



In the name of God, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

Manitoba Islamic Association

Subject: Celebration of the birth of the Prophet (PBUH)
From: Local Fiqh Committee, Winnipeg, Manitoba
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Introduction:

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the last and final messenger sent by Allah SWT to guide humanity. It is a part of the Islamic testimony of faith to believe in him, love him, and follow his guidance. Loving the Prophet (PBUH) and following his guidance must go hand in hand. One of the issues of controversy in the Muslim community is the subject of celebrating the Prophet's birthday (mawlid al-nabi). How have Muslim scholars addressed this issue? Some Muslim scholars considered it impermissible while others considered it permissible. We will explain both views followed by our recommendations.

Opinions of scholars:

1. Scholars who said it's permissible to celebrate the Prophet's birthday:

The list of classical scholars who permitted celebrating the Prophet's birthday includes Abu Shaamah al-Maqdisi (d.665H), Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali (d.795H), Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 852H), and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti

(d.911H).¹ These scholars acknowledged that celebrating the Prophet's birthday was a novel practice that did not exist during the earlier centuries of Islam, however they argued that:

- it could be considered a 'good innovation', so long as it was free of any misdeeds (munkararat). For instance, these scholars did not condone the practice of music, dancing, and free-mixing in such celebrations, or otherwise.
- And so long as it was done with the intention of taking advantage of the date as nothing more than a means to utilize this momentous event to remind people about the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and to increase the love for him.
- Moreover, since expressing one's love for the Prophet (PBUH), worship Allah, and giving in charity are all deeds that are enjoined in Islam, there is no prohibition against performing them on the Prophet's birthday. Ibn Rajab pointed out that the Prophet (PBUH) used to fast on Mondays because that was the day on which he was born, which indicates that Muslims may fast days on which Allah has blessed them with bounties, the greatest of which is the Prophet being sent to

¹ For a list of these scholars' statements and arguments refer to Uthman Shaykh Hadag, al-Aali al-Sunniyya fi Mashruiyya Mawlid khayr al-Bariyya, pp 17-23. See also: Abdul Fattah Al-Yafi'i, Hukm Al-'ihtifal Bilmawlid An-Nabawi; 'Izzu D-din Al-Shaykh, Al-'adillah Ash-Shar'iyah fi Jawaz Al-'ihtifal Bimalad Khayr Al-Baryyah.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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them. Abu Shaamah stated that celebrating the Prophet's birthday increases one's reverence for him and is an opportunity for charity to the poor, remembering Allah, and doing good deeds.

2. Scholars who said it's not permissible to celebrate the Prophet's birthday:

Those scholars who declared it impermissible to celebrate the Prophet's birthday include Ibn Taymiyya (d.728H), Taj al-Din al-Fakihani (d.734H), Ibn al-Haj al-Fasi (d.737H), and Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (d.790H). These scholars argue that:

- the practice of the mawlid did not exist during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions, in spite of the companions' immense love for the Prophet (PBUH).
- Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) warned the Muslims from innovations in religion²
- and he emphasized that the Muslim community has only two Eids (annual celebrations).³

Therefore, to start a new act of worship which is not from Islam is a reprehensible innovation. Nonetheless, Ibn Taymiyya also clarified that someone with the right intentions who practiced the mawlid could in fact be rewarded for his or her sincerity, despite the fact that the practice itself should not be performed.⁴

Recommendation:

In Islam, the fundamentals are clear and uncontroversial and unanimously agreed upon, such as the importance of loving the Prophet (PBUH) and following his guidance in our lives. In subsidiary issues, there are matters which experts have differed about. In light of the preceding discussion, it is clear that the topic of the mawlid is a subject of controversy and differing views among Muslim scholars of the highest caliber. It is important that the Muslim community approach such topics with maturity, respect, and sensitivity, as these issues should not be made a source of sectarianism, division or discord.

May Allah guide us to beneficial knowledge and righteous actions.

² The Prophet said, "Every innovation is misguidance" (Sahih Muslim 867a) and "Whoever introduces something into this affair (religion) which is not from it will have it rejected" (Sahih al-Bukhari 2697).

³ Sunan Abi Dawud 1134.

⁴ Ibn Taymiyya writes in Iqtida Sirat al-Mustaqim:

كما قدمته لك فتعظيم المولد ، واتخاذة موسما ، قد يفعله بعض الناس ، ويكون له فيه أجر عظيم ؛ لحسن قصده ، وتعظيمه لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ، أنه قد يحسن من بعض الناس ، ما يستقبح من المؤمن المسدد