

Indispensable implication of Sunnah and caution against Innovation

All praise be to Allâh who completed the religion for us, perfected the blessing on us and chose Islam as our religion. May the blessings and peace be upon His slave and Messenger, who called upon people to obey his Lord and cautioned against extravagance, innovation and disobedience; and may Allâh bless his posterity, his companions and those who follow his footsteps till the Day of Judgement.

I have been acquainted with the article published on the first page of the weekly magazine *Edarat* of Kanpur, an industrial city of Uttar Pardesh in India, which contains an implied campaign against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its adherence to the Islamic creed, and its opposition to innovations. The writer alleges that the creed of the *Salaf* (early adherents to Islam) which is held by Saudi Kingdom does not agree with the *Sunnah*. By this, the writer aims at creating division amongst the *Ahl-as-Sunnah* and encouraging the innovations and superstitions. This attitude, no doubt, is most abominable and dangerous and aims at offending the Religion of Islam and spreading innovations and deviations from the truth. Furthermore, the article concentrates clearly on the subject of celebrating the Prophet's birthday as an excuse to discuss the creed of the Kingdom and its rulers. Therefore, I consider it necessary to enlighten the people on this subject. So seeking help of Allâh, I say:

صلى الله عليه وسلم It is not permissible to celebrate the birthday of the Messenger or somebody else. In fact, it must be stopped, as it is an innovation in the religion. Allâh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم neither celebrated it, nor commanded others to do this for himself; or for anyone who died before him amongst the Prophets, or for his daughters, or his wives, or his other relatives. The rightly-guided Caliphs, the Companions of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم or the Successors who rightly followed them did not celebrate this event, nor did anyone of the Muslim scholars in the centuries before.

They knew the *Sunnah* of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم best, they loved him more, and followed the *Shari'ah* better than those who came after them. If celebrating his birthday was a good deed, they would have done it.

We are commanded to follow and forbidden to innovate. This is because of the perfection of the Islamic religion and the sufficiency of what Allâh and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم have given us and are accepted by *Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah*. The Muslim community of the Companions and those who followed them in the best way.

It is related to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he said:

" من أحدث في أمرنا هذا ما ليس منه فهو رد "

"He who innovates something in this matter of ours that is not of it, will have it rejected). (Transmitted by *Al-Bukhâri* and *Muslim*)

According to Muslim who reported:

" " من عمل عملا ليس عليه أمرنا فهو رد

"Whoever does an act which is not in agreement with our matter, will have it rejected."

In another tradition, the Prophet ﷺ said:

"عليكم بستني وسنة الخلفاء الراشدين المهديين من بعدي، تسکوا بها وغضوا عليها بالتواجذ، وإياكم ومحدثات الأمور، فإن كل محدثة بيعة وكل بدعة ضلالة"

"You must keep to my *Sunnah* and of the *Sunnah* of the rightly-guided Caliphs, cling to it firmly. Beware of newly invented matters, for every new matter is an innovation and every innovation is misleading".

He used to say in every Friday *Khutbah* (sermon, religious talk):

"إن خير الحديث كتاب الله وخير الهدي هدي محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم وشر الأمور محدثتها وكل بدعة ضلالة"

"The best discourse is the Book of Allâh and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allâh, and the worst matter is that of innovation and every innovation is misleading".

Thus, these *Ahâdîth* (traditions) contain a strong caution against innovations and a warning that such an act is a deviation from the right course. The Prophet ﷺ warned the people of the gravity of these innovations and of their bad consequences. There are many traditions adduced in this connection. And the Almighty has said:

وَمَا أَنَّا كُمُّ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا

"... And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it), ..." (V.59:7)

Allâh, the Most High said:

فَلَيَحْذِرُ الَّذِينَ يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

"... And let those who oppose the Messenger's (Muhammad ﷺ) commandment (i.e. his *Sunnah* - legal ways, orders, acts of worship, statements, etc.) (among the sects) beware, lest some *Fitnah* (disbelief, trials, afflictions, earthquakes, killing, overpowered by a tyrant, etc.) befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them." (V.24:63).

Allâh the Almighty said.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّنَ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْأَخِرُ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

"Indeed in the Messenger of Allâh (Muhammad ﷺ) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allâh and the Last Day and remembers Allâh much." (V.33:21)

And Allâh the Almighty said:

وَالسَّائِقُونَ الْأُولَوْنَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعْدَلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تُجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

"And the first to embrace Islam of the *Muhâjirun* (those who migrated from Makkah to Al-Madinah) and the *Ansâr* (the citizens of Al-Madinah who helped and gave aid to the *Muhâjirun*) and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allâh is well-pleased with them as they are well- pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success." (V.9:100).

And Allâh the Almighty said:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَّتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيَتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامُ دِينِنَا

"... This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion..." (V.5:3).

This verse decisively indicates that the Almighty Allâh has completed the religion for this *Ummah*, and has showered His blessings on them.

His Prophet ﷺ passed away only after he had imparted the complete Message of Allâh to the *Ummah* as well as his legislations concerning sayings and deeds. He also stressed that all things invented by people and then attributed to the religion of Islam are innovations and to be rejected, even if their inventors did so in good faith.

It is established that the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and the righteous Successors after them warned the people against innovations as they add to Islam and legislate what is not permitted by Allâh, in line with the enemies of Allâh such as the Jews and the Christians who added to their religion and innovated what was not allowed by Allâh. Moreover, to admit innovation in Islam is to admit that Islam is incomplete and imperfect. Such a belief is not only an evil but contradicts the following verse: "This day have I perfected your religion for you," and the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ which warn us against innovations.

To celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Prophet ﷺ and the others, means that the religion is not perfected by Allâh (the Glorious, the Almighty) for this *Ummah*, and the Messenger ﷺ did not impart to the people what was necessary regarding their religious duties, till these late ones appeared and invented in the religion what is not permitted by Allâh, thinking that this would bring them nearer to Allâh.

Undoubtedly, this is a great danger and is tantamount to criticizing Allâh the Almighty and the Prophet ﷺ ; whereas Allâh the Almighty has already completed the religion and perfected His Grace, and the Prophet ﷺ has conveyed the Message openly and informed the *Ummah* of all such ways that will lead them to the Paradise and save them from Hell-fire.

According to an authentic *Hadith*, on the authority of Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-Aas, Allâh's Messenger ﷺ said:

" ما بعث الله من نبي إلا كان حقا عليه أن يدل أمته على خير ما يعلمه لهم وينذرهم شر ما يعلمه لهم "

"Allâh (the Almighty) did not send a Prophet but obliged him to lead his people to the best way which is known to him, and warn them against the worst which is known to him." (Transmitted by *Muslim*)

It is well-known that our Prophet ﷺ is the best of all the Prophets, the last and the most perfect of them regarding the way he conveyed the Message and advised his people.

Had the celebration of *Milâd* been an act of religion chosen by Allâh for His slaves, the Prophet ﷺ would have either explained that to his people and would have celebrated it during his life, or his Companions would have done it. As these did not happen, it becomes clear that Islam has no concern with *Milâd*. On the contrary, it is one of the innovations against which the Prophet ﷺ has warned his people as mentioned earlier.

A host of scholars have not only rejected the celebration of *Milâd* but have warned against it in view of the evidences given above.

According to the rule of the Islamic *Shari'ah* all matters regarding legalization or prohibition and all disputes among the people, should be referred to the Book of Allâh and the *Sunnah* of His Messenger ﷺ in line with the saying

of Allâh:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولَئِي الْأُمُورِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكُ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ

"O you who believe! Obey Allâh and obey the Messenger (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allâh and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, if you believe in Allâh and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination." (V.4:59)

And Allâh the Almighty said:

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ

"And in whatsoever you differ, the decision thereof is with Allâh (He is the ruling Judge). (42:10)

Referring this issue back to the Book of Allâh, we find it ordaining upon us to follow Allâh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم in his commands and warns us against whatever he prohibits. Furthermore it tells us that Allâh has perfected the religion for the people. So, as long as *Milâd* is not among the teachings of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it cannot be a part of the religion which Allâh has perfected for us and asked us to adhere to by following the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Again when we refer this issue back to the *Sunnah* of Allâh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, we do not find either the Prophet or the Companions doing it by themselves or asking others to do it. So it becomes evident that *Milâd*, is not a part of religion, rather one of innovations and blind imitation of the people of the Scripture, i.e. the Jews and the Christians in their festivals. With this argument in mind, it becomes crystal clear for everyone having the least insight and inclination towards truth and justice, that celebrating any birthday has nothing to do with Islam. It is rather among the innovations which Allâh and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم warned against emphatically.

A wise man must not be deceived by seeing a large number of people doing it throughout the world because the truth is known and recognized by the evidences of *Shari'ah* and not by the acts of a great number of people.

Allâh (the Almighty) says regarding the Jews and the Christians:

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تِلْكَ أَمَانِتُهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

"And they say, 'None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.' These are their own desires. Say (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم): 'Produce your proof if you are truthful.'" (V.2:111).

And the Almighty also said:

وَإِنْ تُطِعْ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُخْلِلُوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ يَتَبَعَّنَ إِلَّا لَظَنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ

"And if you obey most of those on earth, they will mislead you far away from Allâh's path. They follow nothing but conjectures, and they do nothing but lie." (V.6:116).

Most of these innovations, in addition to their innovative nature, also do not usually escape from a number of other evils, such as mixed gatherings of men and women, songs accompanied by musical instruments, drinking intoxicants, narcotics and the like. They may also involve the worst thing i. e. the greatest *Shirk*, through showing exaggeration in Allâh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم and other saints and through praying to him, invoking his help or believing that he knows what is hidden and all similar claims which render a believer as an infidel. It is authentically reported that the Messenger of Allâh has said:

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" " وَيَاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوْ فِي الدِّيْنِ إِنَّمَا أَهْلُكُمْ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ

"Beware of extravagance in the religion: It has caused the people before you to perish".

He also said:

" " لَا تَطْرُونِي كَمَا أَطْرَتِ النَّصَارَى إِبْنَ مُرْيَمَ, إِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدٌ فَقِلْوَاعِبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ

"Do not lavish praise on me as the Christians did with the son of Maryam. I am just a slave. So simply say: The slave of Allâh and His Messenger". (Transmitted by *Bukhâri*)

It is curious to note that a great many people participate most actively in these celebrations and defend them vehemently, while they sit back from attending the obligatory forms of worship such as daily and Friday prayers. They are not even ashamed of this, nor do they realize that they are committing a great evil.

Undoubtedly, this shows the weakness of their Faith, their short-sightedness, and the deeply ingrained rust on their hearts because of sins and disobedience. We ask Allâh's protection for us and for all the Muslims.

It is even more astonishing to note that some people believe that Allâh's Messenger ﷺ is present at *Milâd*. Consequently they stand to greet and welcome him. That is not only a sheer lie but a worst form of ignorance, as the Prophet ﷺ shall neither come out of his grave before the Day of Resurrection, nor shall he meet the people or attend their meetings. Instead, he shall remain in his grave till the Day of Resurrection while his soul rests at the highest of the high with his Lord in the most exalted and highest place.

Allâh (تعالى) the Almighty says:

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَمْ يَتُّونَ. ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَبْعَثُونَ

"After that, surely, you will die. Then (again), surely, you will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection." (V.23:15, 16).

And the Prophet ﷺ said:

" " أَنَا أَوْلُ مَنْ يَشْقَى عَنِ الْقَبْرِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَأَنَا أَوْلُ شَافِعٍ وَأَوْلُ مُشَفَّعٍ

"I am the first one to rise from the grave on the Resurrection Day and I will be the first intercessor and the first one whose intercession is to be accepted."

The aforesaid evidences from the Qur'ân and *Hadith* prove beyond doubt that the dead people will come out of their graves only on the Day of Resurrection. All the scholars of Islam agree upon this. A Muslim should be aware of these things and must not be easily misled by the innovations and the superstitions created by the ignorant people with no authority from Allâh at all.

As for offering the blessings and greetings (*Salât* and *Salâm*) to the Prophet ﷺ, they are among the most preferred and virtuous deeds in accordance with the Saying of Allâh:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلِّوْنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْبِيْلِيًّا

"Allâh sends His *Salat* (Graces, Honours, Blessings, Mercy, etc.) on the Prophet (Muhammad ﷺ) and also His angels too (ask Allâh to bless and forgive him). O you who believe! Send your *Salat* on (ask Allâh to bless) him (Muhammad ﷺ), and (you should) greet (salute) him with the Islamic way of greeting (salutation i.e. As- *Salâm-o-Alaikum*). (V.33:56).

The Prophet ﷺ has said:

" " مَنْ صَلَّى عَلَيِّ وَاحِدَةً صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَشْرَ

"Whosoever sends blessings on me one time, Allâh sends blessings on him ten times".

It is prescribed on all times, particularly at the end of each prayer. It is held obligatory at the last *Tashahhud* of each *Salât* (prayer) by most of the scholars. It is strongly required at a number of occasions such as immediately after *Adhâan*, at the mention of the name of the Prophet ﷺ, during the day of Friday and the night preceding it, according to a host of *Ahâdith*.

This is what I wanted to emphasize regarding this issue. I hope it will satisfy everyone whom Allâh has shown the light.

How sad it is to see some devoted Muslims, known for their strength of Faith and love for the Prophet ﷺ organizing such innovative celebrations.

Let us ask such people: Tell us, if you belong to *Ahl-as-Sunnah* and follow the Prophet ﷺ, whether he himself or one of his Companions or their Successors did this or is it no more than a blind-following of the enemies of Islam from among the Jews and the Christians and the like?

The love of the Prophet ﷺ is not reflected by the celebration on his birthday, but by obeying him, believing in his teachings, keeping away from what he prohibited and by worshipping Allâh in the way he prescribed for us.

It is also reflected through offering *Salat* and *Salâm* to him from time to time, particularly at the mention of his name and during prayers.

The *Wahhabiyah*, as the writer tends to put it, are not new in rejecting all such innovations. Their creed is to hold fast to the Book of Allâh and the *Sunnah* of His Messenger ﷺ; to follow his footsteps and those of his rightly-guided Successors; to believe and practise what was propounded by the virtuous Predecessors and the *Imâms* of learning and guidance who were capable to issue religious injunction concerning the knowledge of Allâh, and His Attributes of perfection and dignity as shown in the Glorious Book and the authentic *Ahâdith* (traditions) of the Prophet ﷺ and as wholeheartedly accepted by his Companions.

The *Wahhabiyah* believe in them, the way they are reported without any alteration, personification, exemplifying or negation of such attributes. They stick to the way of the Successors and their followers from among the people of learning, Faith and piety. They believe that the foundation of the Faith is to bear witness that there is none to be worshipped except Allâh and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh. To them, this is the root of Faith and one of its most exalted branches as well.

They know in accordance with the consensus of the Muslims, that this root requires knowledge, acknowledgement and practice.

It implies that none is to be worshipped except Allâh the Almighty, Who has no associates at all. It further implies the negation of worshipping any other except Him. It shows why jinn and mankind were created; why the Messengers were sent and why the Books were revealed.

In addition, *Ibâdah* (worship) is not only complete submission and love but also complete obedience and veneration as well. Islam is the only religion prescribed by Allâh and disseminated by the Prophets and nothing, except it, is acceptable to Allâh whether in the past or the present. The one who submits his will to Allâh as well as to someone else beside Him, is a *Mushrik* (polytheist). The same is true for the one who prays to Allâh and someone else beside Him. As for the one who does not submit to Him, he is arrogant concerning his duties towards his Creator.

Allâh, the Almighty says:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتُ

"And verily, We have sent among every *Ummah* (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming): "Worship Allâh (Alone), and avoid (or keep away from) *Tâghût* (all false deities etc. i.e. do not worship *Tâghût* besides Allâh)." (V.16:36).

Thus the creed of the *Wahhabiyah* is based upon fulfillment of witnessing that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allâh and completely abandoning all innovations, superstitions and whatever goes against the *Shari'ah*.

This is what Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab رحمه الله believed and invited others to believe. Whoever accredits to him anything contrary to it, does not only lie but commits a great sin and claims what is totally unfounded. He will, no doubt, receive what Allâh has promised to all the fabricators of lies.

The Shaikh has shown - through a series of his well-known treatises and scholarly books on the topic of the "Declaration of Oneness: *La ilaha illAllâh*" - that no one deserves worship except Allâh the Almighty, and that this type of worship should be devoid of all sorts of *Shirk* whether big or small. Anyone who is aware of these writings, his way of preaching and calling people to Allâh and of the way of his pupils and disciples, can easily find out that his approach was not different from that of our virtuous Predecessors, the great Imâms of learning and guidance. Indeed, he has propounded what they did throughout their lives concerning the worship of Allâh Alone and leaving all innovations and superstitions aside.

This is the foundation of the Saudi regime and this view is held by the scholars of Saudi Arabia. The hard attitude shown by the Saudi government is directed only against the superstitions and innovations in contradiction with Islam, or the extreme type of extravagance which is totally prohibited by the Prophet ﷺ. All Muslims, scholars and rulers of Saudi Arabia hold great respect and love for every Muslim regardless of his affiliation to any group or country in the world. They do reject all types of celebrations or gatherings which are based on innovation, with no authority from Allâh or His Prophet ﷺ.

They oppose them because every new matter in the religion is an innovation and because the Muslims are commanded to follow, not to innovate. Islam is perfect and complete by itself.

It is in no need of any addition after what Allâh and His Prophet ﷺ have ordained and what the *Ahl-as-Sunnah wal-Jamâ'ah*, from among the Companions, the Successors and their followers have already received. To forbid celebrating the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ due to its innovative nature in addition to the signs of extravagance and *Shirk* normally associated with it, is not un-Islamic or derogatory to the Prophet ﷺ. Instead, it is an act of obedience as the Prophet ﷺ himself said:

"إِيَّاكُمْ وَالغُلُوْفُ فِي الدِّينِ فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلُكَ مِنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الغُلُوْفُ فِي الدِّينِ"

"Beware of the extravagance in matters of religion. Those before you have perished because of extravagance in the matters of religion".

Again he said:

"لَا تَطْرُونِي كَمَا أَطْرَتِ النَّصَارَى بْنَ مَرِيمٍ، إِنَّمَا أَنَا عَبْدٌ فَقْلُوْعٌ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ"

"Do not lavish praise on me as the Christians did with the son of Maryam. I am but a slave. So simply say: 'Slave of Allâh and His Messenger.'"

This is what I wanted to point out regarding the aforesaid article.

May Allâh help us and all the Muslims to understand His religion, to continually

confirm us on it, stick to Sunnah and keep away from the innovation. Indeed He is Generous and Kind.

And may Allâh shower His blessings and mercy upon our Prophet Muhammad, his posterity and his Companions.

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