



Q 5: In Tanzania we prepare a banquet to be held in a special location in our town where we gather and say: "This banquet is offered by the founder of Qadiriyyah Tariqah (Sufi order)." Is this act regarded as Bid`ah (innovation in religion) or does it comply with the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him)? We do not visit the Masjids (mosques), unless we make this banquet and recite the birth narrative of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Is there anything wrong in doing these things?

A: During the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet), and Salaf (Righteous Predecessors), banquets were not prepared for honoring any of the late righteous men. None of the Sahabah or Salaf celebrated the Mawlid (the Prophet's birthday) either during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or after his death. They never prepared food to commemorate the Prophet's death. Celebrating the birth of the Prophet (peace be upon him), or that of righteous people, caliphs, outstanding personalities, Shaykh `Abdul-Qadir or others, by reciting eulogies or even worse claiming that the soul of the Prophet (peace be upon him) attends the celebration, are all considered reprehensible Bid`ahs.

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Showing respect to the Prophet (peace be upon him) can be manifested by following his way; Allah (Exalted be He) says: ﴿Say (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم to mankind): "If you (really) love Allâh then follow me (i.e. accept Islâmic Monotheism, follow the Qur'ân and the Sunnah), Allâh will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allâh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."﴾ Also, love for the righteous people can be shown through following their path while conforming with the guidance and Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Therefore, Muslims should adhere to the Sunnah of their Prophet (peace be upon him) and the path of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and be wary of excessive veneration of pious people and over-praising them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ﴿Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians over-praised the son of Mary, for I am only His Slave. So, call me Allah's Slave and Messenger.﴾ (Related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih) The Prophet (peace be upon him) further said: ﴿Do not exceed the limits in your religion for those who preceded you have been destroyed due to their excessiveness.﴾

May Allah grant us success! May peace and blessings of Allah be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family and Companions!

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