Lahore Ahmadis pioneered the commemoration of birth of Holy Prophet Muhammad in Indian subcontinent in 1908

A public meeting to commemorate the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was held at Ahmadiyya Buildings, Lahore, on 14th April 1908, corresponding to 12th *Rabi-ul-Awwal* 1326 A.H.

In the contemporary newspapers such occasions were called *Bara Wafat,* meaning "death on the 12th", which was the term used by Muslims in India for this day. It referred to the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad on that day, which was also the day of his birth (according to majority opinion).

This public meeting was reported in the Ahmadiyya newspaper *Badr*, 30th April 1908 (p. 6). The report is translated below in the left-hand column, while the original Urdu text is shown in the right-hand column. As can be seen, this news report also quoted the general Muslim newspaper *Watan*.

(Note: The bolding of some of the text in the translation is ours, and not in the original report.)

"A respected friend reports from Lahore that, on the previous day, a Tuesday, on the occasion of *Bara Wafat*, and for the benefit of the residents of Lahore, a grandly organised lecture was held at Ahmadiyya Buildings, where houses of our Khwaja [Kamal-ud-Din] sahib are located. The ground was very large and was decked with a marque and other necessities. It had been widely advertised in the city.

The poem in praise of the Holy Prophet written by Huzoor [Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad] was read out by brothers Abdul Aziz, son of Mian Chiragh Din, and Ghulam Muhammad. Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din gave an explanation of the Surah Fatiha with great zeal and pure sincerity, and went over the events of the life of the Messenger of God, may peace and the blessing of Allah be upon him. Then brother Dr. Mirza Yaqub Baig spoke on the life of the Holy Prophet in a fine speech. The audience included Hindus, Muslims and members of the Brahmo Samaj. All the leading men of Lahore who could come were in attendance. The whole gathering listened patiently and attentively to the highly effective speeches of these young men, who were preaching using this new technique and method, and they went away expressing much praise.

لاہور سے ایک مکرم دوست اطلاع دیتے ہیں کہ کل بروز منگل بارہ وفات کی تقریب پر اور واسطے فائدہ مخلوق خد اباشند گان لاہور بڑی دہوم دہام سے احمد یہ بلڈ نگس پر (لیعنی جہاں ہمارے خواجہ صاحب کے مکانات ہیں) ککچر ہوا۔ مید ان بہت کھلا تھا اور خوب سامان شامیانہ و غیرہ سے آراستہ تھا۔ اشتہار بھی شہر میں خوب دے دیا گیا تھا۔

حضور کی تصنیف کر دہ نعت کو بھائی عبد العزیز پہر میاں چراغ دین صاحب نے اور بھائی غلام محمد صاحب نے پڑھا اور مولو می صدر الدین صاحب نے بڑے جوش سے اور خلوص نیت سے الحمد شریف کی تفسیر کی اور پیغیر خد اصلی اللہ علیہ وسلم کی پاک زندگی کے حالات بیان کئے اور پھر بھائی ڈاکٹر مر زایت قوب بیگ صاحب نے بڑے عمدہ طور سے رسول اللہ صلعم کی سوانح کولو گوں کے سامنے بیان کیا۔ حاضرین میں ہندو، مسلمان، برہمو، سب شامل تھے اور جو رکیس لوگ کہ ہو سکتے تھے سب تشریف لائے ہوئے تھے۔ سب نے بڑے آرام سے اور بڑے غور سے ان نئی طر زوطریق پر وعظ کر نیو الے نوجو انوں کے پر اثر تقریروں کو سنا اور عش عش کرتے ہوئے واپس نے۔ This meeting was also reported in other newspapers and was generally much liked. **Hence the newspaper** *Watan* **wrote**:

'Just as there was great regret that there were no arrangements in Lahore for holding this great occasion of remembrance, there was equal pleasure that on 14th April, corresponding to 12th *Rabi-ul-awwal* 1326 A.H., on behalf of the Anjuman-i Ahmadiyya Lahore a magnificent meeting was organised by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, lawyer, High Court. Capable speakers delighted the audience by telling them about the life of the Holy Prophet and his excellent and praise-worthy qualities. It is hoped that in future many people in Lahore will organise events for such a sacred remembrance.'

The newspaper *Sada-i-Hind* expressed a similar opinion."

دوسرے اخباروں میں بھی اس جلسہ کا چر چاہوا ہے اور عام طور سے اسے پیند کیا گیا۔ چنانچہ وطن میں لکھاہے:

"لاہور میں اس عظیم الشان یاد گار کا معقول انتظام نہ ہونے پر جسقد رافسوس تھا، اتنی ہی مسّرت اس بات سے ہوئی کہ ۱۲ اپریل مطابق ۲۲ اررئیچ الاوّل ۲۳ ایھ کو انجمن احمد یہ لاہور کی طرف سے خواجہ کمال الدین صاحب و کیل ہائیکورٹ کے زیرا ہتمام ایک شاند ار جلسہ نمایاں موقع پر کیا گیا اور لائق اصحاب نے سیر ۃ الرسول صلح اور آپ کے فضائل و محامد سنا کر حاضرین کو محظوظ کیا۔ امید ہے کہ لاہور میں آیندہ اکثر اصحاب الیی پاک یاد گار کو تازہ کر نیکا اہتمام فرمائیں گے۔"

Evidence that Lahore Ahmadis were the first in India to hold this function

There is an Urdu work entitled *Islami Encyclopaedia*, published in 1933, and compiled by the famous pioneering Muslim journalist Maulvi Mahboob Alam (founder of *Paisa Akhbar* newspaper). It has an entry on *Bara Wafat*, which says:

"The Muslim festival of 12th Rabi-ul-Awwal is in memory of both the birth and the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, Muslims in India and elsewhere gave precedence to the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and named this day as *Bara Wafat*. In 1327 A.H. a campaign started in the countries of Syria and Arabia to name this day as the Eid of the birth of the Prophet and make it into the grandest of all Islamic festivals. The call of this campaign reached India and other Islamic countries, and in 1328 A.H. the Muslims of India celebrated Eid on this day in various cities. Both modernly-educated people and traditionally-minded people held joint public meetings where powerful speeches were delivered on the sacred life of the Holy Prophet. Efforts were made to change the name of this festival from *Bara Wafat* to *Eid Maulud*. In celebration of this Eid, some newspapers appeared in a colour garb and published high standard articles." (p. 130–131)

According to this entry, Muslims in the Indian subcontinent started celebrating the birth of the Holy Prophet in the year **1328 A.H.** This is two years **after** the function held by the Lahore Ahmadi leaders at Ahmadiyya Buildings in **1326 A.H.** (14th April 1908), as mentioned earlier.

On the next page are displayed scanned images of the cover page of this encyclopaedia and the relevant part of its entry on *Bara Wafat*.

Front cover of Islami Encyclopaedia From the entry on Bara Wafat رحول 20191 1.4 139 الالانفنف للسلالية . . . كالحزن (محمّل ٢ جدينٌ) 2 2 251 10 واقعا Le Bo غال . كو عبالمولودانتيه ي الالور 115 ب _ زباده شاندار بوار اللامي تهوارول جمندوتان ا 231 باره وقات il'sini 1, 22,5 حارات ي بيفادر در در سفاين

Article at: www.ahmadiyya.org/islam/intro.htm