

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

MALIKI JURISTS ON
MAWLID AN-NABI ﷺ

Compiled by Abdul Samad Ali



Dear reader,

Please recite *Surat al-Fatiha* and donate the reward of your recitation to the renowned scholars and great gnostics, carriers of the banner of the authority of the Quran and Sunna, who illuminated the land of Khorasan and Hind with the Muhammadan light, *Alī bin ʿUthman al-Hajwari al-Hassani wal-Husayni* and *Baba Fareed Masʿud Ganjshakar* — may Allah the Exalted have mercy upon them and reward them well on behalf the Muslims; Indeed, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

Amin

- Abdul Samad Ali

INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. Blessings and salutations on the best of Allah's creation, the most sublime in character, our Master Muhammad ﷺ, the seal of those who have passed and the guide to the straight path — and upon His pure and noble wives and family, His Companions and those who have followed the People of the Prophetic Way and the Majority of Scholars (*Ahl as-Sunna wal-Jamā'ah*) with excellence until the Day of Judgement.

In this brief text, I have compiled a collection of verdicts of Maliki jurists regarding *mawlid an-nabī* — celebration of the blessed birth of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. I have simply compiled the verdicts of scholars, whether for or against *mawlid*, in this work; after having verified the references, either myself or having asked qualified people to verify them for me. The translations, for some verdicts, were taken from Marion Holme's book called, *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad*.

The intention behind the compilation of this text is to protect and preserve knowledge, to serve the seekers of knowledge and to educate those who err in their understanding of the real nature of the *mawlid*. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah will not unite my *ummah* upon error." It is quite clear, based on the verdicts in this text, that majority of the Maliki jurists were of the opinion that it is permissible/recommended to celebrate *mawlid an-nabī* ﷺ.

May Allah the Exalted guide us all to the right path, the path of the People of the Prophetic Way and the Majority of Muslim Scholars (*Ahl as-Sunna wal-Jamā'ah*), protect us from misguidance and unite us with our Master Muhammad ﷺ in Paradise. *Amin*

WHEN WAS HE ﷺ BORN?

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was born on Monday during the month of *Rabīʿ al-Awwal* in the Year of the Elephants (570CE). There are various narrations which contend that he ﷺ was born on the 2nd, 8th, 10th, 12th, 17th, 18th or the 21st of the month. The well-known and majority opinion is that he ﷺ was born on a Monday on the 12th of *Rabīʿ al-Awwal*.¹

HISTORY OF MAWLID CELEBRATION

The beginning of the celebration of the *mawlid an-nabī* ﷺ in its present form lies with the ruler of Irbil², Sultan Muḏaffar (d. 630AH), the brother-in-law of Sultan Salahuddin Ayubi, whose full name is Abū Saʿīd Kawkabūrī Ibn Zain al-Dīn ʿAlī Ibn Baktagin, who is counted among the great Sultans and generous leaders. He was responsible for many other noble works as well. Among the many monuments set up by him was the *Jāmiʿ Muḏaffari*, which he had constructed near Mount Tasiyun.

Ibn Kathīr writes about Sultan Muḏaffar as follows: “Sultan Muḏaffar used to arrange the celebration of the *mawlid an-nabī* ﷺ with due honour, glory, dignity and grandeur. In this connection, he used to organise a magnificent festival. He was a pure-hearted, brave and wise polymath and a just ruler. May Allah shower His Mercy on him and grant him an exalted status.”³

Imam adh-Dhahabī says, in praise of Sultan Muḏaffar: “As for his celebration of the noble *mawlid an-nabī*, words are too poor to describe it. The people used to come all the way from Iraq and Algeria to attend it...the celebration would last several days, and a huge quantity of cows and camels would be brought out to be sacrificed and cooked in different ways...Great sums would be spent on charity.”⁴

Imam as-Suyūṭī says, “He used to spend two hundred thousand dinars annually to ransom Muslim prisoners-of-war from the Europeans. Also for the maintenance of the two holy sanctuaries and for providing water along the routes in Hijaz (for pilgrims), he used to spend three thousand dinars annually. These are in addition to the charity that used to be given secretly. His wife, Rābīʿah Khātūn Bint Ayyūb, the sister of Sultan Nasir Salahuddin Ayyubi, narrates that her husband used to wear a garment (*Qamīs*) of coarse cotton costing no more than five dirhams. She says that she once rebuked him for this, upon which he replied that his wearing a five-dirham garment and spending the rest of the money in charity is far better than wearing a costly garment and giving a poor or indigent person mere good wishes.”⁵

¹ Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, *Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ* || Muhammad ibn ʿAlawī al-Mālikī, *Tārīkh al-Ḥawādith wa al-Aḥwāl al-Nabawīyyah* || At-Tabari, *Tārīkh-ul-Umam-wal-Mulūk*, Vol. 2, pg. 125

² Arbela, east of Mosul.

³ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Vol. 13, pg. 136-137

⁴ Imām adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalā* Vol. 22 pg. 335-336

⁵ Imām as-Suyūṭī's, *al-Husn al-Maqṣad fī ʿAmal al-mawlid*.

DETAILED ACCOUNT OF SULTAN MUZAFFAR'S MAWLID CELEBRATIONS:

Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī records that one participant in the *mawlid* celebrations organised by Sultan Muẓaffar states that: "...on the royal table-spread were laid out five hundred prepared goats, ten thousand chickens, one hundred thousand earthen tumblers and thirty thousand baskets of sweet fruits." He further writes, "Eminent pious scholars and illustrious Sufis used to attend the *mawlid* ceremony held by the Sultan, Every year his expenditure on the *mawlid* celebrations amounted to three hundred thousand dinars. The expenditure of the guest house, where people from distant places would come and stay during *mawlid* celebrations, used to be one hundred thousand dinars annually."⁶

Ibn Khallikān, who witnessed the *mawlid* celebrations of Sultan Muẓaffar, said:

"The pomp with which he celebrated the birthday of the Prophet (*mawlid*) surpassed all description, but I will mention a part of it:

The people of the neighbouring provinces have heard of his good belief in regards to the Prophet ﷺ, so every year, a big number of jurists, Sufis, preachers, Quran reciters, and poets would come from near lands — such as Baghdad, Mosul, al-Jazirah, etc. — and they would continue coming from the month of *Muḥarram* until the beginning of *Rabīʿ al-Awwal*. Before that, Sultan Muẓaffar would have already erected wooden pavilions, each pavilion is 4 or 5 stories, and he would make more than 20 wooden pavilions, one for him, and the rest for the amirs and high ranking personnel in his state.

Then when it was the first of the month of *Ṣafar* (month before *Rabīʿ al-Awwal*), these pavilions were decorated in a most splendid manner, and in every pavilion sat a group of singers, a group of composers/actors, and musicians; not a story was left without the company of these people.

During the whole period all business was suspended, and the only occupation of the people was to watch (the bands play) and walk from one band to another. These pavilions were erected from the gate of the citadel/castle to the door of the *Khānqah*⁷, that is near the field/hippodrome. Everyday, after *Asr* prayer, Muẓaffar ad-Dīn would go and stop at each pavilion, one by one, listening to their singing, and watch their acting and other things done in the pavilions.

He then would pass the night in the *Khānqah*, listening to the Sufi religious singing (*Samāʿ*); and after *Fajr* prayer, he would ride out to hunt, and return to the citadel before *Dhuhr*; this is what he did everyday until the day of the *mawlid*.

He used to do the *mawlid* one year on the eighth of the month, and the next on the twelfth, because of the difference of opinion regarding it (the date of his ﷺ birth). Two days before the *mawlid*, he would send a huge number of camels, cattle, and sheep to the field, accompanied with drums, singers, and musicians. Then they begin the slaughtering of the animals, and set up a number of caldrons, and cooking in various manners.

⁶ Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mirʿat al-Zamān*.

⁷ A place of retreat for worship.

Then when it was the eve of the *mawlid*, after praying *Maghrib*, he would listen to the singing in the citadel; then he would go forth, preceded by a great number of people bearing candles; two or four of these candles - not sure of the exact number - were such as employed in grand ceremonies, each of them being fastened on the back of a mule, with a man seated behind it to support it. He advanced in this manner until reaching the *Khānqah*.

The morning of the next day, a quantity of pelisses were brought out to the *Khānqah* by the Sufis, in the hands of each of them is a bundle, and advanced one after the other. A great number of it is brought down, I can't count how many.

Then he would go to the *Khānqah*; there gathered high distinct persons, chiefs, and a great number of other eminent individuals, and he would set up chairs for preaching. And there, set up for Muẓaffar Ad-Dīn, would be a wooden tower with windows overlooking the place where the people and chairs of the preachers were, and other windows open on the field, which was extremely wide. In it the soldiers were gathered for display, and he would sometimes look at the soldiers, and other times towards the people and preachers; he would continue like this until the soldiers were done.

Right then, a repast was brought into the field for the poor, and it would be a public meal, consisting of an immense quantity of food and bread, that couldn't be described. Then a second repast would be prepared in the *Khānqah* for the people gathered at the chairs. And during the time of soldiers' display and the preachers exhorting, he would send for each one of the eminent men, chiefs and the comers for this festival, of whom we mentioned previously, from the jurists, preachers, Quran reciters, and poets; and he would cloth each in a pelisse, after which he would return to his place.

When all of that was done, the repast was brought in, and a portion of it was sent to the house of the ones whom were designated. This would continue until *Asr* time or after, then he would stay that night there, listening to Sufi religious singing until day-break. This is what he does every year. And I have summarised the situation, because a full description of it would take a lot. When they were done with this festival, each person would get ready to go back to his country so he would give each his spending/outlay.”⁸

There is a book called, *Tārīkh al-Iḥtifāl bi mawlid an-nabī*, written by an Egyptian scholar Muhammad Khālid Thābit. In it he charts the history of the *mawlid* and then in detail, charts how the *mawlid* is celebrated across the world. On the front page, he has added a line which simply sums up the whole philosophy behind the *mawlid*, as well as indicates his own belief:

“Whosoever does not show happiness for the sake of Muhammad ﷺ,
has never seen [true] happiness.”⁹

⁸ Ibn Khallikān, *Wifayāt al A'yān*.

⁹ Dr. Hafidh Ather Hussain al-Azharī, *The History of the mawlid*.

MALIKI SCHOLARS ON MAWLID CELEBRATIONS

Ash-Shāṭibī (d. 720AH):

“*Bid‘ah* resembles a method of the *Sharī‘ah*, although it is in fact not so, rather is in conflict with it. An explanation of its resemblance with it [*Sharī‘ah*], is from a number of perspectives...From them is sticking firmly to specified forms and ways, like *dhikr* in the form of congregation with one voice, and adopting the day of the birth of the Prophet ﷺ as an Eid, and what resembles that.”¹⁰

He also said, “Decorating and spending on the day of *mawlid* which has started among the people, is an innovation and every innovation is misguidance and one should not spend on innovation.”¹¹

Tāj ad-Dīn al-Fākihānī (d. 734AH):

I say and with Allah is success: I do not know for this *mawlid* any basis in the Book, nor the Sunna and nor has its practice been narrated from any one of the Scholars of the *Ummah* who are the followed leaders in the religion, holding fast to the ways of the predecessors. Rather, it is an innovation, which was invented by the idlers and out of the soul’s desire through which the devourers (of wealth) enriched themselves - (this) with the evidence that if we consider it in light of the five rulings, we say: Either it is *wājib* (obligatory), or *mandūb* (recommended) or *mubāh* (permissible), or *makrūh* (disliked) or *muḥarram* (unlawful). It is not *wājib* by consensus and nor is it *mandūb*, because the reality of the *mandūb* is “that (whose performance) the *Sharī‘ah* has requested but without any censure for the one who leaves it.” But we see that the *Sharī‘ah* has not granted permission for this, and the Companions never did it, nor the *Tābi‘ūn* and nor the religious (devoted) scholars - as far as I know - and this is my answer in front of Allah ﷻ if I am asked about it. And it is not permissible that it should be permitted, because innovating in the religion is not permissible by consensus of the Muslims.

Hence, there is not left except for it to be either *makrūh* (disliked) or *ḥarām* (unlawful). In that case, speech regarding it will be in two parts, and distinguishing between two situations:

The first of them: That a man practice this with his own wealth for his family, associates and dependents and they do not go beyond, in that regard, gathering to eat food, and they do not commit any of the sins. This is what we have described as a detested innovation and as being repulsive, since none of the people of obedience from the predecessors performed it, those who are the jurists of Islam, the scholars of the creation, the lamps of the ages and adornment of the places.

The second: That crime (i.e. sin, disobedience, prohibited matters) entered into it, and concerted effort is made (to collect wealth for it) such that one of them gives something and his soul reproaches him and his heart hurts him due to what he finds of the hurt of oppression (in being made to give his wealth), and the Scholars have said, may Allah have

¹⁰ ash-Shāṭibī, *al-Fīṭṭām* 1:37

¹¹ Aḥmad al-Wansharīsī, *al-Mi‘yār al-Mu‘rab* 9:252

mercy upon them, “Taking wealth through (display of) modesty, humility is like taking it with the sword.” This is especially the case when [the concerted effort in collection of wealth for this *mawlid*] is augmented with singing and futile instruments such as drums and flutes and the gathering of men with youths and women singers - either mixing with them (the women) or they (the women) playing an organisational role (without mixing with the men), and dancing with effeminateness and affectation, and being engrossed in distraction and forgetting the Day of Fear. Likewise the women, when they gather together in isolation and raise their voices, and who chant out loudly out of gratification and who when making *dhikr* and reciting (the Quran) depart from what is legislated and what is the acceptable norm, being heedless (all the while) of His, the Exalted's saying, “Indeed your Lord is ever watchful over them” (89:14). No two people will differ about the unlawfulness of this, and nor would any possessor of manhood deem it to be good. It is only with the souls of those with dead hearts and those not devoid of [plentiful] sin and disobedience by which this becomes treated as lawful. And I increase you [in knowledge] that they consider this to be from the acts of worship, not from the rejected unlawful matters. To Allah we belong and to Him shall we return, indeed Islam began as something strange and will return as something strange, as it began...

...All of this alongside the fact that the month in which he ﷺ was born is the very month in which he passed away, so rejoicing is not more worthy of grief therein. This is what is obligatory upon us to say, and from Allah, the Exalted do we ask for good acceptance.¹²

Muhammad ibn ‘Abdus Salām al-Munastīrī (d. 749AH):

After having walked out of a royal *mawlid* celebration, he expresses his disapproval of the proceedings by remarking that “This is the blessed night for which it is obligatory to thank God,” yet the Prophet would not have permitted the frivolity and singing with which it was being observed. Chastened, the sultan in later years distributed food to the needy and provided aid to *al-fuqarā* (the destitute or perhaps the Sufis), “as thanks to God.”¹³

Ahmad ibn al-Qāsim al-Qubāb (d. 778AH):

“My master Ahmad al-Qubāb was asked about those acts that teachers do, including lighting candles on the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ and children gathering to send prayers on the Prophet ﷺ with some children, who have beautiful voices, reading one tenth of the Quran and reciting religious songs. Men and women gather for this reason. Are the candles that the teacher takes lawful or not?”

He answered by saying: “All that you have described are innovations that must be terminated. Whoever takes part in it, assists in it or works hard to keep it going is working

¹² Al-Fākihānī, *al-Mawridu fī ‘aml al-mawlid*

¹³ Abu'l-Ḥasan ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Nubahi al-Maliqī al-Andalusī, *Tā’rikh qudat al-andalus*, known as *Kiṭab al-marqaba al-‘ulya fī-man yastahiqq al-qada’ wa’l-futya*

hard for deviancy and misguidance. He imagines through his ignorance that by that he is esteeming the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by establishing his *mawlid*, whereas he is contravening his *Sunna* and performing a prohibited act that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade. He is open about it whilst introducing into religion that which is not part of it. Had he been truly esteeming him, he would have obeyed his orders and not introduced into religion that which is not part of it. He would not have exposed himself to that which Allah, Most High, warned about when He said: ‘Let those who oppose his command beware that a tribulation befalls them or a painful punishment strikes them.’

As for what the teacher takes, if he is only given it for performing these innovation and carrying out these tasks, then there is no doubt that what he takes is foul.

If, however, they give it to him in that time even if he does nothing of these innovations, Ibn Ḥabīb has mentioned that the teacher should not be given anything during Muslim festivals, even though that is a recommended act. If Ibn Ḥabīb is saying that he should not be given anything during Muslim festivals and religious occasions, then what about those that are not legal?”¹⁴

Ibn ‘Abbād (d. 795AH):

“As for the *mawlid*, it seems to me that it is an Eid from the Eids of the Muslims, and everything that is done on it out of joy and pleasure regarding the blessed birth, including the lighting of lamps, the gratification (*imtaʿ*) of the sight and the hearing, adornment with fancy clothes and the riding of swift steeds, is a permissible thing for which no one should be censured (*layunkaru ‘alā aḥad*), based on the analogy with other times of rejoicing (*qiyāsan ‘alā ghayrihi min awqāt al-farah*). To judge that these things are an innovation at this time when the secret of existence appeared, the banner of witnessing was raised, and the darkness of unbelief and denial was dispersed, to claim that this time is not one of the legitimate festivals of the people of the faith, and to compare it with [the Iranian festivals of] *Nawruz* and *Mihrajan*, is a distasteful thing from which sound hearts recoil, and which sound opinions reject.

Once in the past I had gone out on the *mawlid* to the riverbank, and I happened to find there Sayyidī al-Ḥājj ibn ‘Āshir and a group of his companions; some of them had brought out different foods to eat them there. When they were ready to eat they wanted me to share their food. I was fasting at the time, and I told them, “I’m fasting.” Sayyidī al-Ḥājj looked at me disapprovingly and said something to the effect that “today is a day of joy and delight (*farah wa-surūr*), on the likes of which it is not considered appropriate to fast, equivalent to an Eid.” I considered what he said and found it true; it was as if I had been sleeping and he had awoken me.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Aḥmad al-Wansharīsī, *al-Miʿyār al-Muʿrab* 12:48-49. Passage translated by Shaykh Haroon Hanif

¹⁵ Ibn ‘Abbad, *al-Rasāʾil al-Kubrā*, p. 180.

Ibn al-Hāj̣j al-‘Abdarī al-Fasī(d. 799AH):

“From among those innovations which those people have brought about, thinking that thereby they are engaging in a great act of worship and participating in religious ceremonies (to celebrate the remembrance of some great event) is this that in the month of *Rabī‘ al-Awwal* they celebrate the *mawlid*, which celebration is constituted of many innovations and unlawful things. Among these are the participants sing songs and ghazals while at the same time using musical instruments – drums, flutes, fiddles, etc. – and in this connection do many other evil actions which are customarily done mainly at those times which Allah ﷻ has endowed with excellence and greatness (e.g. Eid and other occasions) and which are innovations wholly and totally, and are prohibited. There is no doubt that this kind of *Samā‘*, if it takes place on other nights apart from this, even then it would not be permissible. What then is the justification for holding such a *Samā‘* in this holy month, which Allah Almighty, the Most Excellent, has endowed with excellence and blessings in that His Beloved was born therein – such a *Samā‘* in which musical instruments are used? What relation can such a *Samā‘* have to this holy and blessed month, in which Allah, Exalted is His Majesty, granted us the great *Ihsān* of the auspicious birth of the Noble Prophet, the leader of those who are first and those who are last ﷺ?

Therefore, it is obligatory (*wājib*) that special gratitude to Allah ﷻ should be expressed in this month and as much *Tbādah* (Worship) and charity should be done as is possible, since He has bestowed on us this very great favour (that He caused the birth therein) of His beloved ﷺ. Even though the Noble Prophet ﷺ did not engage in more worship in this month as compared with other months (nor did he command us to do so), yet in reality, this was due to his mercy and kindness to his *Ummah*, and also to create ease and mildness for them. This is why at times the Noble Prophet would leave off doing an action, lest it should become compulsory on his *Ummah*. This is the result of his mercy on us.

Nevertheless, the Noble Prophet ﷺ has indicated the excellence of this great month in reply to a questioner. When the questioner wanted to find out about fasting on Mondays, the Noble Prophet ﷺ replied: ‘That is the day on which I was born’.

Since the excellence of this day (i.e. Monday) implies the excellence of this month (i.e. *Rabī‘ al-Awwal*) in which the Noble Prophet ﷺ graced this world, then it is our duty to give this month its due respect and sanctity, and we should understand it to be very excellent just as Allah ﷻ has deemed other blessed months to be very excellent. In this connection the Noble Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: ‘I am the leader of the children of Adam and there is no pride (in this)’. ‘Adam and all other Prophets, may peace be upon them all, will be under my flag (on the Day of Judgement)’.

The merits and excellence of times and places are a result of those forms of worship which are carried out therein, and by which Allah ﷻ has specially favoured them. When it is known that times and places do not in themselves contain any honour and greatness accrues on account of those characteristics and distinctions (with which they have been granted exaltation), then reflect on this greatest favour of Allah ﷻ, with which He has

distinguished and ear-marked this blessed month, *Rabīʿ al-Awwal* and the day, Monday. Do you not see that fasting on Mondays has great merit because the Noble Prophet ﷺ was born on a Monday?

For this reason it is of the utmost appropriateness (and it behoves us to do so) that when this holy month comes, it should be treated with the exaltation, honour, esteem and respect it deserves. The example of the Noble Prophet ﷺ should be followed in that in times endowed with special distinction, he himself used to perform the maximum possible acts of virtue and of charity, and he used to make special arrangements thereof. Have you not seen the following statement of ʿAbdullāh Ibn Abbās (may Allah be pleased with him)? ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was the most generous of men and his generosity was the utmost in *Ramadhān*’. For this reason, just as the Noble Prophet ﷺ honoured those times endowed with distinction, we carry out this very duty in accordance with our capacity, in the month of *Rabīʿ al-Awwal*. If it be said that what the Noble Prophet ﷺ took upon himself in times of special distinction is known, but what he undertook in other months he did not do so in this month (i.e. *Rabīʿ al-Awwal*) – then the answer is that it is well-known that the Noble Prophet ﷺ had this noble trait of wanting ease and relief for his *Ummah*, especially in those things concerning himself. Do you not see that the Noble Prophet, the leader of the world, ﷺ declared *Madīnah Munawwarah* as sacred territory just as Ibrāhīm has declared *Makkah Mukarramah* to be, yet he did not fix any punishment for hunting, cutting down any tree, etc. in *Madīnah*? – do you not see that he did this out of desiring ease and relief for his *Ummah* and out of mercy on them

As it were, the Noble Prophet ﷺ used to consider what things concerned his own self, and even though those things in themselves are of great merit, yet through desiring ease and relief for his *Ummah*, he used to abstain from them. The honouring of *Rabīʿ al-Awwal* is of this category, that in it the maximum possible acts of virtue and charity should be done and he who cannot do so (i.e. for any reason is unable to perform these acts), at least he should abstain from all *Harām* (forbidden) and *Makrūh* (disliked) things in this holy month, out of respect for it. Even though the abstention from all *Harām* and *Makrūh* things is required in other months as well, yet this month deserves the greatest respect. He should do so just as in *Ramadhān al-Mubārak* and other sacred months, he remains careful to the utmost, abstains from misdeeds in religion and keeps away from other unsuitable things.

However, at the present time some people are acting contrary to this. When this blessed month comes they busy themselves with amusement and sport, using musical instruments. However, regretful it is that they make music and merriment and then entertain the assertion that they are showing respect for this blessed month! Leave aside the fact that they begin such *mawlid* celebrations with the recitation of the Holy Quran. They then, for the sensual delight of the *nafs*, take resort to those who are expert at the art of creating restlessness and excitement in the emotions – which in itself contains many causes of corruption and destruction.

Yet they do not content themselves with that alone – but some of them add an even more dangerous thing in that the singer is young, handsome, mellow-voiced, well-attired

and of a very pleasing appearance. He sings ghazals, at the same time with crescendo and diminuendo in voice and ascent and descent in movements. Thus, he puts the audience, men and women into temptation. The result is that the two sides become prey to temptation and other many evils take the root. In some extreme cases, the husband-wife relationship is destroyed and it even reaches the extent of separation between them at times. Thus, the period of destruction and ruin begins, in which a settled and complete home is destroyed and peace of mind and heart ruined. These evils are the result of that kind of *mawlid* celebration in which there is also a session of *Samāʿ*.

Yes, if the *mawlid* is free from those evils (and that kind of *Samāʿ*) – only food is prepared and in that ones (intention) is of celebrating the *mawlid* and Muslim brethren are invited and in which those matters contrary to the *Sharīʿah* and those blameworthy matters described above are abstained from – then it is an innovation merely on account of one’s *niyyah* (intention) because this is an accretion in the religion. Also the pious predecessors have not done it, and it is evident that it is better than more appropriate to follow the predecessors from none of whom has this been transmitted, nor has it been said of any of them that they made the *niyyah* of celebrating the *mawlid*. We are their followers and are obligated to observe the same precepts as they were. (Thus, we should do only that which they did).”

After this, Ibn al-Ḥājj wrote: “There are some people who do not celebrate the *mawlid* solely for the purpose of demonstrating honour and respect. On the contrary, someone has some money in the possession of various people which he had given them on different occasions and ceremonies and now he wants to re-possess this money and is shy to ask for it. Therefore, he makes arrangement for the *mawlid* which becomes the cause for the recovery of his wealth which was in the hands of people.

In this many types of corruption are found. One is that hypocrisy is found there – in his heart the opposite of what he outwardly shows is present. Outwardly he shows that he is celebrating the *mawlid* because he wants to gain benefits in the Hereafter, however in his heart that he should recover his money dispersed in the hands of people.

Some are such that they celebrate the *mawlid* in order to collect money or so that people may praise them (saying for example, ‘Well done, brother!’ or ‘What good work you have done!’) and join them to work (so that it may be evident from this how many people are with them). In these forms as well as the acts of corruption and destruction are not hidden.”¹⁶

Muhammad ibn Ahmad Banīs, a scholar from 8th century AH:

“The superiority of *laylat al-qadr* (Night of Destiny) was established textually (*nussa ʿala*) so that its superiority would be known, because it can be known only from the text; the night of [the Prophet’s] appearance does not need its superiority to be established textually because it is so very obvious and extremely manifest; it would be like informing someone of something that is already known – and God knows best.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Madkhal*. Translated by Mufti Ahmadul Qadri from Darul Uloom Azizia Plano, Texas, USA.

¹⁷ Muhammad ibn Ahmad Banīs, *Lawāmiʿ anwār al-kawkab al-durri fī sharḥ Hamziyat al-Imām al-Buṣṭī*

Abu ‘Abdullāh Muhammad Ibn Marzūq, a scholar from 8th century AH:

“Know that there should be no dispute that the specific night on which the Messenger of God was born is superior to every other night, categorically, by reason of that which occurred on it.”

He further says: “Loftiness and exaltation (*al-‘uluw wa’l-rif‘a*) are relative attributes (*nisbatan idhāfiyyatan*); the honour (*sharaf*) of each night depends on that with which it was honoured. The night of the *mawlid* was honoured with the birth of the best of God’s creation; this establishes its superior status, upon consideration.

The night of the *mawlid* is the night of [the Prophet’s] arrival into this world, and the Night of Destiny (*laylat al-Qadr*) was given to him...; that which was honoured by the very existence of the one for whose sake it is honoured, is more honourable than that which is honoured by reason of what was given to him.

The Night of Destiny is a derivative (*far‘*) of [the Prophet’s] arrival into this world, and a derivative is not as strong as the fundament (*aṣl*).

Just as the place distinguished by the Prophet (*al-buq‘a allati ikhtaṣṣat bihī*) is agreed to be the best of places, the time distinguished by his birth must be the best of times.”¹⁸

The discussion is, rather, about the nights of [each] year corresponding to it; this is what is being considered in comparison to the Night of Destiny. If you were to say, “Evidence demonstrates that that which distinguishes the Night of Destiny is present every year, based on the predominant opinion that it remains and has not been withdrawn; [in contrast], with respect to the night of the *mawlid* no evidence has been established that it must be considered [to occur] every year. Thus, one must consider the Night of Destiny superior,” I would say: “There is evidence demonstrating that its virtue must be observed on the basis of its time recurring.”

Ibn Marzūq then cites the chain of narration and text of the *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet is asked why he fasts on Monday and replies that it is the day on which he was born and on which he first received revelation (and according to another version cited by Ibn Marzūq, also the day on which his Prophetic mission began). After supplying a number of references for the *ḥadīth*, Ibn Marzūq concludes, “This *ḥadīth* establishes that the virtue of the night of the *mawlid* and its morning continues, and its honour remains.” Ibn Marzūq emphasises that the *ḥadīth* in question is indisputably authentic. In fact, he concludes, the continuing existence of the night of the *mawlid* is better authenticated than that of the Night of Destiny, about which there is some debate.¹⁹

Abu ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥaffār al-Gharnaṭī (d. 811AH):

The pious predecessors, that is the Companions of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ and the Successors, did not congregate for worship on the night of the *mawlid*, and they would not increase therein over the rest of the nights of the year, because the Prophet ﷺ is not glorified except in the manner in which his glorification has been established in the *Sharī‘ah*;

¹⁸ Ibn Marzūq, *Jany al-Jannatayn fī fadhli al-Laylatayn*

¹⁹ Ibn ‘Ammār, *Nihla* pg. 106 || Marion Holmes Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad*.

and his glorification is from the greatest acts of nearness to Allah, but one should seek proximity to Allah with what has been legislated in the *Sharī'ah*.

The proof that the *Salaf* did not increase on that [night] more than the rest of the nights is that they differed over it; so it has been said he ﷺ was born in *Ramadhān* and it has been said in *Rabī' al-Awwal*, and the day on which he was born has been disputed according to four different views. So, if it was the case that on eve of the morning of which he ﷺ was born, acts of worship were innovated in it due to the birth of the best of creation ﷺ, it would have been specified and well-known containing no controversy. But increased glorification has not been legislated.

If this door is opened, some people will say the day of *Hijra* is a day in which Allah honoured Islam so they would gather therein and increase in worship, and others will say in the night of *Isrā'* he attained immeasurable honour so they invent worship therein, and this will have no boundary. All good is in following the pious predecessors for which Allah has selected them; so whatever they do, we do and whatever they left we leave. When this is realised, it becomes clear that gathering on this night is not legally required, rather one is ordered to leave it.”²⁰

Jamāl ad-Dīn b. ‘Abd ar-Rahmān al-Kattānī (d. 812AH):

The commemoration of the birth of Allah’s Messenger ﷺ is honoured and magnified and is a means of revering and honouring the day of his blessed birth. His existence was the means of salvation for those who follow him and the means of diminishing the denizens of Hell (for those who display happiness with his blessed birth). It is for this reason that it is appropriate to openly display happiness and spend wealth (on that day) s, and his blessings are complete for those who follow his guidance. This day resembles Friday in that the Hellfire is not stoked on Friday — as was reported from the Prophet ﷺ — and so for that reason, one should display delight and spend of what he can and respond to those who invite him as he would respond to a wedding banquet (*walīma*).²¹

Ahmad Zarrūq al-Fāsī (d. 899AH):

“Fasting on the (day of) *mawlid* was disliked by some... It is from the Eids of the Muslims and fasting should not take place on it.”²²

Uthman Dan Fodio (d. 1232AH):

“If you were to say, ‘What is the legal judgment concerning what the people do during the month of *Rabī' al-Awwal* on the day of Prophet’s birthday (*mawlid an-nabī*) or on the seventh day of the *mawlid* where people gather together for remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*)

²⁰ Aḥmad al-Wansharīsī, *al-Mi'yār al-Mu'rab* 7:99-100

²¹ Imam Qaṣṭallānī, *al-Mawahib al-laduniyya*. Translated by Abdul Aziz Suraqah

²² Ibn al-Hattab, *Mawahib al-Jalīl* a Sharh on *Mukhtaṣar Khalīl* | | Ahmad Zarruq, commentary on *Manzūmatul Qurṭubiyah*

and the food which is prepared for that purpose?’ I say: That is a reprehensible (*makrūh*) innovation if it is free of every disobedience (*ma’siyya*). It is said that the answer is that the practice of the *mawlid* of the noble Prophet ﷺ is a highly recommended good innovation (*bid’a ḥasana mandūba*) when it is free of every disobedience. As for what the people have made a habit in these times where men and women mix freely, Allah forbid that any scholar would make that permissible. It says in the *al-Madkhal*, “Generally, what the people have invented from innovation is their false belief to be among the momentous acts of worship (*akbar ‘l-‘ibādāt*) and manifesting the rites of Islam is what they do during the month of *Rabī‘ al-Awwal* from the *mawlid* of the Prophet ﷺ. This has been included among the innovations (*bid’ah*) and the forbidden things (*muḥarramāt*).”

He continued, “It is necessary that when this noble month comes that it be honoured, ennobled and respect it with deserving respect. This is by following the Prophet ﷺ in that he used to single out times of blessing by increasing in performing acts of righteousness and generosity.”

If you were to say, “What is the legal judgment concerning those who prepare food only on the day of the *mawlid*. He intends by that the recognition of the *mawlid* and invites his Muslim brothers to eat along with that being free of every disobedience?”

I say, this is a reprehensible (*makrūh*) innovation or an allowed (*mubāḥ*) innovation. The latter is the preferred decision (*al-mukhtār*). The former decision was the opinion of the author of the *al-Madkhal* because he said, “If food is prepared only and one intends by that to recognise the *mawlid* and the Muslim brothers are then invited even when it is free of every disobedience - it is still an innovation because of the intention alone. This is because that is making increase in the religion and it is not among the behaviour of the early community (*as-Salaf*). For following in the footsteps of the *Salaf* is paramount, rather it is obligatory (*wājib*).”²³

Imam Aḥmad ibn Muhammad aṣ-Ṣāwī (d. 1241AH):

He, like other scholars, was also of the view that fasting on the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ is considered *Makruh*, as it is an Eid of the Muslims.²⁴

Aḥmad ibn Muhammad Ad-Dasūqī (d. 1246AH):

“From the *makrūh* days of fasting - as some scholars have said - is the fasting on the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ because this day is considered amongst the days of Eid.”²⁵

²³ Uthman Dan Fodio, *Ihya as-Sunna*.

²⁴ Aḥmad ibn Muhammad aṣ-Ṣāwī, *Bulghat as-Sālik li-Aqrāb al-Masālik*

²⁵ *Hāshiyah ad-Dasūqī ‘alā Sharh al-Kabir*.

Muhammad ‘Ulaysh (d. 1299AH):

He, also, was of the view that it is *makrūh* to fast on the day of *mawlid* by analogy to the day of Eid, in general. He was asked, “What is your opinion of a man who has a cow, and it falls ill while it is pregnant. He says, “If God heals my cow, I promise to slaughter what is in her womb for a *mawlid* for the Prophet.” God heals the cow, and it gives birth to a female [calf]; then he delays slaughtering it until it grows up and [itself] becomes pregnant. Must he slaughter that specific cow, or may he slaughter a substitute for it, or is he not obligated to do anything?

‘Ulaysh responds that the man is under no obligation whatsoever, because the performance of a *mawlid* (*‘amal mawlid li’l-rasūl*) is not recommended in the shariah, particularly if it involves religiously objectionable activities.²⁶

Muhammad ‘Alī bin Ḥussain (d. 1368AH):

“The celebration of the *mawlid* is desirable (*mustahabb*) according to the *Shari‘ah*.”²⁷

Muhammad ibn al-‘Alawī (d. 1422AH):

“Gathering for the sake of the *mawlid* celebration is a customary matter. It is not an act of worship in itself. This is what we believe and take as our religion with Allah. Whoever wishes to imagine the reality of the *mawlid* celebration as something else, then they may do so, for each person is only responsible for what he believes and no one else.”

He further says, “The most novice student of knowledge knows the difference between that which is customary and that which is worship and the reality of the two. If someone says that something is an act of worship with its particular modality, we retort: ‘What is your proof?’ If someone says that something is a customary act we say to him: ‘Do as you like, because the real danger and tribulation that we fear is that an innovated and un-legislated act is covered in the garment of worship — although is only the product of someone’s *ijtihad*. We are not pleased with this. We wage war against it and warn from it.’

The upshot of all this is that even if gathering for the commemoration of the *mawlid* is a customary act, it is nevertheless from the customary acts of goodness that are composed of various benefits for the people because they are composed of acts which, when taken individually, are found to be sought after and legislated.”

He further says. “Whoever claims that we only remember the Prophet ﷺ in one night only, and that we are heedless of him ﷺ for the other 364 nights of the year, then he has invented a falsehood and come up with a grievous lie. By the bounty of Allah, these gatherings commemorating the *mawlid* of the Prophet ﷺ occur on every night of the year. Hardly a day or night passes, except that there is a gathering here, or a celebration there. We always say that to restrict *mawlid* gatherings one night only is of the greatest of offences to

²⁶ Muhammad Ahmad ‘Ulaysh, *Fath al-‘ali al-Malik fi’l-fatwa ‘ala madhhab al-Imam Malik*. 1:205.

²⁷ al-Khazraji, *al-Qawl al-Wādh al-Mufīd fi qirā’at al-mawlid fi kull ‘am jadīd*, excerpted in introduction to *Ḥamid al-Mihdar, al-Ihtifal bi-dhikr al-ni‘am wājib*, pp. 6–7.

the Messenger ﷺ, and for this reason the people accept our council in this regard and to Allah belongs all praise.

The upshot of all of this is that we do not say it is a *Sunna* to celebrate the *mawlid* on a specific night. On the contrary, whoever believes that has innovated in the religion. Remembering him ﷺ, and being attached to him is obligatory at all times and it must fill the souls.”²⁸

Murābit al-Ḥājj, a contemporary scholar from Mauritania:

Ustadh Rami Nsour, a student of Murābit, was asked regarding *mawlid an-nabī* celebrations in Mauritania. He said, “Murābit al-Ḥājj celebrates *mawlid*. The Mauriticians in the *Mahdara*,²⁹ where I was and in most of the country, people would wear new clothes on Eid [*mawlid an-nabī*], and slaughter a sheep. Just like the practices of the Eid (new clothes, slaughtering a sheep).

Murābit al-Ḥājj would read a lot of poetry in the praise of the Prophet ﷺ. Murābit and his students do not do anything in group, but rather individually. There are scholars in other *Mahdaras* that do group practises; *dhikr*, *ṣalawāt*, *madḥ*, etc.”

Abdullah bin Bayyah, a contemporary scholar from Mauritania:

Background:

The celebration of the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ is an issue of controversy amongst the scholars. Thus, there were some who considered it a disliked innovation, a few even saying it reached the level of prohibition, and there were others who considered it a praiseworthy innovation.

This difference is traced back to a divergence concerning the division of innovation (*bid‘ah*). Some scholars recognised the validity of such innovations and this was, primarily, the school of Imam al-Shāfi‘ī (May Allah have mercy upon him) and the head of this thought was Al-‘Izz ad-dīn ‘Abdus Salām (May Allah have mercy upon him). In addition, Imam Al-Qarāfi (May Allah have mercy upon him) who was a Maliki, carried this same opinion, giving it great attention, explaining it in an exhaustive manner. In his discussion Al-Qarāfi expanded the concept of innovation to include innovations that were commendable, highly recommended, obligatory and of disliked nature. Thus, he divided innovation into five parts: (obligatory, recommended, permissible, disliked and forbidden).

There were some scholars who failed to accept this division contending that, “Any innovation, if it appears, then it is repulsive in nature.” They did this by restricting the statement of ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), regarding the *Tarāwīḥ* prayers, “This is a good innovation” to its linguistic meaning. There was a large body of scholars who held this opinion, such as; Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah, Ash-Shāṭibī, in his book Al-

²⁸ Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-‘Alawī al-Mālikī, *Mafāḥim Yajib An Tuṣaḥḥah* (Notions that must be Corrected) translated by Suraqah Abdul Aziz

²⁹ Religious Institutes

I'tiṣām, and many scholars from the Maliki and Hanbali schools (may Allah have mercy upon all of them).

Finally, there were scholars who wrote in support of celebrating the mawlid such as Al-Suyūṭī (May Allah have mercy upon him) and, at the same time, there were others who wrote against it. Thus, in my opinion, there is no need to drag this discussion out, nor continue to argue about it any longer.

The Ruling:

Whoever wants to celebrate the Prophet's ﷺ birthday should celebrate it and avoid doing any action contrary to Islamic Law. This act should be done with an intention that it is not a Sunna nor an obligatory act. If these conditions are observed, and one is careful not to contradict Islamic Law, out of sincere love for the Prophet ﷺ, then, Allah willing, there is nothing wrong with this action and this person will be rewarded.

Commenting on this, the Shaykh of Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (May Allah have mercy upon him) said, "Indeed, such a person will be rewarded because of his intention." Likewise, for the one who shuns this celebration, seeking to cling to the Sunna out of fear of falling into innovation, then this person will also be rewarded, Allah willing. It is important to note that this is not a big issue. Nor is it necessary to give it more attention than it deserves.

The Methodology:

Our attention towards this issue is directed towards uniting the Muslims and curbing these differences. We base this understanding on facilitation (for both sides) and ease. This ease is not founded on an empty premise, but is referenced directly back to the Quran, traditions of the Prophet ﷺ, the fundamental objectives of Islamic law, and the order of the Prophet ﷺ to work towards unity between others. If a contentious issue arises pertaining to a matter, we exercise great consideration and respect for both sides. This consideration is not simply an act of being overly accommodative, as some contend, or attacking those who hold weak opinions. But, this respect and consideration for differences is guided by the fact that both opinions are based on proofs from Islamic Law. In some regards these proofs are clear, and in other regards the opposite holds true. Thus, some (scholars) have provided evidences for these acts' legitimacy, and others hold proofs for the opposite.

In conclusion, our stance is that both are on goodness, Allah willing, as long as this act is not mixed with some type of evil and the intention is correct. Allah knows best.³⁰

'Isa al-Mani' al-Humayrī, a contemporary scholar from UAE:

We find nowadays publications filled with lies and deception which mislead many Muslims into thinking negatively about the honourable *mawlid* of the Prophet ﷺ. These publications claim that to celebrate the *mawlid* is an act of innovation that goes against

³⁰ Shaykh 'Abdullah bin Bayyah, *Celebrating mawlid an-nabi* ﷺ. Translated by Suhaib Webb. Available at: [<http://www.binbayyah.net/portal/fatawa/231>]

Islam. This is far from the truth, and it is therefore necessary for those who can speak clearly to help clarify and reverse the doubts surrounding this most blessed day. It is with this humble intention that I present the following proofs in support of celebrating our beloved Prophet's birthday.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “He who innovates something in this matter of ours that is not of it will have it rejected.” He ﷺ also said, “Beware of innovations, for every innovation (*kul bid‘a*) is misguidance.”

Those opposed to *mawlid* cite this saying and hold that the word every (*kul*) is a term of generalisation, including all types of innovations, with no exception, and that therefore, celebrating *mawlid* is misguidance. By daring to say that, they accuse the scholars of Islam of innovation. At the top of the list of those they have accused, then, is our Master ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). Those in opposition to *mawlid* quickly reply to this, “But we did not mean the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.”

It follows, then, that the meaning of every (*kul*) cannot be taken in its general sense. Therefore, although the Prophet ﷺ may not have said to celebrate his blessed birthday, it is nonetheless not innovation to do so. For, as the following examples show, there were many actions and practices instituted by his close followers after his time that are not deemed innovation.

Compiling the Quran:

(From a Prophetic saying related by Zaid Ibn Thābit) “The Prophet ﷺ died and the Quran had not been compiled anywhere. ‘Umar suggested to Abu Bakr to compile the Quran in one book. When a large number of Companions were killed in the battle of *Yamāma*, Abu Bakr wondered, ‘How could we do something that the Prophet did not do?’ ‘Umar said, ‘By Allah, it is good.’ ‘Umar persisted in asking Abu Bakr until Allah expanded his chest for it (Allah made him agree and accept these suggestions) and he sent for Zaid Ibn Thābit and assigned him to compile the Quran.” Zaid said, “By Allah if they had asked me to move a mountain, it would not have been more difficult than to compile the Quran.” He also said, “How could you do something that the Prophet did not do?” Abu Bakr said, “It is good, and ‘Umar kept coming back to me until Allah expanded my chest for the matter.”³¹

The Maqam of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) in relation to the Kabah:

(*Al-Bayhaqī* narrated with a strong chain of narrators from ‘Aisha.) “The Maqām during the time of the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr was attached to the House, then ‘Umar moved it back.” Al-Ḥāfidh Ibn Ḥajar said in *al-Fath*, “The Companions did not oppose ‘Umar, neither did those who came after them, thus it became unanimous agreement.” He was the first to build the enclosure (*maqsurah*) on it, which still exists today.

³¹ Narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*

Adding the first call to prayer on Friday:

(From *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, from al-Sa'ib bin Yazīd.) “During the time of the Prophet ﷺ, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar, the call to Friday prayer used to occur when the Imam sat on the pulpit. When it was ‘Uthman’s time, he added the third call (considered third in relation to the first *ādhān* and the *iqāma*. But it is named first because it proceeds the call to the Friday prayer.)”

Salutations on the Prophet composed and taught by our Master ‘Ali”

The salutations have been mentioned by Sa‘īd bin Manṣūr and Ibn Jarīr in *Taḥzīb al-Āthār*, and by Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim and Ya‘qūb bin Shaiba in *Akhbār ‘Ali* and by al-Ṭabarānī and others from Salamah al-Kindī.

The addition to the tashahhud by Ibn Mas‘ūd:

After “*wa raḥmatullāhi wa barakātuh*”, and the Mercy of Allah and Blessings, he used to say, “*assalāmu ‘alayna min Rabbinā*”, peace upon us from our Lord. Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr*, and the narrators are those of the sound transmitters, as it has been mentioned in *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*.

The addition to the tashahhud by ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar:

He added the *basmalah* at the beginning of the *tashahhud*. He also added to the *talbiya*, “*labbaika wa sa‘daika wal-khayru bi yadayka wal raghba’u ilayika wal ‘amalu*” This is mentioned in *Bukhārī*, *Muslim*, et al.

These are some of the developments instituted by the Prophet’s Companions, the scholars, and the honourable members of his nation, which did not exist during the time of the Prophet, and which they deemed good. Are they, then, misguided and guilty of bad innovation?

As for the claim that there is no such thing in religion as good innovation, here are some sayings of the brilliant scholars of Islam belying this claim.

Imam Nawawī said in his *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (6:21): “The Prophet’s saying every innovation is a general-particular and it is a reference to most innovations. The linguists say, ‘Innovation is any act done without a previous pattern, and it is of five different kinds.’” Imam Nawawī also said in *Taḥzīb al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣifāt*, “Innovation in religious law is to originate anything which did not exist during the time of the Prophet, and it is divided into good and bad.” He also said, “*Al-muḥdathāt* (pl. for *muḥdatha*) is to originate something that has no roots in religious law. In the tradition of religious law it is called innovation, and if it has an origin within the religious law, then it is not innovation. Innovation in religious law is disagreeable, unlike in the language where everything that has been originated without a previous pattern is called innovation regardless of whether it is good or bad.”

Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, the commentator on *al-Bukhārī*, said, “Anything that did not exist during the Prophet’s time is called innovation, but some are good while others are not.”

Abu Na‘īm, narrated from Ibrāhīm al-Junaid, said, “I heard al-Shāfi‘ī saying, ‘Innovation is of two types; praiseworthy innovation and blameworthy innovation, and anything that disagrees with the *Sunna* is blameworthy.’”

Imam al-Bayhaqī narrated in *Manāqib al-Shāfi‘ī* that al-Shāfi‘ī said, “Innovations are of two types: that which contradicts the Quran, the *Sunna*, or unanimous agreement of the Muslims, is an innovation of deception, while a good innovation does not contradict any of these things.”

Al-‘Izz bin ‘Abdus Salām said, at the end of his book, *Al-Qawā‘id*, “Innovation is divided into obligatory, forbidden, recommended, disagreeable and permissible, and the way to know which is which is to match it against the religious law.”

Clearly we see from the opinions of these righteous scholars, that to define innovations in worship as wholly negative without exception is ignorance. For these pious knowers, among them Imam Nawawī and al-Shāfi‘ī, declared that innovations could be divided into good and bad, based on their compliance or deviance with religious law.

Moreover, the following Prophetic saying is known even to common Muslims, let alone scholars: “He who inaugurates a good practice (*Sunna ḥasana*) in Islam earns the reward of it, and of all who perform it after him, without diminishing their own rewards in the least.”

Therefore it is permissible for a Muslim to originate a good practice, even if the Prophet didn’t do it, for the sake of doing good and cultivating the reward. The meaning of inaugurate a good practice (*sanna sunnatun ḥasana*) is to establish a practice through personal reasoning (*ijtihād*) and derivation (*istinbāt*) from the rules of religious law or its general texts. The actions of the Prophet’s Companions and the generation following them which we have stated above is the strongest evidence.

The ones prejudiced against celebrating the Prophet’s birthday have paved the way for their falsehood by deceiving the less-learned among the Muslims. The prejudiced ones claim that Ibn Kathīr writes in his *Al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya* (11:172) that the Fatimiyid-‘Ubaidi state - which descends from the Jew, ‘Ubaidillah Bin Maimūn Al-Kaddah - rulers of Egypt from 357-567 A.H., innovated the celebration of a number of days, among them, the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday. This treacherous lie is a grave insult to the scholarship of Ibn Kathīr and the scholarship of all Islam. For in truth, Ibn Kathīr writes about the Prophet’s birthday in *Al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya* [13:136] “The victorious king Abu Sa‘īd Kawkabūrī, was one of the generous, distinguished masters, and the glorious kings; he left good impressions and used to observe the honourable *mawlid* by having a great celebration. Moreover, he was chivalrous, brave, wise, a scholar and a just ruler.” Ibn Kathīr continues, “And he used to spend three hundred thousand Dinars on the *mawlid*.” In support, Imam Al-Dhahabī writes of Abu Sa‘īd Kawkabūrī, in *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubala’* [22:336], “He was humble, righteous, and loved religious learned men and scholars of Prophetic saying.”

Following are some sayings of the rightly guided Imams regarding the *mawlid*.

- Imam al-Suyūṭī

In *Alhawi lil fatawi*, wrote a special chapter entitled “*The Good Intention in Commemorating the mawlid*”, at the beginning of which he said, “There is a question being asked about commemorating the *mawlid* of the Prophet in the month of *Rabi‘ al-Awwal*: ‘What is the

religious legal ruling in this regard, is it good or bad? Does the one who celebrates get rewarded or not?’ The answer according to me is as follows: To commemorate the *mawlid*, which is basically gathering people together, reciting parts of the Quran, 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 for his honourable birth.”

- Ibn Taymiyyah

In his book *Iqtida’ al-Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm* (pg. 266), said: “Likewise, what some people have innovated, in competition with the Christians in celebrating the birth of Jesus, or out of love and veneration of the Prophet ﷺ; doing what the predecessors didn't do, even though there is a reason for it, and there is nothing against it.” This is a saying of someone who set fanaticism aside and sought to please Allah and his Prophet. As far as we are concerned, we commemorate the *mawlid* for no other reason but what Ibn Taymiyyah said, “Out of love and veneration of the Prophet.” May Allah reward us according to this love and effort, and may Allah bless the one who said, “Let alone what the Christians claim about their Prophet, and you may praise Muhammad in any way you want and attribute to his essence all honours and to his status all greatness, for his merit has no limits that any expression by any speaker might reach.”

- Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī

In the same source previously mentioned, al-Suyūṭī said, “Someone asked Ibn Ḥajar about commemorating the *mawlid*. Ibn Ḥajar answered, ‘Basically, commemorating the *mawlid* is an innovation that has not been transmitted by the righteous Muslims of the first three centuries. However, it involves good things and their opposites, therefore, whoever looks for the good and avoids the opposites then it is a good innovation.’ It occurred to me (al-Suyūṭī) to trace it to its established origin, which has been confirmed in the two authentic books: *al-Ṣaḥīḥain*. When the Prophet arrived in Medina he found that the Jews fast the day of *Āshūra*; when he inquired about it they said, ‘This is the day when Allah drowned the Pharaoh and saved Moses, therefore we fast it to show our gratitude to Allah.’ From this we can conclude that thanks are being given to Allah on a specific day for sending bounty or preventing indignity or harm.” Al-Suyūṭī then commented, “What bounty is greater than the bounty of the coming of this Prophet, the Prophet of Mercy, on that day?”

“This is regarding the basis of *mawlid*. As for the activities, there should be only the things that express thankfulness to Allah, such as what has been previously mentioned: reciting Quran, eating food, giving charity, reciting poetry praising the Prophet or on piety which moves hearts and drives them to do good and work for the Hereafter.”

These are the derivations that those opposed to *mawlid* call false conclusions and invalid analogies.

- Imam Muhammed bin Abu Bakr ‘Abdullah al-Qaisī al-Dimashqī

He wrote *Jāmi’ al-Āthār fi mawlid*, *al-nabiy al-mukhtār*, *Al-lafz al-ra’iq fi mawlid khayr al-khalā’iq* and *mawlid al-sa’ada fi mawlid al-hādī*.

- Imam Al-‘Iraqi

He wrote *Al-mawlid al-heni fi al-mawlid al-sani*.

- Mulla ‘Ali al-Qārī

He wrote *Al-mawlid al-rawī fil mawlid al-nabawī*.

- Imam Ibn Dahiya

He wrote *Al Tanwīr fi mawlid al-bashīr al-nadhīr*.

- Imam Shamsuddīn bin Nāṣir al-Dimashqī:

mawlid al-Sadi fi mawlid Al-Hadi. He is the one who said about the Prophet’s estranged uncle, Abu Lahab, “This unbeliever who has been dispraised, ‘perish his hands’ [111:1], will stay in Hell forever. Yet, every Monday his torment is being reduced because of his joy at the birth of the Prophet.” How much mercy can a servant expect who spends all his life joyous about the Prophet and dies believing in the Oneness of Allah?

- Imam Shamsuddīn Ibn al-Jazarī

He wrote *Al-Nashr fil qirā’at al ‘ashr, ‘urf al ta’rīf bil mawlid al-Sharīf*.

- Imam Ibn al-Jawzī:

He said about the honourable *mawlid*, “It is security throughout the year, and glad tidings that all wishes and desires will be fulfilled.”

- Imam Abu Shāma:

Imam Abu Shāma (Imam Nawawī’s Shaykh) in his book, *Al-Bā’ith ‘ala Inkār al-bid‘a wal ḥawādith* (pg.23) said, “One of the best innovations in our time is what is being done every year on the Prophet’s birthday, such as giving charity, doing good deeds, displaying ornaments, and expressing joy, for that expresses the feelings of love and veneration for him ﷺ in the hearts of those who are celebrating, and also, shows thankfulness to Allah ﷻ for His bounty by sending His Messenger, the one who has been sent as a Mercy to the worlds.”

- Imam al-Qaṣṭallānī:

Imam al-Shihāb al-Qaṣṭallānī (*al-Bukhārī’s* commentator) in his book *al-Mawahhib Al-Ladunniya* (1:148) said, “May Allah have mercy on the one who turns the nights of the month of the Prophet’s birth into festivities in order to decrease the suffering of those whose hearts are filled with disease and sickness.”

There are others who wrote and spoke about *mawlid*, such as Imam al-Sakhawī, Imam Wajihu Din bin ‘Ali bin al-Dayba’ al-Shaybānī al-Zubaidī, and many more, which we will not mention due to the limited space available.

From these many evidences, it should be clear by now that celebrating the *mawlid* is highly commendable and allowed. Surely we cannot simply shrug off as heretics the scholars and dignitaries of this nation who approved the commemoration of the *mawlid* and wrote countless books on the subject. Are all these scholars, to whom the whole world is indebted for the beneficial books they have written on Prophetic sayings, jurisprudence, commentaries, and other sorts of knowledge, among the indecent who commit sins and evil? Are they, as those opposed to *mawlid* claim, imitating the Christians in celebrating the birth of Jesus? Are they claiming that the Prophet did not convey to the nation what they should do? We leave answers to these questions up to you.

And yet we must continue to examine the errors which those opposed to *mawlid* utter. They say “If celebrating the *mawlid* is from the religion, then the Prophet would have made it clear to the nation, or would have done it in his lifetime, or it would have been done by the Companions.” No one can say that the Prophet did not do it out of his humbleness, for this is speaking evil of him, so they cannot use this argument.

Furthermore, that the Prophet and his Companions did not do a certain thing does not mean they made that thing prohibited. The proof is in the Prophet’s saying, “Whoever establishes, in Islam, a good practice...” cited earlier. This is the strongest evidence that gives encouragement to innovate whatever practices have foundations in religious law, even if the Prophet and his Companions did not do them. Al-Shāfi‘ī said, “Anything that has a foundation in religious law is not an innovation even if the Companions did not do it, because their refraining from doing it might have been for a certain excuse they had at the time, or they left it for something better, or perhaps not all of them knew about it.” Therefore, whoever prohibits anything based on the concept that the Prophet did not do it, his claim has no proof and must be rejected.

Thus we say to the rejecters of *mawlid*: based on the rule you have attempted to found, that is, that whoever does anything that the Prophet or his Companions did not do is committing innovation, it would follow that the Prophet did not complete the religion for his nation, and that the Prophet did not convey to the nation what they should do. No one says this or believes this except a heretic defecting from the religion of Allah. To the doubters of *mawlid* we declare, “Based on what you say, we convict you.” For you have innovated in the basics of worship a large number of things that the Prophet did not do, nor did his Companions, the Generation after the Companions, or the Generation after them.

For instance:

- Congregating people behind one Imam to pray *Ṣalāt al-Tahajjud* after *Ṣalāt al-Tarāwīh*, in the two Holy Mosques and other mosques.
- Reciting the Prayer of Completion of the Quran in *Ṣalāt al-Tarāwīh* and also in *Ṣalāt al-Tahajjud*.
- Designating the 27th night of *Ramadhān* to complete reading the entire Quran in the two Holy Mosques.
- A caller saying, after *Ṣalāt al-Tarāwīh*, in the *Qiyām* prayer, “May Allah reward you.”
- Founding organisations which did not exist in the time of the Prophet, such as Islamic universities, societies for committing the Quran to memory, and offices for missionary work, and committees for enjoining good and forbidding evil.

We are not objecting to these things, since they are forms of good innovation. We merely list these innovations to point out that those who oppose *mawlid* clearly contradict their own rule stating that anything that neither the Prophet nor his Companions did is innovation. And since they claim that all innovation is bad, they themselves are guilty. Yet another claim they make is to say that those who commemorate the *mawlid* are mostly indecent and immoral. This is a vulgar statement and it only reflects the character of the one saying it. Are all the distinguished scholars that we have mentioned, from the point of view of those opposed to *mawlid*, indecent and immoral? We won't be surprised if this is what they

believe. This is a most serious slander. We say, as the poet said, “When Allah wants to spread a virtue that has been hidden, He would let a tongue of an envious person know about it.”

Those opposed to *mawlid*, may Allah guide them, have confused some expressions, and claim that some religious scholars associate partners with Allah. Take for example the plea of Imam al-Buṣīrī to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, “O, most generous of creation, I have no one to resort to, save You, when the prevailing event takes place.” They must examine carefully the saying of Imam al-Buṣīrī: *inda hulul il-amim*, when the prevailing event takes place. What is *al-Amim*? It means that which prevails over the whole universe, and all of creation, in referring to the Day of Judgment. Imam al-Buṣīrī is asking intercession from the Prophet on the Day of Judgment because on that Day we will have no one to resort to, or appeal to.

Imam al-Buṣīrī seeks his intercession to Allah through the Prophet, for when all other Messengers and Prophets will be saying, “Myself, myself”, the Prophet ﷺ will be saying, “I am the one for it, I am for it [the Intercession]”. It becomes even more clear now that the doubts of those opposed to *mawlid* are unfounded, just as their charges of associating partners with Allah are unfounded. This is due to their blindness, both physical and spiritual.

Another similar example can be found in the well-known saying transmitted by the distinguished Imam al-Kamāl bin al-Ḥammām al-Ḥanafī, author of *Fath il Qadīr fi manāsik al-Fārisī*, and *Sharḥ al-Mukhtār min al-sada al-aḥnāf*. When Imam Abu Hanifa visited Medina, he stood in front of the honourable grave of the Prophet and said, “O most honourable of the Two Weighty Ones (humankind and jinn)! O treasure of mankind, shower your generosity upon me and please me with your pleasure. I am aspiring for your generosity, and there is no one for Abu Hanifa in the world but you.” Again, we must not misinterpret this entreaty, but realise its true meaning.

Yet another misconception those opposed to *mawlid* hold can be seen in their statements such as these: “What occurs during *mawlid* is mixing between men and women, singing and playing musical instruments, and drinking alcohol.” I myself know this to be a lie, for I have attended many *mawlids* and have not seen any mixing, and never heard any musical instruments. And as for drunkenness, yes, I have seen it, but not that of worldly people. We found people intoxicated with the love of the Prophet ﷺ, a state surpassing even the agony of death, which we know overcame our master Bilal at the time of his death. In the midst of this sweet stupor he was saying, “Tomorrow I shall meet the loved ones, Muhammad and his Companions.”

To continue, those opposed to *mawlid* say, “The day of the Prophet’s birth is the same day of the week as his death. Therefore, joy on this day is no more appropriate than sorrow, and if religion is according to one’s opinion, then this day should be a day of mourning and sorrow.” This kind of lame eloquence, is answered by the Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, in *Al-hawī lil-fatawī* (pg.193), “The Prophet's birth is the greatest bounty, and his death is the greatest calamity. Religious law urges us to express thankfulness for bounties, and be patient and remain calm during calamities.

Religious law has commanded us to sacrifice an animal on the birth of a child [and distribute the meat to the needy], which is an expression of gratitude and happiness with the newborn, while it did not command us to sacrifice at the time of death. Also, it prohibited wailing and showing grief. Therefore, the rules of Divine Law indicate that it is recommended to show joy during the month of the Prophet's birth, and not to show sorrow for his death.”

Furthermore, Ibn Rajab, in his book *al-Laṭā'if*, dispraising the rejecters of *mawlid* based on the above argument, said, “Some designated the day of *Āshūra* as a funeral ceremony for the murder of al-Ḥusayn. But neither Allah nor His Prophet commanded that the days of the prophets’ great trials or deaths should be declared days of mourning, let alone those with lesser rank.”

We conclude this article with a saying of the Prophet, which has been narrated by Abu Ya‘la, from Hudhaifa and about which Ibn Kathīr said, “It's chain of transmission is good.” Abu Ya‘la said, “The Prophet has said, ‘One of the things that concerns me about my nation is a man who studied the Quran, and when its grace started to show on him and he had the appearance of a Muslim, he detached himself from it, and threw it behind his back, and went after his neighbour with a sword and accused him of associating partners with Allah.’ I then asked, ‘O Prophet of Allah, which one is more guilty of associating partners with Allah, the accused or the accuser?’ The Prophet said, ‘It is the accuser.’”

Completed, with all Praises to Allah and salutations and peace be upon our master Muhammad and the family of Muhammad and his Companions.³²

Lastly, Salek bin Siddina, a contemporary scholar from Mauritania:

“Taking this month (*Rabī al-Awwal*) or the day of the blessed birth of the Prophet ﷺ as a day of celebration is an innovation. It is an innovation because the *Salaf* did not celebrate it in that particular fashion. But it is considered a *Bid‘ah ḥasanah* (good innovation). This is the opinion of the majority of the earlier scholars.”

He further says, “The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Whoever initiates a good practice (*Sunna ḥasanah*) in Islam and is followed by others in doing so will get the reward of it and the reward of all those who act upon it without their rewards being diminished in any respect...’³³ This is a proof that even though the practice may not have been initiated by the Prophet ﷺ and his noble companions, the Prophet ﷺ is indicating that there are things that can be added as a good practice and one can be rewarded by it. This practice appeared in the Muslim community in the year around 570AH. Since the year 570AH till now, this has been the practice of the Muslims and the overwhelming majority of scholars have accepted it to be something acceptable and recommended for Muslims to take part in it.

³² Dr. ‘Isa al-Mani` al-Humayri. (1998). Should we celebrate mawlid (The Prophet's ﷺ birthday)? *The Muslim Magazine*. Department of Awwaqaf, Dubai Office of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Dubai Administration of Ifta' and Research. Available at: [<http://sunnah.org/2014/02/24/dubai-fatwa-mawlid/>]

³³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1017* and *Tirmidhī*, 2675. al-Tirmidhī said, “This Ḥadīth is *Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ*.”

The problem that comes about in celebration of the *mawlid* is when people introduce practices that are not acceptable according to the *Sunna*. For example, free-mixing of men and women, having music, not showing proper etiquette to the Prophet ﷺ, turning it into a carnival, to treat it just as a get together for feast, to turn it into an average wedding-like gathering, etc. That is not what the *mawlid* celebration is about. We are talking about celebrating the *mawlid* by using *Sunna*-practices. Even though it is a *Bid'ah ḥasanah*, we are encouraged to use practices that are in accordance with the *Sunna*, not contrary to it. For example, the *Sunna* way of dealing with people, the *Sunna* way of gathering together and following the *Sunna* in all aspects.

It becomes a reprehensible innovation when people act contrary to the *Sunna*. If a person leaves the *Sunna*, that is when his actions become an evil innovation. The bad practices are the evil innovations not the celebration of the *mawlid*, which is a good innovation. No one should say that celebration of the *mawlid* is a *Bid'ah sayyi'ah* and therefore a misguidance. We know that the Prophet ﷺ said that every innovation is misguidance and every misguidance is in the fire.” Some people when they see this will say “This is a *bid'ah*, so it's misguidance' so it's in the hellfire.” We shouldn't say this because it was mentioned by so many *fuqahā* (jurists), *mufasssirīn* (exegetes), *muḥaddithīn* (traditionists) such as, as-Suyūṭī, Ibn Ḥajar and many others have accepted this and considered it not only permissible, but highly recommended.

We see centuries of scholarship accepting *mawlid* celebrations as something good and then few people come along and say, “It is an innovation.” We shouldn't accept this. Imam Mawlūd [d. 1323AH] said, “What should suffice us is the way of those who came before us; the rightly guided predecessors. We should follow their examples.” There is another quote saying that, “We should follow what those before us followed, without adding anything or subtracting anything, but simply following their way.” The verdict of the erudite scholars of the past; scholars of *Aqīdah*, scholars of *Tafsīr*, scholars of *Taṣawwuf*, scholars of *Ḥadīth* etc. should be sufficient for us in regards to the celebration of *mawlid an-nabī* ﷺ. If the scholars have already come together and given a verdict on the permissibility of *mawlid*, then we don't need to give a verdict in this modern-age, as scholars before us have already given their verdict on this matter. All we have to do is implement it.

A lot of ignorant people, who are considered to be scholars of high-calibre by the general masses, gather together for *mawlid* and do practises that are not acceptable in the *Sharī'ah*. When the opponents of *mawlid* come and see these practises, their belief is strengthened that *mawlid* is an evil innovation. So we have extremes on both sides; those who do practises that contradict the *Sharī'ah* and those who oppose *mawlid* based on the practises done by the ignorant people. Both are not acceptable. This issue has come about due to the fact that anyone can just wear a turban, sit like a scholar and people will begin to honour him, without even asking about his knowledge and qualifications. However, if you look at the science of engineering, he wouldn't be allowed to design and build without having gone through years of study and practice, because people's lives are at stake. Similarly, the doctor has to go through years of study and years of training before he is able to practice as a doctor, because people's lives are stake. However, when it comes to the

Sharī‘ah, everyone become opinionated, standards are dropped and people begin to call him a “*Shaykh*”, just because he wears a turban and sits like a scholar.

Ibn al-Ḥājj said, ‘One of the things that has really ruined the religion and the practice of it is people giving titles to those who are unworthy of such titles.’ If a person is not a scholar, he shouldn’t be called a “*Shaykh*”. What will happen if people start calling someone a doctor and he then starts treating people? The lives of others will be in danger. Similarly, such a person, who is considered a scholar when he really is ignorant, will destroy people’s religion and afterlife.”

He further says, “Some of the scholars have actually considered the celebration of *mawlid an-nabī* ﷺ to be better than all other celebrations. We recognise that majority of the scholars have accepted the celebration of *mawlid*. Imam as-Sakhāwī has mentioned some of the best proofs regarding the permissibility of celebrating *mawlid an-nabī* ﷺ. He says, “The celebration of *mawlid* was officially started by Sultan Muẓaffar of Irbil, which then spread out to the east and west. All of the Muslim countries taking part in the celebrations, the general populace and the scholars accepted it. The fact that the majority of the Muslims have accepted it, we have to take what the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Whatever the Muslims see as being good, then Allah ﷻ considers it good.’” This is because Muslims, as a whole, have been put as representatives of Allah on Earth. If they gather together and accept something, then the Prophet ﷺ was telling us that it is a sign of acceptance from Allah.

Imam as-Sakhāwī then says, “In another *ḥadīth* the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘My *Ummah* will not unite upon misguidance.’ These two *ḥadīth*, along with the majority of the *Ummah* accepting the *mawlid* celebrations, are a proof that it is something considered good in the sight of Allah ﷻ.” Therefore, *mawlid* celebrations are permissible, as long as they are free from that which is forbidden.

Imam al-Jazarī [d. 833 AH], the scholar of *Tajwīd* and the author of *Matn al-Jazariyyah* says, “The blessings of *mawlid* have been experientially tested, and its blessings proved to be many. Among them is [the fact] that the one who celebrates *mawlid* experiences security for himself, his wealth, and his family and is not harmed in that year and until the same time [of the next year]. By the blessings of the one who is mentioned in it [i.e., the Prophet] it fulfils needs, and by means of it the favour of the Lord of the heavens is sought. This is something that has been experienced and become common knowledge (*jurriba wa-sha’a*).”

There is no end to the list of scholars who have considered *mawlid* celebrations to be permissible. If we start listing them, there will be no end to it. What has been mentioned should be sufficient to say that it is a good practice and not something rejected.”³⁴

³⁴ Shaykh Salek bin Siddina, *Celebrating mawlid*. Translated by Ustadh Rami Nsour al-Idrisi, transcribed by Abdul Samad Ali. Available at: [<http://www.muwatta.com/shaykhs-salek-bin-siddina-rami-nsour-on-celebrating-mawlid/>]