

# 5 Fatawa on the permissibility of commemorating the blessed birth of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

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The following is a collection of selected fatawa (legal edicts) concerning the legality of commemorating the blessed birth (Mawlid) of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), issued by five prominent, classical Arab<sup>1</sup> scholars whose scholarship is undisputed and accepted by both the advocates and rejecters of the practice.

## 1. Imam Jalal Al-Din Al-Suyuti (911AH):

Imam Al-Suyuti authored a treatise dealing specifically with the validity of commemorating the Mawlid, titled 'Husn al-Maqsid fi 'Amal al-Mawlid'<sup>2</sup>. He writes:

"A question has been posed about commemorating the birth of the Prophet (SAW) during the month of Rabi' al-Awwal, and the legal ruling of such an action. Is it praiseworthy or reprehensible? Is the one who performs this act rewarded or not?" The answer according to me is that commemorating the Prophetic birth is simply gathering people together, reciting parts of the Qur'an, recalling the stories about the Prophet's birth and the signs that accompanied it, then serving food and then departing, all of which makes it from among the good innovations, and the one who practices it will be rewarded because it involves honouring the great status of the Prophet and expressing happiness for his noble birth."<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Imam Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani (852AH):

In the same treatise, Imam Suyuti mentions the opinion of the great Imam and Hafiz, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani:

"The origin of commemorating the Prophetic birth is an innovation which has not been transmitted from anyone of the first three generations. Nevertheless, it consists of both good and bad. So whoever practices only the good of it and cautiously avoids the bad, it will be considered a praiseworthy innovation...And it has occurred to me that the legal basis of this practice can be deduced from an authentic hadith found in Al-Bukhari and Muslim, that the Prophet (SAW) came to Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah and found the Jews fasting on day of 'Ashura. He asked them why they were fasting, to which they replied: 'It is the day on which Allah drowned Fir'awn and saved Musa (AS). So we fast on this day out of gratitude to Allah.' So it is deduced from this hadith that it is valid to express gratitude to Allah for a blessing He has bestowed on a particular day, or for

averting a calamity, and to repeat that on the same date every year. Expressing gratitude to Allah can be done in various forms of worship such as performing salah, fasting, giving charity or reciting the Qur'an."<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Imam Ibn Hajr Al-Haytami (974AH):

Imam Ibn Hajr Al-Haytami writes in his book 'Itmam an-Ni'mah al-Kubra 'alal-'Alam bi Mawlid Sayyidi Waladi Adam':

"Know that it (the Mawlid celebration) has not been reported from anyone of the first three generations which the Prophet (SAW) described as the best of all generations. However, it is a praiseworthy innovation as it consists of showing abundant kindness to the poor, reciting the Holy Qur'an, excessive remembrance of Allah, sending salutations upon the Prophet (SAW) and expressing joy at the birth of the Prophet<sup>5</sup> (SAW)."<sup>6</sup>

### 4. Imam Abu Shamah (665AH):

The teacher of Imam Al-Nawawi, Imam Abu Shamah, authored a book specifically to censure and refute reprehensible innovations titled 'Al-Bai'th fi Inkar Al-Bida' wa'l-Hawadith'. He writes in it:

"And from the best of innovations in our times is what the people of the city of Irbil do every year on the date which coincides with the day of the birth of the Prophet (SAW), such as giving charity and expressing happiness, which in addition to being a form of kindness towards the poor, is also a form of inciting the love and honour of the Prophet (SAW) in the heart of the one who practices it, and a form of expressing gratitude to Allah for the blessing of bringing into existence His Messenger (SAW) who is a mercy to the universe."<sup>7</sup>

### 5. Imam Muhammad Ibn Isma'il Al-San'ani (1182AH):

Imam Al-San'ani writes in his celebrated commentary of Bulugh Al-Maram titled 'Subul Al-Salam' after mentioning that the Prophet (SAW) used to fast on Mondays as it was the day in which he (SAW) was born:

"And in it is proof that one should honour the day in which Allah sends a blessing, by fasting and performing other types of worship."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned scholars, there are numerous other classical as well as contemporary scholars who have written epistles and issued fatawa on the permissibility of commemorating the Mawlid.

<sup>1</sup>The reason for specifying Arab scholars is due to a misconception held by many Muslims nowadays that the Mawlid is only commemorated in the Indian Subcontinent.

<sup>2</sup>Translated as 'The Beautiful Intention in Commemorating the Prophet Birth'. It is published as part of his collection of legal edicts and epistles titled 'Al-Hawi Li'l Fatawa'.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Suyuti, Al-Hawi, vol. 1 pg. 222, Dar Al-Fikr.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., vol. 1 pg. 229. Al-Suyuti adds: "And which blessing is greater than the Prophet Muhammad (SAW)?"

<sup>5</sup>All of which are good actions and prescribed in Islam.

<sup>6</sup>Al-Haytami, Itmam an-Ni'mah al-Kubra 'alal-'Alam, pp. 21-22, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah.

<sup>7</sup>Abu Shamah, Al-Ba'ith, pp. 35-36, Maktabah Al-Qur'an.

<sup>8</sup>Al-San'ani, Subul Al-Salam, pg. 525, Mu'assasah Al-Rayyan.

3<sup>rd</sup> Rabi' Al-Awwal Al-Anwar 1436 - 14<sup>th</sup> Decemver 2015  
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