

FROM THE MINBAR

SACRIFICE (QURBAN) IN ISLAM: IT IS PIETY THAT REACHES THE CREATOR

Khutbah delivered by Imam Dr. Zijad Delic at SNMC on November 4th, 2011 corresponding to Zul Hijjah 8th, 1432 H.

BACKGROUND

Indeed all praise is for God, Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings of God be upon Muhammad (S), his family, Khulafai Rashidin, all his Companions, and all those who follow in their footsteps until the Last Day. All praise is for God! We praise Him. We seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. We seek God's refuge from evils of ourselves and from our evil actions. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except God, alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (S) is His Messenger.

My dear brothers and sisters in Islam ~ *As Salamu 'Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu.*

INTRODUCTION

Everywhere, on the same day; the 10th day of Zul Hijjah (this year it falls on November 6th), the last Lunar month, Muslims celebrate the festival of sacrifice (Qurbani) of prophets Ibrahim and his son Ismail alayhimassalam by offering a sacrifice in commemoration of the great actions of these two great prophets of Almighty Allah.

It was narrated that once the Sahabah asked the Messenger (S) about the sacrifice and he replied:

"This is commemorative Sunnah of your father Ibrahim." {Ahmad and Ibn Majah}

Allah mentions this type of sacrifice together with the first and foremost worship in Islam – the prayer. He ordered the Messenger, Muhammad (S) to slaughter the sacrifices:

"Turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice (for His sake)." {Al Kawthar 2}

This verse clearly indicates the immense importance of this action in the sight of the Creator.

The sacrifice on this occasion comes within the category of those called Al Muhsinin (righteous ones) and those who are to attain communion and closeness to their Creator.

TERMINOLOGY

There are six words used among Muslims to express the idea of sacrifice. These are:

a) *Zibh* – to split, pierce or to cut the throat of a creature; b) *Qurban* – approaching near, expresses the ordinary sacrifice; c) *Nahr* – to injure the jugular vein; d) *Udhiyah* – the sacrifice offered after rising of the sun on the Day of Eid ul Adha; e) *Hady* – that which is presented offering of an animal for sacrifice sent to Makkah, when a Haji is not able to reach on time; and f) *Mansak* – the place of devotion or sacrifice which draws a man near to Almighty Allah.



THE OBJECTIVE OF QURBANI

The objective of this memory is: a) to remind us of the spirit of self-sacrifice shown by Ibrahim alayhissalam and b) to subject ourselves to the Will of Allah as Isma'il alayhissalam did.

Almighty Allah explains the significance of sacrifice in Islam in the following ayah:

"And for every nation We have appointed religious ceremonies, that they may mention the Name of Allah over the sustenance He has given them from animals (fit for food). And your Ilah (God) is One Ilah (Allah), so you must submit to Him in Islam. And give glad tidings to those who humble themselves (Mukhbittin)." {Al Hajj 34}

This ayah implies two things: a) *sacrifice has been an essential part of the worship of One God in all revealed religions.* In order to inculcate Tawhid (Oneness), Almighty Allah prohibited sacrifice for anyone other than Himself. b) *the other thing which has been common in all the revealed religions was the object of the sacrifice in the name of Allah though its details have been different in different religions, times and places.*

This is thus the true end of a sacrifice – the act is only for Allah Who does not delight in flesh or blood, as He says in the Qur'an:

"It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah, but it is piety from you that reaches Him. Thus have We made them subject to you that you may magnify Allah for His guidance to you. And give glad tidings (O Muhammad sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) to the Muhsinin (all who do right)." {Al Hajj 37}

This ayah points out on the essence, inwardness and real object and purpose of sacrifice in Islam. It

teaches us the supreme lesson that it is not the outward act of sacrifice which pleases Allah but the spirit underlying it and the motive behind it. The flesh or blood of the sacrificed animal does not reach Allah; it is righteousness of the heart which is acceptable to Him. Allah wants and demands from us the offering of our hearts.

It is, however, a mistake to think that because it is not the outward act of sacrifice but the motive behind it that really matters; that the outward act is of no importance. True, the outward act of sacrifice is the shell and the spirit underlying it is the kernel and essence, yet the shell or the body of a thing, like its spirit or kernel, is of very great importance because no soul can exist without a body and no kernel without a shell.

Sacrifice in Islam is an outward symbol of a Muslim's readiness to lay down and surrender his/her interests and desires in the cause of Truth for His sake. Only shedding the blood of an animal does not fulfill the purpose of sacrifice, but it is really fulfilled when one submits himself/herself completely to the Command of Almighty Allah.

In this sense all the manifold rites, concentration and purification, offerings and sacred feasts, all devotion and morality are only the indirect expression of the inner experience of one's faith – the experience of trust, surrender, yearning and enthusiasm. Sacrifice, whether that of animals, wealth or desires is the practical proof of one's devotion and submission to the Creator.

Thus, sacrifice in Islam is nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else than a natural, visible expression of homage and gratitude to the Creator.

It is essentially symbolic – an external symbol of an internal dedication and voluntary submission to the Will of Allah. Our Creator does not need anything from us. All acts of sacrifice and worship are for our own benefits.

This Issue 'From The Minbar' presents



**SACRIFICE IN ISLAM:
Piety Reaches the Creator**



In next issue: 'Family in Islam'

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SACRIFICE: OUTWARD SYMBOL

Islam purifies the act of sacrifice from all wrong notions and practices connected with it and makes it explicitly clear that it is an outward symbol of our readiness to lay down our egos for the sake of Allah and to surrender personal interests in the cause of truth and righteousness. This should be the true motive of sacrifice, and it is with this spirit that this act of sacrifice should be performed.

Almighty Allah says: *“Say (O Muhammad sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam): Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of ‘Alamin.”* {Al An’am 162}

When we hear a word ‘sacrifice’, we usually think of an animal sacrificed in the name of Almighty Allah, but sacrifice in its true sense means, ‘giving away something of immense value and importance for the sake of Allah alone.’

For an act to be called a sacrifice, it must involve the giving away of something we love most dearly and cherish wholeheartedly. This something could be measurable like wealth, like time or could be immeasurable like feelings, opinions, likes and dislikes, pleasures and comforts, family ties or merely our own egos.

BODY OR SPIRIT? ...OR BOTH?

The ritual known to us as sacrifice (Qurbani or Udhayah) has a body and a soul. Its body, or form, is the act of slaughtering the animal. Its soul, or the truth about it, is to generate in one’s heart the supreme feeling of self-sacrifice for the sake of Truth and good – for God’s sake.

In Islam every act of worship has its body and its soul. Prayer has its soul, charity has its soul, fasting has its soul, pilgrimage has its soul, and the sacrifice has its soul; each distinct from the other.

In short, to line up to the spirit of a particular ritual or act of worship, it is imperative to adopt the very form that Allah has ordained for it. The very thing that Allah asks for sacrifice has to be sacrificed. The Qur’an is informing us:

“By no means shall you attain Al Birr (piety, righteousness – Allah’s reward), unless you spend (in the Cause of Allah) of that which you love; and whatever of good you spend, Allah knows it well.” {Al Imran 92}

This is why true believers are ready to sacrifice of their wealth and time when needed or when they are called upon to do so.

The true believers are ready to sacrifice their own aspirations for the sake of their Creator. If something stands against His command, they will readily give up their aspiration to please Him for they know that the devoted believers will be close to Him. This is indeed real Qurbani on their behalf.

The true believers are ready to sacrifice their time for the sake of Allah. They are well aware that time is a very precious commodity, because we are losing it every moment. The same case is with money.

What proportion of our time and wealth have we donated and sacrificed for the sake of Allah? Did it ever occur that it is only 2.5% (at least) of our

wealth that we are asked to give for His sake? The same is true with our time. If we pray five times a day, which is about 35 minutes, it amounts to 2.5% of our daily 24 hours.

Sometimes it is easier to sacrifice time and wealth – measurable commodities, but much more difficult to sacrifice the immeasurable commodities such as pleasures and comforts, likes and dislikes, family relationships, passion and pride, or our egos.

The Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) was the paragon of sacrifice in the way of Allah. He was tried and tested in many possible ways. His father, his family, his people, political powers, etc., all were opposed to him, but only after Allah tested him against these hardships and much more, and after he fulfilled Allah’s Commands that Allah made him the leader of mankind; called him the Ummah, Khalil of Allah...

LESSONS OF SACRIFICE

If so, then what lessons do we learn from sacrificing the Qurbani/Udhayah especially here in Canada?

1. Allah will accept in us the sacrifice of self, our time, our comforts for the benefit of our brothers and sisters and our community, if it is for the sake of Him -- sincere.
2. Allah does not accept only words but the action (the spirit), our sacrifice and struggle – walking the talk.
3. Children must be obedient to the parents and respectful of them as long as what they demand is not Haram -- Ihtiram.
4. Every member of the family must work as a part of a team in the process of sacrifice, just as the household members of Ibrahim ‘alayhissalam did – Ta’awun.
5. We should be able cast way Shaytan, and never listen to Shaytan again. He lies in ambush for the believers trying to take them away from the Right Path, from the sacrifice to Allah. He promised: *“Because You have let me be astray, surely I will sit in wait against them (human beings) on Your Straight Path.”* {Al A’raf 16}

In another verse, Allah informs us that Shaytan promises:

“O my Lord! Because You have let me astray, I shall indeed adorn the path of error for them on earth, and I shall mislead them all. Except Your chosen, sincere (guided) servants among them.” {Al Hijr 39, 40}

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude this ~~Khutbah with~~ the following statements:

In Islam, the sacrifice stands for higher and nobler purpose and ideal. It nourishes and elevates the soul. It develops the personality of a person and refines his/her *Damir* -- *Nafs* (inner-self).

As Muslims, we must know that the sacrifice (Qurbani/Udhayah), as all rituals of our Din have the meanings. We cannot be lost in the external form of the rituals. We cannot neglect those meanings.

We have to make our duties to be the duties of concepts not merely the duties of rituals. One who does not realize what he/she is doing in these rituals and does not feel the spirit of it, for example in

Hajj, only brings back gifts from Makkah. The suitcase full, but ‘self’ empty!

One who does not realize the meaning of sacrifice should know that Allah doesn’t need the flesh and blood of the animals which we sacrifice for this occasion. One who does not live a prayer after the prayer, does not have much benefit of his/her prayer.

Whatever weakens us upon the way of our Faith; whatever calls us to stop our movement towards the pleasure of Allah; whatever brings doubt in our responsibilities; whatever is attached to us and holds us back, we should sacrifice as Ibrahim ‘alayhissalam did.

Just think that Isma’il ‘alayhissalam was waited son for a century and then Ibrahim had to fulfill the promise given to Allah – to sacrifice his beloved son.

He loved him dearly but he had to chose in this test between the pleasure of Allah and his own-self. Pleasure or responsibility? Life for living or life for a goal? Instinct or consciousness? Relationship or Message? Isma’il or Allah?

Ibrahim has chosen the Right Path. He has chosen the pleasure of Allah. What we are ready to chose, my dear brothers and sisters in Islam?

O Allah! Accept our sacrifice and help us on the path of committing ourselves to the Din you have chosen for us to be our path.

O Allah! Accept our sacrifice and reward us for every good deed we do to please You.

O Allah! Help us to contribute on the path of building peace and harmony in the world.

Allahumma Amin!

AN ACTION ITEM

If YOU like this Khutbah and what we, at your SNMC, do, PLEASE:

Support our activities & projects

Please Donate ONE Prayer Spot for \$2,500 and be the ONE who will build the Masjid and the Center so that it could help us and our children maintain Islamic Identity and build strong Canadian National Identity, Insha Allah.



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