115148 - Celebrations in Islam: What is Permissible and What Is Not?

the question

In these times, when we are living in a global village with all other communities, is it permissible to celebrate people’s birthdays and weddings in an Islamic fashion, in which we do not engage in any un-Islamic practices, so long as these special occasions and celebrations are not connected to any religion, as is the case with regard to Halloween, Christmas, and Valentine’s Day, which have Christian roots, the Hindu festival of Diwali, and so on? Is it permissible to celebrate special occasions that have nothing to do with religion?

I know that it is possible to hold a simple celebration as mentioned in the fatwas on the websites islamonline.net and daruliftaa.com. I find it very difficult to convince my children that what we have been doing for fifteen years and everything that is practised around us is not Islamic and is not acceptable in our religion. Please answer me, bearing in mind everything I have mentioned.

Summary of answer

There is nothing wrong with having celebrations on the occasions of marriage or other worldly occasions provided that they are free of reprehensible matters such as free mixing and music. Among the impermissible celebrations in Islam are those in which there is any imitation of the disbelievers such as birthday celebrations and Mother’s Day.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Permissible celebrations in Islam

According to Islamic teaching, there is nothing wrong with having celebrations on the occasions of marriage or other worldly occasions, on condition that they are free of reprehensible matters such

as free mixing and music.

These celebrations do not come under the heading of acts of worship that are intended to bring one closer to Allah, may He be Exalted; rather they are gatherings to express joy and happiness, and the basic principle with regard to customs and traditions is that they are permissible.

This is in contrast to acts of worship, concerning which the basic principle is that they are not allowed unless there is evidence to show that they are prescribed.

Impermissible celebrations in Islam

Among the celebrations that are prohibited according to Islamic teaching – apart from those which involve reprehensible practices and sins – are those in which there is any imitation of the disbelievers , such as birthday celebrations and Mother's Day.

The prohibition is more emphatic if they take a form which resembles the festivals prescribed in Islam. This is the case with regard to those occasions, as they are called `Eid Al-Milad (lit. "festival of birth" i.e., birthday ) and `Eid Al-Umm " (lit. festival of mothers, i.e., Mother's Day).

These are occasions which involve imitation of the disbelievers and those whom we are forbidden to imitate. The prohibition is more emphatic if the aim of the one who celebrates it is to draw closer to Allah, may He be Exalted, thereby, because this is combining sin and innovation (Bid`ah). The scholars of the Standing Committee were asked:

What is the ruling on celebrating children's birthdays? There is a saying among us that it is better to fast on that day instead of celebrating it. What is the correct view?

They replied:

"Celebrating birthdays or fasting because it is one's birthday is all innovation (Bid`ah) for which there is no basis . Rather the Muslim should seek to draw closer to Allah by doing that which He has enjoined upon him and by doing supererogatory acts of worship. In all cases he should be grateful to Him and praise Him for all the days and years during which he has been sound in body

and he, his property and his children have been safe.” (Shaykh `Abd Al-`Aziz ibn Baz, Shaykh Salih Al-Fawzan, Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd, Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da’imah, 2/260, 261)

And Allah knows best.