

With regards to blameworthy vs. good innovations, we should ask ourselves: Did the Sahaba organize iftars during the month of Ramadan? Did they have fundraising dinners to raise money for schools & other projects? Did they have structured, Western /Islamic schools for their children to attend? Did they pray on carpets? Annual conferences where hundreds of Muslims gather to attend lectures & bazaars? Online Islamic Universities? The Sahaba didn't do any of these but as a community all of the above are norms today & nobody is complaining of bid'ah.

When you think of why the Sahaba didn't celebrate mawlid the answer is very clear: they didn't need to. They had the Prophet (p) there with them as a living, breathing reality. Their hearts were filled with love for him. We on the other hand have our daily, hectic lives and are centuries away from his presence. And just like the Sahaba didn't hold large conferences because they didn't need them for imaam boosters or to sell Islamic wares. And just like they didn't send their children to schools based on modern Western theory and a mix of Islam because they could send them to qualified teachers to learn. And just like they didn't hold annual fundraising dinners & Ramadan dinners because they weren't necessary, the same holds for Mawlid. A need arose among the Ummah generations after the Prophet (p) passed **in order to revive our love for him**. Just as a need has arisen for many other practices common amongst the Muslims these days. We cannot always use "well the Sahaba didn't do it" as our litmus tests because if we do we may as well cancel our convention tickets, stop going to the masjid iftars, take our kids out of the Muslim schools, stay away from fundraising dinners, and disband our Islamic centres. The list goes on and on.

Things do not automatically become haram just because the Prophet(p) or the sahabas did not do it. It is considered to be blameworthy only if it is against the Quran & Sunnah. The companions used to recite poetry in honour of our Prophet(p). Salawaat is commanded by the Quran & learning Seerah is a must to know about him and to love him. As for the actual **celebration** the proof is in the Quran itself. Say, "In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy – in that let them **rejoice**; it is better than what they accumulate." Our beloved Prophet(p) is a mercy to the worlds. This is what Mawlid is all about.

The Mawlid is nothing more than the manifestation & culmination of an outpouring of love. In loving the Prophet (p) one is able to attain a more comprehensive understanding of Islam. Moreover, in taking the time to reflect upon who he was we are able to rekindle the Mercy & Love he manifested.

The rather modern phenomenon of viewing such a celebration as an innovation has led many to be distant in their relationship with The Beloved. Those who worry that such an undertaking may lead to placing the Prophet in a position equal to God fail to understand a core essence of this faith. One can **not** truly have faith until one is in love with The Beloved. The ramification of this removal as such is apparent all over the globe – in being far from the fountain of Mercy we have made this religion into a rigid form. **We "Muslims" have become a tribulation for this Faith.** The Inner Sciences of this faith in being tarnished by the ignorance of modern autodidacts has began to take its toll on the overall spiritual health of the Muslim Community. The solution is to turn back to The Beloved, emulate him as best we can – sending abundant praises upon him. In reality we should love Prophet Muhammad (p) all days of the year & say *Salla Allahu Alayhee wa Sallam* every day in our life and love him as much as we can. Let's thank God for bringing us the Prophet of Mercy to take us from darkness to light.

A cardinal rule of Islamic jurisprudence is that **"Everything is permitted unless explicitly forbidden by either God or his Messenger."** It is on this basis that we permit all the technological and institutional innovations, which were not present at the time of the Prophet and his companions. There's nothing in the Quran or in the Prophetic traditions that explicitly forbids from celebrating the Prophet's life, his teachings, his morality, his manners, his sacrifices, his struggles and his birth. Celebrating Mawlid is not worship, but it is not forbidden either, like putting an air conditioner or an extravagant chandelier in a mosque. They add comfort and beauty to the place of worship, but are not elements of worship.

Muslims have their religion Islam, and they also have their culture. We celebrate marriages, national days, independence days & the victories of our favourite soccer & cricket teams. We celebrate our children's achievements and now many Muslims also celebrate their countries' cultural holidays. Can we not then also celebrate the life of the man who is dearest to us without deeming it as an act of worship?

We do not want any divine reward for celebrating the Prophet's birthday, celebrating it is reward enough. It is enough that it is a pleasure here & now that neither embellishes the hereafter nor imperils it.

May the Prophet's birthday never deviate from a day of reflection to another commercialized version of Christmas. Call the neighbours and let them enjoy good food, and regale them with traditions and stories about the mercy, the wisdom, the compassion and the struggles of the most praised man – Muhammad. Use this time to read the sirah & reflect on the blessings of his birth. God **did not send him except as Mercy to all the worlds** (Quran 21:107).

The Salutation

What a Celebration by God!

"Indeed, God & His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O you who believe!

Ask blessings on him & salute him with a worthy salutation."

(Quran 33:56)

Any day, everyday, even on a national holiday do what God & His angels do

Bless the Prophet (p)

No virtue is more universally accepted as a test of good character than trustworthiness.

And none was more trustworthy than Muhammad!

This is what we celebrate!!!

Some persons have allowed their **narrow-minded view of spiritual knowledge to corrupt a great religion & bring shame to its Prophet (p).**

By adhering to irrational, anachronistic & often meaningless traditions they obscure the power & beauty of Islam & deprive themselves & the rest of the world from its Message & its Messenger (p).

I desired to praise the Chosen One
and was hindered
By my own inability to grasp
the extent of his glory.
How can one such as I measure an ocean,
when the ocean is vast?
And how can one such as I
count the stones and the stars?
If all of my limbs were to become tongues,
even then –
Even then I could not begin to praise him
as I desired.
And if all of creation gathered together
in an attempt to praise him,
even then they would stint in his due.
I have altogether ceased trying –
awestruck, clinging to courtesy,
Tempered by timidity,
glorifying his most exalted rank.
*Indeed, sometimes silence holds within it
the essence of eloquence,*
And often *speech merely fodder for the faultfinder.*
Have you grasped the extent of his glory?

The above is a poem written by a scholar, Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi, who died a martyr in the battle of Tarifah defending the lands of the Muslims.

The Prophet Muhammad (p), is deeply revered in the Islamic tradition. Every time Muslims mention his name & every time they offer prayers, they seek blessings for him. The Prophet's actions, words & silences are all tantamount to divine law. No human has ever been so revered by so many. Prophet Muhammad (p) is remembered & celebrated all the time by Muslims. *After all, his name is Muhammad, which means the most praised one.* Let this not be construed as WORSHIP. For all worship belongs solely to God. It is about Respect.

The birthday of the Prophet (p), is a great blessing for our community and, indeed, for all believers. So if we know the day, it should renew our joy manifold times. The Mawlid (his birthday) has traditionally been a time to reflect on – and be grateful for – our Prophet (p), and his life, miracles, and the sacrifices he made on behalf of his community. Celebrating the Mawlid is a good practice based upon sound hadith, “Whoever establishes an excellent

practice in Islam has its reward & the reward of those who act upon it.” This hadith, as some less perspicacious have thought, does not contradict the narration of Aisha, in which she relates that the Messenger (p) said, “Whoever introduces something in this matter of ours that is not from it will find it rejected.”

The latter hadith refers to blameworthy innovations that are not from Islam. Ibn Daqiq al-Eid, a polymath master of Islamic tradition, says that this hadith is foundational and that it rejects any innovation in the religion, and then further explains, as for those matters that branch off of the roots and do not depart from his Sunnah, this rejection does not apply to them, such as the copying of the Quran [with its innovated orthographies], and the various juristic schools that emerged as a result of the excellent study & thought of mujtahid scholars capable of seeing the connection that the branches have to the roots, which is what the Messenger (p), has transmitted; not included also [in this prohibition] are the later books of grammar, arithmetic, inheritance laws, and other sciences that have their basis in the words of the Prophet (p) & his dictates. None of that applies to this hadith.

Celebrating the Mawlid does not depart from the Sunnah & is a branch from the root of love of the Prophet (p). Loving him is clearly from the Sunnah, as illustrated in the hadith in which when Umar expressed his love saying, “O Messenger, you are more beloved to me than everything except my own soul,” he was then reminded by the Prophet (p), “None of you truly believes until I am more beloved to him than even his own soul between his sides.” At that point, Umar said, “By God, you are more beloved to me than my own soul between my sides.” The Prophet (p) then said to Umar, “**Now, O Umar, now!**”

At that moment, Umar's faith was completed – *when his love matured from natural love to willful love.* Natural love is the love of a child for a parent or the love of a devoted student for a teacher. This emanates from a simple truth, as stated by the Prophet (p): “**Hearts are inclined to love those who do good to them.**” In other words, the human heart has no choice in the matter of natural love – love simply flows. Willful love, on the other hand, is of a higher order; it is love attained after deep contemplation of the beloved and a profound awareness that the object of one's love is perfect, as in the case of God, or after the realization of the immense debt one owes to the beloved, as in the case of the Prophet (p). *Willful love is a matter of choice & introspection.* Umar realized that his own soul that he loved so much was nothing,

a cipher, without the blessing of the Messenger of God (peace). It was at that moment that his willful love occurred; it took precedent over the natural love that everyone feels instinctively & without musing or meditation.

The celebration of his birthday is a matter of willful love, as it is from the religion to honour him & remember him. Part of the remembrance of God is to pray upon our Prophet (p). Anything that helps us to do that, and is not an innovation, is good. Innovation is “**what obliterates a sunnah.**” Encouraging the community of believers to reflect on the Prophet (p) on the sacred day of the 12th of Rabi'a al-Awwal, the day of his birth, is not destructive to the Sunnah that he brought. Moreover, the day itself is auspicious – it was the day of the Prophet's arrival to Medina after his migration (hijrah). The day he died was also the 12th of Rabi'a al-Awwal. These are not coincidences. *So let the lovers love in peace.* The Mawlid is a national holiday in every Muslim country in the world except for one. That one country is the one in which the Blessed Prophet (p) was born. Indeed, the Saudis seem to have no problem with monarchy; they condemn the celebration of Prophet's birthday, but condone Saudi monarchy. Is monarchy not bid'ah. **Why permit monarchy & forbid Mawlid?**

Willful love, where knowledge & contemplation of the object are essential: the contemplative knowing of God leads to love of Him, Most High; and the awareness of our indebtedness to the Prophet (p) leads to his love. Let's use the language of debt as a precursor to love. Certainly, our debt to the Beloved of God is immeasurable; beyond the power of language to convey. And if we were to be bonded in love through indebtedness, this is the perfect picture. Indeed, there are very few other human beings we would be honoured to be indebted to. Let's be reminded of Mr. Rochester's words to Jane Eyre, when she rescues him from a fire: “You have saved my life: I have a pleasure in owing you so immense a debt. I cannot say more. Nothing else that has being would have been tolerable to me in the character of creditor for such an obligation: but you: it is different;—I feel your benefits no burden...”

With such a creditor, how can we not be elevated by being in his debt!

IT'S WORTH REPEATING: **INDEED, GOD & HIS ANGELS**

SHOWER BLESSINGS ON THE PROPHET (P)

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