

## 8. Is It An Innovation To Commemorate The Birth And Death Anniversaries Of Awliya' Allah?

The Wahhabis consider the honoring of birth and death anniversaries of *awliya'* and divine personalities to be forbidden and an innovation. They are the staunch enemies of the *Awliya' Allah* and religious leaders and consider the gatherings on their birth and death anniversaries to be (*haram*) prohibited.

Muhammad Hamid Al-Faqi, the leader of group 'Ansar Al-Sunnat Al-Muhammadiyah' in his footnotes to his book *Al-Fath Al-Majid* writes:

الذكريات التي ملئت البلاد بإسم الأولياء هي نوعٌ من العبادة لهم وتعظيمهم

*“Remembering and celebrating on the days of birth and death of awliya' amounts to one kind of worshipping them and respecting before them.”<sup>1</sup>*

The root of all their mistakes is that because they have not determined any limit and margin for polytheism (*shirk*), *tawhid* and specially the meaning of *'ibadah*, they think that every kind of respect and honor is worship. As you must have noticed, he has brought the word of *'ibadah* and homage close to each other and imagines that both give the same meaning.

In the one of next chapters, we shall explain the meaning of *'ibadah* and clearly prove that every honor and respect to the virtuous servants of God with the intention that they are the 'servants' of Allah, does not result in their worship at all. Therefore, we shall examine this discussion from another angle (not polytheism in *'ibadah*).

Undoubtedly, Qur'an has repeatedly praised the Prophets and *awliya'* with eloquent and rhetorical words.

About Zakaria, Yahya and others the Qur'an says:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا ۖ وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ

**“Surely they used to hasten, one with another, in deeds of goodness and to call upon Us, hoping and fearing, and they were humble before Us. (Holy Qur’an, Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:90)**

Now, if in a gathering which is held under their name, someone portrays them in a similar manner which has come down in the contents of this verse and by this way honors them, has he done anything other than obeying the Holy Qur’an?

About the household of the Prophet, Allah (swt) says:

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

**And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. (Holy Qur’an, Surah Al-Insan, 76:8)<sup>2</sup>**

Now if the followers of Ali (a) come together on the birthday of Amir Al-mu'minin and say that Ali (a) is one who used to give his own food to the poor, orphan and the captive, have they by this act worshipped him!?

If on the birthday of the Holy Prophet (S) we translate the verse which praises the Prophet into a non-Arabic language or write a poem on a tablet and recite it in a gathering, have we committed a forbidden action!?

They are having enmity with the matter of honoring the Holy Prophet (S) and *Awilya Allah* that they wish to stop this under the pretext of fight against innovation.

At this stage a question is brought up to which the loud-speakers amongst the Wahhabis lay great emphasis and it is this: ‘Since these assemblies and gatherings are held under the name of religion and are labelled as Islamic, they should be approved specifically and generally by the Islamic rules. Otherwise it would be innovation (*bid'at*) and forbidden (*haram*).

The reply to this question is quite clear because the verses of Qur’an that draw our attention to the necessity of honoring the Prophet (S) is sufficient in this case and these kinds of gatherings are not held for any reason other than respecting the *awliya' Allah*. That thing is considered to be ‘innovation’ which is not approved specifically or generally by Qur’an or the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet.

The purpose of these honorings and utmost respect that are common amongst all the nations of the world is nothing but paying respect and homage and this practice is common among all the Muslims of the world except for these handful of dry Wahhabi ‘Najdis’. If it was innovation and something new and not confirming with the general Islamic principles, it was impossible that the Islamic scholars would

celebrate the birthday of the Holy Prophet (S) and make splendid such gatherings by reading scholarly monographs and reciting sweet and elegant poems.

Here are some logical reasoning from Qur'an permitting such respect and honorings:

## First Proof

The Holy Qur'an praises that group of people who honor the Holy Prophet (S):

فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ.

***So (as for) those who believe in him and honor him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al- A'raf, 7: 157)***

The words which have appeared in this verse comprises of:

أَمَنُوا بِهِ

عَزَّرُوهُ

نَصَرُوهُ

وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ

Is it possible for one to think that the words **نَصَرُوهُ** , **أَمَنُوا بِهِ** and **وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ** are confined to the period of the Holy Prophet (S)? Certainly not! If such a probability cannot be given about these three words, the word of **عَزَّرُوهُ** which gives the meaning of honor and respect<sup>3</sup> cannot be assigned to the period of the Holy Prophet (S) and thus this sublime leader should be respected and honored at all times.

Is it not that arranging memorial gathering on the day of **bi'that**<sup>4</sup> and birth of the Holy Prophet (S) and delivering speeches and poems on such occasions clear evidence to **عَزَّرُوهُ**?

Surprisingly, the Wahhabis pay homage and respect their own tribal leaders and rulers and honor even one ordinary person such that observing one hundredth of that with regard to the Holy Prophet (S), his pulpit and alter is considered to be innovation and anti-Islamic by them. As a result they introduce Islam to the world as one dry religion lacking any sentiments and affections and think that the *shari'ah* which is in fact simple and easy, matching with the human nature and feeling and generous enough to attract the

people is a dry "*shari'ah*" which does not consider the respect of divine leaders to be of any significance and does not possess the ability to attract the people of the world.

## Second Proof

What do the Wahhabis who oppose any kind of mourning ceremonies for the martyrs in the way of Allah have to say about the story of Ya'qub (a)? If today, this great Prophet was living amongst these Najdis and the followers of Muhammad bin 'Abd Al-Wahhab how would have they judged him?

Day and night he was weeping for his separation from Yusuf and all the time he was asking the people about the whereabouts of his beloved son. He was so much sorrowful by the separation of his son that he lost his eye-sight.[5](#)

Sickness and loss of eye-sight did not deter Ya'qub (a) from forgetting his son Yusuf (a). Instead, as the promise of re-union was drawing closer the flames of love towards his son increased manifold and he could smell Yusuf miles away.[6](#)

And instead of the star (Yusuf) pursuing the sun (Ya'qub (a)) it was vice -versa.

Why expression of such affection during the life of the loved one (i.e. Yusuf) is correct and confirms to *tawhid* but after his death when the heart becomes more prone to pain and suffering it amounts to polytheism and becomes forbidden?

Now if the Ya'qubs of our time gather together every year on the death anniversary of their Yusufs and speak about the value of his moral qualities due to which they start crying, will such an act amount to worshipping of their sons!?[7](#)

## Third Proof

Undoubtedly, *مودت ذوی القربی* (love towards kinship) is one of the Islamic obligations which Qur'an explicitly commends us towards it. Now, after fourteen centuries if someone wishes to act upon the religious obligations then what should we do? Is it not that he should rejoice on their joyous days and become sorrowful on the days of their grief and sorrow?

Now, for expressing one's own pleasure, if someone holds a gathering wherein he reveals their historical life and sacrifices and describes their innocence and their deprivation from their rightful claims then, has he done anything other than expressing his affection and manifesting *mawadda dhawi'l qurba*? (*مودت ذوی القربی*)

If, for showing more affection, such a person visits their progeny and comes near their graves and holds such gatherings near their graves then, has he in the eyes of the wise and intelligent people, done anything other than manifesting his love and affection!?

Except that the Wahhabis may say: Such love and affection should be kept secret and confined to the heart and no one has the right to manifest and express them (openly).

During the time of the Holy Prophet (S) and the period after him which was the period of change of thoughts and beliefs, different tribes and nations with different cultures and customs were turning towards Islam and by reciting the *shahadatayn* (verbal testimony of acceptance of Islam) their Islam was accepted. The stance of Prophet (S) and the leaders was never to investigate, censor (by establishing the 'section for scrutinizing of beliefs') than forbid the entire prevalent rites and customs of the nations and tribes and bring them out in another form different from the previous ones.

Respect of leaders, establishing memorial ceremonies, visiting the graves and expressing love for their signs and traces was and is the custom of all nations and tribes. At present too, the people of East and West stand for hours in queue waiting to pay visit to the mummified bodies and graves of ancient leaders in order to express their love and shed tears in their grief. They consider this to be one way for expressing respect and honor.

It was never seen that the Holy Prophet (S) would accept the Islam of people only after investigating their beliefs and examining their practices and customs in practical life. Instead, expressing the '*Shahadatayn*' was enough for him. If these practices and customs were forbidden and or amounted to worshipping the ancestors, then it was necessary to accept the Islam of nations and tribes (only) after taking allegiance and promise from them about their exoneration (of such practices) while such was never the case.

## Fourth Proof

We see Isa (a) asks for table (with food) from the Almighty Allah and introduces the day of its dissension as the day of celebration and says:

رَبَّنَا أَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ تَكُونُ لَنَا عِيدًا لِأَوَّلِنَا وَآخِرِنَا وَآيَةً مِنْكَ ۗ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

***O Allah, our lord! send down to us food from heaven which should be to us an ever-recurring happiness, to the first of us and the last of us, and a sign from Thee, and grant us means of subsistence, and Thou art the best of the Providers. (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Maida, 5: 114)***

Is the value of the Holy Prophet's (S) existence lesser than one heavenly table which Isa (a) declares the day of its dissension to be the day of 'Eid'. If such a day is declared to be the day of 'Eid' because of the table being a divine sign, then is not the Holy Prophet (S) the greatest divine sign!?

Woe to those who are ready to celebrate the day of dissension of one heavenly table that feeds the stomachs but ignore and label as innovation, the celebration of the day of dissension of Qur'an and the

day of appointment (*bi'that*) of Prophet who blessed the minds of human beings with perfection of thought over the period of history!

## Fifth Proof

The Qur'an says:

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ

### ***Did We not exalt your name? (Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Inshiraah, 94:4)***

Is it that arranging gatherings for celebrating the days of birth of the Holy Prophet (S) having any purpose other than elevating his name and fame? Why in this case we should not follow the Qur'an? Is not Qur'an an example and the best model for us?

1. Al-Fath Al-Majid, page 154. At this time when these pages and papers are being composed, and in the entire Islamic countries celebrations are being held on the occasion of the birth of the Holy Prophet, the Grand Mufti of the House of Sa'ud, Abdullah ibn Baz has declared as forbidden and innovation any kind of respect for the birthday of the Holy Prophet (S). But the same person addressed King Faisal Al-Sa'ud during his reign as 'Amir Al-mu'minin' and this action was biting and shocking to the extent that the king too understood and excused for accepting this title.
2. Also known as Surah Dahr.
3. Refer to Al-Raghib Isfahani's Mufradat Al-Raghib, under عَزَّر. Written by Hussein bin Mufaddal Al-Isfahani (d. 1108 A.D.), popularly known as Raghib Isfahani was an Iranian Sunni Ash'ari Muslim scholar of Qur'anic exegesis and the Arabic language. Al-Mufradat fi Gharib Al-Qur'an also known as Mufradat Al-Raghib is a dictionary of Qur'anic terms.
4. 27th Rajab
5. وَاَبْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ Surah Yusuf, 12: 84.
6. اِنِّي لَاجِدٌ رِّيحَ يَوْسُفَ لَوْلَا اَنْ تَفْنَدُوْنَ Surah Yusuf, 12: 94.
7. Moreover, reliable traditions have come down from the Infallibles about holding of mourning ceremonies and in this connection, Allama Al-'Amini has collected in one chapter of his book titled: سِيرَتَنَا وَسُنَّتَنَا all the traditions from Sunni books

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