

Notes On The Evils Of Innovation

Introduction

Linguistically bid'ah (innovation) means 'a newly invented matter'. The Sharee'ah definition of bid'ah is: "A newly invented way [beliefs or action] in the religion, in imitation of the Sharee'ah (prescribed Law), by which nearness to Allaah is sought, [but] not being supported by any authentic proof - neither in its foundations, nor in the manner in which it is performed." Al-I'tisaam of ash-Shaatibee (1/37).

The Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: "Every innovation is misguidance and going astray" Reported by Abu Daawood (no. 4607), at-Tirmidhee (no. 2676) and it is saheeh. Ibn Hajr authenticated it Takhreej Ahaadeeth Ibn ul-Haajib (1/137).

And he (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) also said: "... and every innovation is misguidance and all misguidance is in the Hellfire." Reported by an-Nasaa'ee (1/224) from Jaabir bin Abdullaah and it is saheeh as declared by Shaikh ul-Islaam Ibn Taymiyyah in Majmoo' ul-Fataawaa (3/58).

The Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) also warned against the People of Innovation, from befriending, supporting or taking from them saying: "Whoever innovates or accommodates an innovator then upon him is the curse of Allaah, His Angels and the whole of mankind." Reported by Bukhaaree (12/41) and Muslim (9/140)

And in his footsteps, we find the Noble Companions and the Taabi'een after them warning from the danger of innovations upon the Ummah, its people and their unity, since it is innovations which have divided the Ummah and split it asunder.

Ibn Abbaas (d. 68H) said: "Indeed the most detestable of things to Allaah are the innovations." Reported by al-Bayhaqee in as-Sunan al-Kubraa (4/316)

Ibn Umar (d. 84H) said: "Every innovation is misguidance, even if the people see it as something good." Reported by Abu Shaamah (no. 39)

The Deen Is Complete:

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" (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 (ﷺ) 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 (ﷺ) 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-Shaafi'ee and others).

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

Allaah says in His Book,

"And We have revealed to you a Book explaining everything" (16:89),

and He says,

"We have neglected nothing in the Book" (6:37).

So in the Qur'aan is explained the principles of the religion, tawheed in all its various categories, even to the extent that it teaches us the manners of sitting in circles, visiting other peoples houses, the correct clothing etc.

The Importance Of Sticking To The Sunnah:

Allaah says,

"Indeed you have in the Messenger of Allaah an excellent example for the one who hopes in Allaah and looks to the Last Day." (33:21), He also says, "so if you obey him (i.e. Muhammad), then you will be guided" (25:54)

The Messenger of Allaah 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 he (ﷺ) also said, "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" (Bukhaaree)

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

In these narrations is clear evidence that the way of salvation and safety is to closely follow the Sunnah of our Prophet (ﷺ), and not to deviate from his path, not accepting the guidance of another individual, nor accepting a corrupted form of the Sunnah. Allaah says,

"And whosoever 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!" (4:115)

The Sunnah Shall Become Corrupted:

We are taught in the revelation that the sunnah shall become corrupted and this corruption would become the norm, so much so that the people who follow the sunnah would become as strangers, and those that call to purifying the sunnah would be slandered and reviled. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Islaam began as something strange, and it shall return as something strange as it began. So Tooba (a tree in paradise) 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 our whims and desires, something that Allaah Himslef condemns,

"Or do they have partners that legislate some religion which Allaah has not given permission for?" (42:21)

The Companion, Abdullaah ibn Mas'ud 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 Abdurrahmaan? 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!

Only Allaah (SWT) Has The Right To Tell Us How To Worship Him:

"Follow that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, and do not follow as Friends and Protectors other than Him" (7:3)

From the tafseer of this verse we learn that this verse embodies a categorical statement that the privilege to tell people how to worship Allaah belongs to Allaah Alone. And how could it be otherwise when the true meaning of ibaadah is to worship Allaah in a way which He is Pleased with and not according to our desires,

"and who is more astray than the one who follows his own whims and desires devoid of revelation" (28:50)

In this regard the Prophet (ﷺ) 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-Nasaa'ee)

And he (ﷺ) used to say at the beginning of his lectures, "and the best speech is the Speech of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (ﷺ), and the worst of all affairs are the newly invented matters (in the religion)" (Muslim)

And he (ﷺ) commanded us, "whosoever does an action which we have not commanded then it must be rejected." (Muslim)

And again, "whosoever introduces into this religion of ours that which is not part of it then it must be rejected" (Ahmad)

'And 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]

So every bid'ah that is introduced in the religion has to be rejected because only Allaah and His Messenger (ﷺ) have the right to legislate in the sharee'ah of Islaam.

Hence 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 its foundations nor in the manner in which it is performed." [al-I'tisaam 1/231 of ash-Shaatibee]

And in what has preceded is ample evidence for any fairminded 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 (ﷺ) are no longer enough to convince them. And certain groups of people have come up with a new belief to assist them with the destruction of Islaam. 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. A belief that has absolutely no foundation in Islaam at all. So we resort to the sayings of the Companions and the Imaams to illuminate the road ahead of these people.

The Sayings Of The Companions:

Abdullaah ibn Umar (RA) states, "every innovation is misguidance, even if the people regard it as good." (ad-Daarimee)

This narration is enough to demolish the concept of 'a good bid'ah', for you have amongst the most knowledgeable companions of Muhammad (ﷺ) saying the exact opposite. So who do you choose to follow, ibn Umar or these modern day Shaykhs and Mullahs who are Imaams of their own whims and desires.

Abdullaah ibn Abbaas (RA) said, "do not sit with the people of innovation, for verily their sittings are a sickness for the hearts" [ash-Sharee'ah pg 65 of al-Aajurree (d.360)]

Mu'aadh bin Jabal (RA) used to say, whenever he sat in a circle of knowledge, "and I warn you of what is innovated, for all that is innovated is misguidance" [ash-Sharee'ah pg.55, also Abu Dawood with similar wording]

Abdullaah ibn Mas'ud (RA) said, "follow the sunnah of Muhammad and do not innovate, for what you have been commanded is enough for you." [ad-Daarimee]

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

Is this not enough? That the Companions tell us to follow the way of Muhammad (ﷺ) and not to make up new ways of worship? "whomsoever Allaah guides to the truth, none can misguide him, and whomsoever Allaah misguides, none can guide"! [Muslim]

The Sayings Of The Second And Third Generation Scholars:

Hasan al-Basree said, "do not sit with the people of innovation, do not debate with them or listen to them" [ad-Daarimee 1/121]

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 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]

Sufyaan ath-Thawree, "innovations are more beloved to Satan than sin. Since a sin may be repented from but an innovation is not repented from" [Sharh Usul I'tiqaad of al-Laalikaa'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 (ﷺ) and his Companions.

Imaam al-Awzaa'ee said, "patiently restrict yourselves to the sunnah, stop where the people stopped, say what they said, avoid what they avoided. Take to the path of the salaf, for indeed what was sufficient for them was sufficient for you." [ash-Sharee'ah pg. 58]

Ibraaheem al-Masayrah said, "he who honours an innovator has assisted in the demolition of Islaam" [Sharh Usul I'tiqaad 1/139]

The Sayings Of The Later Imaams:

Imaam Abu Haneefah 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 said, "he who innovates an innovation in Islaam regarding it as something good, has claimed that Muhammad (ﷺ) has betrayed his trust to deliver the message as Allaah says, 'this day have I perfected for you your religion'. And whatsoever was not part of the religion then, is not part of the religion today." [al-I'tisaam]

He also said, "how evil are the People of Innovation, we do not give them salaam" [al-Ibaanah of ibn Battah (d.387) no.441]

Imaam Ahmad 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]

As for the narrations from Imaam ash-Shaafi'ee in which he categorises bid'ah into two, then it is weak as all of it's chains of narrations depend upon unknown narrators. [al-Bid'ah of Shaykh Saleem al-Hilaalee, al-Masaabeeh fee Salaatit Taraaweeh of as-Suyutee with Alee Hasans footnotes]. Not only this but in his risala e rejects the concept of istihsaan because 'the person doing so has legislated in the sharee'ah' i.e. without permission from Allaah.

Imaam Bukhaaree said, "I have met more than a thousand scholars.(then he mentioned the names of the more prominent in each of the lands that he travelled in) and I found that they all agreed on the following points: they all used to prohibit bid'ah - that which the Prophet and his Companions were not upon, because of the saying of Allaah, 'and hold fast to the rope of Allaah and do not separate'" [Imaam Bukhaaree's article on belief as quoted in Sharh Usul I'tiqaad 1/170. From amongst the scholars he met were: Ahmad bin Hanbal, Abu Ubaid al-Qaasim, ibn Ma'een, ibn Aasim, ibn Abee Shaybah.]

What I have narrated here is just a small number of the many narrations that I have in front of me from various books, I have tried to quote as best to my ability only authentic narrations, and Allaah knows best. It is good to know that the early Imaams were prolific in writing and warning against bid'ah, and even today we have a number of books from them dealing just with this topic. Amongst them: al-Bid'ah of al-Qarnushi, al-Bid'ah of ibn Waddah, al-I'tisaam of ash-Shaatibee and many more.

So once this topic becomes clear, a truth that none can deny, then know 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.

So I leave you with the hadeeth of the Prophet (ﷺ), "so he follows my sunnah has been guided, and he who follows the innovations has been destroyed." (Ahmad)

And our Lord the Most High is the One that guides to attaining the truth.