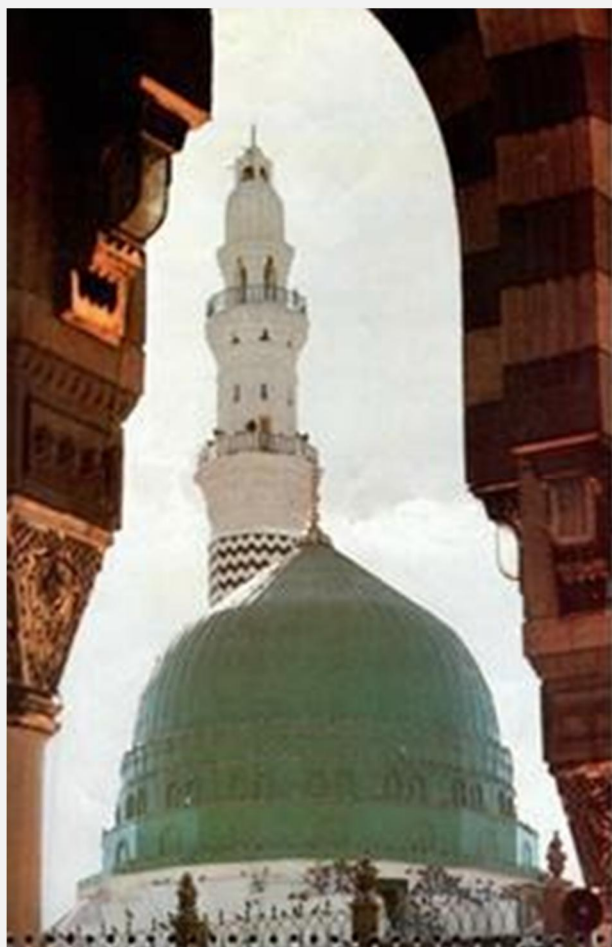


In the name of Allaah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE OBJECTIVE IN :
CELEBRATING THE BIRTHDAY OF
THE NOBLE PROPHET (S.A.W.)



By *Imaam* Jalalluddin Al-Suyuti

being the English Translation
by Maulana Siddiq Ahmad Nasir
of the Urdu Version of his work
Husn al-Maqsid fi 'Amal al-Mawlid

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FOREWORD

This booklet is a swiftly penned work of great benefit by *Imaam* Jalaluddin al-Suyyuti, who was an illustrious *Muhaddith*, an unrivalled *Mufasssir*, an eminent historian and a famous jurist. In it he has shed light on the historical and legal status of the *Mil'ad Shariif* in his own characteristic scholarly style.

Before forming any opinion on the status of this booklet in imparting knowledge and benefit, first of all consider the illustrious personality of the author. The highly acclaimed *Tafsir al-Jalalain* which he co-authored is still a prescribed textbook in religious institutions and Muslims of all shades of opinion study and teach it, and praise *Imaam* al-Suyyuti for this work. Apart from this, his book on *Usuul al-Tafsir* called *al-Itqaan fii Uluum al-Qur-aan* became an indispensable source of reference for all later works on the subject. *Al-Badr al-Manshur*, his *Tafsir* of the Holy Qur-aan, is referred to as an exemplary *Tafsir*. On the characteristics and miracles of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.), his work entitled *al-Khasaa-is al-kubraa* has the distinction of being the foremost on this topic and excerpts from it are to be found in the works on *Siirah* by eminent *Imaams* and *Ulemaa*.

It is thus obvious that when such a great religious luminary takes up his pen to write on the *Mil'ad Shariif* (i.e., celebrating the birthday of the Noble Prophet – S.A.W.) the result will be of a unique status and its every word will be a summary of his vast knowledge of *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Usuul* and history. Thus it would form the conclusive verdict on the subject.

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In the Name of Allaah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

Praise be to Allaah and Peace on His chosen servants.

The question under consideration is what is the verdict of the *Shari'ah* in celebrating the holy birthday of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) in the month of Rabii-'ul Awwal. From the point of view of the *Shari'ah* is this a praiseworthy action or a blameworthy one? And do those who arrange such a celebration receive blessings or not?

SECTION ONE

THE OCCASION OF HAPPINESS

The reply to this question is that in my view the *Mil'ad Shariif* (celebration of the birthday of the Noble Prophet – S.A.W.) is in fact such an occasion of happiness on which people assemble and recite the Holy Qur'aan to the extent that is easy. Then they relate the prophesies concerning the appearance of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) that have been transmitted in '*Ahadiith* and *Athaar*, and the miraculous events and signs that took place on his birth. Then food is set before them and according to their desire they partake therefore to satisfaction. *This festival of celebrating the birthday of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) is a Bid'ah Hasanah (a good innovation) and those arranging it will get blessings, since in such a celebration is found the expression of joy and happiness at the greatness and eminence of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) and at his birth.*

HISTORY OF THE MIL'AD SHARIF

The beginning of the celebration of the *Mil'ad Shariif* in its present form lies with the ruler of Urbil, Sultan Muzaffar, whose full name is Abu Said Kukabri Ibn Zain al-Din Ali Ibn Baktagiin, 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 *Jaami' Muzaffari*, which he had constructed near Mount Tasiyun.

Ibn Kathir writes about Sultan Muzaffar as follows:

“Sultan Muzaffar used to arrange the celebration of the *Mil'ad Shariif* with due honour, glory, dignity and grandeur. In this connection he used to organise a magnificent festival. He was a purehearted, brave and wise *'alim* and a just ruler. May Allaah shower His Mercy on him and grant him an exalted status. *Shaikh* Abu al-Khattab Ibn Dihyah also wrote a book for him on the *Mil'ad Shariif* entitled “*al-Tanwiir fii Mawlid al-Bashiir al-Nadh'ir*” (Enlightenment on the Birthday of the Bearer of Good News, the Warner). For this book Sultan Muzaffar awarded him a gift of one thousand *dinars*. Sultan Muzaffar remained the ruler until his death, which occurred in 630 A.H. in the city of 'Akka when he had the Europeans under siege. In short, he was a man of great piety and disposition.”

Sibt Ibn al-Janzi wrote in *Mir'at al-Zaaman* that one participant in the *Mil'ad Sharif* organised by Sultan Muzaffar 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 that eminent pious *'Ulema* and illustrious *Sufis* used to attend the *Mil'ad Shariif* ceremony held by the Sultan, who used to honour them with robes of distinction and royal favour. For the Sufis there used to be a *Mahfil-e-Samaa'* from *Zuhr* until *Fajr*, in which the Sultan himself used to participate and derive ecstasy therefrom, together with the Sufis. Every year his expenditure on the *Mil'ad Sharif* amounted to three hundred thousand *dinars*. For those coming from outside (the city) he had a special guest house commissioned, where people from all walks of life used to come from different places and stay without any discrimination of status. The expenditure of that guest house used to be one hundred thousand *dinars* annually.

Similarly 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 *Harams* and providing water along the routes in Hijaz (for pilgrims), he used to spend three thousand *dinars* annually. These are in addition to the *Sadaqaat* and charity that used to be given secretly. His wife Rab'iah Khatoon Bint Ayyub, the sister of Nasir Salahuddin, narrates that her husband used to wear a garment (*Qamiis*) of coarse cotton costing not 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 money in charity is far better than wearing a costly garment and giving a poor or indigent person mere good wishes.

THE FIRST BOOK ON THE MIL'AD SHARIF

Ibn Khallikaan wrote in the biographical sketch of *Haafiz* Abu al-Khattab Ibn Dihyah:

“He was one of the pious *‘ulema* and famous scholars. He travelled from Morocco to Syria and Iraq. In the year 654 A.H.¹ he passed through the city of Urbil, when he saw that its ruler, the eminent Sultan Muzaffar al-Din Ibn Zain al-Din, arranged for celebrating the birthday of the Prophet (S.A.W.). So he wrote the book *Kitab al-Tanwiir fii Mawlid al-Bashyr al-Nahiir* for the Sultan and himself read it out to him. I myself heard the book read out in six sittings at the Sultan’s place in 625 A. H.”

SECTION TWO

AI-FAKIHAANII’S ESSAY REJECTING THE MIL’AD SHARIIF

Shaikh Tajuddin Umar Ibn Ali al-Khumi al-Iskandari, well-known as al-Fakihaanii, has claimed that the *Mil’ad Shariif* is a reprehensible *Bid’ah* (innovation). In this regard he wrote an essay entitled *al-Mawlid fi-l Kalaam’ala-l-Mawlid* (The Origin in Discussion about the Birthday of the Prophet). Below I quote the essay in full after which I shall discuss it letter for letter.

Shikh al-Fakihaanii (may Allaah grant him His Mercy) has said:

“All Praise is due to Allaah Who has guided us to follow the Prophet, the Leader of the Messengers, (S.A.W.), Who has granted us the capacity to remain steadfast on the *Akraan* (basic elements) and the essential principles of the *Diin*, Who has made it easy for us to follow the footsteps and the way of our pious predecessors, to the extent that our hearts have been illumined with the knowledge of the *Shari’ah* and the conclusive arguments in favour of the evident truth, and Who has kept our internal selves free from the filth and contamination of the new *Bid’at* and *Muhdathaat* (innovations). I praise and thank Him for having blessed us with the light of certainty, and for having granted us the courage to continuously hold fast to His strong rope. These are all out of His Bounty and Grace. And I testify that there is no deity besides Allaah, Who is alone, and has no partner, and that without doubt Muhammad (S.A.W.) is the Servant of Allaah and His Messenger, the leader of those who are first and those who are last. May Allaah send *Salaah* (*Daruud*) until the Day of Judgment on him, his progeny, his companions and his wives who are the mothers of the Believers!

“Thereafter, a group of questioners has repeatedly asked whether there is any basis in the *Shari’ah* for the assembling of people in the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal which assembly is called *Mawluud*, or whether this is a new invention and a *Bid’ah* in the *Diin*.

“I reply, and Allaah is the One Who bestows *Tawfiq*, that it was not possible for me to find any basis for the *Mil’ad Shariif* in the Qur’aan and the *Sunnah*, nor is this action transmitted from the *Ulama* of the *Ummah*, who are the leaders of the *Diin* and who are steadfast on the footsteps of the early generations. On the contrary this is entirely an innovation, invented by useless and idle people. It is the creation of the lower desires of the *Nafs* of those who are slaves of their stomachs, who are ever in search of excuses for food and drink.

“The proof of the foregoing is that if we apply five rules of the *Shari’ah* (*al-Ahkaam al-Khamsa*) to the *Mil’ad Shariif*, we will have to say that it is either *Waajib* (obligatory), *Manduub* (commendable), *Mubaah* (permissible), *Makruuh* (disliked) or *Haraam* (prohibited). Now it is the *Ijmaa* (concensus) of all that it is not *Waajib*. Nor can it be *Manduub* since only that matter is *Manduub* which the *Shari’ah* has commanded without at the same time censuring those not doing it (i.e., there will be no accountability for not doing it). The *Mil’ad Shariif* is such an action which the *Shari’ah* has not commanded. Nor did the *Sahabah* and the *Tabi-uun* practise it, nor the *Ulema* of the early generations, those that I know of. If I am questioned in the presence of Allaah *Ta’ala* about it, this will be my reply, since the consensus of the followers of Islam is that no innovation can be permissible. Thus only two situations remain ... either it is *Makruuh* or it is *Haraam*. Below is a separate discussion of these two conditions, in which the difference between them will be explained.

“One manner is that someone arranges for the *Mil’ad Shariif* from his own personal wealth and invites his relatives and friends, who all participate therein and partake of the food – with no action against the *Shar’iah* being involved. This we term as *Bid’ah Makruuhuh* (a disliked innovation) or a *Bid’ah Shaani-ah* (a repulsive innovation). This is because from the religious leaders of the early generations, i.e., the *Fuquuha* of Islam and the *Ulemaa* of mankind, who are the torchbearers of guidance and the adornment of the world – from among them no one did this.

“The second manner is that the element of sin predominates. In the display of pomp and show and gifts and bounty, the self-esteem of the participants is injured. A sense of beggary and deprivation is created. When anything is obtained the *Nafs* terms it insufficient and the heart reproaches it. In this way, one, a victim of grief and sorrow becomes sorrowful and grieved. The *Ulema* have said to take wealth on the basis of modesty (from which a sense of injured self-esteem is created) is tantamount to taking wealth by force at the point of a sword. Especially when in this *Mahfil* (assembly) people with their stuffed bellies, get music and song from the beating of drums and playing musical instruments, and there is the assembly of men, young boys and improperly dressed women together, the latter having been adorned and made up, and they all mix or to top it all the women are providing for the *Mahfil*, together with dancing – bending their waists at times and their arms and faces at other times, in this direction and that – such that the atmosphere is one of amusement and fun and forgetfulness of the Day of Judgment. The separate assemblies of women are no less mischievous, as they raise their voices and sing with great joy. In *Dikhr* and recitation of the Qur’aan also, they exceed the limits of the *Shari’ah* – nay, they exceed all general

limits, i.e., they needlessly screech at the top of their voices, and in this they exhibit neglect of the statement of Allaah:

‘Surely your Lord is ever-watching’ (Al Qur-aan 89:14).

“That such a *Mahfil* is *Haraam* there can be no difference of opinion, nor can any cultured and religious person look on it with approval. Only those whose hearts are dead, and who up to now are not free from sin and disobedience – only they derive pleasure from such a *Mahfil*. And to add insult to injury, they consider such a *Mahfil* an act of *Ibaadah*, and do not even think that is forbidden and prohibited. *Innaa lillaahi wa inna ilaihi raji-uun.*

“Islam began as something Gharib (rare) and it will return to its original position.”

How beautifully has our *Shaikh* al-Qushairi expressed about that which we have made lawful!

“In our days of tumult the unlawful has become lawful and the lawful unlawful.

The learned have been pulled down in status and the ignorant exiled.

They have departed from the Truth and their ways of conduct have no connection with what has gone before.

So I said to the Abraar who are people of piety and religion, when the distress has become severe, do not disown your conditions for your time has come in the age of rarity.”

(Ghurbah)

How well has *Imaam* Abu Amr Ibn Al-‘Ala said!

“People will always remain on virtue (i.e., virtue will never be completely wiped out).

What then is the need for amazement at this wonder (i.e., at this strange age!)”

“In addition Rabi’-ul-Awwal is the month not only of the blessed birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) but also of his demise. Thus the expression of joy and happiness cannot be better than the demonstration of grief and sorrow.

“About the assemblies of *Mil’ad*, this is what we say and we hope that Almighty Allaah favours us with acceptance.”

REFUTATION OF THE FOREGOING ESSAY

Now consider my discussion on what al-Fakihaani said in this brief essay.

In consideration of his statement that he could not find any basis for the *Mil'ad Sharif* in the Qur'aan and the *Sunnah*, our submission is that the negation of the knowledge of a thing does not necessarily imply the negation of the existence of that thing (i.e., someone's not having knowledge of a thing does not necessarily mean that that thing does not in reality exist). The *Imaam* of the *Huffaz*, Abdul Fadl Ahmad Ibn Hajar (R.A.), has extracted a basis for the *Mil'ad Shariif* from the *Sunnah*. One more basis I have extracted, which will be mentioned later.

Al-Fakihaani has stated that the *Mil'ad Shariif* is an innovation invented by the useless and idle people, who are slaves of their stomachs and on whom the lower desires of the *Nafs* dominate. Further, having explained the different kinds of rules he stated that it is neither *Wajib*, nor *Manduub* since neither did the *Shar'iah* demand it nor did the *Sahabah*, the *Tabi-uun* and the *Ulema* of the early generations celebrate it. In this connection we say, as stated earlier, that it was a just Sultan who was an 'Alim who started the *Mil'ad Shariif* with the objective of obtaining nearness to Allaah. There were many 'Ulema and pious people with him, yet none of them deemed it reprehensible. On the contrary Ibn Dihyah (such an eminent 'Alim of that time) liked the celebration of the *Mil'ad Shariif*, and wrote a book for the Sultan on the subject (as mentioned earlier). These were all 'Ulema of the early generations who liked the *Mil'ad Shariif*, who supported and confirmed it and did not criticise or refute it. (This is itself a self-evident proof that al-Fakihaani's allegations are wrong.)

Then there remains his statement that the *Mil'ad Shariif* is not even *Manduub*, since only that matter is *Manduub* in reality, which the *Shar'iah* has demanded. In this regard our submission is that the demand of the *Shar'iah* is known sometimes through a *Nass* (an explicit textual statement in the Qur'aan or in the *Hadis* literature) and sometimes through *Qiyaas* (analogical deduction). For the *Mil'ad Shariif*, although no *Nass* is to be found, yet from those two bases in the *Shar'iah* which are mentioned further on, *Qiyaas* can definitely be made (i.e., when *Qiyaas* is applied on those two bases the commendability – being *Manduub* – of the *Mil'ad Sharif* can be realised).

DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF BID'AH (INNOVATION)

His statement that the *Mil'ad Shariif* can also not be *Mubaah* because the 'Ijmaa of the followers of Islam is that anything that is a *Bid'ah* (innovation) in religion cannot be *Mubaah*, is one that is not accepted. This is because *Bid'aat* (innovations) are not classified only as *Haram* or *Makruuh*, but they can also be *Mubaah* as well as *Manduub* or *Wajib*. *Imaam* al-Nawawi says in *Tahdhib al-Asmaa wal Lugaat*:

“*Bid'ah in the Shar'iah is the invention of that which was not there in the period of the Messenger of Allaah (S.A.W.), and it is divided in two categories, Hasanah (or good) and Qabiihah (or evil).*”

Shakh Izzuddin Ibn Abd al-Salaam writes in *al-Qawaa'id*:

“*Bid’ah* is divided into *Waajib*, *Haraam*, *Manduub*, *Makruuh* and *Mubaah*. And the way to know to which category it belongs is to examine it with the laws of *Shar’iah*. If it falls in the laws that deal with what is *Waajib*, then it is *Waajib*; if with those laws that deal with what is *Haraam*, then it is *Haraam*; if with the laws dealing with what is *Manduub*, then it is *Manduub*; if with the laws of what is *Makruuh*, then *Makruuh*; if with the laws of what is *Mubaah*, then *Mubaah*.”

After this he went on to give examples of the five kinds of *Bid’ah* and wrote:

“As for *Bid’ah* that is *Manduub*, its examples are the setting up of inns and educational institutions and every good action which was not there in the first age. Among the latter are *al-Taraawih*, discussion on the intricacies of *Tassawwuf* and debates. And among these is the convening of assemblies for deduction of laws in connection with problems, providing that the motive thereof is to seek the Pleasure of Allaah *Ta’ala*.”

Al-Baihaqi in *Manaqib al-Shafi’i* has transmitted with his *isnad* (chain of narrators) from *Imaam* al-Shafi’i himself, that he said:

“*The new things that are brought about are of two kinds. One kind is that which is brought about inconsistent with something in the Qur’aan or the Sunnah or with some Athar or some ‘Ijmaa. This is the category of Bid’ah Dalaalah (heretic innovation). The second kind is that which is brought about from good things which are not inconsistent with any of the above.*”

‘Umar (R.A.) did say about standing in prayer in the month of Ramadaan:

“*What a good Bid’ah that is! meaning that this is a new thing which was not there before and being a new thing it does not contradict anything that went before.*”

THE BID’AH THAT IS MANDUUB

This disputes *Skaikh* Tajuddin al-Fakihaani’s statement that the *Mil’ad Shariif* cannot also be *Mubaah*, but that on the contrary it is a *Bid’ah* that is *Makruuh*. This is because the *Mil’ad Shariif* is of that category of new matters which involve no inconsistency with anything in the Qur’aan or the *Sunnah*, or with any *Athar* or *‘Ijmaa*. Thus this is not blameworthy (i.e., from the point of view of the *Shar’iah* there is no evil in it), as in the statement of *Imaam* al-Shafi-i. And it is a good action which, even though (in its present form) was not done in the first age, was brought about afterwards. The invitation to partake of food and drink in which there is no sin is an act of goodness, for sure. Therefore in connection with the *Mil’ad Shariif*, that assembly in which someone, out of his lawfully earned wealth, invites his family, relatives and friends to partake of food and drink and in which there is no action against the *Shar’iah* – that assembly is a *Bid’ah* (innovation) that is *Manduub* (commendable), as is clear from the above-quoted statements of *Shaikh* Izzuddin Ibn ‘Abd al-Salaam.

HARAAM AND MAKRUUH THINGS

In connection with the second manner in which al-Fakihaani has described and criticised, his criticism is in itself correct. There is no doubt that that assembly (*Mahfil*) is *Haraam* when men, women and little boys are freely mixed, and in which there is dancing and music, with musical instruments in busy use, or where women assemble separately and sing in raised voices. But this does not mean that to arrange for the *Mil'ad Shariif* has been deemed *Haraam*. On the contrary, in the above instances the reason for their being *Haraam* is not assembling to celebrate the *Mil'ad Shariif*, but is due to those things which are *Haraam* in the *Shar'iah* and have become mixed with the blessed assembly. (And if these things are not indulged in then the *Mil'ad Shariif* would be an assembly for remembering Muhammad *Mustafaa* (S.A.W.), and would thus be full of goodness and blessings.)

Furthermore if these kinds of actions were to take place say, in the assembly of *Salaat-ul-Jumu'ah*, then it is evident that that would be a reprehensible step and an evil matter. However from this the criticism of the original assembly for *Salaat-ul-Jumu'ah* does not necessarily ensue. It has been seen that some of these kinds of actions also take place on the nights of *Ramadaan Shariif* when people assemble for the *Salaat-ut-Tarawiih*. Now on the basis of those actions can one conceivably criticise assembling for *Salaat-ut-Tarawiih*? Definitely not! However we will say that the original assembly for *Salaat-ut-Tarawiih* is *Sunnah* and an act of virtue and *'Ibaadah*, but that those above-mentioned actions, which have become mixed with it, are evil and repulsive. Similarly we say in connection with the celebration of the *Mil'ad Shareef* that the assembly is itself *Manduub* (commendable) and an act of virtue, but the above-mentioned kinds of other actions, which have become mixed with it, are blameworthy and unlawful.

REFUTATION OF THE FINAL OBJECTION

In conclusion al-Fakihaani stated that *Rabii-ul-Awwal* is the month not only of the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A. W.), but also of his demise. Therefore instead of grief and sorrow, exhibiting joy and happiness is neither better nor suitable. In reply to this, first of all we submit that the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) is the greatest favour of Allaah granted to us, and that his death is the greatest affliction for us. However, the *Shar'iah* has encouraged us to show our gratitude for favours and has taught us to observe patient perseverance, silence and calm in the face of afflictions. The *Shar'iah* has ordered us to offer the *'Aqiqah*² on the birth of a child, which is an expression of happiness and gratitude on the birth of that child. But the *Shar'iah* has not ordered us to sacrifice any animal on the death of someone, nor to do any such action. On the contrary it has prohibited wailing and lamentation. Thus the laws of the *Shar'iah* indicate that to exhibit

happiness in this holy month in connection with the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) is better than showing grief at his demise.

Ibn Rajab in his *Kitab al-Lata-if* wrote criticising the *Rawaafid* (a *Shia* sect) that because of the martyrdom of *Imaam Husain (R.A.)* they have made '*Ashuuraa* (the 10th. of Muharram) a day of mourning wherein Allaah and His Messenger (S.A.W.) have prohibited taking the days of affliction on the Prophets and the days of their deaths (A.S.) as days of mourning. What then is the justification for taking days of mourning for those who are not Prophets?

SECTION THREE

STAND POINT OF IBN AL-HAJJ

Imaam Abu Abdullah Ibn al-Haj has discussed the subject of the *Mil'ad Shariif* with great maturity and insight in his book *al-Madkhal*. To sum up his discussion, he has praised celebrating the *Mil'ad Shariif* with joy and happiness and exhibiting gratitude to Allaah, therefore. And he has criticised the *Haraam* and prohibited things which have been included in it. Here I quote his discussion section-wise.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE MIL'AD

“From among those innovations which those people have brought about, thinking that thereby they are engaging in a great act of '*Ibaadah* and participating in religious ceremonies (to celebrate the remembrance of some great event) is this, that in the month of Rabii-ul-Awwal they celebrate the *Mil'ad*, which celebration is constituted of many innovations and unlawful things. Among these are that 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 Allaah *Ta'ala* 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 *Samaa*, 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 *Samaa* in this holy month, which Allaah Almighty the Most Excellent has endowed with excellence and blessings in that His Beloved (S.A.W.) was born therein – such a *Samaa* in which musical instruments are used? What relation can this *Samaa* have to this holy and blessed month, in which Allaah (exalted is His Majesty) granted us the great *Ihsaan* of the auspicious birth of the Noble Prophet, the leader of those who are first and those who are last (S.A.W.). Therefore it is *Wajib* that special gratitude to Allaah *Ta'ala* should be expressed in this month and as such '*Ibaadah*

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 (servant) - S.A.W. Even though the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) did not engage in more 'Ibaadah 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 (S.A.W.) would leave off doing an action, lest it should become compulsory on his 'Ummah. This is the result of his mercy on us."

MERITS OF THE DAY OF THE MIL'AD AND OF THE NOBLE PROPHET (S.A.W)

"Nevertheless the Noble Prophet has indicated the excellence of the great month in reply to a questioner. When the questioner wanted to find out about fasting on Mondays, the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) replied:

"This is the day on which I was born." (Hadith)

"Since the excellence of this day (i.e., Monday implies the excellence of this month (i.e., Rabi-u-'Awwal) in which the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) graced this world, then it is our duty to give this month its due respect and sanctity, and we would understand it to be very excellent, just as Allaah Ta'ala has deemed other blessed months to be very excellent. In this connection, the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) 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 (A.S.) will be under my flag (on the Day of Judgment)".

"The merit and excellence of times and places are the results of those forms of 'Ibaadah which are carried out therein, and by which Allaah Ta'ala has specially favoured them. When it is known that times and places do not in themselves contain any honour and greatness, but that honour and greatness accrue on account of those characteristics and distinctions (with which they have been granted exaltation), then reflect on this greatest favour of Allaah Ta'ala, with which he has distinguished and earmarked this special month, Rabii-ul-Awwal Shariif and the day, Monday. Do you not see that fasting on Mondays has great merit because the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) 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 (S.A.W.) 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 therefore. Have you not seen the following statement of *Hadrat* Ibn Abbas (R.A.)?

“The Messenger of Allaah (S.A.W.) was the most generous of men and his generosity was the utmost in Ramadaan.”

WHY IS RESPECT FOR RABII-UL-AWWAL ESSENTIAL?

(and in this connection the removal of a misgiving)

“For this reason, just as the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) honoured those times endowed with distinction, we carry out this very duty in accordance with our capacity, in the month of Rabii-ul-Awwal *Shariif*. If it be said that what the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) took upon himself in times of special distinction is known, but that what he undertook in other months he did not do so in this month (i.e., Rabii-ul-Awwal *Shariif*) – then the answer is that it is well-known that the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) had this noble trait of wanting ease and relief for his *Ummah*, especially in those things concerning his own self. Do you not see that the Noble Prophet, leader of the world (S.A.W.) declared Madinah *Munawwarah* as sacred territory (*Haram*) just as *Hadrat* Ibrahim (A.S.) had declared Makkah *Mukarramah* to be, yet he did not fix any punishment for hunting, cutting down any tree etc. in Madinah – do you not see that he did this out of desiring ease and relief for his *Ummah* out of mercy on them? As it were, the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) 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 Rabii-ul-Awwal *Shariif* 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 *Haraam* and *Makruuh* things in this holy month out of respect for it. Even though the abstention from all *Haraam* and *Makruuh* things is required in other months as well, yet this month deserves the greatest respect. He should do so just as in Ramadaan *al-Mubaarak* and other sacred months he remains careful to the utmost, abstains from misdeeds in religion and keeps away from other unsuitable things.

CRITICISM BY IBN AL-HAJ

“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. How 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 *Mil’ad* celebrations with the recitation of the Holy Qur-aan. They then, for the sensual delight of the *Nafs*, take resort to those who are expert in 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 many other evil take 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 *Mil'ad* celebration in which there is also a session of *Samaa*.

“Yes, if the *Mil'ad Sharif* is free from those evils (and that kind of *Samaa*) – only food is prepared and in that one's *Niyyah* (intention) is of celebrating the *Mil'ad* and Muslim brethren are invited and in which those matters contrary to the *Shar-iah* 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 and more appropriate to follow the predecessors from none of whom this has been transmitted, nor has it been said of any of them that they made the *Niyyah* (intention) of celebrating the *Mil'ad*. We are their followers and are obliged to observe the same precepts as they were. (Thus we should only do that which they did)”..

GIST OF CRITICISM

The gist of the above-quoted writing of Ibn Haj is that he has not criticised the *Mil'ad Shar'if*. On the contrary he has criticised those things which are *Haraam* and *Makruuh* in the *Shar'iah*. From the opening section it is clear that this holy month should be accorded a special status and it should be honoured and respected. The maximum possible acts of virtue should be done therein. One should try to surpass one's limits in doing acts of *'Ibaadah*, of charity and other virtuous acts. This is the method of celebrating the *Mil'ad Shariif* which he has deemed praiseworthy and commendable, because in that there is nothing but the recitation of the Qur'aan and invitation to partake of food and drink - and these are the acts of goodness, meriting reward.

As far as his statement goes that this is an innovation – either it is in clear contradiction to what he said earlier (when Ibn al-Haj himself stressed honouring the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal), or it means that it is a good innovation (*Bid'ah Hasanah*) the elucidation of which was given earlier, or it means that the *Mil'ad Shariif* is a virtuous and praiseworthy act, and the innovation is the *Niyyah* (intention) of the *Mil'ad*, as he has suggested in this statement of his:

“then it will be an innovation merely on account of his *Niyyah* (intention).”

There remains the statement of Ibn al-Haj that it has not been transmitted that any of the predecessors made the *Niyyah* (intention) of celebrating the *Mil'ad*. From this it is clear that he considered the *Niyyah* of celebrating the *Mil'ad* to be *Makruuh* and that he did not deem the preparation of food and inviting Muslim brethren to partake thereof as *Makruuh* (i.e., he also views the preparation of food and inviting Muslim brethren as not being *Makruuh*. If this is examined closely, then it seems that this statement of his is not consistent with his earlier statements. This is due to the fact that he had first taught the showing of gratitude to Allaah *Ta'ala* in Rabii-ul-Awwal *Shariif*, and the engaging in the maximum acts of '*Ibaadah* and of charity and other virtuous acts therein, since he caused His Beloved (Servant) *S.A.W.* to be born in this holy month. The *Niyyah* (intention) of celebrating the *Mil'ad Shariif* means only this. Then how can something be criticised after doing it has been stressed? Abstract virtue, acts of '*Ibaadah*, of charity etc. and other acts of goodness cannot even be conceived of without a *Niyyah* (intention). And even if it could be considered, then it couldn't be deemed '*Ibaadah*, nor can it earn any reward. This is because no action without an intention is worthy of acceptance. And the *Niyyah* (intention) to celebrate the *Mil'ad Shariif* means only to demonstrate gratitude to Allaah *Ta'ala* on the auspicious birth of the Noble Prophet (*S.A.W.*) in Rabii-ul-Awwal. The intention of celebrating the *Mil'ad Shariif* means only this, and there is no doubt that that intention is commendable (i.e., it is a virtuous intention). Ponder on this well (and impress it on the mind as well).

EXTRAORDINARY FORM OF THE MIL'AD

After this Ibn al-Haj wrote:

“There are some people who do not celebrate the *Mil'ad* solely for the purpose of demonstrating honour and respect. On the contrary someone has some money in the possession of various people which he has 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 *Mil'ad* which becomes the cause for the recovery of his wealth which was in the hands of people.³

“In this many kinds 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 *Mil'ad* because he wants to gain benefits in the Hereafter. However in his heart is that he should recover his money dispersed in the hands of people.

“Some are such that they celebrate the *Mil'ad* in order to collect money or 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 the acts of corruption and destruction are not hidden.”

REAL REASON FOR ABOMINABLES

The criticism by Ibn al-Haj is also of that kind which has already been examined above. The blameworthy or evil aspect in it is based on the absence of pure *Niyah* (intention), and not that in the *Mil'ad Shariif* itself is to be found any evil or blameworthy aspect.

SECTION FOUR

VIEWPOINT OF SHAIKH AL-ISLAM IBN HAJAR

Shaikh al-Islam Abul Fadl Ahmad Ibn Hajar (the *Haafiz* of the age) was asked about the *Mil'ad Shariif*. His reply was that the *Mil'ad Shariif* is, in fact, an innovation, which was not transmitted from any pious predecessor in the first three centuries. Nevertheless both acts of virtue as well as acts of abomination are to be found in it (i.e., sometimes acts of virtue are found therein and sometimes acts of abomination). If in the *Mil'ad Shariif* only acts of virtue are done and acts of abomination are abstained from, then the *Mil'ad Shariif* is a *Bid'ah Hasanah* (a good innovation), otherwise not.

BASIS OF THE MIL'AD SHARIIF

He has said that he found a strong basis for the *Mil'ad Shariif* in *Sahiih al-Bukhari* and *Sahiih Muslim*. It is that when the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) migrated to Madinah, he saw the Jews fasting on 'Aashuura (i.e., the 10th. of Muharram). He enquired from them as to the reason for this. They told him that 'Aashuura is that day on which Allaah *Ta'ala* caused Pharaoh to drown, and granted *Musaa A.S.* deliverance from him, and that they (the Jews) therefore fast (on that day) out of gratitude to Allaah *Ta'ala*.⁴

From this the proof is obtained of showing gratitude to Allaah, and in that connection to do any virtuous act and to observe it annually as a means of recollection for any special day on which Allaah *Ta'ala* has bestowed any favour or removed any calamity. Gratitude to Allaah *Ta'ala* is expressed through different kind of *Ibaadah* – prostration and standing in prayer, charity and recitation of the Holy Qur-aan. And what greater favour of Allaah can there be than the appearance of the Prophet of Mercy (S.A.W.) on this day (i.e., the 12th. of Rabii-ul-Awwal)? Therefore this day should be specially observed so that consistency with the event concerning *Hadrat Muusa A.S.* on the day of 'Aashuura be attained.

Some people do not limit it and celebrate the *Mil'ad Shariif* on any day of Rabii-ul-Awwal. Nay, some have extended it to even more and increased the period to the whole year. According to the

latter the *Mil'ad Shariif* can be celebrated on any day of the year. The objective here is the same (i.e., to rejoice at and celebrate the holy birth of the Noble Prophet - S.A.W.).

This discussion has been in connection with the basis of the *Mil'ad Sharif*

IT'S BETTER TO REFRAIN FROM WHAT IS NOT

MOST PREFERABLE

As far as those actions are concerned which are done in the *Milad Shariif* it needs that one content oneself with only such actions through which gratitude to Allaah *Ta'ala* is demonstrated in a proper manner. For example, the above-mentioned matters – recitation of the Holy Qur'aan, invitation to partake of food, acts of charity, reciting verses in praise of the Leader of the two worlds (S.A.W.) and such verses through which hearts are moved towards acts of *'Ibaadah* and piety and through which there is motivation for bringing about acts of virtue and for working for the Hereafter.

Concerning those things belonging to the category of *Samaa'* and amusement and song⁵ and which happen to be within the sphere of permissibility and through which joy is expressed that day ... if such things are done there is no evil therein. And those things belonging to the categories of *Haraam* and *Makruuh* they should be guarded against. Similarly those things which are inconsistent with what is *Awlaa* (most preferable) and which are not appropriate ... such things should be abandoned.

ANOTHER BASIS FOR THE MIL'AD SHARIIF

I submit that I have found another basis for the *Mil'ad Shariif* in the *Hadth Shariif* (literature). It is that al-Baihaqi transmits from *Hadrat* Anas (R.A.) that the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) mentioned his own *'Aqiqah* in the period after the proclamation of Prophethood. This was in spite of the fact that his grandfather *Hadrat* Abdul Muttalib had already performed the *'Aqiqah* on the seventh day after his birth, and *'Aqiqah* is done only once and is not done a second time. From this it is understood that the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) did this to show his gratitude to Allaah *Ta'ala* for causing him to be born, having made him “*the Mercy unto all the worlds*”.

The objective was also to create a precedent in the *Shar'iah* for the *Ummah* – just as the Noble Prophet himself (S.A.W.) used to recite *Daruud Shariif* on his own self in order to create a principle in the *Shar'iah* for that act of showing honour and esteem on him. Therefore it is commendable (*Mustahab*) that we arrange for the *Mil'ad Shariif* to show our gratitude (to Allaah

Ta'ala) for the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.), in which the invitation to food and drink is there and other similar acts of virtue are done and which occasion is celebrated with happiness.

IBN AL-JAZARI'S FAITH KINDLING PROOF

I came across the book of the *Imaam* of the *Qurra'* Shams al-Din Ibn-Jazari entitled '*Urf al-Tar'iif bil-Mawlid al-Shariif* in which he writes that after the death of Abu Lahab⁶ someone saw him in a dream and enquired from him as to his condition. He said that punishment is being meted out. However on the night of Monday, there is some relaxation in his punishment and he manages to suck some water from his finger (so saying, he indicated the finger) because it was through a gesture of that finger that he set his female slave Thuwaibah free when she conveyed to him the good news of the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) and that she had had the privilege of suckling him. Consider! If this Abu Lahab, a *Kaafir* whose censure has come in the Holy Qur'aan also – if he has been rewarded for his expression of joy at the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.), what will be the condition of that Muslim, the sincere upholder of *Tauhiid* from his '*Ummah*, who expresses joy at the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) and spends whatever is possible for him, out of love for the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.)? By my life! His reward will be that Allaah, the Most Noble, out of His Comprehensive Grace, will place him in the Garden of Bliss.

AL-DIMASQI'S SOUL-ENRICHING NAAT ON THE MIL'AD

Hafiz Shams al-Din Ibn Nasir has written in his book *Mawlid al-Saadii fi Mawlid al-Haadii*:

“It is established in *Sahiih Aahaadith* that punishment is lessened for Abu Lahab every Monday because he set Thuwaibah free out of joy and happiness at the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.).”

After this he wrote the following lines of poetry:

“When this is a Kaafir and his censure has come in the Qur'aan)

Perish his hands in the Fire of Hell forever.

It has been narrated that always on Monday

(His punishment) is lessened because of his happiness at (the birth of) Ahmad.

What is the view then about the servant (of Allaah) who spent his whole life

Being happy at (the birth of) Ahmad and died an upholder of Tawhiid?”

PRACTICE OF A SHAIKH OF A TARIQAH

Kamal Adfiri states in *al-Taali' al-Saiid* that his reliable and trustworthy friend Nasir al-Din Mahmud Ibn-al-'Imaad stated that Abu al- Tayyib Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim al- Sibti al-Maliki, a resident of Tus and one of the pious *Ulama*, used to pass by the *Madrassah* on the birthday of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) and say:

“O Jurist! Today is the day of Id. Give the students a holiday and send them home”.

Thus they used to give them a holiday and send them home.

This is evidence of his confirmation and absence of rejection. This gentleman was a famous jurist of the *Maliki* school of law, who had a command over many branches of knowledge and was a God-conscious and pious elder. Abu Hayyan and others have transmitted narrations from him. He passed away in the year 695 A.H.

CONCLUSION

Ibn al-Haj has written that if it is questioned as to the wisdom in the birth of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) being in the month of Rabii-ul-Awwal and on Monday and not in the month of Ramadaan *al-Shariif*, which is the month of the sending down of the Qur-aan and in which *Laila-tul-Qadr* is found, nor in any of the sacred months nor on the fifteenth of Sha'baan *al-Mu'uzzam*, nor on Friday, nor on the night of Friday – then the reply can be given from four angles:

1. It has been transmitted in *Hadith* literature that Allaah *Ta'ala* created the trees on a Monday. In this there is great admonition and it is that on a Monday Allaah *Ta'ala* created food, sustenance, fruits and the things given in charity. Mankind's growth, development and livelihood are closely connected with these and men's selves get joy from them.
2. In the word *Rabii* from the point of view of its etymology, a good indication and a virtuous omen is found. Abu al-Rahman al-Saqfii states that for every man his name is a part of him (i.e., his name has effects on his body).
3. The season of *Rabii* (i.e., spring) is the most moderate and beautiful of all seasons and the *Shar-iah* of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) is the most moderate and the easiest among the *Sharaa'i*.
4. Allaah, the All-Knowing and Wise, wanted to bestow eminence on that time in which the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) entered this world. Had he been born in any of the sanctified times, then the illusion may have arisen that the nobility

and eminence of the Noble Prophet (S.A.W.) are on account of these sanctified times.

THE END

Notes

1. This is obviously a misprint in the Urdu version (Translator)
2. *Aqiqah* is the animal sacrifice recommended on the seventh day after the birth of a child to show gratitude to Allaah *Ta'ala* for the gift of the child and to seek for the child protection from evil influences.
3. This seems to be mere exaggeration. At least no such case has come to our notice of any person celebrating the *Mil'ad* with the object of collecting his money, which was dispersed in the hands of different people. (Publishers of Urdu version.
4. The Hadis goes on that the Noble Prophet a.s. said, on hearing this reply from the Jews in Madinah: "We are nearer to Musaa a.s than you, and pressed (following him) is more due on us as compared to you." saying this he fasted and instructed fasting on that day of Aashuura. (Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.
5. A few words here are illegible in the Urdu translation (Translator).
6. In the commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari by al-Aini it is stated that this person was Hadrat Abbas *r.a.* (Publisher's of Indian version.).