

WHAT IS LAILATUL BARAAT OR THE 15TH NIGHT OF SHA'BAAN?

Every Muslim knows or should know that the Deen of Islam is the Revelation of Allah Ta'ala. Islam is the Deen which is reared and established on the Qur'aan Majeed and on the Ahadith and Sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). Thus, the Ummah, for its practices, customs, beliefs and acts, draws its supports and sanction from the Divine institution of Wahi (Revelation), the highest repository of which is the Glorious Qur'aan. The Qur'aan-e-Hakeem commands the Ummah:

“O people of Imaan! Obey Allah and obey His Rasool....”

Any belief, teaching, practice or custom which conflicts with this Command or which arose from beyond the confines of this commanded Obedience to Allah and His Rasool, stands condemned in the Eyes of Allah's Shariah. Allah, His Rasool and the Shariah of Islam have no affinity, nor any relationship with innovated and unsubstantiated customs and practices.

Muslims are people who are supposed to travel along the Path chalked out by Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). Our Ibaadat and our mundane activities must all necessarily operate within the framework of the Shariah. Ibaadat will not be Ibaadat if there is no sanction and authorization for the acts from the Shariah. If the Sunnah of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) does not approve or command a practice, it will never be Ibaadat irrespective of the holy form the practice may assume. Thus Salaat performed at sunrise will be sin irrespective of the form of Ibaadat it has taken on. Similarly, fasting on the Day of Eid will be sinful, irrespective

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Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 10 June 2014 10:51 -

of its external form of Ibaadat. Nafil Salaat performed during Fajr time will be sinful no matter how beautiful its form may seem. In short, if any act is not conformity with the Sunnah, it will not be Ibaadat if its form seems Ibaadat. This brings us to the prevalent celebrations and customs on the 15th Night of Sha'baan.

Lailatul Baraat is an auspicious occasion in Islam. In this fact there is no doubt and no dispute. The holiness of this Night is not based on the reasoning or the fancies of people. The holiness and significance of the 15th Night of Sha'baan are based on Holy Narration. Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) informed us of this Night. It was he who explained the significance of this auspicious night to the Ummah. Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) and his noble Companions were fully aware of the way in which to uphold and honour this great Night. Can anyone's way of upkeeping this Holy Night excel the way of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi Wasallam)? Does any Muslim, sincere in his heart, wish for a way other than the Way of Nabi-e-Kareem (sallallahu alayhi wasallam)? Does any follower of Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) cherish a desire to surpass the glorious Nabi (sallallahu alayhi wasallam)? Can any Believer arrogate to him the authority of setting aside the method of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) and supplanting in its place his own method, style and innovation?

In regard to Lailatul Baraat and many other practices, this has been exactly the condition of Muslims who have eliminated the ways and methods of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) and innovated strange customs, alien to the Shariah, having no sanction in the Qur'aan or Hadith. Such violation and elimination of the Sunnah are termed **Bid'ah Sayyiah** or **Evil Innovation**

On the Night of Baraat (15th Night of Sha'baan) Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) visited the Qabrustaan (cemetery) on the instruction of Allah Ta'ala and there he made Dua for the dead. This is the only specific practice in addition to his normal Ibaadat of the night, which is proven by the Hadith to have transpired on the 15th Night of Sha'baan. Besides the Visit to the Qabrustaan on the 15th

Night of Sha'baan, all other customs and practices in vogue among Muslims today are innovations which have absolutely no sanction in the Deen. But, we claim to follow the Deen!

We claim to love Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), but our ways and customs conflict with those of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). When the occasion of Lailatul Baraat arrives, a great show of piety is demonstrated. But, the activities specially organised for the occasion of Lailatul Baraat are devoid of any sincerity and true piety because all such activities are not

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those of Islam. Among such innovated customs is the delivering of lectures on this Night at the Musaaqid. Lecturing on Lailatul Baraat is considered incumbent by numerous Muslims, hence the audience or the Musallis in the Musjid stare askance if in some Musjid a lecture is not being delivered on this Night. It is felt by the people that a great act of Ibaadat has been omitted. But, Islam does not order lectures to be delivered on this Night. It has never been the practice of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) nor of his Sahaabah nor of the illustrious Shar'i authorities to lecture on Lailatul Baraat. Lecturing on the 15th Night of Baraat as is in vogue nowadays is not an Islamic practice. In fact, it is an innovation which has been accorded Shar'i status by the innovators, hence it falls in the classification of **bid'ah**.

And, among the unsubstantiated customs of this Night is the special arrangement made for Khatmul Qur'aan ceremonies in Musjids. This has never been the practice of Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), nor the practice of his Sahaabah. Reciting the Qur'aan Shareef is an act of Ibaadat of the highest merit and thawaab. But, it is not a Sunnah custom to organise such ceremonies in the Musjid on the 15th Night of Sha'baan. By all means, recite Qur'aan as much as you wish on this Night and on any night. But, it is not lawful to weave a custom around it and present a practice of individual choice and preference as a Shar'i act of Ibaadat.

Organization of Nafl acts of Ibaadat in congregational and public form in the Musaaqid is not permissible in the Shariah. Nafl acts of Ibaadat are individual practices which must be executed individually, not in congregational form.

Gathering in the Musjid on this Night is considered of greater importance and significance than the daily Fardh Salaat which has to be performed in Jamaat (congregation). But, the majority of people neglect this compulsory injunction of Islam, viz., performance of Fardh Salaat in Jamaat, while they compulsorily adhere to gatherings and lectures on this Night. Yet, these practices have no origin and no sanction in Islam. Islam is what has been taught by Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam), not what has been introduced by people who have no standing in the Shariah.

Since Rasulullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) and his Sahaabah did not gather in the Musjid on the 15th Night of Sha'baan to deliver lectures or engage in Khatmul Qur'aan ceremonies or distribute sweetmeats, cakes, etc., it does not behove Muslims to introduce such customs.

The 15th Night of Sha'baan is indeed auspicious. Muslims should spend the Night or part of the Night in individual Ibaadat at home and preferably carry out the Sunnah practice of visiting the

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Qabrustaan on this Night. But, when visiting the Qabrustaan on this Night, it should not be done in a congregational form with the Imaam gathering his followers and proceeding to the cemetery in ostentation as has been observed to be the case on Eid Days.