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The Verdict of Islam on the Celebration of Valentine's Day (YAWM AL-HUBB/'EID UL-HUBB)

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Abstract: Many people are alleging Islam that is against love and because	Review Paper
Muslims don't celebrate Valentine's Day. This article therefore, intends to take a	*Corresponding Author:
look at the historical background of the Valentine's Day and examines the verdict of	Kamal-Deen Olawale Sulaiman
Islam on the reasons why Muslims are not celebrating valentine day and weather the	Professor, Department of Religious
it truly a day of love in the verdict of Islam. The study is theoretical in nature; the	Studies, Ekiti State University,
existing available literatures on Islamic like books, journals, <i>Ahadith</i> , the Glorious	P.M.B 5363, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
Qur'an, and research work related to the topic will be reviewed. The study revealed	How to cite this paper:
that, Valentine's Day is a pagan Roman festival, which continued to be celebrated	Kamal-Deen Olawale Sulaiman
	(2023). The Verdict of Islam on the
until after the Romans became Christian. Therefore, celebrating this Day means	Celebration of Valentine's Day
resembling or imitating the pagan Romans which is strictly forbidden in Islam. In	(YAWM AL-HUBB/'EID UL-
Islam, the festivals are clearly defined and well established, and no additions or	HUBB). Middle East J Islam Stud
subtractions may be accepted. Also the festival promotes infatuation and sexual	<i>Cult.</i> , <i>3</i> (4): 49-54.
immorality. It also observes that, the expression of feelings and emotions is not a	Article History:
justification for the Muslim to allocate a day for celebration in Islam. It concluded	Submit: 25.11.2023
that, in Islam, a husband loves his wife throughout the year, and he expresses that	Accepted: 26.12.2023
love towards her with gifts, in verse and in prose, in letters and in other ways.	Published: 29.12.2023

Keywords: Celebration, Valentine's Day, Muslims, Islamic verdict, love, festival.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times the celebration of Valentine's Day (Yawm ul-Hubb or 'Eid ul-Hubb) has become widespread with the arrival of 14th of February. It is a Day or the day of love is celebrated all across the world with full enthusiasm and joy. The celebration began to influence the contemporary society's culture, especially among the youngsters, around the end of the 1980s along with the emergence of television broadcasts showing advertisements or films with the celebration as the theme. It is also becomes more popular among the younger generations due to the influx of foreign culture through various media channels either electronic or print. This celebration is known to them as a day to celebrate love, which according to them, is the most appropriate moment to express the feeling of love and affection towards their dearest or loved ones. Many schools, universities and clubs prepare elaborate functions and parties. Many will argue that Valentine's Day is a day of joy and harmless fun. However, Muslims have special reservations towards this day. A majority of Muslims does not celebrate this day, while those who do it, do it on the name of liberalism and religious freedom. Hence, a lot of Muslim dominated countries are campaigning

against the Day while some have prohibited the citizens from observing the holiday. For instance, a court in Pakistan has placed a ban on the Valentine's Day celebration and also banned the country's media from covering valentines' related events (Akinbayo, 2019). Also, in Indonesia, students between 13-15 age brackets have protested against Valentine's day in the country because they believe it promotes casual sex (Dimeji, 2017 and John Tolan, 2002). In Malaysia, Association of Muslim Youths have also discouraged Muslim youths from wearing Valentine themed dress and avoid the use of emoticons and fragrance in the name of celebrating lovers day (Jonathan, 2018 and Asma, 1991). In Iran, shop owners are not allowed to sell or stock any Valentine's material. Roses or love shaped paraphernalia are also prohibited (Jonathan, 2019). Also, in 2008 Saudi Arabia asked florists and gift shops to remove all red items until after Valentine's Day. According to CNN, the Saudi's termed the celebration of such a holiday a sin (Marguerite, 2014). It has equally banned in Belgorod and Russia (Jakim, 2017 and María, 1981 (49)1:55). As a result, many non-Muslims and some Muslims have allege that Muslims are against love and hence they don't celebrate Valentine's Day. This article therefore, will provide definite answers to the questions such as: what

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is the historical behind Valentine's Day?, why people celebrate it?, is valentine day truly a day of love?, what is Islamic verdict on the celebration of valentine's day, why Muslims can't celebrate it?, and how to express love in Islam?

The Historical Origins of Valentine's Day

The Festival of Love was one of the festivals of the pagan Romans, when paganism was the prevalent religion of the Romans more than seventeen centuries ago. In the pagan Roman concept, it was an expression of "spiritual love". There were myths associated with this pagan festival of the Romans, which persisted with their Christian heirs. Among the most famous of these myths was the Roman belief that Romulus, the founder of Rome, was suckled one day by a she-wolf, which gave him strength and wisdom.

The Romans used to celebrate this event in mid-February each year with a big festival. One of the rituals of this festival was the sacrifice of a dog and a goat. Two strong and muscular youths would daub the blood of the dog and goat onto their bodies, and then they would wash the blood away with milk. After that there would be a great parade, with these two youths at its head, which would go about the streets. The two youths would have pieces of leather with which they would hit everyone who crossed their path. The Roman women would welcome these blows, because they believed that they could prevent or cure infertility (Leigh, 1993, (28) 4:1840-1870).

The Link between St. Valentine and Pagan Roman Festival

The name St. Valentine is given to two of the ancient' martyrs' of the Christian Church. Some say there were two of them while others say there was only one who was martyred by the Gothic Leader Claudius in 296 CE. In 350 C E, a church was built in the honor of St. Valentine on the site of his death to perpetuate his memory. The celebrating of the Feast of Love continued by the Romans even after they embraced Christianity, however the pagan concept of 'spiritual love' was now changed to 'martyrs of love'. This was done to commemorate the massacre of St. Valentine who was a promoter of peace and love and was supposedly martyred for the same cause. The festival was also called Feast of Lovers and Saint Valentine was considered to be a supporter of lovers (Joseph, 1979:2-3).

One of the false believe connected with this festival was that the names of young unmarried girls would be written on pieces of paper and placed in a dish on a table. A young man who wanted to marry would be called to pick a piece of paper to draw a name of a girl. He would then hangout with that girl for a year so that the couple gets to know each other, and then get married. This process was repeated every year during the festival. The Christian clergy abolished this tradition in Italy, as they believed it would cause corruption of the society. In the 18th and 19thcenturies it was revived again in some Western countries where they sold books of love poems in shops. These books were called "Valentine books" and had suggestions for writing love letters (Leigh, 1993, (28) 4: 1840-1870).

Christian Influence

When Christianity came onto the scene in Rome, it wanted to replace this feast with something more in line with its ethics and morality. A number of Christians decided to use February 14 for this purpose. This was when the Italian Bishop Valentine was executed by the Roman Emperor Claudius II for conducting secret marriages of military men in the year 270. Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, so he outlawed marriage for young, single men, who made up his military. Valentine defied Claudius and performed marriages for young couples in secret. When his actions were revealed, Claudius put him to death. Another version of the story says that Valentine was a holy priest in Rome, who helped Christians escape harsh Roman prisons where they were often beaten and tortured. Valentine was arrested and sent to the prefect of Rome for this. He found that his attempts to make Valentine renounce his faith were useless, and so recommended he be beaten with clubs, and later beheaded. This took place on February 14, 270 (Charles, 1987: 50-52).

According to the Catholic encyclopedia, there are at least three different Saint Valentines, all of whom are Christian martyrs of February 14. One of them is described as a priest from Rome (as mentioned above), another as bishop of Interamna (modern Terni), and the third from Africa. It was in the year 496 that Pope Gelasius officially changed the February 15 Lupercalia festival to the February 14 St. Valentine's Day to give Christian meaning to a pagan festival. The holiday became popular in the United States in the 1800's during the Civil War. After the American adoption of this day it got popularized in Europe again. In rest of the world it reached in last 50 years with the blessings of media and attractive merchandize.

Islam's Stance on the Celebration of Valentine's Day

Based on the above facts, it is clear that Valentine's Day is one of the celebrations which have become a ritual practice of Christianity. This automatically contradicts a principle of Islam which does not allow its followers to participate in the festival for the following reasons:

Firstly, in Islam, the festivals are clearly defined and well established, and no additions or subtractions may be accepted. They are essential part of worship and there is no room for personal opinion. They have also been prescribed for the Muslims by Allah and the Prophet Muhammed (SAW). Therefore, festivals are part of the laws, clear way and religious ceremonies of which Allah Says "To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a clear way" (Qur'an 5:48) in another verse, he says "For every nation We have ordained religious ceremonies which they must follow" (Qur'an 22:67). So there is no difference between joining them in their festival and joining them in their other rituals. Agreeing with the whole festival is agreeing with disbelief. Agreeing with some of their minor issues is the same as agreeing with them in some of the branches of disbelief.

Festivals are also the most distinctive things by which religions are told apart, so whoever celebrates their festivals is agreeing with the most distinctive rituals of disbelief. Undoubtedly, going along with them in their festivals may, in some cases, lead to disbelief. Dabbling in these things, at the very least, is a sin. The Prophet referred to the fact that every nation has its own festivals when he said: "Every nation has its own festivals and this is our festivals" (Sunna Abu Da'ud/1134). Because Valentine's Day goes back to Roman times, not Islamic times, this means that it is something which belongs exclusively to the Christians, not to Islam, and the Muslims have no share and no part in it. If every nation has its own festivals, as the Prophet said then, this means that every nation should be distinguished by its festivals. If the Christians have a festival and the Jews have a festival, which belongs exclusively to them, then no Muslim should join in with them, just as he does not share their religion or their direction of prayer.

Also, the clear evidence of the Qur'an, sunnah and the consensus of the early generations of Islam indicates that there are only two festivals in Islam: Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha (Sunna Abu Da'ud/1132). Any other festivals that have to do with a person, a group, an event or anything else are innovated festivals, which it is not permissible for Muslims to observe, approve of or express joy on those occasions, or to help others to celebrate them in any way, because that is transgressing the sacred limits of Allah, and whoever transgresses the sacred limits of Allah has wronged himself. If the fabricated festival is also a festival of the Pagans, then the sin is even greater, because this is a kind of taking them as close friends, and Allah has forbidden the believers to take them as close friends in His Holy Book (Asma, 2011and Akinbayo, 2017).

Secondly, the celebration of Valentine's Day means resembling or imitating the pagan Romans. If it is not allowed to imitate the Christians in things that really are part of their religion but not part of our religion then how about things which they have innovated in their religion in imitation of idolaters? Imitating non-Muslims in general -whether they are idolaters or People of the Book is *Haram* (prohibited), whether that imitation is of their worship which is the most serious form or of their customs and behavior. This is indicated by the Glorious Qur'an thus: "And be not as those who divided and differed among themselves after the clear proofs had come to them. It is they for whom there is an awful torment." (Qur'an 3:105). Also, the Prophet said: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them." (Sunnah Abu Da'ud/4021 and Sunnah Ibn-Hanbal/2150) Ibn Taymiyyah commented that, "This Hadith (narration) at the very least indicates that it is *Haram* to imitate them, although the apparent meaning implies that the one who imitates them is non-Muslim, as Allah Says "And if any amongst you takes them friends (and helpers), then surely, he is one of them" (Qur'an 5:5). Also, Ibn Taymiyyah narrated that there was agreement that it is Haram to imitate non-Muslims in their festivals at the time of the Prophet's Companions, and Ibn Al-Qayyim narrated that there was scholarly consensus on this point (Dimeji, 2017 and Cassandra, 2014). In another verse, Allah says: "And be not as those who divided and differed among themselves after the clear proofs had come to them. It is they for whom there is an awful torment" (Qur'an, 3:105) The Prophet also said: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them." (Sunna Ibn-Hanbal/50 and Sunna Abu Da'ud/4021) Prohibition of imitation the Non-believers is one of the basic tenets of the Islamic law.

In another *hadith*, 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who said:

Abu Bakr came in and there were two young girls of the Ansaar with me who were singing about what had happened to the Ansaar on the day of Bu'aath. She said: And they were not (professional) singing girls. Abu Bakr said: "Musical instruments of the shaytaan in the house of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)?!" and that was on the day of Eid. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "O Abu Bakr, every people has a festival and this is our festival." (Sahih Al-Bukhaari/952 and Sahih Muslim/892)

Also, Sunna Abu Da'ud/1134 narrated that:

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him said: When the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madinah, they had two days when they would play. He said: "What are these two days?" They said: "We used to play on these days during the Jaahiliyyah." The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Allah has given you instead of them two days that are better than them: the day of al-Adha and the day of al-Fitr." (This hadith was classed as sahih by al-Albani in Sahih Abu Da'ud).

This indicates that festivals are among the characteristics by which nations are distinguished, and it is not permissible to celebrate the festivals of the ignorant and the *Mushrikin* (polytheists).

Thirdly, the love referred to in this festival ever since the Christians revived it is romantic love outside the framework of marriage (Maan, 2017 and Islamic, 2013). The result of that is the spread of fornication and immorality. The Christian clergy opposed it at some stage and abolished it, then it came back again. Hence, love between a man and a woman is the first thing that comes to mind when one speak of love. Rather than prohibiting this kind of love, Islam encourages it within the sanctity of marriage. The foundation of marriage love, compassion, respect, forgiveness, and understanding is found in the Qur'an (30:21):

> And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and he placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought.

Perhaps nowhere is this more epitomized than in the love between Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his first wife, Khadijah. She loved him for his noble manners, perfect character, trustworthiness, loyalty, humility, and gracious behavior towards everyone. He loved her for her beauty of character, virtue, understanding, nobility, and support and belief in him. He loved her deeply despite the age difference. She loved him unconditionally despite his poverty. So great was their love, that the Prophet continued to love Khadijah until the end of his life. It was reported that 'Aishah once asked him if Khadijah had been the only woman worthy of his love. He replied, "She believed in me when none else did, she embraced Islam when people disbelieved me; and she helped and comforted me when there was none to lend me a helping hand." (Sunah Ibn Mājāh/1979. Sunnah al-Tirmidhī/388, Sahih Muslim/1106, Sahih al-Bukhārī/297 and Sunnah an-Nasā'ī/281)

Also, love in Islam is more general and more comprehensive; it is not restricted only to one kind of love, that between a man and a woman. It is love when Muslim cry for those Muslims being tortured and killed by those evil armies of the west. It is love when Muslims cry looking at the people of Somalia dying out of hunger. It is love when Muslims morally mentally and financially support those Muslims whose lives have been devastated by tyrant rulers like in Syria.

There is no religion which encourages its followers to love and care for one another more than Islam does. This applies at all times and in all circumstances, not just on one particular day. Indeed, Islam encourages Muslims to express their emotions and love at all times, as the Prophet said: "If a man loves his brother, let him tell him that he loves him" (Sunnah Abu Da'ud/5124 and Sunnah Al- Tirmidhi/2329). In another hadith, he said:

> By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you will not enter Paradise until you truly believe, and you will not truly believe until you love one another. Shall I not tell you of something that, if you do it, you will love one another? spread

(the greeting of) salaam amongst yourselves. (Sahih Muslim/54)

Also, Islam respects love and affinity as the entire humans do on this earth. The only problem is that Islam only thing in legitimate love and relationships. Love between two spouses, between family members, between blood relations, between good friends. There are no special days in particular to show love. One can show love 24/7 to his or her ties. Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an that:

And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts). Verily in that are signs for those who reflect." (Qur'an, 30:21).

The key words in the verse are *Mawaddatan wa Rahmah* which translates as Love and Mercy. The interesting thing to note about this verse is to notice the location of this verse along with the verses that precede it and those that come after. Allah mentions His Signs (Night/Day, Heaven/Earth, and Man/Woman) and He puts the feeling of Love and Mercy between spouses in the same value as the creation of Heaven & Earth.

For a person to express his or her love (romantic or otherwise) for someone is not only permissible but encouraged in the Islamic tradition, as long as this is done in a way that does not violate Islamic regulations. There are many narrations about the Prophet Muhammad's candid expression of love toward his wives, his children, and his followers and supporters. These narrations tell of his variety of romantic gestures toward his wives. In the case of his wife ' \bar{A} 'isha, for example, there are narrations about the Prophet playfully racing with her; saying

> \bar{A} 'isha" when one of his followers asked who was most beloved to him; kissing her, even while he was fasting; laying down with his head in her lap; and drinking from the same spot on a cup that her lips had touched. (Sunnah Ibn Mājāh,1979; Sunnah al-Tirmidhī/388; Sahih Muslim/1106; Sahih al-Bukhārī/297 and Sunnah an-Nasā'ī/281)

This brief list of examples shows that the Prophet expressed his love for his spouses and, by implication, instructed his followers to do so as well. There was enough emphasis on this for it to become a topic of study for many Muslim thinkers. Some of these who wrote about love include al-Jāhiz died in 868; *Treatise on Love and Women*, Ibn Sīna died in 1037; *Treatise on Love*, Ibn Hazm died in 1064; *The Ring of the Dove*, Ibn al-Jawzī, died in 1201; *Dispraise of Lowly Desire* and Ibn al-Qayyim died in 1350; *The Garden of Devoted Lovers* (Joseph, 1979). A common thread in these works was the insistence that expressing love is not in and of itself something to frown upon; it is only shameful when done inappropriately vis-à-vis the

parameters set down by the Islamic tradition. Ibn Sīna and Ibn al-Qayyim took their reflections a step further and asserted that love at the level of human expression (e.g. romantic/sensual love between a husband and wife) was a means to achieve the ultimate spiritual goal: a relationship of love with Allāh (Grunebaum, 1952 (11), 4: 233).

Therefore, it is a mistake to confuse celebration of Valentine's Day with what the real intentions are behind it. The love referred to on this day is romantic love, taking mistresses and lovers, boyfriends and girlfriends. It is known to be a day of promiscuity and sex for them, with no restraints or restrictions. They are not talking of pure love between a man and his wife or a woman and her husband, or at least they do not distinguish between the legitimate love in the relationship between husband and wife, and the forbidden love of mistresses and lovers. This festival for them is a means for everyone to express love which contrary to Islam (Zeeshan, 2012 and The Muslim Blog, 2016).

Also, expression of feelings and emotions according to Zeeshan, (2012), Sadaf, (2017) and Maan, (2017) is not a justification for the Muslim to allocate a day for celebration based on his own thoughts and ideas, and to call it a festival, or make it like a festival or 'Eed. So how about when it is one of the festivals of the non-Muslims?. In Islam, a husband loves his wife throughout the year, and he expresses that love towards her with gifts, in verse and in prose, in letters and in other ways, throughout the years not just on one day of the year. And what people think is that, love before marriage is a good thing, is wrong, as has been proven in studies and by reallife experience. So, how can someone believe that Valentine's Day is of any benefit to Muslims? The truth is that it is a call for more permissiveness and immorality, and the forming of forbidden relationships. The husband who sincerely loves his wife does not need this holiday to remind him of his love. He expresses his love for his wife at all times and on all occasions.

In this matter, the Research Panel of Faith and the Research Panel of Syari'a of the Malaysian Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) have decided that "the practice of celebrating Valentine's Day is haram and contradicts the teachings of Islam". The 71st Fatwa Committee of the National Council for Islamic Affairs Malaysia Meeting which was held from 22 to 24 November 2005 concluded that: "The practice of celebrating Valentine's Day has never been recommended by Islam. The spirit of the celebration has elements of Christianity and the practice, which is mixed with sinful acts, is contradictory and prohibited by Islam. Thus the practice of celebrating Valentine's Day is not encouraged by Islam" (Fataawa al-Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen, 16/199).

Observations and Recommendations

Based on the foregoing discussion, it is extremely important for Muslim parents, grandparents and teachers to understand and explain the real motives and cultural roots of Valentine's Day. The explanation is due to beloved Muslim youths and the Parents whenever the subject is brought up. It is quit evident that the western culture was and is totally engulfed in modified paganism. Compared to the Hadith about the virtues of the Muslim months one can no longer allow his or her children and grandchildren to accept these seminally joyous holidays. Muslims must fully embrace as much Fard, Sunnah, Mustahab and Nafl as expression of their love and commitment to Allah. The root of all of western holidays (Holy Days) and festivals are dependent not on the Torah or the Injil but on the concoction of Paul's usurpation of Prophet Isa's (AS) teachings. Logically when the reasoning people of western culture saw through the antics of the Catholic Church they rejected religion totally. Now one sees the results in today's Neopagan life style.

CONCLUSION

From the above, it is evident that, there are many reasons why taking part in Valentine's Day is at odds with Islam. The study revealed that, Valentine's Day is a pagan Roman festival, which continued to be celebrated until after the Romans became Christian. This festival became connected with the saint known as valentine who was sentenced to death on 14 February 270 CE. This article also notes that, celebrating Valentine's Day means resembling or imitating the pagan Romans which is strictly forbidden in Islam. In Islam, the festivals are clearly defined and well established, and no additions or subtractions may be accepted. Also the festival promotes infatuation and sexual immorality. It observes that, the expression of feelings and emotions is not a justification for the Muslim to allocate a day for celebration. It concluded that, in Islam, a husband loves his wife throughout the year, and he expresses that love towards her with gifts, in verse and in prose, in letters and in other ways, throughout the years and not just on one day of the year. The paper observed that, it is extremely important for Muslim parents, grandparents and teachers to understand and explain the real motives and cultural roots of Valentine's Day. The paper recommended that, Muslims should distinguish themselves as being Muslims and following Islam. There is no need to follow the tradition of another religion or pagan ritual. Muslims are not Christians, pagans, jews, buddhists, hindus, sikhs, atheists or belonging to any other religion or way of life. Muslims are Muslims and follow Islam. By celebrating Valentine's Day, you are actually following something else. There is nothing wrong with saying that you are a Muslim and so do not celebrate Valentine's Day.

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