

Q & A

The Mawlid-un-Nabi

By Shaykh Fakhruddin Owaisi al-Madani

Q1-What is the ruling (*hukm*) regarding celebrating the *Mawlid-un-Nabi*:

A1: Any action we do may be judged by the *Shari'ah* as being of one of the following five categories:

- Fard* (Obligatory)
- Mustahabb* (Recommended)
- Mubah/Ja'iz* (Simply Permissible)
- Makruh* (Discouraged)
- Haram* (Forbidden)

Past and present *Ulama* from the four Madhabs (Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki and Hanbali) have considered the commemoration of the Prophet (SAW)' birth as being *Mubah*, i.e. permissible, as there is no evidence in the *Shari'ah* that prohibits such an event.

In fact, there is some evidence that actually supports the commemoration of the noble birth. For example:

- Allah says in the Qur'an:

“Say in the Bounty of Allah and His Mercy, Let them rejoice”. (*Surah Yunus*, verse 58).

There is no greater bounty given to creation than the Holy Prophet (SAW).

- The Qur'an narrates to us the stories of the births of Prophets 'Isa, Musa and Yahya (AS) in an honorable manner. As the greatest of the Prophets, the birth of Nabi Muhammad (SAW) is even more deserving of such attention.

- Imam al-Bukhari narrates that when the Prophet (SAW) was born, his uncle, the unbeliever Abu-Lahab freed the slave-girl Thuwaybah that brought him the good news, by gesturing to her with his finger. When Abu-Lahab passed away, his brother Sayyidna al-Abbas (RA) saw him in dream and asked him about his condition. He replied:

“I am in severe punishment, but my punishment is lessened every Monday as I am allowed to suck some water from that finger of mine with which I freed Thuwaybah”.

- It is also narrated by Imam Muslim that the Prophet (SAW) used to fast on Mondays. When asked why, he (SAW) replied:

“That is the day I was born”.

That is why many scholars have been very supportive of the *Mawlid*. For example, the great 9th Century *Shafi'i* scholar Imam Jalaluddin al-Suyuti writes in his *Al-Hawi lil Fatawi*:

“To commemorate the *Mawlid*, which is basically gathering people together, reciting parts of the *Qu'ran*, narrating stories about the Prophet's birth and the signs that accompanied it, then serving food, and afterwards, departing, is one of the good innovations; and the one who practices it gets rewarded, because it involves venerating the status of the Prophet and expressing joy at his honorable birth.”

However, while commemorating the *Mawlid* cannot be considered *Haram*, it also must not be considered *Fard*. It must be understood that it is simply a beneficial practice that is nevertheless not obligatory.

Note, too, that while commemorating the *Mawlid* itself is only *Mubah*, many of the actions done in it are *Mustahabb* (Recommended) such as recitation of *Salawat*, coming together of Muslims, discussing the life of the Prophet (SAW), feeding the hungry etc. People will undoubtedly be rewarded for these actions. *Wa 'Llahu A 'lam*.

Q2-Is commemorating the *Mawlid un-Nabi* a *bid'ah* (an innovation)?

Bid'ah refers to beliefs and practices that appeared after the era of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Broadly speaking, *bidah's* are acceptable or unacceptable depending upon whether or not they fall under the general principles and spirit of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*.

Given this they will be classified according to the five *Shari'ah* rulings mentioned above.

Therefore, some *bidah's* may be obligatory such as writing books on the *din* and the gathering of the *Qur'an* and *hadith* into book form. Some may be recommended such as the translation of the *Qur'an*, the congregational *Tarawih* prayer and the second *adhan* for *Jumu'ah*. Some *Bid'ah's* may simply be permitted such as performing Eid Salah in Mosques, *qira'ah* programs, Qur'anic competitions and the commemoration of *Mawlid* as noted earlier. Depending upon the intention and results, such permitted *bidah's* may even become recommended.

Discouraged innovations would be to have the Holy *Qur'an* on a cellphone, as some Ulama have said. Forbidden *bidah's* are any innovated beliefs and practices that are in clear violation of agreed upon principles and rulings of the *Shari'ah*.

The *hadith* that states that “every *bidah* is a misguidance” refers to this last category of *bid'ah* only as explained by *hadith* authority Imam al-Nawawi in his commentary on *Sahih Muslim* (Volume 6, p154):

“What is meant by it is new matters that are not validated by the *Shari’ah*. That - and that alone - is what are meant by innovations.”

Q3-What is the ruling on standing up to recite *Salawat* (Salutations) and *Salam* (Greetings of Peace) upon the Prophet (SAW):

It is permissible if done with the intention of respecting the Prophet (SAW), and without the belief that it is obligatory. The *Qur’an* has ordered us to present the *Salam* to the Prophet (SAW) in a respectful manner as implied in the verse “*Wa Sallimu Taslima*” i.e.

“And send worthy greetings of Peace upon him”. (*Qur’an* 33:56)

Furthermore, it is permissible in Islam to stand up to greet any honorable or beloved person. The Prophet (SAW) used to stand up to greet many people, including his beloved daughter Sayyidah Fatimah Zahra (RA).

Imam al-Bukhari narrates that once the Prophet (SAW) was sitting in the Mosque and saw a funeral passing by. So he immediately stood up in respect of it. He was then told that it was actually the funeral of a Jew. So he (SAW) replied; “It is still a soul”.

The Ulama have also deemed it permissible to stand up for a national anthem.

It has for centuries been the custom in many Muslim lands to stand up when reciting the *Salawat* and *Salam* on the Prophet (SAW), especially upon hearing the news of his Birth, so as to display love, gratefulness and respect. This practice has been commended by *Ulama* from all 4 *Madhhabs*.

The Mufti of the *Shafi’i madhab* of Medina al-Imam al-Sayyid Ja’far al-Barzanji wrote in his *Mawlid* that:

“Scholars of great character and knowledge have commended the practice of standing up at the mention of the Prophet (SAW)’s birth. So glad-tiding to the one whose goal and purpose is to honor the Prophet (SAW)”.

This was written by him in Medina four centuries ago, and he referred to scholars before his time.

The *Salawat* can be recited in all positions: sitting as in the *Jalsah* (sitting position) in *Salah*, or standing as in the *Salat-ul-Janazah* or even while lying down.

Furthermore, it is general command of the Shariah to display all sorts of love, honor and veneration to the Prophet (SAW) [*Qur’an* 7:157; 33:6 amongst others], as long as it does not involve any prohibited action. *Wa’Llahu A’lam*.

Q4-Is it possible for the Prophet (SAW) to be present at a *Mawlid* gathering?

The blessed body of the Prophet (SAW) is buried in Medina. But his Soul, like the souls of all Prophets and pious believers, is free to roam in the Kingdom of Allah to attend blessed gatherings. Evidence for this is what occurred on the Night of the *Mi'raj* when all the Prophets gathered in *al-Quds* to meet and pray behind our Prophet (SAW). Many of them met him again in the Heavens.

Ibn al-Qayyim mentions in his *Kitab al-Ruh* that the famous Companion Sayyidna Salman al-Farisi (RA) said:

“The souls of the believers are in a partition from the (visible) earth, they go anywhere they want to.”

He also quotes the great Imam Malik as saying:

“I was informed that the soul is free; it goes anywhere it wants to”.

The above has also been confirmed by great Classical scholars such as Imam al-Suyuti and Imam Ibn-Hajar al-Haytami in their *Fatawa*.

However, a person who experiences the spiritual presence of the Prophet (SAW) at any gathering should normally keep such things to him or herself. In general, this is a matter of the unseen and it is best to not to delve into the issue unnecessarily.

Q5-What are the *Riwayats* popularly recited in Cape Town?

The *Riwayats* are basically narrations on the happenings of the noble Birth of the Prophet (SAW), compiled in a book from by the 16th century Mufti of the Shafi'i *madhab* in Medina al-Imam al-Sayyid Ja'far al-Barzanji. Whatever is mentioned in them is authentically sourced from the books of *Hadith* and *Sirah* (biographies of the Prophet). It is a blessing to recite them as it is a blessing to recite any *hadith* of the Prophet (SAW).

Muslim throughout the world recite these *Riwayat* during the blessed month of *Mawlid*. They are usually referred to in other parts of the world as “*Mawlid al-Barzanji*”.

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