

QURBANI ~ THE GREAT SACRIFICE

INTRODUCTION

'Udhiya' is an Arabic word meaning "blood sacrifice", and 'Qurbani' is an Urdu and Persian word derived from the Arabic word "Qurban" which literally means an act performed to seek Allah's pleasure. It is technically used for the sacrifice of an animal slaughtered for the sake of Allah.

The sacrifice of an animal has always been a recognized form of worship in many religions, but in the 'Shariah' (Islamic sacred law) of our beloved Prophet ﷺ the sacrifice of an animal has been recognized as a form of worship only during the three days of the month Zul-Hijjah, namely the 10th, 11th, and 12th.

Allah Ta'ala says in the Noble Quran:

"Verily, We have granted you (O Muhammad ﷺ) Al- Kauthar (a river in paradise), So pray on to thy lord and sacrifice. For he who makes you angry will be cut off." (Surah 10)

"And the camels! We have appointed them among the ceremonies of Allah, there you have good!"

Of all of the physical and spiritual worships the greatest is 'salaah', and among the worships concerning wealth, sacrifice holds a distinguished position, because the original spirit of sacrifice was to sacrifice the soul. The replacement of an animal was made due to some reasons, as it is clear from the story of Hazrat Ibrahim ﷺ and Hazrat Ismail ﷺ. That is why in other places in the Quran the mention of 'salaah' is made together with 'Qurbani'. (Tafseer-E-Usmaani)

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF 'QURBANI'?

This act of 'Udhiya' is to commemorate the unparalleled sacrifice offered by the Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ. When he, in pursuance to a command of Allah Ta'ala conveyed to him in a dream, prepared himself to slaughter his beloved son Ismail ﷺ and actually was about to, but Allah Almighty after testing him of his submission, sent down a ram and saved his son from the logical fate of slaughter. It is from that time onwards that the sacrifice of an animal became an obligatory duty to be performed by every well to do Muslim.

Although Qurbani had been ordained as an Ibaadah from the time of Adam ﷺ, a special importance was attached to it only after the occurrence, which took place with Ibrahim ﷺ. Thereafter, it was made Wajib in the Shariah of Muhammad ﷺ. This is a unique incident in world history and of great spiritual value, which the Qur'an mentions with some detail in Sura As-Saffaat. To understand the context of Qurbani in Islam this incident should be kept in mind and understood..

THE SUNNAH OF HADHRAT IBRAAHIM ﷺ

The sacrifice of animals annually on the occasion of Eidul Adha is closely linked to the sacred offering and dedication of Hadhrat Ibrahim ﷺ. The following hadith explains this relationship and specific bond to Hadhrat Ibrahim ﷺ.

Hadhrat Zaid bin Arqam ﷺ narrates that the companions of Rasulallah ﷺ enquired; 'O Messenger of Allah, what are these sacrifices (of animals)?' He replied: 'It is the sunnah of your father Ibrahim ﷺ'. The 'Sahabah' ﷺ further enquired, 'What benefit is there in it for us, O Messenger of Allah?' Rasulallah ﷺ replied: 'You will be rewarded for every hair on it's (the sacrificed animals) body.' The Sahaabah's response to this was; 'And what reward is there for animals with wool?' The Nabi ﷺ then said: 'A reward for every fiber of wool (of the animal)'. (Mishkaat, Ahmad, Ibne Majah)

To understand how this Ibaadah which is linked to Ibrahim , we will have to refer to the books of history. The incident regarding the 'Qurbani' of Hadhrat Ibrahim  is a very lengthy one. Here we will open the aspects of the astounding spirit of sacrifice displayed on this occasion. Allah Ta'ala had granted Ibrahim  a son at a very old age. According to some narrations he was eighty six years old at that time. When this beloved son, Ismail  was a young boy, Ibrahim  saw in a dream that he was slaughtering his little son. This dream was experienced on three consecutive nights.

Since dreams of the Ambiyaa'  are a divine revelation and indeed true, Ibrahim  realized that this was a command of Allah Ta'ala. Hence he immediately undertook to carry out this order and requirement from Allah. To prepare his son to submit to and dutifully obey Allah, Ibrahim  explained to his son Ismail  the sacred injunction. Ismail  without hesitation submitted to the command and assured his father that he would tolerantly endure this act of sacrifice for Allah's pleasure.

Ibrahim  with his son proceeded to the place of sacrifice. On three occasions Shaitan attempted to divert them, but these exemplary servants of Allah did not yield to Shaitan's treacherous influence and schemes. Eventually Ibrahim  placed his son down and attempted to slit Ismail's  throat, using a sharp knife. However, as much as he tried, the cutting instrument would neither cut nor sever the boy's throat.

Finally, a voice was heard from above saying: 'O Ibrahim, you have genuinely and honestly acted in a manner confirming and establishing the truth of your dream'. (Sura As-Saafaat: 102-108). There Jibraeel  appeared with a sheep from Jannah and Ibrahim  was instructed to slaughter that sheep (in sacrifice; for it being) in place of his son, Ismail  (Ma'ariful Qur'an Vol. 7: 457-461)

Hence, in commemoration of this great and unprecedented spirit of sacrifice, Allah Ta'ala ordered the Ummah of Rasulullah  to sacrifice an animal on the occasion of Eidul Adha. Therefore, Rasulullah  described it as 'the sunnah of your father Ibrahim '. (Mishkaat, Ahmad, Ibne Majah, Ma'ariful Qur'an vol7; 457- 461)

ORIGIN OF TAKBEER-E-TASHREEQ

Eminent jurists have stated that the origin of the 'Takbeer-e-Tashreeq' is when the Prophet Ibrahim  made Hazrat Ismail  lie down, Allah ordered Hazrat Jibraeel  to take along a 'fidyah' (ransom) and when Hazrat Jibraeel  arrived there, he feared that Hazrat Ibrahim  would slaughter Ismail  and so he began shouting "Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar."

Hearing his voice, Prophet Ibrahim  took it as a glad tiding and exclaimed, "Laa ilaaha allallahu wallahu akbar."

Hazrat Ismail  also came to know that the 'fidyah' arrived and he got up saying, "Allahu akbar wa lillahil hamd," and began to eulogise and thank Allah.

WHAT IS THE PHILOSOPHY OF 'QURBANI'?

Mufti Muhammad Taqi Uthmaani states that the philosophy behind 'Udhiya' is that it is a demonstration of total submission to Allah and a proof of complete obedience to Allah's will or command. When a Muslim offers an 'Udhiya' this is exactly what he intends to prove. Thus, the 'Udhiya' offered signifies that he is a slave of Allah at his best. And that he would not hesitate even for a moment once he receives an absolute command from his Creator to surrender before it, to obey it willingly, even if it be at the price of his life and possessions. This is exactly what the Prophet Ibrahim  did.

Apparently, there was no reason why a father should slaughter his innocent son. But, when the command came from Allah, he never asked the reason to that command, nor did he hesitate to obey it. This is the true philosophy of 'Qurbani'.

VIRTUES OF ‘QURBANI’ (UDHIYAH)

The virtues of ‘Udhiya’ are established from the following ‘Ahadith’ (Traditions).

Hazrat Anas  reported that the Messenger of Allah  sacrificed with his own hands, two white rams with black markings. He took the name of Allah and recited ‘Takbeer’. Hazrat Anas  states that he saw him putting his foot upon their buttocks and saying: "In the name of Allah. And Allah is the greatest". (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

Note: We learn from this Hadith that one should try to make sacrifice with his own hands. If the Prophet  can sacrifice by his own blessed hands at the age of sixty, why can't our young generation follow in his footsteps? If one cannot do so, he should at least be present at the time of slaughter.

Hazrat Jaber  reported that the Messenger of Allah  slaughtered on the day of sacrifice two horned, white and black castrated rams. When he faced them towards the Qibla, he said: "Verily I turn my face towards the One who created the heavens and the earth, upon the religion of Abraham, being upright, and I am not one of the polytheists. Verily my prayer, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. There is on partner with him and I have been ordered that, and I am one of the Muslims. O Allah, it is Thine and for Thee, from Muhammad  and his Ummah: In the name of Allah. Allah is the greatest". He then slaughtered the rams. (Ahmed, Abu Dawud, Ibne Majah)

Hazrat Ayesha  reports that the Apostle of Allah  said, "The son of Adam does not perform any actions on the day of sacrifice which is more pleasing to Allah than the shedding of blood. He will come on the day of resurrection with its hair, horns and hooves, and the blood certainly will fall in a place near Allah before it falls on the ground. So, make yourselves purified there with. (Tirmizi, Ibne Majah)

Hazrat Zaid bin Arkam  reports that the Companions of Rasulullah  asked him: "Ya Rasulallah, what is this sacrifice?" He said: "it is the way of your fore father Ibrahim ." They asked: what (reward) is for us therein?" He replied: "There is a reward for every hair (i.e. the reward for meat and useful parts of the animal's body will be very lofty in merit, but there will also be a great reward for the parts which are useless and thrown away such as the hair)."

They asked: "For the wool, Ya Rasulallah?" He replied: "There is one reward for every strand of wool." (Ahmed, Ibne Majah)

WHO IS OBLIGED TO OFFER THE SACRIFICE?

‘Qurbani’ is ‘wajib’ (compulsory) according to Imam Abu Hanifah (and sunnah-e-muakkadah according to other Imams) upon every ‘muqem’ (domiciled) and who possesses 613.35 grams of silver or its equivalent in money, personal ornaments, stock in trade or any other form of wealth which is surplus to his/her basic needs. Each adult member of a family who possesses that much wealth must perform his/her own ‘Qurbani’ separately.

Hazrat Ibne Umar  reports that the Messenger of Allah  lived in Madinah Munawarah for ten years and performed ‘Qurbani’ every year. (Tirmizi)

Note: Despite the fact that the Prophet  was not obliged to sacrifice as he never possessed the required amount of wealth, he still did so as can be conceived from the above Hadith.

CAN A SACRIFICE BE MADE ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE ELSE?

A sacrifice can be made on behalf of others such as minor offspring. This offering is not ‘wajib’ (compulsory) but is ‘mustahab’ (desirable). Similarly if one decides to sacrifice on behalf of the spouse or a father decides to sacrifice on behalf of an adult offspring (apart from offering his/her own ‘Qurbani’) can do so with their permission. A sacrifice can also be made on behalf of a deceased Muslim. This can be classified into three categories:

- 1- If the deceased had made a will for a sacrifice then, it is permissible to sacrifice to fulfill the will but is incumbent to give all the meat of the sacrificed animal to the poor and needy (those who are entitled to receive 'Zakaat'). ("Vide Shami" vol.5 p293)
- 2- Whether or not the deceased had made this will, his/her relative or friends can make a 'nafl' (voluntary) sacrifice from their own money; the meat of this sacrificed animal can be partaken by the rich and poor alike.
- 3- One may make a voluntary sacrifice from one's own wealth for the deceased persons and this meat can partaken by all, rich and poor.

If one's intention is of mere remittance of recompense to a dead person then it will be superior to slaughter an animal during the Days of 'Nahar' instead of giving money in charity. This is because reward is attained both for spending wealth and for sacrificing.

In a 'Hadith' it is stated.

Hazrat Hanash  reported: I saw Hazrat Ali  sacrificing two rams. I asked him, "What is this?" He said: "Verily the Messenger of Allah  left instruction to me to sacrifice on his behalf, and so I am sacrificing on his behalf. (Tirmizi, Abu Dawud)

Note: Rasulallah  is so generous that he had sacrificed on behalf of his whole 'Ummah' and we see here Hazrat Ali  sacrificing for Rasulallah  after he has passed away. We learn from this that we should also put a share of Rasulallah  in our sacrifice.

IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO PARE NAILS AND CUT HAIR BEFORE THE SACRIFICE?

This could be understood from the following 'Hadith':

Hazrat Umm-e- Salama  reports that the Apostle of Allah  said, "Whoever sights the crescent moon of 'Zul-Hijjah' and is intending to make a sacrifice should refrain from cutting his bodily hair and paring his nails". (Muslim)

Thus after sighting the 'Zul-Hijjah' crescent, it is desirable for a man intending to make a sacrifice to refrain from cutting the hair of his body and paring his nails till he has slaughtered the animal. This is because he is making a sacrifice in lieu of the sacrifice of his own life. Each part of the sacrificial animal is in lieu of each part of his own body.

The Holy Prophet  has given this order that no part of his body may be absent at the time of the descent of divine mercy. If more than forty days have passed one should not be idle in removing unwanted hair, nails, etc, in order to save oneself from 'karaahat' (abomination).

WHAT IS THE BEST MANNER OF OFFERING IT?

It is preferable that one selects an animal oneself, nourishes it and becomes familiar with it, as this animal is to become the means of great recompense and not only that, but it is a substitute for the sacrifice of one's own child.

IS A SACRIFICE CARRIED OUT IN ANOTHER PLACE VALID?

As for getting the 'Qurbani' done in other places one deprives oneself from all the aforementioned blessings. If it is carried out on account of some 'Uzr' (disability) or legal expediency, one can hope for the whole or even more reward for it all depends on the correct method and intention. One can also organize sacrifice at one's native land in order to fulfill the rights of one's relatives.

WHAT IS THE RULE REGARDING THE MEAT?

Although the person offering a Qurbani can keep all its meat for his own use, yet it is preferable to distribute one third among the poor, another one third among his friends and relatives, and then keep the rest for his personal consumption. Thus, if possible, one should eat its meat on the very day.

IS IT PERMISSIBLE IN THE SHARIAH TO MAKE THE ANIMAL UNCONSCIOUS BY GUN OR CURRENT BEFORE SLAUGHTERING IT?

There are a few grave defects in this so-called humane method of slaughtering. This has been explained in great detail by Hazrat Aqdas Hakeemul-Ummah, Mujadid –ul-Millah, Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi (May Allah fill his grave with light), in his book Imdadul-Fatawaa and also the Mufti of Mazahirul- Uloom, Sahranpoor. I briefly mention the details of this. This method is not permissible in any circumstance whatsoever. It is the Muslims ‘fardh’ and duty that they do their best in putting an end to this means of slaughtering and that they never slaughter in this manner again.

1. The jurists have clarified that it is prohibited to inflict pain to an animal when there is no benefit in doing so. It is stated in the book Dur-ul-Mukhtar:

"Any sort of pain infliction, which is of no benefit, is ‘makrooh’ (undesirable), for example; the cutting off the head and the skinning of the animal before the animal becomes still i.e. ceases to shake and shiver."

Since the aforementioned blow is not sufficient for slaughtering, therefore, it obviously is a means of hurting the animal without there being any benefit in doing so and this is prohibited in the ‘Shariah’. If anyone were to say that by this method no pain comes to the animal, but in fact it helps in discharging the blood from the body and it also idles the senses, then this is not true. The reason for this is that before it became unconscious the senses of the animal had been sound and after unconsciousness the breaking of the senses is not certain. It is possible that with the use of this instrument the movement becomes still, yet the senses remain sound. This is also stated in the book Dur-ul-Mukhtar:

"The nullification of the senses is not necessary for the inactivity of movement."

It is apparent that in the state of the senses remaining sound the use of this instrument will be means of no pain.

2. The ‘Shariah’ has stated that the purpose of slaughtering is to discharge flowing blood. It is obvious that, when conscious, the natural health of the body will be stronger, and furthermore, this is also evident that the discharging of flowing blood is an act of the healthy body. Hence the stronger the body health the more blood will be discharged. Thus, the purpose of the ‘Shariah’ will be fulfilled to a greater extent. Therefore, to cause less blood to discharge by weakening the body health purposefully is not permissible in the ‘Shariah’, as it leads to opposing the purpose of slaughtering.

3. The third point which is the most detestable, when the first two are disregarded, is enough to clarify its impermissibility. This is that the person who carries this out will believe that this manner of slaughtering is more commendable than the way shown by the ‘Shariah’ (where the animal is not made unconscious). In respect of this he will think the method (of slaughtering) shown by the ‘Shariah’ as being inferior and defective, and to give priority to invention over revelation is close to ‘kufr’. Allah knows best and He is The Most Wise.

IF QURBANI WAS NOT OFFERED IN THE SPECIFIED DAYS IS THERE ANY SUBSTITUTE?

If somebody out of his/her ignorance and negligence, did not offer ‘Qurbani’ on the three prescribed days (10th, 11th and 12th ‘Zul-Hijjah’) they should then give the price of the ‘Qurbani’ as ‘sadaqah’ (alms and charity) This does not mean that Sadaqah is an alternative, this will only be the case when it is not offered on the prescribed days, thus there is no alternative to ‘Qurbani’ in the prescribed days.

CONCLUSION

Finally I end by quoting the following ‘Hadith’:

Hazrat Abu Hurairah  reports that the Apostle of Allah  has said: "Whoever has the capacity to sacrifice and does not do so, should not come to the place where the Eid prayer is offered." (Ibne Majah). Hence we can understand the importance of ‘Udhiya’ from the above ‘Hadith’, therefore each and every Muslim who is obliged should offer it, and if possible within their domicile. This will not only create an atmosphere of ‘Eid’ and ‘Qurbani’ in the community but will also serve as a lesson for generations to come.

[taken from www.inter-islam.org & <http://www.al-inaam.com/>]