

Does “Milad” Have Any Validity Whatsoever in the Holy Qur’an?

Birthday of Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) must not be ritualized. Instead, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) must be remembered, honoured and most certainly marvelled for his unique greatness, and as the most perfect exemplar this world has ever known since creation. He is responsible as the societal-architect for building up currently 1.8 Billion Muslims (2009 data) and hundreds of thousands of mosques all over the world, where Allah is much worshipped. He led a lifestyle, which millions of people are striving to imitate throughout their lives! He must never be idolised with innovated rituals.

The author clarifies at the outset that this article deals with various innovations linked with “*Eid Milad-un-Nabi*” (also spelt *Eid Meelad-un-Nabi* in some countries), which has become ritualism celebration of Prophet Muhammad’s birthday in some communities only. This article is also taking to critically examine and analyze those special ritualism gatherings, involving groups of people, and where there is religious chanting, blessing by an Imam (or *Molvi*) of specially prepared food items and then distributed to all those gathered as “blessed food.”

The author further stresses that Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was at the age of 40 when he received the very first revelation from Archangel Gabriel (*Jibreel*), which was the commencement of the Holy Qur’an. This is Chapter 96 as *Surah Al-Alaq*. At that historical stage, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was better known as *Al-Amin* (the Truthful). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) died 23 years later, soon after the Holy Qur’an was contractually completed through Divine revelations, systematically compiled and collated and then finally, divinely sealed off. Celebration of “*Eid Milad-un-Nabi*” is neither a revealed compulsion in the Holy Qur’an, nor did Prophet Muhammad ever direct that people must celebrate his birthday as a “*Milad*” ritual after his death (b.570 –d.632 AD).

Another point often overlooked by many people is that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), most miraculously has his date of birth and his date of death as the same, i.e. 12th *Rabi’ al-awwal* in the Islamic calendar for Sunni divisions (and Shia divisions have 17th *Rabi’ al-awwal* in the Islamic calendar for his birth only). Both dates are respected.

The earliest record of Muslims celebrating “*Milad-un-Nabi*” is in the 8th Islamic century in Mecca, during the administrative era of the 5th Abbasid Caliph Haroon-al-Rashid. The particular house where Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born was transformed into a prayer house. It remained so for several decades, without any religious festivity attached to it.

However, almost four Islamic centuries later, closer towards the end of the Islamic 11th Century, the wealthy class of communities in Egypt, commenced to convert the birth and death date of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) into an expensive and an elaborate affair, and which included animal sacrifices, expensive food and fasting and processions through the streets of Cairo, in Egypt. These communities gave it an Egyptian-Arabic pronounced name of “*Muled en-Nabi*,” and which later became “*Mawlid an-Nabi*” in mainstream Arabic.

It should also be noted that this practice took accelerated elevation and it followed the spread of Islam to many parts of the world, especially countries which have higher density Muslims in their population demographics.

Consequently, because “*Milad-un-Nabi*” is not documented in the Holy Qur’an, the pronunciations began to differ from country to country; and in the same token their spellings also had some variations. The most significant variation in pronunciations, spellings and practices has been noticed in Mediterranean countries, West Asia, Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Malay regions. The Indian Diaspora was another vehicle, which carried variations of these cultural practices, pronunciations and spellings into a completely new dimension to many parts of the world.

For sake of those exploratory readers who are reading this article for the first time, this article is following-on to an earlier article by same author on “*Teeja, Dassei, Bissei, Chalissa, Chammei, and Salina*” as aspects of *Bid’a* (innovation to Islam). Accordingly, certain historical facts are repeated here, especially so, to stress their relevance. The author extends his humble apologies to those who may have already read about them in the previous article. Those facts are, however, essential aspects in the structure of this article.

Nowhere in the entire Holy Qur’an does the word “*Milad*” or “*Mawlid*” appear in any form of description whatsoever for this purpose. This ritualized practice of “*Milad*” is also another *Bid’a*.

Ideally and correctly, the birth date of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) should be remembered of his being:

1. The most perfect human exemplar the world has ever known in its history of humanity since creation;
2. As the most powerful and influential human medium used by Allah to introduce the Holy Qur’an to the world, through His systematic revelations delivered over 23 years, and as His Final Scripture to mankind;
3. As the promised representative Ambassador of Allah to mankind on this planet, and directly answering peoples’ questions and demonstrating with practices, which later became Hadith; and
4. As the Final Prophet of Allah and sealing off the emergence of any other Prophet. This is evidenced in the Holy Qur’an at 33:40 as “*Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things.*”

Following on from that previous article, the Hindustani terminologies of “*Teeja, Dassei, Bissei, Chalissa, Chammei, and Salina*” are all foreign words in Islam and of course all are *Bid’a*. The earlier discussions expanded to some detail that they were introduced into Islam by influential and prominent Muslims of early India. This was especially during the Mughal regime of the entire Indian subcontinent; and which stretched from Afghanistan to Burma and much of the “V” of the Indian subcontinent (the Deccan). The Mughal Empire governed over entire India from early 16th Century through to mid 19th Century.

It is again necessary to inculcate about these influential and prominent Muslims. More explicitly, these influential persons were amongst, as commencing with the Delhi Muslim Sultanate (1206-1526), the Mughal Empire (1526-1857) and ending with the British Raj

(1858-1947), which finally led to independence of India and Pakistan on 14th-15th August 1947. During these very trying times (1206-1857), the Indian communities were living under intense cultural pressures, where on one hand the Muslim (Mughal) Rulers imposed strict Muslim prescriptions, and on the other hand, the mixed Indian populace went through various transformations, which included conversions from other faiths to Islam; and to some extent of cross-marriages.

It is necessary to remind the readers to visualise the general reality on-ground situations, of other ethnic groups' cultures, traditions and religious practices in India, during that era of Mughal regime.

During the Mughal regime (1526-1857), the mainstream religions existing in India were in the following array (with largest first, then descending to smaller): Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jain and many insignificant small religious groups of various names.

The Mughal Emperors, as recorded in history, were in India after the 8th Islamic Century, they were extremely powerful and conquered every community which dared and stood in their way. The author reiterates, noting that the Mughal Emperors entered and conquered India from the Middle East, after the 8th Islamic Century. The 8th Islamic Century was the point of commencement of "*Muled en-Nabi*," in Cairo, Egypt.

These Emperors were sequentially as:

1. Emperor Zahir ud Din Muhammad Babur (b.1483 d.1850).
2. Emperor Nasir ud Din Muhammad Humayun (b.1508 d.1556).
3. Emperor Jalal ud Din Muhammad Akbar (b.1542 d.1605).
4. Emperor Noor ud Din Muhammad Salim (b.1559 d.1627).
5. Emperor Shahanshah Shahab-ud-din Muhammad Shah Jehan (b.1592 d.1666).
6. Emperor Abul Muzaffar Muhy-ud-Din Muhammad Aurangzeb Alamgir (b.1658 d.1707).

After the death of the 6th Mughal Emperor, subsequent Mughal emperors practically lost their control over religious administration affairs India-wide. Over periods of time, those people of other religions who had converted to Islam began to reintroduce and practice some of their previous religious practices.

The new generation of Emperors after 1707, and spanning the entire Mughal regime, allowed this to continue and over several decades and generations later, these alien practices began to spread amongst Muslims throughout India. "*Milad*" was one such foreign practice (*Bid'a*); and it is necessary to trace it back, right down to its originating roots and then linking it to similarity of another word in India.

As already deliberated upon in the previous article, Mughal Emperor Jalal ud Din Muhammad Akbar got married to Princess Jodha Bai, who was the eldest daughter of Kachwaha Rajput Raja Bharmal of Amber.

She was a Hindu princess. Whilst there were no cameras in those days, history books' paintings recorded her as exceptionally beautiful and making her very influential.

Mughal Emperor Jalal ud Din Muhammad Akbar permitted his beautiful Jodha Bai to have a *mandir* inside the *Raj Mahal* (palace), complete with typical outfitting of *mandirs*. This also included having the fire-pit (*havankund*) and periodic holding of “*Katha*” inside the *Raj Mahals* (palaces). Accordingly, the damage was already done, as hundreds of Muslims employed inside the palaces, assumed as permissible to have such other than Islamic practices (*Bid’a*) in Muslim households. The Mughal Emperors built many palaces and mosques throughout India (and Pakistan).

After the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, the Mughal Empire continued in a fragmented way for another 150+ years; and Islam continued to decline, losing some of its original purity.

Consequently, Allah saw fit in His magnificent wisdom, to send His Islamic Reformers to India to prevent Islam from further decline. They were the 13th Century Reformer *Mujjadid Hazrat* Syed Ahmad Bareilvi (b.1786-d.1831) and the 14th Islamic Century Reformer *Mujjadid Hazrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (b.1835-d.1908). They were continuation of other Reformers, who were located to various other parts of the world, over the previous 12 Islamic Centuries. (There is not an Islamic Century without an Islamic Reformer).

It is reiterated that nowhere in the entire Holy Qur’an does the word “Milad” appear in any form of description whatsoever. The 14th Century Reformer (*Mujjadid Hazrat* Mirza Ghulam Ahmad) expressed his dissatisfaction and directed that Muslims cease such practices, which are not stipulated in the Holy Qur’an and not recorded in the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Some people stopped but not all people, as India with its very rich and complex cultural diversity, continued to hold on to such practices most religiously, out of respect to their elders. The common practice has been to respect and continue doing exactly as their fathers, grandfathers and such senior ancestors were practicing.

Accordingly, it is necessary to revisit the history of India and identify the very roots of such foreign practices. In order to hold his vast Mughal Empire intact with the multicultural mix, the 3rd Mughal Emperor Jalal ud Din Muhammad Akbar (b.1542 d.1605) introduced as a compromise, an agreement with other religious leaders. It was meant to be a State Religion and was to be known as “*Din-e-Illahi*.” This however was discontinued after much insistence by the then Grand Mufti of Delhi.

It can now be seen and concluded, that certain other than Muslim rites and practices have crept into the Muslims’ practices, only for those Muslims, whose origins are from India. Muslims from other countries to not indulge in such practices, as those practices are not authenticated in the Holy Qur’an.

“*Milad*” is a corrupted Hindustani word with root of “*milana*” and which is taken to mean the gathering and mixing together of communities in a certain place. The similarities of Arabic word “*Mawlid*” as a function, and “*milana*” in India resulted in “*Milad*” commencing in India with borrowed practical ideas, such as from “*Katha*.”

“*Milad*” is also the Hindi-Urdu equivalent of the word “*Katha*” and which takes a similar meaning. “*Katha*” comes from the root Sanskrit word “*Gatha*” and which means gathering together of communities and reading out stories and epics from the Ramayana.

In any “*Katha*,” the particular deities which are being worshipped are expected to be present in that ceremony. These ceremonies are directed with idols and with picture frames of those other deities who featured in the Ramayana. Their practices are respected. It is not for Muslims to insult or show disrespect to other religions.

Muslims must understand and remember at all times that any terminology which is not in the Holy Qur’an, is obviously not a revealed word and did not come from Allah. Such foreign words therefore must not be taken as part of Islamic terminology. In addition, Muslims must also remember, that such foreign words must not become compulsively imposed upon all Muslims - that they must perform such rituals, which are *Bid’a*.

Some religious groups in India are particularly known as religions of fasts, feasts and various types of festivals, which keep people in groups of social gatherings. Generally, there are 35 different “*Kathas*” types widely practised in India. “*Kathas*” are really historical stories of the past in the religious context, and includes hymns as *bhajans* or *kirtans*.

Reverting to links between “*Milad*” and “*Katha*,” it is essential to analyze how “*Katha*” types of practices crept into Islam and became called as “*Milad*.” Accordingly, it is necessary to draw comparative parallels, and this is given in the table below, taken from actual case studies in Fiji:

(Other than Muslim) Katha	(Muslim) Milad
Gathering of relatives and friends	Gathering of relatives and friends
A pundit (or <i>pujari</i>) leads the function	An imam (or <i>Molvi</i>) leads the function
Clean white sheets used as mat for sitting around	Clean white sheets used as mat for sitting around
Placing idols and picture frames of revered gods	No such thing
Utterances of scripted recitals	Utterances of scripted recitals
Prepared foods presented on clean white sheets for blessing	Prepared foods presented on clean white sheets for blessing
Fire from sticks burnt in the <i>havankund</i> (fire pit)	Smouldering incense sticks (<i>aggarbatti</i>) (sometimes held together in a receptacle of rice or flour) or brass holder, placed in a dinner plate
Recitals from the Ramayana	Recitals from various Hadith
Chanting of kirtans/bhajans from specially prepared Katha scriptures	Chanting of readings from specially prepared Milad scriptures
Blessing of food presented on the clean white sheets	Blessing of food presented on the clean white sheets
Blessed food is then distributed to all those gathered as “ <i>holy prashad</i> ”	Blessed food is then distributed to all those gathered as “ <i>sirnee</i> ”
A full meal follows later	A full meal follows later
After the event the pundit (or <i>pujari</i>) is paid for his professional services and given some token gifts	After the event the imam (or <i>Molvi</i>) is paid for his professional services and given some token gifts
End of function	End of function

The author will not go into the details of the various (35) “*Kathas*” as that is not the purpose of this article.

As earlier mentioned, “*Milad*” (also spelt *Meelad*) is a corrupted version of the Arabic word “*Mawlid*” which means giving birth to or introducing something. For example, in some Arabic-speaking countries (but not all), the term “*Mawlid-an-Nabi*” is taken to mean the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The most disappointing situation is that whilst Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was the most exemplary Prophet introduced to entire mankind (and not just Muslims), he neither practised “*Mawlid-an-Nabi*” nor did he leave any instruction in whatsoever form, that such practices must be introduced after his death.

“*Milad*” is an innovation in Islam; it is commonly referred to as “*Bid’a*” and must not be encouraged to continue into fast becoming as a hallmark function for Muslims.

It must also be remembered, that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not come just for Muslims only, but he came to reform the world’s peoples, which had been largely reduced to degradation, through all sorts of cultural and communal wars, much of which were resulting from different forms of worships.

Another point which further complicates to the confusion is that many Muslim communities have their annual calendar conspicuously marked with “*Milad-un-Nabi*” indicating birthday of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

In conclusion, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) must have his birthday remembered inasmuch as anybody has rights to have own birthday remembered.

Considering the unique unparallel-greatness of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), as identified with the four-points given above, the approach to his birthday should not become rituals such as “*Milad*,” but he should be remembered more academically, with analytical studies of his exemplary lifestyles and his exemplary views and opinions given in the Hadith.