a child of seven years, and the Aqeeqah is not repeated a second time. So therefore this is to taken to mean that what the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did was to openly manifest gratitude for Allaah making him the mercy for the universe and to legislate this for his Ummah, just as he used to do by his sending salaam upon himself. Therefore it is recommended for us that we openly manifest gratitude for his birth." ('Husnul Maqsad' of as-Suyutee contained in his 'Haawi lil Fataawi')?

A. Imam Maalik (d.179 AH) was asked about this narration and he replied:

“Do you see the Companions of the Messenger of Allaah صلى الله عليه وسلم, for whom the Aqeeqah was not performed in the days of Jaahiliyyah, performing Aqeeqah for themselves in Islaam? This is from the rejected (narrations)” (Ibn Rushd al-Maaliki: AL-Muqaddamaat al-Mumahhadaat 2/15]

Imam an-Nawawi (d.676 AH) said:

“This hadith is false. Al Baihaqi said: rejected”. (Majmu’ Sharh Muhadhdhab an-nawawi 8/330)

Ibn Hajr (d.852 AH) said:

“This hadith is rejected because it contains Abdullah Bin Muharrar, and he is severely weak.” (Talkhees al-Habeer 4/147)

Q. Did not Ibn taymiyyah (d.728 AH) say: “So honouring the Mawlid, and taking it as a festive season (mawsam) which some of the people have done, there is a great reward in it due to the good intention and the honouring of the Messenger”?

A. Once again, this quote has been taken out of context. Before mentioning that, Shaikhul Islam says: “Indeed the Eed is a legislated law, so what Allaah legislates is followed, otherwise do not innovate in this religion that which is not part of it. As for the Mawlid that the people have invented, either in opposition to the Christian celebration of the birthday of Jesus, or out of love for the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم and in honour of him. And Allaah will reward them for this love and ijtihaad, but NOT FOR THE BID’AH of taking the day of the birth of the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم as an Eid... so if you were to see someone doing this (celebration) and he were to not leave it except for an evil greater than it, then do not call him to leaving the evil so that he may perform something more evil than this... So honouring the mawlid, and taking it as a festive season which some of the people have done, there is a great reward in it due to the good intention and the honouring of the Messenger صلى الله عليه و سلم because of what I have previously stated to you - that it is possible that something be good for some of the people and be denounced by the strict believer. This is why it was said to Imaam Ahmad about some of the leaders, that they spent 1000 dirhams upon the mushaf or similar to this. So he replied, ‘leave them, for this is better than them spending it on gold (jewellery).’ This despite the fact that the madhhab of Imaam Ahmad was that it is abhorrent to decorate the mushafs...” (Iqtidaa Siraat al-Mustaqeem 2/618)

To further highlight his position on this issue, Ibn Taymiyyah mentions on the next page:

"But this does not prevent one from detesting and prohibiting it and to replace it with a legislated action containing no bid'ah.... Just as the Jews and Christians may find benefit in their worship because it is possible that their worship includes an aspect of what is legislated but this does not necessitate that you perform their actions of worship or you report their words because all of the innovations contain evil that outweighs their good, this due to the fact that if their good outweighed the evil then why would the Sharee'ah have disregarded it? So we depend upon the fact that it's sin is greater than it's benefit and this necessitates forbiddance."

So from this we understand that Ibn Taymiyyah only approved of the Mawlid from the angle of it being the lesser of the two evils, in the case of the practitioner entering into a greater evil were he to leave celebrating the Mawlid.

This principle is also found in a narration that mentions that once Ibn Taymiyyah was walking with his students when they came across some drunken Mongol Soldiers (who were Muslims) and he did not censure them. When he was asked by his students why he did not censure them he replied "Because when they are sober they kill Muslims". So they being drunk was the lesser of the two evils as it relates to them killing Muslims.

Q. Abu al-Qasim al-Suhayli, Ibn Kathir & Ibn Sayyid al-Nas quote: "Iblis, the curse one, in his life screamed and cried fiercely four times. The first was when he was declared cursed. The second was when he was thrown from elevation to the lowest level. The third was when the joyous birth of the Sovereign of both Worlds (Peace be upon him) occurred and the fourth was when Surat al-Fatihah was revealed." (Ibn Kathir: Al Bidaya wan Nihaya v.2 p.166). If Iblis cried on this day should we not celebrate it?

A. I am not aware of the authenticity of this narration. However, even if it were to be authentic then it still wouldn't prove the validity of the Mawlid because this narration mentions that Iblis cried when the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم was born. The narration mentions nothing about Iblis crying annually on the birthdate of the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم. As we know, it is permissible to celebrate births but not the birthday which occurs annually.

Even if the narration was to mention that Iblis cries annually during the Mawlid, it still wouldn't lend any support towards the celebration because of that very same reason ie. the narration does not mention anything about any celebration.

Furthermore, if on the basis of Iblis crying when Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم born, we are now allowed to celebrate the Mawlid, then from the same intellect we can say that the other three occasions when Iblis cried are also days of celebrations?!

Q. Allah never told us to do many things - Allah never told us to drive cars, to listen to the radio or to go to the gym. These are only a few examples, there are millions of things that we do in our everyday lives that we were not told to do by Allah or the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم but that does not in and of itself mean that we cannot do those things.

A. This is indeed the speech of one who lacks understanding of the Arabic language and the Islamic Sciences. And this brings to mind the saying of Imam As-Shafi'iy (d.206 AH) who said:

"Never did the people deviate from the truth and fall into catastrophe except due to their ignorance and abandonment of the Arabic language and their inclination towards the language of Aristotle" (Sawnul muntaq as-Suyuti 1/47-48)

Islamic terminology often have dual meanings: a linguistical meaning and a juridical meaning.

The definition of Bid'ah in the language is "an innovation" and this is known as Bid'ah lughawi. These may be good or bad depending upon their usage (**Ibn Hajr: Fathul Bari' 13/286**).

The definition of Bid'ah in the Shari'ah is **"A newly invented way in beliefs and actions, in imitation of the Shari'ah, not being supported by any authentic proof neither in its foundation nor the manner in which it is performed"** (Al-'itisam ash-Shaatibi 1/37) and this is known as Bid'ah Shar'i.

As for worldly innovations such as cars, radio, gym etc, then these things are Bid'ah Lughawi and are permissible unless they are used against Islam or there exists a specific text forbidding them. The evidence being the saying of Allah:

"Say: Do you see the provisions that Allah has sent down for you: Some of which you declare to be forbidden and some of which you declare to be permissible?! Say: Has Allah commanded you or do you forge a lie against Allah? (Holy Qur'an: 10:59)

However, we are not concerned with Bid'ah Lughawi; we are concerned with Bid'ah Shar'i. As for Bid'ah Shar'i then it is always evil and there is no such thing as a "good Bid'ah Shar'i" because it contradicts the statement of Allah:

"This day I have perfected for you your religion and I have completed my favour upon you and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion" (Holy Qur'an: 5:3)

If something is already perfect then can it be any more perfect? If something is already complete then can it be any more complete?

The prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

"And beware of the newly invented matters, for indeed every newly invented matter is an innovation, and every innovation is a deviation and every deviation is in the hellfire" (Tirmidhi 2676)

From amongst the Sahaabah we have the likes of Ibn Abbaas (d.67 AH) who said:

"Indeed the most hated of affairs to Allah are the innovations" (al-Baihaqi: sunan al kubra 4/316)

And we have the likes of Ibn Mas'ood (d.32 AH) who said:

"Follow and do not innovate, for indeed you have been sufficed and every innovation is a deviation" (Ad-daarimi no.211, at-Tabaraani in al-kabeer 9/154)

Imam Abu Hanifah (d.150 AH) said:

"Binding upon you are the narrations and beware of the newly invented matters for all of it is innovation" (Sawnul Muntaq as-suyuti pg.32)

Imam Maalik (d.179 AH) said:

"Whoever claims that there is such thing as a 'good innovation' has indeed accused the messenger of Allah of treachery because Allah said: 'This day I have perfected your religion...' So, that which was not part of the religion on that day can never be part of the religion today!" (Al'itisaam ash-Shaatibi 1/38)

Imam Shafi'iy (d.206 AH) said:

"That you meet Allah having committed every other sin other than Shirk is better for you than to meet Allah with a Bid'ah" (al'itigaad al-baihaqi pg.158)

Imam Ahmad (d.241 AH) said

"The fundamental principles of the Sunnah according to us are: holding fast to what the Sahaabah were upon, taking them as a model to be followed, abandoning the innovations for all of it is deviation" (Usoolus sunnah pg.1-3)

So therefore every Bid'ah Shar'i is Haraam but not every Bid'ah Lughawi is Haraam.

Mawlidun Nabawi is not only a Bid'ah Lughawi but also a Bid'ah Shar'i because it is performed as an act of worship with the intention of gaining nearness to Allah but it is not supported by any evidence from the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

For a detailed refutation of the concept of 'Bid'ah Hasanah' please visit: www.bidah.com

ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVES TO UNLAWFUL CELEBRATIONS

The celebration of the two 'Ids should be more emphasised and established as a family tradition. These should be festivals that one looks forward to and occasions to remember throughout the year. Other occasions such as weddings and births (not the annual "birthday"!) become opportunities for Halal enjoyment. Also, the month of Ramadan provides a unique atmosphere for spiritual growth and closeness within families, when properly nourished, will enable young Muslims to associate happiness with worship and to perceive the emptiness of Materialistic culture.

CONCLUSION

Due to the falsehood of the Mawlid, it should be deplored vehemently and those who persist in such transgressions after advice has reached them then they are the ones who are most deserving of outrage.

"Whoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand (by physical exertion), and if he is unable then with his tongue (by speaking out against it), and if he is unable then with his heart (by hating it) and that is the least of faith." (Muslim 49)

They are reminded not to accuse those who disapprove of the Mawlid of not loving the

Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم as this is an implication of disbelief as well as a false statement.

Allah is not pleased with this celebration nor will He accept it so DO NOT celebrate it. The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

"Whoever introduces into this affair of ours something which is not from it, then it will be rejected" (Bukhari 2697)

Whoever claims that they themselves did not invent the Mawlid but they are just acting upon it, then we have as a refutation of him another hadith in which the Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

"Whoever performs an action which is not in accordance with our affair, then it will be rejected" (Muslim 1718)

O Muslims return back to the Qur'an and Sunnah! Avoid these repugnant celebrations, for they do not bring you any closer to Allah nor do they increase you in good regardless of how beautiful they may seem.

Abdullah Ibn Umar (d.73 AH) said:

"Every Bid'ah is misguidance even if the people see it as something good." (Ibn Battah: Al-Ibaanah 1/339)

The Prophet صلى الله عليه و سلم said:

"I have left you upon a CLEAR path, no one deviates from it except that he is destroyed" (Ibn Maajah 43)

أحسن الله إليكم

والله أعلم وصلى الله وسلم على نبينا محمد

سبحانك اللهم وبحمدك أشهد أن لا إله إلا أنت أستغفرك وأتوب إليك

وسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته