

What is a Bid'ah?

The word Bid'ah in Arabic is taken from 'Al-Bada', that is to create something without precedence. Allah says in the Qur'aan, which translated means: "Badei' (the Originator) of the heavens and the earth." [Soorah Baqarah (2): 117]

This means that Allah created the heavens and the earth without precedence. He also said: "Say (O Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam): I am not Bid'an (a new thing) among the Messengers." [Soorah Ahqaf (46): 9]

This means: 'I am not the first of Allah's Prophets to His slaves, many (Prophets) preceded me.' When it is said that a person has performed a Bid'ah, this means that he has innovated a new thing without precedence.

Bid'ahs in the matters of life, like the new scientific inventions are permissible because originally, what is a matter of life or habit is permissible. The prohibited Bid'ah is to innovate in the religion. This is because the religion is 'Tawqifiyah' which means that religion can only be revealed by Allah and He has completely revealed His religion. Consequently, there is no room for any innovation. As will be manifest and clear from the following text.

Allaah Alone has the right to tell us how to worship Him. Allah says: "Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord (the Qur'aan and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) and follow not any Auliya (protectors, or helper etc. who order you to associate partners in worship with Allah), besides Him (Allah)." [Soorah Al-Aa'raf (7): 3]

From the Tafseer (explanation) of this verse, we learn that this verse is a definite statement, explaining the right of Allaah Alone; to reveal and command His slaves, the manners of worshipping Him. And how could it be otherwise, when the true meaning of 'Ibaadah' is to worship Allaah in the way, which pleases Him, not following one's own desires. As is known from the following verse: "And who is more astray then one who follows his own lust (desires) without the guidance from Allah (revelation)" [Soorah Al-Qasas (28): 50]

In regards to this Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa- sallam) said: "I warn you of the newly invented matters (in the religion), and every newly invented matter is an innovation, and every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Hellfire" [An-Nasa'ee]

And he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) used to declare at the beginning of his lectures, "..and the best speech is the Speech of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), and the worst of all affairs are the newly invented matters (in the religion)" [Saheeh Muslim]

And he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) also commanded us, to reject everything, which has no basis in the religion saying: "Whosoever does an action, which we have not commanded then it must be rejected." [Saheeh Muslim]

"Whosoever introduces into this religion of ours that which is not a part of it then it must be rejected" [Musnad Ahmad]

In this Hadeeth is a clear evidence that every action which is not legislated in the Sharee'ah must be rejected' [Jaami al-Ulum of ibn Rajab 1/120]

Consequently, every Bid'ah, that is introduced in the religion has to be rejected as for the reason that only Allaah and His Messenger (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) have the right to legislate in the Sharee'ah.

The Deen is complete

Allaah says in the Qur'aan: "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islaam as your religion" [Soorah Maidah (5): 4]

This verse embodies a clear statement that the religion has been completed and so has no need of addition and deletion, and our noble Messenger (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "There is nothing that Allaah ordered you with except that I have ordered you with it, and there is nothing that Allaah forbade you from except that I have forbidden you from it" [al-Bayhaqee and others]

And he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said, "There is nothing that will take you closer to Paradise but that I have enjoined it upon you, and there is nothing that will take you closer to Hell but that I have warned you from it" [Musnad ash-Shafi'e and others]

So, Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) fulfilled the trust placed upon him by Allaah completely, explaining the religion to the people in it's inward and outward form, making clear the lawful from the prohibited, the encouraged from the discouraged, even to the extent that he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) taught us the manners of going to the toilet, the manners of having sex with our partners etc.

Allaah also says in His Book, "and We have sent down to you Book (the Qur'aan) as an exposition (explanation) of everything, a guidance, a mercy and a glad tiding for those who have submitted themselves (to Allah)." [Soorah al-Maidah (16): 89]

Hence, Qur'aan contains the explanation of the entire religious principles, tawheed in all it's various categories, even to the extent that it teaches us the manners of sitting in circles, visiting other people's houses, the correct clothing etc. .

In the light of what has preceded we can now give the formal Sharee'ah definition of bid'ah... "A newly invented way (in beliefs and actions) in the religion, in imitation of the Sharee'ah, by which nearness to Allaah is sought, not being supported by any authentic proof, neither in it's foundations nor in the manner in which it is performed." [al-I'tisaam 1/231 of ash-Shaatibee]

Reasons behind the Existence of Bid'ah

(a) **IGNORANCE:** Whenever people separate from the True Message, knowledge will decrease and ignorance will flourish. The Prophet of Allah (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) informed us about this adversity when he said: "Whoever lives (long) will witness many differences." [Abu Dawood]

And he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) also said: "Allah does not erase knowledge (from earth) by erasing knowledge from slaves (hearts). Rather, He erases knowledge through the death of scholars. When He leaves (earth) without scholars, people will take the ignorant as leaders (and scholars). They (the ignorant) will be asked and then give fatawah without knowledge. Then, they will be lead, and will lead astray." [Ahmad]

People of knowledge are those who fight against Bid'ahs. When knowledge and scholars disappear from earth, then Bid'ah will see the light. Bid'ah will then appear and spread.

(b) **FOLLOWING ONE'S OWN DESIRES:** Whoever shuns the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, and follows his own desires, then pertaining him Allah says: "But if they answer you not (O Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) (i.e. do not believe in your teachings of Islamic Monotheism, nor follow you), then know that they only follow their own lusts. And who is more astray then one who follows his own lust (desires) without the guidance from Allah (revelation)" [Soorah Al-Qasas (28): 50]

"Have you seen him who takes his own desires as his god, and Allah knowing (him as such) left him astray, sealed his hearing and his heart, and put a cover on his sight. Who then will guide him after Allah." [Soorah Al-Jathiyah (45): 23]

So, following one's own desires leads one to straying away from the Straight Path and indulging in evil innovation

(c) **BLIND FOLLOWING:** "When it is said to them: 'Follow peoples opinion blindly prevents one from following the Straight path. Allah said what translated means: "Follow what Allah has sent down." They say: "Nay! We shall follow what we found our fathers following. Even though their fathers did not understand anything, nor were they guided." [Soorah al-Baqarah(2): 170]

This is the case today with those who blindly follow a Madh-hab. If they are called to following the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, leaving their traditions, what opposes them, they claim to follow their own Madh-hab, scholars, fathers or grandfathers, which leads them to indulge in many evil affairs known as rituals and traditions, originated from the worst of affairs; Bid'ahs resulting to the final abode in Hellfire.

(d) IMITATING THE KUFFAR: Imitating the Kuffar is what befalls one most in Bid'ahs, because actions of the Kuffar are built only upon corruption and misguidance.

Abu Waqid Al-Laithi (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "We were still new Muslims when we went to the battle of Hunain with the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam). We found that the Mushrikeen had a tree, called 'That Anwar', which they revered and on which they hanged their weapons on. When we passed by a similar Sidrah we said: "O Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), make for us 'That Anwar' as they have.. Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "Allahu Akbar! It is the Sunnan (traditions of the Mushrikeen). You said by He Who has my soul in His Hand, what the children of Israel said to Moses: "Make for us gods as they have gods. He said: 'Verily! You are a people who know not." [7:138] and he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: You will follow the traditions of those before you (Jews and Christians)" [at-Tirmidhee]

In this hadeeth, we find that imitating the Kuffar (non-believers) is what drove Jews before them), and some of the companions (radhi allahu anhu), to ask for this ugly matter. They wanted gods to worship and revere other than Allah. This is the case with the majority of Muslims today, imitating the disbelievers, which is an opening to ruthless Bid'ahs in Islam.

Bid'ah is more Beloved to Shaytaan than Sinning Sufyaan ath-Thawree (rahimahullah) said: "Innovations are more beloved to Shaytaan than sin. Since a sin may be repented from but an innovation is not repented" [Sharh Usul I'tiqaad of al-Laalika'ee (d.414) no.238]

This is because the innovator believes that he is doing something good and therefore sees no need to repent.

He also said, ".so cling to the original state of affairs" [al-Hilya 6/376] meaning stick to the way of Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) and Companions

Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) said, "Stick to the narrations and the way of the salaf, and beware of the newly invented matters for all of it is innovation" [Sawnul Muntaq of as-Suyutee pg.32]

Imaam Maalik (rahimahullah) said, "He, who innovates an innovation in Islaam regarding it as something good, has claimed that Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) has betrayed his trust to deliver the message as Allaah says: "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islaam as your religion" [Soorah Al-Maidah (5): 4] [al-I'tisaam]

Imaam Ahmad (rahimahullah) said, "The fundamental principles of the sunnah with us are.avoiding innovations and every innovation is misguidance" [Usul as-Sunnah of Imaam Ahmad pg.1]

Bid'ah - Corrupting the Sunnah

We are taught in the revelation that the Sunnah shall become corrupted and this corruption would become the norm (custom), so much so that the people who follow the Sunnah would become as strangers, and those who call to purifying the sunnah would be slandered and reviled (hated).

The Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "Islaam began as something strange, and it shall return as something strange as it began. So (radhi allahu anhu) give glad tidings to the strangers." It was asked, "who are the strangers?" He replied, "Those that purify and correct what the people have corrupted of my sunnah" [Tabaraanee in al-Kabeer [6/202]

And what is this corruption, it is none other than innovation, introducing into the pure religion of Allaah, new ways of worshipping Him that He has not taught, blemishing His religion with one's own whims and desires, something that Allaah Himself condemns:

"Or do they have partners with Allah, who have instituted for them a religion which Allah has not allowed." [Soorah Ash-Shura (42): 21]

The Companion Abdullaah ibn Mas'ud (radhi allahu anhu) laments: "How will it be when the trials overcome you, in which the young grow old and the old grow senile. And the people take the Bid'ah as the sunnah, and when it changes they say: the sunnah has changed. "It was said: When will this be? O Abu Abdur Rahmaan!" He replied: When your speakers are many and your scholars are few, and the wealthy ones are plenty and the trustworthy ones are few." [ad-Daarimee]

How true this statement is today, that the innovations have become so widespread in the religion that the people have taken them to be the Sunnah. And when the true scholar speaks out against these innovations, he is labelled as a 'wahhabi' by the people because to them it seems that he is changing the sunnah. To Allah, we complain of the ignorance of our times!

So, once this topic becomes clear, a truth that none can deny; that all these innovations in the religions are a clear denial of the above mentioned verses and ahaadeeth, for none were done by the Companions (radhi allahu anhu). And in what has preceded is ample evidence for any fair-minded Muslim that all Bid'ah is blameworthy, and in fact a major sin. But unfortunately, the Muslims are in such a state today that the Words of Allaah and His Messenger (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) are no longer enough to convince them and certain groups of people have come up with belief that has very frail grounds in the Sunnah. For example, the belief of 'Bid'ah hasanah', i.e. a good Bid'ah, meaning that a scholar can introduce a new action of worship in Islaam, which can be considered to be good as long it does not contradict any of the principles of Islaam. This belief is completely false and has no basis in the Qur'aan neither in the Sunnah of our Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam).

This issue has been discussed in details, under the title "The Arguments of the Misguided"

Shunning the Bid'ah - Adherence to the Sunnah

The cure for shunning these newly invented matters has been specified in the texts of Qur'aan and the Sunnah:

Allah has revealed the religion of Islam unto Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), and made adherence to his way, the cure to misguidance:

"Say. 'And Verily, this is My Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not (other) paths, for they will separate you away from this Path.' [Soorah An'am (6): 153]

Allah also says in the Qur'aan: "Indeed in the Messenger of Allah, you have an excellent example to follow for him, who hopes in (the meeting with) Allaah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much" [(33): 21]

Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "I have left behind me two things, if you cling to them you will never go astray. They are the Book of Allaah and my Sunnah" [al-Haakim]

And ".and you will live to see great difference, so cling to my sunnah and the sunnah of the rightly guided caliphs after me, even if it be with your teeth" [Bukhare]

Abdullaah ibn Mas'ud (radhi allahu anhu) said: "Follow the sunnah of Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) and do not innovate, for what you have been commanded is enough for you." [Ad-Daarimee]

Hudhayfah bin al-Yaman (radhi allahu anhu) said, "every act of worship that the Companions did not do, do not do it" [Abu Dawood]

The Taabi'ee, the Imaam, az-Zuhree commented, "Clinging to the sunnah is to be saved" as Imaam Maalik (rahimahillah) said, 'like the Ark of Noah', he who embarked upon it was saved, and he who did not was destroyed." [Ad-Daarimee]

Abu Aaliyah said, "Learn Islaam, then when you have learned Islaam, do not turn away from it to the right or to the left. But be upon the Straight Path and be upon the Sunnah of your Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) and that which his companions were upon.

And beware of these innovations because they cause enmity and hatred amongst you, but stick to the original state of affairs that was there before they divided." [al-Hilya of Abu Nu'aym 2/218]

In these narrations is clear evidence that the way of salvation and safety is to closely follow the Sunnah of our Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), and not to deviate from his path, denying the guidance of others, not accepting a corrupted form of the Sunnah.

Allaah says: "And whosoever does not contends with the Messenger after guidance has been made clear to him, and follows a way other than the way of the believers, We shall leave in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell, what an evil destination!" [Soorah an-Nisa (4): 115]

Arguments of the Misguided

Know, O noble reader! The saying that some Bid'ahs are good and that not every Bid'ah is a sin, rather some Bid'ahs are good is a clear misguidance. Every example that these misguided bring from the actions of the companions (radhi allahu anhu) to prove their belief of a 'good innovation', is invalid and it just shows their weak understanding of the Sunnah of Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), for all of these examples have a clear basis in the Sharee'ah, or occurred due to necessity, or from ijtihaad. Insha'allaah, we will mention a few of their arguments:

Initially, know that their saying is in opposition to the Hadeeth: "For every Bid'ah is a sin" [Abu Dawood]

The Prophet of Allah (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) clearly stated that all Bid'ahs are sins.

Ibn Rajab says regarding this issue: "The Prophet's (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) saying: "every Bid'ah is a sin" is a unique way of speech that nothing (no Bid'ah) can escape. This is a major rule in this religion. It is

similar to Prophet's (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) saying: "Whoever innovates, in this religion of ours, whatever is not of it, is rejected."

Whoever innovates a matter that has no basis in Islam, and introduced it to the religion, has sinned. The religion disowns whoever does that. This rule applies to all matters of belief, action, and saying, both in public or in secrecy."

1. When Umar (radhi allahu anhu) was caliph, he collected the Muslims to pray in congregation for taraaweeh prayers and said, "what a good bid'ah this is" [Saheeh Bukhaaree]

Evidence is derived from this for 'bid'ah hasanah' (i.e. Good Bid'ah), but of course they have misunderstood the true intent of Umar (radhi allahu anhu), which can be clearly understood if one were to quote the context of this narration.

When the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) first prayed taraaweeh, the Muslims used to pray taraaweeh individually or in small groups, and then for three nights they prayed in one congregation behind the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), and after this he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) stopped them from doing so by saying:

"I feared that it would become obligatory upon you." So after this again, the Muslims would pray individually or in small groups, and they remained like this throughout the rule of Abu Bakr (radhi allahu anhu) and the beginning of the rule of Umar (radhi allahu anhu). Then Umar (radhi allahu anhu) came to the Mosque and saw the Muslims praying in small groups and so gathered them as one jama'ah to pray behind Ubayy bin Ka'b (radhi allahu anhu) and Tameem ad-Daaree (radhi allahu anhu) and stated the above phrase. [Reported in Bukhaaree, the Muwatta and others]

Firstly: How can the action of Umar (radhi allahu anhu) be considered to be new when the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) did it in his lifetime? Not only this but the Muslims were also in the habit of praying in small groups as well. Hence, the praying of taraaweeh in jama'ah was well established in the sunnah and the practice of the Sahaabah (radhi allahu anhu).

Secondly: The Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) gave the reason why he stopped the congregational prayer, for the revelation was still descending, and he feared that praying in obligation might become obligatory upon his nation, and that this might lead to be hard on them.

After the death of Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), the revelation ceased, and this fear was no longer present. Hence, Umar (radhi allahu anhu) re-established the congregation during his rule because he knew his action could not be made obligatory upon the ummah.

Thirdly: All the companions agreed to this action of Umar (radhi allahu anhu), there was a consensus (ijmaa) on this. And the scholars of 'usul' have stated that a consensus cannot occur except when there is a clear text for it in the Sharee'ah.

Fourth: So how do we understand this statement of Umar (radhi allahu anhu), "what a good bid'ah this is" when the action that Umar (radhi allahu anhu) called a bid'ah was done by the Prophet r? Bid'ah here can only be understood in its linguistic sense and not in its Sharee'ah sense i.e. when Umar (radhi allahu anhu) said this, he did not mean it in the legal sense that we may understand it today. For how many are the words that mean one thing in the language, but another thing in the Sharee'ah! The linguistic sense is: something new, because praying in one congregation was not present in the rule of Abu Bakr (radhi allahu anhu) and the earlier period of his own rule.

Hence, Abu Yusuf (rahimahullah) said, "I asked Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) about the taraaweeh and what Umar (radhi allahu anhu) did and he replied, 'the taraaweeh is a stressed sunnah, and Umar (radhi allahu anhu) did not do that from his own opinion, and neither was there in his action any innovation, and he did not enjoin it except that there was a foundation for it with him and authorization from the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) .'" ['Sharh Mukhtaar' as quoted from in 'al-Ibdaa' (pg. 80) of Shaykh Alee Mahfooz]

2.The hadeeth: "Whosoever starts in Islaam a good practice (sunnah), he gets the reward of it and the reward of all those, who act on it. And whosoever starts in Islaam an evil practice (sunnah), he gets the evil of it and the evil of all those, who act on it." [Saheeh Muslim]

The evidence they derive from this hadeeth is that people can invent new practices in Islaam, either good or bad. But were they to take this hadeeth in its full context then it would not be possible to infer such a thing.

Imaam Muslim(rahimahullah) reported this story from Jareer ibn 'Abdullaah (radhi allahu anhu) who also narrated: "Some people came to Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) wearing woollen garments. He (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) saw that they were in bad shape and in desperate need, so he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) urged the people to give them charity. People were very slow to respond, and it could be seen on his face (that he was upset). Then a man of the Ansaar brought a package of silver, then another came, then after him another and another, and his face was filled with joy. He (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: 'Whoever starts a good thing in Islam, and others do likewise after him, there will be written for him a reward like that of those who followed him, without detracting it in the least from their reward.'

Whoever starts a bad thing in Islam, and others do likewise after him, there will be written for him a burden of sin like that of those who followed him, without detracting it in the least from their burden." [Saheeh Muslim, no. 1017]

Firstly: The word 'sunnah' used in the hadeeth must be understood in its linguistic sense (i.e. practice) not its sharee'ah sense (i.e. the life example of Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam)) because otherwise it would imply that there is something bad in the sunnah.

Secondly: The Companion (radhi allahu anhu) who gave charity, did not do anything new, for giving charity had been legislated from the very early days of Islaam as the Makkan surahs prove, rather he was simply implementing a previously legislated matter. So, the statement of the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), 'a good sunnah' was said at a time when the people were reluctant to give charity, so one man gave it and then others followed him - i.e. he renewed a sunnah that was being neglected - this is the meaning of 'good practice' - renewing an existing sunnah.

Hence, we do not stick just to the specific occurrence in the hadeeth, but we generalize its intent as its wording is general and as is established in the 'usul'. The intent of this hadeeth is renewing the Sunnah when it has been neglected. This is why the early scholars of Islaam included this hadeeth under the chapter 'The reward of the one who renews the sunnah' [as done by the 4th century Imaam al-Laalikaa'ee in his encyclopedic work detailing the belief of Ahlus Sunnah, 'Sharh Usul I'tiqaad Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah']

Thirdly: The meaning of 'bad sunnah' is to be understood in the similar vein, i.e. the one who renews an evil act, will get its evil. Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) gave the example of the two sons of Adam (alaihi as-salaam), one killing the other, one who killed got the sin of his action as well the sin of all those who follow him in killing; without their sins decreasing, a killing had been forbidden from the time of the first Prophet (alaihi as-salaam) to the last

Fourthly: The hadeeth uses the terms 'good' and 'bad', and from what has preceded, it is clear that Islaam has already defined in its totality all that is good and bad, and if we were to say otherwise, we would then be accusing the religion of incompleteness and deficiency

Some Common Innovations

Imitating the Kuffar nowadays has resulted in many Bid'ah's. Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "You will follow the ways of those who were before you. (Jews and Christians)"[At-Tirmidhee] Some common Bid'ah today in the Ummah are:

Al-Mawlid - Celebrating the Prophet's (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) birthday The practice of celebrating al-Mawlid (Prophet's birthday) on the 12th day of Rabee' al-Awwal each Hijri year, has no basis in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, rather this celebration is an imitation of the Christians, resembling their celebration of Prophet Jesus's (alahi as-salaam) birthday, invented in the 4th century of Hijrah through the Shites This practice is known and performed as a sign of one's love for the Messenger of Allah (sallallhu alahi wa-sallam). Although, the Qur'aan has enlightened the issue of loving and establishing the love of the Messenger (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) in a differing way: Allah says: "Say (O Muhammad (sallallhu alahi wa-sallam): 'If you (really) love Allaah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

This verse clarifies the fact that the love of the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) is merely a claim unless the proof of sincerity is exposed, which is to submit and abide to the laws and commands of Allah, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (sallallhu alahi wa-sallam). In accordance to the above mentioned verse, one who claims to loves the Prophet (sallallhu alahi wa-sallam), then it is for him to obey his (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) commands and follow his (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) Sunnah, for Allah says: "whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain from it" [(59): 7]

And according to the Sunnah of Prophet (sallallhu alahi wa-sallam), exaggerating his (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) position in calling upon him as is done in these celebrations is not only against his saying but indeed Shirk. Allah says: " invoke not anyone along with Allaah." [(72): 18]

And he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "Do not exaggerate about me, as the Christians exaggerated about the son of Maryam. I am only a slave, so say "the slave and Messenger of Allah (sallallahu alahi wa-sallm)" [Bukhari]

Celebrating al-Mawlid even if it does not hold calling upon the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) and other sorts of sins; like the mingling of men and women, singing, narrating poems about the Prophet (sallallhu alahi wa-sallam), which contain undeserved praise of the Prophet etc. is an innovation, since this practice as mentioned earlier is not a part of the religion, neither Prophet Muhammad (sallallhu alahi wa-sallam), nor his Companions (radhi allahu anhu) are known to have commemorated this celebration. Rather, when Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alahi

wa-sallam) was asked about fasting on Mondays, he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "That is the day on which I was born and the day on which, I was entrusted with the Mission or when I was first given Revelation." [Saheeh Muslim]

Consequently, one who claims to love the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) and truly thankful to Allah, then according to what has preceded, he must celebrate the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) as he (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) himself did.

Revering (Tabarruk) from certain places or personal effects Tabarruk means to ask for blessing, by means of which a thing is preserved and protected and increases in goodness. Tabarruk can be asked to Allah Alone, for He is the One who sends down the Barakah and preserves it. Companions (radhi allahu anhu) of Prophet (radhi allahu anhu) used to seek Barakah of Allah by the hairs of Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), and his personal effects. This special status is only for the Prophet and only during his lifetime. After his death, none of his companions (radhi allahu anhu) carried out such practice, to seek Barakah from certain places, people or thing is prohibited and considered Shirk. To believe that Barakah can be reached if one visits or touches certain thing, place or people, or Allah grants Barakah if one visiting some certain thing, place or people is a way to Shirk. From these are hanging, kissing or wearing certain Qur'aanic verses for Barakah, using charms amulets etc..

Bid'ah in Matters of Worship The religion of Islam is 'Tawqifiyah'. No worship can be enacted that has no proof in the religion, as the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) said: "Whoever does what is not of our matter then it is rejected." [Muslim]

From the many Bid'ah in worship are the following: To converse the Niyyah (intention). It is a very common practice to converse the niyyah in preparation for prayer, like the saying "I intend to pray for Allah such and such rakah." This act is a Bid'ah, for intention is a matter of the heart and not the tongue and moreover it has no proof from the Qur'aan and the Sunnah. Rather, Allah says: "Say: 'Will you inform Allah about your religion?"

While Allah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth and Allah is all-Aware of everything." [(49): 16]

A type of Bid'ah in worship is to recite Fatihah in times of celebration or death, hiring people to recite the Qur'aan if death comes to someone, celebrating Israa wa Al-Miraj (ascension of Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam) and Hijrah. Also from these is to perform Umrah specifically in the lunar month of Rajab, Rajab is an ordinary month, there are no special Umrah, prayer or fast in this month, also from these is to specify prayer during the middle night of Sha'baan and to fast during the 15th of this month. Major Bid'ah are building monuments on graves, making graves

as mosques, and visiting graves for Baraqah. All these celebrations are not valid in the Shar'iah

And we leave you with the hadeeth of the Prophet (sallallahu alahi wa-sallam), "...so he follows my sunnah has been guided, and he who follows the innovations has been destroyed." [Ahmad]

Bidah - Its Meaning, Aspects, Dangers, and the Solution

An anonymous contribution. The religion of Islam, the religion of Muslims, is based on only one teaching. In other words there is only one 'true' Islam. There is no such thing as different versions of Islam or different types or classes of this deen. The true path is only one way which lies under the shade of the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the understanding of the Companions.

As was illustrated by our beloved Prophet (Saw) and was narrated by Ibn Mas'ud that one day the Prophet (saw) drew a straight line on the ground and He said, "This is the path of Allah." Then he drew some lines to the left and right to it and said, "These are the erred paths and on each of these paths, there is Shaytaan calling to it."

Then he recited the following verse from the Qur'an (which means): "Verily, this is my straight path so follow it and do not follow the other paths that will take you away from the true path."

In fact, if we look in the Qur'an, when Allah (swt) describes the truth, it is always described as singular. For example, the word 'al-noor' which is singular is used for the truth, as opposed to 'zulumath' which is plural. It is a prime example from the Qur'an the clearly shows us that the right way is one way only. Any deviation from the true path is not an acceptable 'branch' of Islam but as the scholars call it, is a 'bida'.

Unfortunately, due to several reasons, the concept of Bida is not as clear to everyone as it should be. A reason for that is a lot of people are confused about 'good' bida or bida-e-hasana.

Secondly, there are many things which we do now that were not done at the time of Prophet (saw). With the outset of such widespread bida, people are confused, and rightly so, as to what is actually sunnah and what in religion is not sunnah- i.e. bida.

These misconceptions call for the need to establish the fundamental step which is to know bida, the concepts of bida according to Ahl-Sunnah Wal Jamah and the aspects of bida.

Bida, its Meaning: (heresy, innovation)

"Any invented act or path in the religion that is made to compete or resemble the Shari'a and that is followed for the same purpose as Shari'a is supposed to be followed."

From this definition and from the statements of Prophet (saw) about bida or innovation, we can come up with some general ideas or concepts about bida that explains this definition.

Aspects of Bid'ah:

Some of the aspects or concepts of bida are as follow:

1. Every bida is Dalalah.

Linguistically bida is something which is new or something which was not done before, i.e., it has no precedent. From the point of view of Shari'a, every bida is Dalalah and there is no such thing as 'good' bida. Prophet (saw) said in an hadith, "Kullo dalalatin fin naar (every dalalah is in hellfire)."

Dalalah means to be astray or to be away from the truth. If we look in the Quran, we will see how Allah (swt) used the word 'dalalah' or 'dal'. It is not used for the one who commits a sin or makes a mistake with respect to the deen but it is used for those people who have gone astray from the straight path or who have divided the religion.

For instance in Surah Fatiha (first chapter), the word 'Daaleen' is not used for mere sinners but it is used for people who have gone astray from the true path, the Christians.

So when Prophet (saw) described bida, he used the harsher form of deviation, i.e. dalalah, as he said, " Kullo bidatin dalalah (every bida is dalalah)." He didn't just say that every bida is a sin or is wrong but in fact it is something much greater than that. It is a misguidance, something that takes us AWAY from the right path.

2. Bida is performed as a way of pleasing and getting closer to Allah (swt).

In other words, when someone follows a bida, he claims that by doing this he will be closer to Allah (swt). This is much different from committing a sin. As Ahmad Ibn Hanbal once said, "The greatest sinner (fasiq) from the Ahl-Sunnah Wal Jamah is better than the most pious person from Ahl-Bida."

The sinner, at least, knows that whatever he is doing is wrong and doesn't claim that it's halal and should be done to please Allah (swt) and so on. However, the one who commits bida not only goes against Qur'an and Sunnah but also claims that what he does is pleasing to Allah (swt) and a way of getting closer to Him. And this is one of the greatest lies one can commit to say that some act is pleasing to Allah and has no proof from Allah (swt) about his claim.

So part of the concept of bida is that one who commits it claims that it is approved by the religion and Shari'a and it is beloved to Allah (swt). This is also one of the dividing points between what is bida and what is not.

3. Bida can be both in inventing new actions or in shunning an action.

Meaning, when someone originates a new practice saying that it is approved by Shari'a without a proof is bida. In the same way, when someone avoids something claiming that by avoiding such and such practice he is pleasing Allah and has no proof for it from Quran or Sunnah is also bida.

For example, during Prophet (saw)'s time three people came to the Prophet offering their types of 'bidas'. One claimed that he will pray the whole night, every night for the rest of his life. One claimed that he will fast every day in the future and the third one said that he will never marry. The Prophet was swift in his disapproval of these "good" bidas (at the outset, one would think how could anything be wrong with worshipping Allah all the time). The Prophet told these people that he was the best among all mankind and he prayed some part of the night and slept another part, that he fasted some days while did not in others and that he was married. While the first two wanted to increase their worship beyond what Shari'a requires, the third person intended to avoid marriage or shun or elude something which is totally legal in Shari'a and approved by Allah (swt). Like the Christian monks and priests and the 'Muslim' Sufis claim that by not marrying they are pleasing Allah (swt) is bida and against Islam. Or if a vegetarian claims that by not harming a living soul he is pleasing Allah is also bida because Allah has allowed it and made it halal for us to eat the meat of animals(of course, only the animals He has made halal).

4. Anything in Shari'a can have a bida created or related to it.

Shari'a comprises aqeeda, beliefs, acts of worship and business or public dealings (mu'amlaat). So, bida is not just in matters of aqeeda or acts of worship but it could also be in business or public dealings. For example, if a person claims that 4 witnesses are required for business deal rather than the 2 that are instituted by Islam then he or she is exceeding the limits of Shari'a and falling into bida.

5. Bida has no source and or evidence in Qur'an, Sunnah of Prophet (Saw) and in the actions or Ijma (agreement) of Sahabas.

One famous example that is quoted by the Ahl-Bida in their desire to make some forms of bida halal, is the example of Umar (ra) and the tarawih prayers. They claim that since Umar (ra) started daily tarawih prayers in ramadhan while the Prophet (saw) only performed 3 nights, and Umar (ra) said that he started a good 'bida', we can accept the concept of bida. However, this is a failure to distinguish the linguistic meaning of bida from its Shari'a meaning. For instance Allah refers in the Quran to his Sunnah. Obviously when one refers to sunnah, it is a reference to the Prophet's sunnah and its Shari'a aspects. Similarly when Umar (ra) referred to the regular tarawih prayers, he was only referring to the linguistic meaning. The proof for this claim is clear. Tarawih prayers were not some new practice in religion. The Prophet (saw) instituted the tarawih prayers. The only reason that he stopped after 3 nights was clarified in his own saying that he did not wish that the tarawih prayers be made obligatory upon the Muslims. However, at the Prophet's death, the message of Islam had been perfected and tarawih prayers would always be recommended and not mandatory. Thus, Umar (ra) only started the practice of regularly performing a sunnah not STARTING a sunnah.

To conclude this section of the article, it must be understood that bida is not only a new invention in the religion claimed to be pleasing to Allah (swt), but the one who creates and the one who follows bida actually assert that there is some shortcoming in the deen. In reality, they are stating that there is some way to get closer to Allah (swt) and to please Him that is not found in the Quran or the Sunnah of Prophet (saw). That they have found a way to believe or act and to worship Allah that is pleasing to Him and which is BETTER than the way of Prophet (saw). That this perfect deen of Islam is missing something in it and that is why they are adding something to it or this deen had too much in it and that is why they are taking somethings away. This, in essence, is bida - the concept of a not-so-wholesome deen.

It is an (Naudhobillah) insult to Allah (swt) to say that He could not reveal or teach Prophet(saw) the best way and so they had to find the best way on their own. It is also a denial to what Allah (swt) Himself said in the Quran:

"Today, I have completed and perfected your religion for you and chose Islam for you as your deen" (5:3)

It is also a denial to what Prophet (saw) said:

"There is nothing that shall take you closer to Allah (swt) than what He has told you to do and nothing will take you away than what He has prohibited."

Hence, we must hate bida. This is the bottom-line. This hatred is one of the aspects of our love for Allah and the Prophet (saw) and love for a deen that we know is perfect and will always remain so.

Dangers of Bida:

Shaikh Mohammed Sharoot wrote in his book on bida that if the dangers of bida were restricted simply to the person who follows it, then maybe we would not get as upset or as worried as we are now, but in fact, the dangers of bida and the harms and evils of bida spread from the person following it to the people he is around and finally to the entire Ummah. The deen as a whole is effected because of their heresy and innovations.

Here are some dangers of bida:

1. Bida causes disunity in the Ummah.

It is first and foremost because of Ahl-Bida that there is division and fractionalization among this Ummah. This is proven very clearly from history. All of the Sahabas were following the way of Prophet (saw). They all loved and cared for each other even when they had a difference of Ijtihad after Uthman (ra). They fought with Ali (ra) and Mua'wiya (ra) against each other but they would still take hadith from each other, pray together and marry their daughters to each other. Their fight was due to their difference of Ijtihad but their love was still for the sake of Allah and they were still united on the way of Prophet (saw). However, when the Khawarij brought out their ideas during the famous battle of camel between Muwayyah and Ali (ra on both), many Muslims split from the ranks of the Ahl-Sunnah and hence became the first of the Ahl-bida (the people of bida). It is interesting to note that not even ONE sahaba was present among the Khawarij which in itself speaks of many volumes.

Hence, when it comes to Ahl-Bida, the situation becomes totally different. The Ummah split because of Ahl-Bida. When they bring their new ideas and acts of worship to the religion, the one group that is always supposed to be sticking to the truth (as Prophet had mentioned) i.e. the Ahl-Sunnah, reject these heretic ideas. They refuse to accept Ahl-Bida's concepts and methodology. The general statement made by various 'scholars' of today, "We all should overcome our differences and be united and fight with Kuffar", is a nice statement as a theory. However, practically it is not acceptable because we can not be united with people who do not agree with all tenants of Quran and Sunnah. It is our duty to oppose people when we see them following bida once the evidence has been established.

2. Bida is the cause of fitna (test or trials) or severe punishment for this Ummah.

By definition the people of bida are refusing to follow the commands and orders of Prophet (saw). Allah (swt) says in the Quran:

"For those people who are differing from the commands of Prophet, there will come to them either a fitna (test or trial from Allah) or a severe punishment."

Once Imam Malik was asked about putting on the Ahram from the Prophet's mosque rather than the miqaad. He said, "I fear for that person that some fitna will come to him." The man said, "Why? I am just adding a little to the boundaries of Ahram." Since by doing so, he was going against the commands of Prophet (saw), Imam Malik recited the above verse from the Qur'an.

3. Bida is the source of fasad (evils) in the Ummah

If we look at the Shari'a (laws of the Quran and Sunnah), it was meant for the well-being of mankind in this world and in hereafter. Anytime we go astray from the true teachings and accept any law other than the laws of Quran and Sunnah then we miss that well-being (maslaha) and replace it with fasad. By bringing new methodologies or concepts, the Ahl-Bida actually change the way that will bring the most happiness in here and in hereafter to a way that will not bring the 'maslaha' (well-being).

4. Bida cause Sunnah to die and creates hatred for Sunnah.

Whenever people introduce any bida it usually replaces some Sunnah. Or people add to Sunnah to the point where Sunnah is not practiced correctly anymore.

Ibn Abbas said, "When bida is created then the Sunnah dies and this continues until that bida is living and the Sunnah is dead."

Hasan Ibn Attiya, one of the Ta'baeen said, "When the people accept the bida, Allah removes the Sunnah from among them and doesn't return it until the day of judgment."

So, not only does bida cause the Sunnah to die but at the same time it causes hatred for the Sunnah. Ahl-Bida not only refuses to accept the actual Sunnah but also avoid going to the masjid or places where Sunnah is practiced. For instance, they show great disdain at Muslims that pray with their shoes on while this is an established Sunnah. It is common to see these Ahl-Bida going at great lengths to describe the filth that shoes carry and it would not be 'right' to pray wearing them. Why do these same people forget that it is not 'right' to make a decision on the religion of Allah, the sole owner of this deen? Allah knows what is beneath our shoes or what was beneath the sahabas' shoes or the Prophet's (saw) shoes but he still allowed it and as Muslims, we are to hear and obey (as the Quran instructs us) and

not to pass judgments. That is what happens when the bida spreads. Much hatred is created for the Sunnah that it gets hard for people to follow Sunnah. They get continuous pressure to change their ways. And even if there are some people who truly want to follow the Sunnah, Ahl-bida confuse them so much and mix the lies with truth so much so that they get totally puzzled by Ahl-bida's arguments and end up following the bida. They get pulled into bida and they are not able to see the truth anymore, although they were sincere to Allah (swt). So, InshaAllah, Allah will judge them according to their intentions but we know well that actions that are not within the fold of Quran and Sunnah are unacceptable irrespective of the intentions behind them.

5. Bida is a stepping stone to Kufr.

One of the early scholars, Al-Barbahaaree, one of the companions of Ahmed Ibn Hanbal, said, "Beware of bida, because every bida started out as something small and resembling the truth and people were fooled by it and followed it until it became bigger and bigger and were trapped by it and it took them out of Islam."

Ibn Taymiyyah has a nice passage in one of his books showing that:

"In fact, the kufr of Jews and Christians is because of bida. They introduced new things into the religion and those things took them completely away from the true message of Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) Alaihumma Salam".

6. For the Ummah as a whole, bida hurts the spreading of Islam and Dawah for the sake of Allah.

One of the easiest ways is that usually the ideas of Ahl-bida are used by the enemies of Islam to portray Islam. Most times TV shows will portray Islam as Sufis making 'zikr' which in fact has nothing to do with Islam. They are setting these things up to make people run away from Islam because belief of Ahl-bida is not from the 'fitra'. Only 'real' Islam contains the fitra and people will not be attracted to something which goes against the fitra. For instance, the group of Farakkhan, the nation of Islam being portrayed by Kuffars as an 'Islamic' group. Someone who is looking for the 'truth' will never be attracted to their ideas and beliefs which are being spread in the name of Islam.

7. Individually, bida destroys the akhira of the person.

The best example is like the termite being allowed to live in wood. Imagine bida is the termite and the person is the wood. Sooner or later the person will be ruined because it is clearly shown by the several hadith of Prophet (saw). Bida will be rejected in the hellfire. Allah (swt) puts a barrier between the person committing bida and repentance. This person and his supporters are cursed by Allah and the

angels. He will be turned away from the fountain of Prophet (saw) on the day of judgment. His deeds will be rejected as long as he commits the bida. He will be thinking in the world that he is doing something pleasing to Allah, whereas, in hereafter, he will find out that there is no benefit to what he did. He will not only bear the burden of his bida but also of anyone who followed him.

Solution to Avoid Bida:

First of all, the people claiming to follow the Sunnah and being from Ahl-Sunnah Wal Jamah have to realize the dangers of bida and how it is an obligation upon them to hate and oppose bida. For instance, if a group tries to oppose a bida, the first people to come and defend the bida are the ones who claim to be from Ahl-Sunnah. They say that they should not impose things and give people freedom of what they are doing and so on.

This is at best weird because when anything goes against Qur'an and Sunnah then there is no such thing as giving others freedom of doing what they want. This is basically, due to the lack of understanding of bida.

Secondly, we have to establish "Amara bil ma'roof wa naheen anil munkar (ordering good and forbidding evil)."

Bida is a kind of high munkar (evil) and Prophet (saw) has clearly told us in a hadeeth that we should stop munkar with the best of our abilities.

Last but not least, we should educate ourselves about the 'real' Sunnah of Prophet (saw) and find out what is bida and what is not. We have to look at the tafseer (explanation) of the Qur'an as well as the hadith of the Prophet (saw). When understanding the verses of the Qur'an and the hadith of Prophet (saw) we have to take into consideration the context and the time of the revelation of the verse or the hadith of Prophet (saw).

For instance, many people misinterpret the hadith of the Prophet (saw) where he mentioned the reward of those who introduce a good practice in Islam, with introducing 'innovations' in Islam. However, if one reads the earlier portion of this Hadith in Muslim, it clarifies the misconception. Prophet (saw) said it when he saw some poor people sitting outside the mosque and no one helped them. He (saw) was unhappy and delivered a sermon reminding people to fear Allah (swt). After the speech someone brought a big load of charity and give it to those people. When others saw him doing so, they all started giving charity to those people until the expression of Prophet (saw)'s face changed from anger to happiness.

Basically, the man gave charity, which is an allowable and a good act from Shari'a. So, if someone does an act which people have been neglecting, and is an allowable act and in accordance of Shari'a and people follow him then he gets his reward and

reward for being followed without either one's reward being reduced. Hence, although, this constitutes the literal meaning of bida' hasana, it has no relation whatsoever to the shari'a meaning of bida. The same applies for an evil act.

May Allah protect us from committing bida and guide us all to the His path and help us in strengthening our faith. All the good is from Allah (saw) and His Messenger (saw) and all the evil is from me and Shaytaan.

How Do We Know What Is and What Is Not a Bid`ah?

Shaykh `Alee Hasan `Alee `Abdul Hameed

Ilm Usul al-Bid'ah, pp. 75-9
Translated by Abu Rumaysah

This is a very important point which when discussed clarifies detailed principles under the light of which an action can be known as to whether it is a bid'ah or not. "This is because Allaah, the Blessed and Exalted, will not accept an action until two conditions are fulfilled:

That it be done sincerely seeking the Face of Allaah, Azza wa Jalla. That it be righteous, and it cannot be righteous until it is in conformity to the Sunnah, not in contradiction to it."

['Hujjah an-Nabee' (pg. 100) of our Shaykh al-Albaanee, may Allaah preserve him. I say and it was upon these two principles that Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah based his superb book 'al-Uboodiyah' on.]

Our Shaykh, al-Albaanee, may Allaah preserve him, said in his book 'Ahkaam al-Janaa'iz' (pg. 242),

"Indeed the bid'ah which the Sharee'ah has textually stated to be misguidance is (of a number of types):

Everything that contradicts the Sunnah, be it in actions, sayings or beliefs even if this arise out of ijtihaad." I say: as-Suyutee said in 'al-Amr bi al-Ittibaa' (pp. 92-93),

"This differs in accordance to the different circumstances and to the extent in which it contradicts the Sharee'ah. Sometimes this leads to that which would necessitate forbiddance and sometimes it does not exceed the bounds of detestability. It is possible for every skilled legal jurist to differentiate between the two types especially if he has deep-rooted knowledge and faith. [FN. Rather all innovations in the religion are forbidden].

This category of vile innovation is sub-divided into two:

In matters of belief that lead towards misguidance and loss. The adherents to the deviated sects are of six types, and each type is further divided into 12 sects - this making the 72 sects about which the Prophet (SAW) informed would be in the Fire. We are not, at this juncture, going to detail them but the one who sticks to the Sunnah and the Jamaa'ah and steers clear of the foundations and offshoots of these innovations will be from the Saved Sect by the Permission of Allaah.

In the actions and these are further sub-divided into two:

The type that is known by everyone, the elite and the general masses, to be a bid'ah, be it forbidden or detested. The type that the majority think to be actions of worship and means of drawing close to Allaah and a Sunnah. So from the first type [i.e. (i)] is what a group of the ignoramuses fell into - those that left following the Imaams of the Religion - those who belong to Faqr whose reality is to be impoverished of faith by befriending women and being alone with them.

This is forbidden by the agreement of the Muslims and the one who considers this to be lawful is a disbeliever. The one who does this, considering it of little importance is a sinner, misguided and misguiding, having deserted the religion and split off from the Jamaa'ah of the Muslim - may Allaah distance the one who does it - for indeed looking at women who are haraam for him to look at and being alone with them and listening to their words is haraam upon every mature person unless he be of the ties of kinship. Haraam according to the Book, the Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslims.

This is not the place to detail the evidences concerning this, rather the purpose is to clarify what constitutes bid'ah and what constitutes evidence and this is not hidden from a Muslim." Then he said (pg. 153),

"As for the second type that people think to be obedience to Allaah and a means of drawing close to Him while it is not so, or leaving it is better than enacting it - then this is what the Legislator has commanded to be done in a specific form, at a specific time or in a specific place. Examples of this would be fasting during the day and circumambulating the Ka'bah. Or what has been ordered to a specific person such as the things specific to the Prophet (SAW) such that the ignoramus would find analogy with himself and thereby do them while being forbidden from doing them, or he makes analogy between one form of worship to another while not taking into consideration time and place."

Then our Shaykh said,

"Every matter by which nearness to Allaah is sought but the Messenger of Allaah (SAW) has forbidden." I say: such as fasting continuously, or specifying the day of

Jumu'ah for fasting or praying the night and the likes of these. This is because in and of themselves they are matters which draw one close to Allaah from the point of view that the basis of them is worship but they do not draw one close to Allaah due to their being done in this forbidden way.

As-Suyutee said in 'al-Amr bi al-Ittibaa' (pg. 152) while mentioning bid'ah,". And this occurs in some of them due to their desire to perform a great deal of worship and actions of obedience, so their desire leads them to do this at times and in places that the Sharee'ah has forbidden them from doing so.

From these are those that are forbidden and those that are disliked. Ignorance and the adornment of Shaytaan puts these people in a dilemma by them saying: These are actions of obedience, it is established that they were done at other times so we shall do them continuously, for Allaah will never punish us for actions of obedience irregardless of when we perform them!"

Then our Shaykh said,

"Every matter for which it is not possible to be legislated except by a text and there is no text for it then this is a bid'ah with the exception of that which is reported from a Companion from whom that action was repeatedly done with no one objecting."

I say: Abu Sulaymaan ad-Daaraane said, "It is not upon the one receives inspiration (ilhaam) that something is from the good actions to enact it until he hears it from a text. So when he hears it from a text he should enact it and praise Allaah for making what is in his heart conform to the text." ['al-Baa'ith' (pg. 108) of Abu Shaamah.]

And there was nothing said that was more beautiful than the saying of al-Imaam Ibraaheem an-Nakha'ee,

"If the Companions had wiped over their finger nails then I would not have washed them due to the great virtue of following them" ['al-Ibaanah' (no.254) of ibn Battah.

A similar narration was reported by ad-Daarimee in his 'Sunan' (1/72)] Ibn Abee ad-Dunya reports in 'Kitaab al-Iyaal' (no.56) that Ataa said,

"I asked Aa'ishah about aqueeqah saying, 'what is your opinion of the one who sacrifices a slaughter camel?' She replied, "the Sunnah is better and more excellent."

I say: And what is their that is better to be followed!!

Taqee as-Subkee was asked in his 'Fataawaa' (2/549) about a newly invented matter that was performed by some of his contemporaries to which he replied, "All praise is due to Allaah. This is a bid'ah without any doubt and none should have any doubt concerning this. It is sufficient to state that it was not known in the time of the Prophet (SAW) and neither in the time of the Sahaabah, and it is not known from any of scholars of the Salaf."

These are golden words that cement what has preceded that the Sharee'ah is sufficient and complete and that the right of legislation belongs to Allaah. It is not permissible to overstep its limits or to invent new things in it.

From the examples of this is what al-Haakim says in his 'Mustadrak' (1/370) adding a comment to the hadeeth that is reported concerning the prohibition of writing in graves [the basis of which is in 'Saheeh Muslim' (no.970)],

"This hadeeth is not to be acted upon! For indeed the Imaams of the Muslims from the east to the west have words written on their graves, this being an action that he khalaf took from the Salaf!"

Adh-Dhahabee followed this statement up by correcting it and saying,

"What you say is of no consequence! We do not know of a single companion who did this rather it is something that was introduced by some of the taabi'een and those who came after them because the prohibition did not reach them."

A detailed discussion concerning this follows later.

Then our Shaykh said,

"Those things that are taken as worship but are actually from the habits of the disbelievers."

I say: as-Suyutee says in 'al-Amr bi al-Ittibaa' (pg. 141),

"And from the bid'ahs and evil actions is resembling the disbelievers and joining in with and agreeing to their Eids and accursed festivities as is done by many of the ignorant Muslims." Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah says in 'Iqtidaa as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem' (pg. 214),

"The generality of these actions that are taken from the Christians and others that are not reported (in our Religion) - then Satan has adorned them and made them seem attractive to those that claim Islaam and he has made their hearts accept them and have a good opinion of them. So these (Muslims) have added to some and taken away from others, they have put some forward and delayed others just

as they used to change some aspects of the True Religion. But due to these days and their likes having been specified while the Sharee'ah has not done so, and that making them special in the Religion is false and invalid rather the basis of their being special comes from the religion of the disbelievers, then this specification is actually resembling them.

And it is not possible that some ignoramus think that by changing these aspects that they have derived from the disbelievers they have succeeded in opposing them as occurred in the case of fasting on the Day of Ashura. This is because the basis of this fast was legislated for us and they used to perform it but the form of our fast differs from theirs. As for that which is in no way part of our Religion, rather it is from their innovated, abrogated religion then it is not for us to resemble it - neither in its basis nor its description."

I say: One of the clearest examples of this that has been invented in the past by many ignorant Muslims is the yearly celebration of the Mawlid of the Messenger (SAW). In this they are resembling the Jews and Christians who do the likes of these celebrations in their Eids and festival seasons!!

I have refuted the doubts that these people raise in my introduction to the book, 'al-Mawrid fee Amal al-Mawlid' by Taaj al-Faakihaanee and all praise is due to Allaah.

Then our Shaykh says:

"What some of the scholars, especially the later ones, have textually stated to be recommended while there is no evidence for this." I say: Unfortunately the examples of this are abundant. From them is what an-Nawawee, may Allaah have mercy upon him, quotes from Abu al-Hasan al-Qazwaynee in 'al-Adhkaar' (pg. 276) that he said, "It is recommended for the one on a journey recite 'li Eelaafi Quraysh' because it would safeguard him from every evil"!

And an-Nawawee endorsed this!!

Our Shaykh, al-Allaamah al-Albaanee followed this up in 'Silsilah ad-Da'eefah' (1/374) by saying,

"This is legislating something in the Religion for which there is no evidence apart from mere claim, so from where does he get that this would secure him from every evil?! Indeed these sort of opinions for which nothing occurs in the Book or the Sunnah would have been from the means of changing this Religion via ways that are not known had Allaah not Promised to safeguard it."

As-Sakhaawee said in 'Ibtihaj bi Adhkaar al-Musaafir wa al-Hajj' (pg. 17),

"I have not come across a hadeeth concerning this."

Then our Shaykh says:

"Every action of worship whose manner of performance has only come via a weak or fabricated hadeeth." I say: He also said in 'Hajjah an-Nabee' (pg. 102) while numbering the difference aspects of bid'ah,

"It is not permissible to depend upon weak ahaadeeth or to attribute them to the Prophet (SAW) and in our opinion it is not permissible to act upon such ahaadeeth. This is the opinion of a group of the scholars such as ibn Taymiyyah and others.

As for the ahaadeeth that are fabricated or have no basis then this fact about them was not known by some of the legal jurists and hence they based legal rulings upon them! These are from the core of bid'ah and newly invented matters."

An example of this is the 'Salaah ar-Raghaa'ib' which is prayed on the first Friday of Rajab. As-Suyutee says in 'al-Amr bi al-Ittibaa' (pg. 166),

"Know, may Allaah have mercy upon you, that exalting this day and night as invented in Islaam after the 4th century, and the hadeeth concerning it is fabricated by agreement of the scholars. The contents of this hadeeth concern the excellence of fasting on that day and praying during that night and they have called it 'Salaah ar-Raghaa'ib'!

As for what the researching scholars are upon - then it is to forbid the singling out of this day for fasting and to forbid praying during the night with this invented prayer and from everything that would contain exaltation of this day such as feasts and displaying adornments etc. with the purpose that this day become of the same level as others (normal) days."

[Refer to: 'Iqtidaa as-Siraat al-Mustaqeem' (pg.283), 'al-Fataawaa al-Kubraa' (1/177), 'al-Baa'ith' (pg. 39), 'Tabyeen al-Ajab' (pg.47), 'al-Madhkal' (1/293), 'Masaajilah Ilmiyyah' of ibn Salaah and al-Izz bin Abd as-Salaam. Refer also to 'al-Mawdoo'aat' (2/124) and 'al-Laa'ee al-Masnoo'ah' (2/57).]

Then our Shaykh said:

"Going to excesses in worship."

I say: Allaah censured the disbelievers for their extremism in their religion by saying, "O People of the Book! Do not go to extremes in your religion and do not say about Allaah except the truth." (4/171)

The Messenger of Allaah (SAW) warned from this by saying,

"I warn you of extremism in the Religion for indeed those that came before you were destroyed due to their extremism in the religion." [Reported by an-Nasaa'ee (5/268), ibn Maajah (no. 3029), Ahmad (1/215, 347) with a saheeh sanad.] Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah says in 'Iqtidaa Siraat al-Mustaqeem' (1/72),

"Furthermore going to excesses with regards to the Prophets and righteous has occurred amongst some groups of the worshippers and sufis to the extent that many of these intermingled this with the belief of incarnation and ittihaad that ended being more vile than the saying of the Christians or sometimes similar to it or sometimes stopping short of it."

All of this falls under the meaning of going to excesses in worship.

The meaning of excess (gulu) is to transgress the proper bounds. From the examples of this excess is what some people say in praise of the Prophet (SAW):

Indeed the delight and harm of the world is yours to bestow
From your knowledge is the knowledge of the Preserved Tablet and Pen

Can there be any excess more extreme than this?!

Imaam ash-Shaatibee said in 'al-Muwaafaqaat' (2/242),

"In the time frames set by the legislator for the employment of the actions of worship, the obligatory and recommendations, to certain known times for apparent or not so apparent reasons lies enough to cause certainty that the reason behind the legislation is to keep the actions ongoing and constant.

It is said concerning the saying of Allaah, "they did not observe it in the way they should have done"[57:27] that indeed the lack of their observing it lay in their abandoning it after starting it and continuing in it (for a short time.)

At this juncture we can derive a ruling for what the Sufis have committed themselves to with regards to performing certain rituals and statements of dhikr (wird) at certain set times.."

I say: at this point it would be good to mention the book published by al-Luknawee Abu al-Hasanaat, 'Iqaamah al-Hujjah alaa Anna al-Ikthaar min at-Ta'bbud Laysa bi Bid'ah.' He declares to be good what has been reported from some of the scholars and Imaams with regards to exerting oneself to the utmost in worship such as staying up the whole night for prayer, or reciting the whole Qur'aan in one rak'ah, or performing 1000 rak'ahs!

The vast majority of these narrations are reported by isnaads that cannot be depended upon! So are these quotes from the actions legislated by the Sharee'ah or from the newly invented innovations?!

I say: there is no doubt in the eyes of one who understands the meaning of Sunnah and the correct meaning of Bid'ah, and whose heart has adorned for him the continuous following of the Sunnah and made ugly the following of bid'ah that these ways and mannerisms and setting of limits are all in opposition to the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW), in fact falling into that which has been forbidden from - going to excesses in the religion and despicable innovation.

Imaam adh-Dhahabee says in his amazing book 'Siyar al- A'laam an-Nubalaa' (3/84-86) after mentioning the saying of the Prophet (SAW) to Abdullaah bin Umru, ".then recite the Qur'aan in seven days and do not go beyond this."

[Reported by Muslim]

"It is authentically reported from the Messenger of Allaah (SAW) that this was reduced to 3 nights and he forbade that the Qur'aan be recited in less than this. [Reported by Abu Dawood (no. 1394), at-Tirmidhee (no.2950), ibn Maajah (no. 1347), al-Baghawee (4/498) from Abdullaah bin Umru that the Prophet (SAW) said, "the person who recites the Qur'aan in less than three (nights) has not understood it."]

This was in regards to the amount of Qur'aan that had thusfar been revealed, and then after this saying of the Prophet (SAW) the remainder of the Qur'aan was revealed. The least level of the meaning of prohibition is that it is reprehensible to recite the whole Qur'aan in less than three nights. There is no understanding or contemplation on the part of one who recites it in less than three nights. If it was read and recited in a week and this was done constantly then this would be an excellent action and the religion would be easy.

By Allaah reciting one seventh of the Qur'aan during tahajjud, alongwith preserving the prescribed supererogatory prayers, and the prayer of Duhaa and the prayer of entering the Mosque, alongwith preserving the remembrances which are authentically reported, the supplications upon sleeping and waking and at the ends of the prescribed prayers and opening the fast, alongwith learning beneficial knowledge and busying oneself with it sincerely for the sake of Allaah, alongwith enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, guiding the ignorant and teaching him, reprimanding the sinner and similar things, alongwith performing the obligatory actions and staying away from the major sins, being frequent in supplication and seeking forgiveness and giving charity, joining the ties of kinship, humility, and sincerity in all of what has been mentioned - indeed of all this is a great activity. This is the station of the People of the Right and the God-fearing Awliyaah of Allaah, for all of what has been mentioned is desired.

Therefore when the servant busies himself with trying to finish the whole Qur'aan in one night, the he has opposed the Upright Religion and becomes unable to do much of what we have mentioned and he has not contemplated what he has recited.

Here is the master, the servant, the Companion who used to say when he grew old, "woe to me if only I had accepted the leeway given by the Messenger of Allaah (SAW)" [As is reported by Bukhaaree]

This because it was said to him by the Prophet (SAW) concerning the optional fast, he kept on reducing (the time between fasts) to the point that he said, "fast one day and break fast one day, this is the fast of my brother Dawood (AS)." [The same hadeeth as above]

And he (SAW) ordered that part of the night should be slept in by saying, "but I pray the night and I sleep, I fast and I break the fast, I marry women and I eat meat, therefore the one who turns away from my Sunnah is not of me." [Reported by Bukhaaree and Muslim].

May Allaah inspire us and you to follow in the best of ways and make us to keep away from desires and opposing (the Sunnah)."

Then our Shaykh said:

"Every action of worship that the Sharee'ah has generalised but the people have put some restrictions to it such as a specific place, time, description or number." I say: Imaam Abu Shaamah said in 'al-Baa'ith' (pg. 165), "It is not permissible to specify an action of worship to a time that has not been specified by the Sharee'ah, rather all the actions of righteousness are applicable to all times, there is no specific time that is better than another with the exception of what the Sharee'ah has declared to be so such as fasting the day of Arafah and Aashurah, praying in the depth of the night and performing Umrah in Ramadaan.

And from the places are those that the Sharee'ah has declared to be better to perform actions of worship in such as the 10 days of Dhu al-Hajjah, Laylatul Qadr which is better than a thousand months.

In summary: it is not upon the servant to specify rather this is for the Legislator (SAW), and this was the description of the worship of the Messenger of Allaah (SAW)" [Refer to 'Iqtidaa' (pg. 308-309)]

And the scholars, the dead and the living, have established the principle that "what the Legislator (SAW) has generalised is to be acted upon in its general way and it is

not permissible to restrict it or limit it." ['al-Ikhtiyaaraat al-Ilmiyyah li Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah' (pg. 73) of al-Ba'lee]

I say: ibn al-Qayyim said in 'Igaatha al-Lufhaan' (pg. 371),

".And from these is that the Sunnah has declared to be reprehensible is the singling out of Rajab and Jumu'ah for fasting so that this may not be taken as a means of innovating in the religion by way of specifying a time that the Sharee'ah has not specified for worship."

Our Shaykh said in 'Hajjah an-Nabee (SAW) (pg. 103),

"Habits and superstitions that have no proof in the Sharee'ah, and neither does the intellect testify to them even if some ignoramuses may enact them making them to be part of their legislated law and even if there be some people present who aid them in this having a claim to knowledge."

I say: the examples of this are too many to enumerate, this depicts the condition of many of the children of this time who are following their desires and the way of the Khalaf. So upon this "it is not permissible to depart from the way of the Salaf for it is the best and most complete of ways." ['Ikhtiyaaraat al-Ilmiyyah' (pg. 54) of ibn Taymiyyah].

It is necessary to distance oneself from those who oppose the salaf for it is the most misguided and ignorant.

The Sahabah's Attitude towards Innovations

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An outstanding characteristic of the Sahabah is their absolute adherence to the Sunnah of the Prophet, salla Allaahu Alaihe wa sallam, and their absolute disapproval of Bid`ah (innovation). Some Sahabah narrated the following story:

We used to sit in front of Abdullah ibn Masoud's house before the Fajr prayer waiting to go with him to the Masjid. Abou Mousa al-Ash`aarie came and asked us:

'Did Abu Abdurrahman (i.e. Ibn Masoud) leave yet?'

We answered: 'No.'

So Abou Mousa Al-Ash`aarie sat with us waiting for him. When he came out, we all stood up. Abou Mousa told him: "Oh, Abu Abdurrahman! I recently saw something

in the Masjid which I did not approve." Ibn Masoud then asked: "What was it?" Abou Mousa said: "You will see it if you stay alive..In the Masjid, I saw a group of people sitting in circles waiting for the Salat. Each circle is led by a person. And every person in these circles carries small stones.

The leader of a circle would say: 'Say 'Allah-u Akbar' a hundred times,' they will say Allah-u Akbar a hundred times; then he says 'Say 'La ilaha Illa Allah', a hundred times" they will say La ilaha ill Allah a hundred times; he they says: 'Say 'Subhan Allah', a hundred times, they will say Subhana Allah a hundred times. Then Ibn Masoud said: "What did you tell them?" He said: 'I didn't say anything, I wanted to wait for your opinion."

Abdullah ibn Masoud said: "Could you not order them to count their sins, and assured them of getting their rewards."

Then Abdulah ibn Masoud went ahead and we accompanied him. As he approached one of the circles, he said: "What is this that you are doing?"

They said: "Oh! Abu Abdurrahman, these are pebbles to count the number of times we say Allah-u Akbar, La ilaha Ill Allah, and Subhana Allah."

He said: "Count your own sins, and I assure you that you are not going to lose anything of your rewards (Hasanat).. Woe unto you, people of Muhammad, how fast you will be doomed. Those are your Prophet's companions available, these are his clothes not worn out yet, and his pots are not broken yet. I swear by Whom my soul is in His Hands that you are either following a religion that is better than the Prophet's religion or you are opening a door of aberration."

They said: "We swear by Allah, oh, Abu Abdurrahman, that we had no intention other than doing good deeds."

He said: "So what? How many people wanted to do good deeds but never got to do them? The Prophet of Allah has told us about people who recited the Qur'an with no effect on them other than the Qur'an passing through their throats. I swear by Allah, I am almost sure that most of you are from that type of people."

Then he left them.

Amr Ibn Salamah said: "We saw most of the people of those circles fighting us with the Khawarij in the battle of An-Nahrawan." - Related by Ad-Daremie and Abu Na`eim with an authentic chain.