

Meelad un Nabiyy

CELEBRATING THE BIRTHDAY OF THE PROPHET

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Q. What is Meelad an-Nabiy?

A. Meelad-un-Nabiy is the celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam*. It is also known as Mawlid an-Nabi, Mawlid ar-Rasool and Mawlood in various parts of the world.

Q. When do Muslims celebrate Meelad an-Nabiy?

A. Muslims celebrate Meelad an-Nabiy throughout the year; especially, during the month of Rabiyy al-Awwal, the third month of the Islamic calendar.

Q. When was our Prophet *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* born?

A. According to generally accepted and well-known accounts, he *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* was born on Monday, the 12th of Rabiyy al-Awwal.

Q. How do Muslims celebrate his *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* blessed birth?

A. Muslims gather in mosques and other places, recite the Qur'an, listen to miraculous events of his birth, stories about his life and learn about his perfect character. They organise processions as an expression of happiness at the immense bounty of Allah tāālā.

Q. Why do Muslims celebrate this event?

A. Allāh tāālā has commanded us to rejoice and display our joy upon His immense favors. He says in the Qur'an: **Proclaim the favours of your Lord abundantly¹ and, Say : (this) by the Grace of Allah and by His mercy; so rejoice , because of it.²** It is clear from the verses that rejoicing, celebrating and proclaiming the favors of Allāh tāālā is praiseworthy and is in fact, commanded by Allāh tāālā. The birth of the Messenger *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* is the greatest favour bestowed upon Muslims; Allāh tāālā has Himself impressed upon us this and He has said: **Allah has indeed bestowed a great favour upon believers when He sent a Messenger among them.³**

Q. Is the Prophet a 'mercy' and a 'favour' of Allāh tāālā?

A. Yes. The Qur'an says that our glorious Prophet *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* is the **greatest** favour, and mercy of Allāh tāālā. Believers are given numerous bounties, but the Lord Almighty impresses His favour of sending the Prophet *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* as mentioned in the verse earlier. In another verse, Allāh tāālā says: **and We have not sent thee, except as a mercy for all the worlds.⁴**

Q. Did the Prophet Muḥammad *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* mention his own birthday?

A. Yes. In a famous and rigorously authenticated ḥadīth it is mentioned that RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* used to fast on Mondays; when asked about it, he *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* replied: **'that is the day on which I was born.'⁵**

Imām Suyūṭī says that he has found another narration that, **RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* sacrificed [sheep] as birth-gratitude (āqīqah) after the proclamation of his prophethood.⁶**

Suyūṭī comments: "This is in spite of the fact that his grandfather Ábd al-Muṭṭalib had already made this offering of thanks on the seventh day of his *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* blessed birth. *Aqīqah* is not repeated twice, and this repetition is an indication that he *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* was offering thanks to Allāh tāālā for his birth, for sending him forth as a mercy to the worlds and as an honour to his followers; [this he did] just as he would send *ṣalawāt* upon himself. Therefore it is commendable for us to show our thankfulness as well, upon his birth by assembling together, by feeding people, and other such praiseworthy deeds, to express our happiness and joy [upon such an immense favour.]"⁷

¹ Sūrah Al-Duha, 93:11

² Sūrah Yunus, 10:58

³ Sūrah Āl Imrān, 3:164

⁴ Sūrah Al-Anbiyā'a 21:107

⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, narrated by the ṣaḥābī Abū Qatādah al-Anṣārī; similar narration is present in *Sunan* Abū Dāwūd, *Ṣaḥīḥ* Ibn Ḥibbān, *Mustadrak* of Ḥākim, *Al-Ṭayālsī* and *Al-Bayhaqī* in *Shu'ab al-Imān*.

⁶ Bayhaqī in *Sunan al-Kubrā*; narrated by Anas ibn Malik. A similar narration is found in Ṭabarānī in his *Mújam al-Awsaṭ* and also by Al-Bazzār.

⁷ *Husn al-Maqṣid fī Amal al-Mawlid*, Imām Suyūṭī

Q. What have the *ulamā* (scholars) said about celebrating Meelad-un- Nabi?

A. An overwhelming majority of scholars have considered the celebration of Mawlid as a praiseworthy deed and some have written books on the topic. Among those who have considered it commendable are Imam Ibn al-Jawzi, Imam Abū'l Khattab, Imam Ibn al-Jazri, Hafiz ibn Kathir, Hafiz Ibn Nasiruddin al-Dimashqi, Hafiz Iraqi, Imam Ibn Hajar Asqalani, Imam Qastalani, Imam Suyuti, Allamah Sakhawi, Mulla Ali Qari, Shah Abdul Haq Dihlawi, Shah Waliyullah Dihlawi, Állāmah Nabhani, Imam Zanjī, Imam Shaybani, Imam Wa'ili and Imam Farooqi.

Even such scholars as Ibn Taymiyyah and Nawab Siddiq Ḥasan Bhopali have written in favour of the Mawlid. These scholars are considered as imams by Wahabis and Deobandis, who oppose the Meelad in our times. The Wahabi scholar Nawab Siddiq Hasan Bhopali has said: "He who does not feel joy at the Meelad and does not show happiness at this attainment of mercy, then he is not a Muslim".⁸

Q. Is there any mention in the Qur'ān or Ḥadīth of the birth of any prophet or indication that it is considered as a significant event?

A. Yes. The Prophet Mūsā *alayhi's salām* told his nation: "O people! Remember the favor of Allah upon you when He made prophets among you and made you kings and gave you that which was not given to anyone else in this world."⁹ The Prophet Yūsā *alayhi's salām* said, as mentioned in the Qur'ān: "And peace upon me on the day I was born, and the day I shall die and the day that I shall be resurrected."¹⁰ The Qur'ān says about the Prophet Yaḥyā *alayhi's salām*: "And peace upon him on the day he was born, and the day he shall die and the day that he shall be resurrected."¹¹

Our Prophet Muhammad *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* said: "The best day on which the sun has risen is Friday. Adam was created on Friday..."¹² In addition to other ḥadīth mentioned earlier. We can conclude from these hadith and verses, that the days on which Prophets are born, are special. If the days on which other Prophets were born are considered as events, then surely the birth of our master Muḥammad *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* who is the leader and the chief of all prophets should be of a greater significance.

Q. What is *bidāh*? Is Meelad an-Nabi a *bidāh*?

A. Lexically, *bidāh* means 'innovation.' In Islamic terminology, *bidāh* refers to an action that was innovated afterward and was not present in the time of the Prophet *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa sallam* and it can be of two kinds: praiseworthy innovation and ugly innovation.¹³

Imām Ízzuddīn ibn Ábd as-Salām said in his *Al-Qawāyid*: "Bidāh or innovation is classified in five categories as: Obligatory, Forbidden, Praiseworthy, Disliked and Permissible."¹⁴ He continued: "And the way to recognize [whether an action falls in the above categories] is that we measure such an innovation according to the principles of *sharīāh*; if the act complies with the rule of *wājib*, we consider it *wājib*. If it fulfills the criteria of *ḥarām*, we consider it *ḥarām*. If the action matches the criteria of *mandūb*, it is *mandūb*; *makrūh* if it matches *makrūh*; and *mubāh* if it matches *mubāh*."¹⁵

Imām Suyūṭī quotes other *ulamā* in this regard and says, that as the Mawlid does not oppose or contradict the *sharīāh*, and since its basis is from the Book and Tradition, it is a praiseworthy act, even if such a celebration was not present in the early centuries.

Q. Can you name a few books which have been written on or recommending Mawlid?

A. Some famous books are:

1. *At-Tanwīr fi Mawlid al-Bashīr an-Nadhīr* by Imam Abu'l Khaṭṭab ibn Diḥ-yah (d.633 AH)
2. *Árf al-Tárif bi'l Mawlid al-Sharīf* by Hafiz Shamsuddin Ibn al-Jazri (died after 660 AH)
3. *Al-Mawrid al-Haniy fi'l Mawlid as-Saniy* by Hafiz Al-Íraqī (d.806 AH)
4. *Mawrid as-Şādī fi Mawlid al-Hādī* by Hafiz Ibn Nasiruddin al-Dimashqi (d.842 AH)
5. *Al-Fakhr al-Álawī fi'l Mawlid an-Nabawī* by Hafiz Sakhawi (d.902 AH)
6. *Ḥusn al-Maqṣid fi Ámal al-Mawlid* by Hafiz Jalaluddin Suyuti (d.911 AH)
7. *Al-Mawarid al-Haniyyah fi'l Mawlid al-Khayr al-Bariyyah* by Imam Hafiz al-Samhūdi (d.911 AH)
8. *Itmām an-Niymah ála'l Áalam bi Mawlid al-Sayyidi Waladi Adam* – Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d.974 AH)
9. *Al-Mawrid ar-Rawī fi Mawlid an-Nabawī* by Ali al-Qari (d.1014 AH)
10. *Mawlid al-Barzanji* by Sayyid Jáfár al-Barzanji (d.1177 AH)

Allāh táālā knows best.

⁸ *Ash-Shamamatul Anbariyah*

⁹ Sūrah Al-Māyidah 5:20

¹⁰ Sūrah Maryam, 19:33

¹¹ Sūrah Maryam, 19:15

¹² Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim

¹³ Imām Nawawi in *Tahdhīb al-Asmā'a wa'l Lughāt*, as cited by Suyūṭī in his *Ḥusn al-Maqṣid*.

¹⁴ *wājib*, *ḥarām*, *mandūb*, *makrūh*, *mubāh*

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

