

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH MOST GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

CELEBRATING THE MAULID NABI

By Imam Ibrahim Saidy

Maulid Nabi is the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). More than one billion people all over the world today, one way or the other, follow the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). We believe him to be the Last and Greatest of at least one hundred and twenty four thousand men chosen and sent by God Almighty (Allah) unto mankind to give instruction and provide guidance as to the Way of Life (The Straight Path: Islam) that He has chosen for us.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born in Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula some 570 years after Prophet Issa (pbuh): Jesus Christ. He was commissioned as a Prophet at the age of 40. For twenty three years thereafter, based in Mecca and later in Medina, he received the Quran, a Divine Revelation and invited mankind unto the worship of the one true God: Allah following the model of Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) and all the Prophets who came before him. There are scholars of Islam however, who condemn the celebration of the Maulid Nabi as a baseless innovation since neither the Prophet himself nor any of his Companions (Sahaba) ever observed any such celebrations. There are also on the other hand, many other scholars who have applauded and recommended such celebrations with evidence from some pronouncements and actions of the Prophet himself.¹

The exact birth of the Prophet (pbuh) was on the eve of the 12th of Rabi- ul- Awwal (the third month of the Islamic Hijri calendar). Muslims however, celebrate this event whenever it is most convenient all year round and in different styles (the recital of his biography punctuated with religious songs) always being the main thrust of these happy and joyous occasions. To me however, as a Muslim and student of Islamic Studies the celebration of the Maulid Nabi can only be justified and have meaning if we truly listen to the noble man himself, find out his legacy and do our genuine best to uphold and maintain it both in letter and spirit. Allah, The Exalted, tells us in the Glorious Quran:

“Verily, there is for you in the person of the Messenger of Allah the best example to follow.”² And

Aisha, the Mother of the Faithful (r.a.), said in answer to a question about him (pbuh):

“His character was the Quran.”

My personal favourite way of demonstrating this however, is always to look at the Sahaba, his immediate followers who accompanied him most of his life and received direct instruction from him. What effect did his character; personality and teachings have on them? How did he influence and change their lives? Remember, most of them before Islam were ignorant, illiterate, tribalistic, feudal lords, wine drinkers, womanisers and idolaters among whom the weak and defenceless received no mercy.

After twenty-three years under the personal leadership, instruction and guidance of Allah’s Messenger however, these brute men and women underwent a complete transformation in all their lives. The Prophet (pbuh) passed away and Sayyidna Abu Bakr Assiddiq was unanimously elected to succeed him as the leader of all Muslims. Sayyidna Abu Bakr then issued a decree appointing Sayyidna Umar ibn- Al- Khattab as Chief Judge and Minister of Justice.

¹ See the works of the ff. Imams in this regard: 1.Imam Abu Shama (Imam An- Nawawi’s teacher).

2. Ibn Al-Jawzi 3. Al Hafizh ibn- Hajar. 4. Al Hafizh Assuyuuti

² Quran: 33 – Verse 21

Sayyidna Umar immediately set himself to the task of setting up an effective judiciary in accordance with the Quran and the Prophets teachings. Exactly a year later however, he knocked at the Khalifa's³ door and tendered his resignation. Sayyidna Abu Bakr obviously surprised, asked; "have your duties become too much of a burden for you O` Umar?" No! O`Khalifa of Allah's Messenger. But I have waited in my office for the last twelve months since you appointed me but not a single case was brought before me. No two people had a problem worth going to court for. "How would you, O`Umar, explain this reality," said Abu Bakr.

The man named by the Prophet himself as Al- Farouq⁴, then said:

"O`Khalifa of Allah's Messenger, how can I ever judge between a people of Faith; Amongst whom:

- ❖ *Every individual knows what exactly his or her duties are and would never do anything less.*
- ❖ *Every individual knows what exactly his or her rights are and would never demand anything more.*
- ❖ *Every one of them would love and wish for the other what they would love and wish for themselves.*
- ❖ *They would meet five times a day in the Houses of Allah. If any one of them were noticeably absent, they would inquire after them.*

✓ *If the reason for the absence was illness they would visit, console, and provide the necessary treatment.*

✓ *If they had just past away they would make all arrangements for a proper funeral.*

✓ *If the reason were poverty, they would quickly give help.*

✓ *If the reason were social need, they would provide all necessary assistance.*

O`Khalifa of Allah's Messenger, how can I ever judge between a people whose Way of Life is earnestness and mutual advice; whose morality (character) is to always enjoin and enforce the good and discourage and forbid the bad?"

Umar Al- Farouq, The Commander of The Faithful, has most effectively; in this brief and succinct report given us the unparalleled legacy of the noble Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This is the Prophetic Way.

The whole world today seems to be engulfed in strife, upheaval, and exploitation. Let every person among us reflect on their own existence in the midst of all these conflicts. Yes, we do have a collective responsibility to try to bring about just solutions to the problems of others. Otherwise, we would be like the sailors who were on the top deck and watched the people on the bottom deck cut holes in the boat. By not interfering in "other peoples business," everyone in the boat drowned. How can there be peace in the world without justice and an impartial international body to enforce it?

It is my strong conviction that had Prophets Musa, Issa and Muhammad (peace be on them all) been here today, they would have embraced one another and not spent all their time thinking up unreasonable positions and meeting to discuss them. After all, the Prophets all prayed to the same Creator, fasted, gave charity, loved their neighbours and defended the weak and oppressed.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) went as far as instructing his Companions that if they entered a foreign land in defence of their faith, they should not burn crops, neither should they destroy private property or kill non- combatants. They should also be very particular in not harming

³ Khalifa: Successor. In this case, successor to the Prophet (pbuh).

⁴ Al- Farouq: The Criterion- one who distinguishes between truth and falsehood.

churches, synagogues, (places of worship) in any way. The Glorious Quran, our book of Revelation refers to the internal solution to great crises saying,

“Verily Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change that, which is in themselves.”⁵

⁵ Quran; 13- Verse 11