

EID-UL-AZHA SPECIAL

Eid-ul-Azha: Festivity and sacrifice

SYED ASHRAF ALI

FESTIVALS are a time of thanks-giving and good cheer, of decorating the house and putting on new clothes, of exchanging gifts and greeting family and friends, of preparing special meals, of drinking life to the lees. But Eid-ul-Azha is something extraordinary, something totally different from an ordinary festival. One of the two main festivals in the Islamic calendar (the other being 'Eid-ul-Fitr'), Eid-ul-Azha brings for the Muslim world a divine blessing, a rare opportunity to receive Allah's Mercy and Reward through sacrifice, patience and constancy. The great festival popularly known in this sub-continent as Bakrid, is celebrated by the Muslims on the tenth of Dhul-Hijja every year through sacrifices and prayers in memory of the glorious sacrifice of Prophet Ibrahim and his son Prophet Ismail (peace be upon them). But 'Eid-ul-Azha does not simply commemorate the unique sacrifice of the prophets Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them), it also testifies so eloquently to the patient way in which both father and son cheerfully offered to suffer any self-sacrifice, however painful it might be, in order to obey the Command of Allah.

Sacrifice has always played a vital role in the chequered history of mankind. The Holy Quran testifies: "To every people did. We appoint rites (of sacrifice) that they might celebrate the name of God over the sustenance He gave them from animals (fit for food)" (Sura Hajj,

It is the righteous whom Islam requires to sacrifice, and what Islam teaches through the sacrifice of animals on 'Eid-ul-Azha' in memory of that Great Sacrifice is the lesson of laying down of our own lives in the cause of truth and justice.

22:34). Sacrifices have been made to get rid of natural disasters like typhoons and cyclones, to stop flood, to evade famine, to solicit rain, to nullify earthquake, to extinguish volcanic eruption, to win wars, to ally tyranny, to appease or eulogise gods and goddesses.

The glorious and inimitable attempt of Hazrat Ibrahim Khalilullah at slaughtering his son Hazrat Ismail Zabihullah (peace be upon them) as a sacrifice in obedience to Benign Command, however, stands unique in the annals of history.

The glorious incident of Prophet Ibrahim's (peace be upon him) historic attempt at sacrificing his son Ismail (peace be upon him) in the name of Allah has been clearly narrated in Sura Saffat in the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran testifies: "He (Ibrahim) said, 'O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice. Now see what is thy view!'" (37:102). The son, whose very character was to be Halim, which means ready to suffer and forbear, replied "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou wilt find me, if Allah so wills, one practising Patience and Constancy." (37:102).

It should be noted that the sacrifice was demanded of both Proph-

ets Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them). It was indeed a great trial of the will of the father and the son.

The father sought a solitary corner for the Supreme Sacrifice and took his son towards the hills in Mina. On the way Satan stealthily whispered to Ismail that the was being taken by his father to be killed. But the evil attempt to tempt Ismail (peace be upon him) into refusing to be sacrificed failed miserably and the boy stood steadfast in his obedience to Allah. Thrice did Satan speak to Ismail in the same manner at three different spots but he received the same rebuff every time (This is why pilgrims during the Holy Hajj cast pebbles at the three pillars in Mina symbolising Satan). Just before the sacrifice, Ismail (peace be upon him) told his father to blindfold himself lest he might not be able to go through the ordeal. Ibrahim did so and brought down his knife. The Holy Quran vividly and clearly narrates the incident: "so when they had both submitted their wills (to Allah) and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), we called out to him: O Ibrahim! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision" (37:103-104). And the angel Jibrail with a ram in his arms stopped

Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and replaced the son Ismail (peace be upon him) by the ram. Both the father and the son stood the test and deserved the Divine Blessing. Naturally, therefore, Allah, in His infinite Mercy, declared in the Holy Quran: "thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial -- and we ransomed him with a momentous Sacrifice. And we left (this blessing) for him among generations (to come) in later times. Peace and salutation to Ibrahim" (37:103-109).

It was indeed a great and momentous occasion, when two men, with concerted will, "ranged themselves in the ranks" of those to whom self-sacrifice in the service of Benign Providence was the supreme thing in life. The glorious incident commenced a new era in religious history. It teaches us the very essence of our religion that the keys of Life and Death, and the mysteries of everything around us, are in Allah's hands, that our honesty, determination and upright conduct are not mere matters of policy or convenience, all our life in this world must be lived as in the presence of Benign Providence, that no task or responsibility, however great or difficult a burden it may

be, is greater than what we can bear. What is more, it also testifies so eloquently to the fact that Allah does not delight in flesh or blood and no one should suppose that meat or blood is acceptable to the One True God. It was a Pagan fancy that God could be appeased by blood sacrifice. But what Allah accepts, as the glorious incident indicates, are the true offering of our hearts. The Holy Quran states emphatically: "It is not their meat, nor their blood, that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him." (22:37) The glorious incident in the valley of Mina put an end to the system of Human Sacrifice which was common among most ancient people.

It is really surprising that some inadvertently call this great festival 'Eid-uz-Zoha'. The words 'Eid and Azha' in Arabic mean "joy" and "sacrifice" respectively; 'Eid-ul-Azha' stands for the 'Joy of Sacrifice'. But "Zoha" in Arabic stands for the "forenoon" or middle of the time and mid-day, and has nothing to do with sacrifice. Naturally, therefore, the term 'Eid-uz-Zoha' will refer to the 'Joy of forenoon' and can never signify or stand for the 'Joy of Sacrifice'.

'Eid-ul-Azha, promising an occasion of joy and happiness, provides us with a unique opportunity to

receive the Divine Mercy and Reward through sacrifice, patience and constancy. It will really be unfortunate if we fail to rise to the occasion in true spirit and try to celebrate this historic occasion through mere fun and merry-making and through so-called sacrifices of cattle. Mere purchasing of a cow or a goat only a few days before the festival and slaughtering it on the tenth of Dhul-Hijja does not and cannot pay befitting homage to the sacred incident of a devoted father's glorious attempt at slaying his dearest son. What is needed on this glorious occasion is sacrifice from inside our hearts and not merely from our purses. Allah has, in His infinite Mercy, given us power over the brute creation, and permitted us to eat meat, but that too only if we pronounce His holy Name at the solemn act of taking life. Through this solemn invocation, without which we are apt to forget the sacredness of life, are we reminded that wanton cruelty is not in our thoughts and is never permitted in Islam. Nor does Islam permit extravagance in the name of religion on any occasion whether through slaughtering of cattle on 'Eid-ul-Azha' or through any other means.

Lastly, it is the righteous whom Islam requires to sacrifice, and what Islam teaches through the sacrifice of animals on 'Eid-ul-Azha' in memory of that Great Sacrifice is the lesson of laying down of our own lives in the cause of truth and justice. (Abridged)

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LEST WE FORGET

Tawfiq Aziz Khan: A versatile personality

SABEHA SALEQUE

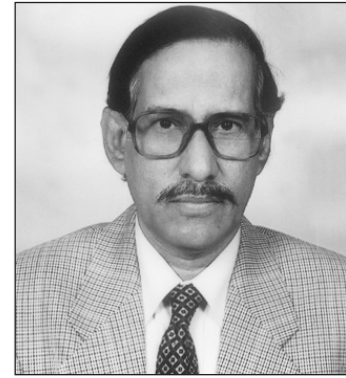
"M EJO Mama", that is how I remember Tawfiq Aziz Khan. Six years have passed, but my memories are very vivid. It was the day before my Walima (being married to one of his favourite nephews), "Mejo Mama" in his immaculate cravat, strode into the room his face beaming and eyes containing the slight glint of mischief that any bride would find discomfiting. But the next few minutes to follow reassured me that this was a man who could never intimidate. This youthful exuberance is what we still remember, and miss in all our family gatherings.

Tawfiq Aziz Khan's versatility knew no bounds. He was as much a professional in the field of sports journalism as he was a man of trenchant humour and fellow feeling. He had that ability to transform an uneventful game into one of high drama and interest. He always kept in mind the listener's expectations and interlarded his commentaries with anecdotal comments from the lives of other outstanding sports personalities. It was always a pleasure to hear his deeply resonant voice begin "Salaam alaikum! This is Tawfiq Aziz Khan speaking from Dhaka Stadium." In fact it was no little feat, to be the first commentator to introduce Bangla commentary wayback in 1962.

Like any pioneer in his field, Tawfiq Aziz Khan did not have a formal training in journalism. His love for elocution and oratory significantly contributed in nurturing his interest, initially in radio commentary and later in journalistic writings. Many of his associates from his undergraduate days at the Edward College in Pabna, remember his recitation of Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade", of even Shukanto's song about "The Runner".

His penchant for acting is oft repeated by friends and admirers. His enchantment of the character of "Lokhai" in the play "Mohua", written by the then Principal of the college, left people mesmerized. It was an adaptation from the famous "Mymensingh Geetika" written by the celebrated Dinesh Chandra Sen.

Tawfiq Aziz Khan's inception into the world of sports could be traced



back to his childhood days, when as a regular companion of his father, the late Khan Bahadur Abdul Aziz Khan, he would tour the provincial tennis circuits. He even took an avid interest in country boat races which took place in the River Padma. Probably this love for sports led him to cover the vast range of sporting events, beginning as a junior sports reporter in the then *Pakistan Observer* to covering all the four Grand Slam events representing *The Daily Star*.

Yet one cannot restrict him only to the field of sports and journalism. His years at *The Star* would remind all of his management skills and his ability to maintain the high standard of work expected in any premier institution. His magnetic personality would be able to enthuse and extract the utmost efficiency from all those around him. He had no fixed hours of working and would be found poring over the news desk at the unearthly hour when most of us were snoring snugly in our beds. His witty repartee and lively humour would enliven the drab office atmosphere into one of robust and youthful activity.

It is all this we miss today. For all those who enjoyed his camaraderie and warmth, it is not easy to live without a man of such qualities. We could little realise how painful living without him would be for his devoted wife, our beloved "Mejo Mami", and their sons. For a man who radiated such a zest for life and embodied such qualities of leadership, it can be said at this hour of remembrance that he personified all that is positive in life -- in fact, life itself.

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Our pioneer sports journalist

KAMRUL ISLAM TALUKDAR

ELEVENTH February 2003 is the second death anniversary of Late Tawfiq Aziz Khan, who was popularly known as 'Tawfiq Bhai' to all his admirers. He served the nation successfully at various capacities in different organisations and had been performing the last assignment to the entire satisfaction as the 'Executive Editor' of *'The Daily Star'* prior to his sudden demise.

He started his career as a junior Staff Reporter in the then *Pakistan Observer* in the fifties. Within a very short time he established himself as an excellent sports writer as well as sports commentator of television and radio. He was also a cultural activist and a good sportsman. Smiling faced, out and out gentleman Tawfiq Aziz Khan had an amiable personality which led him to be a friend of his known circle.

He acquired the modern management technique of newspaper industry and proved it during his tenure at *'Dainik Bangla'* and at *'The Daily Star'*. He was a permanent member of the National Press Club and life member of Bangladesh Sports Writers' Association. It is a

rare distinction as he was elected president of this association for six times.

Mr Khan held other very distinguished positions too. He was a founder member and president of Drama Circle, the first group theatre association of Bangladesh. He was an executive member of FEMA (Fair Election Monitoring Alliance). He was an active Rotarian and was the president of Dhaka North-west for two consecutive years (1999-2001). He became an associate member of Australian Tennis Media Association (ATMA). He was a well-known sports personality in the whole of South Asia. He was the 'Resident Editor' of 'Cricket Asia' (Hong Kong) and 'Sports Time' (Lahore). He was the Founder Editor of *'Kriya Jagat'*, a sports fortnightly published from Dhaka.

He achieved all these by the grace of Allah and by dint of his positive qualities. His contribution to the profession is unquestionably great and everybody praises him for his extraordinary behaviour. Late Tawfiq Aziz Khan deserves posthumous national award. May Allah grant his soul eternal peace.

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Significance of Hajj

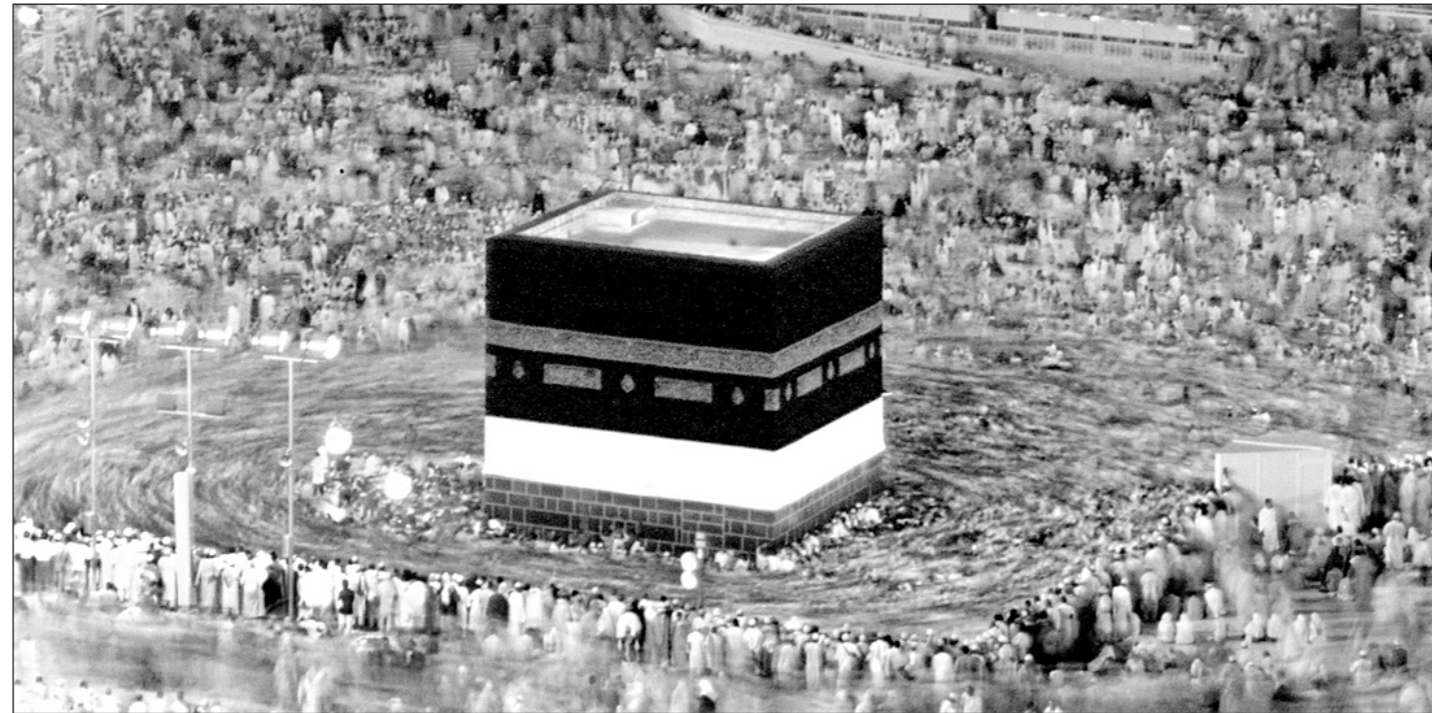
MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

ISLAM reminds us that it is not a religion to be paid mere lip service; rather it is an all-encompassing way of life that must be practiced continuously. Therefore, a Muslim must abide by five pillars of the religion i.e. the declaration of faith in the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), five times prayer in a day, fasting in the month of Ramadan, paying Zakat and the pilgrimage to Makka, and believe in six articles of faith: belief in Allah, the holy scriptures including Bible, Torah and Quran, the prophets, the angels, the day of judgment and Allah's decree, whether for good or bad.

The pilgrimage to Makka to perform Hajj is one of the pillars of Islam. Hajj is, however, not mandatory for all Muslims, but it is incumbent on those who are physically and financially able to perform. In this connection, para 97 of surah Imran says, "pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah, those who can afford the journey but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures" (3:97).

Historically the house of Allah was built in Bakka now known as Makka in Saudi Arabia at the command of Allah by prophet Ibrahim and prophet Ismail and thus the institution of Hajj, which means an intention to go to a holy place. From a religious point of view Hajj can be defined as the intention to go to the house of Allah to surrender to him.

The total submission to Allah is the duty of mummin (believer). In chapter 125 of surah Baqara it is stated very clearly that the believers have been commanded by Allah to visit this holy place of Kaabah at least once in lifetime as an act of submission to Allah. The surah says, "remember we made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety; and take ye the station of Ibrahim as a place of prayer; and we



covenanted with Ibrahim and Ismail, that they should sanctify My house for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer)."

During the period of jahiliyah pagans believers desecrated the House of Allah by worshipping idols. This was the state of affairs before the birth of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). As a result, Allah commanded the Prophet to call upon the people to worship Allah as the one creator. The Prophet did not insist on the acceptance of different religion but to return to the religion that Allah first revealed to Prophet Ibrahim. In chapter 78 in Surah 22 Allah says, 'He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Ibrahim. It is he who named you Muslims, both before and in this (revelation); that the apostle may be a witness for mankind. So establish

regular prayer, give regular charity, and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector, the best protector and the best to help.'

On being commanded by Allah Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) had to undertake the work of cleansing the Kaabah to remove every impurity and remnant of idolatry as the Kaabah represents purification and unification of belief in Allah. A believer is required to perform Hajj at his own cost, which is earned not through usury, criminal acts or any other illegal way. And Allah granted the prayer of Prophet Ibrahim to make the city of Makka a city of peace and a safe place. The Kaabah is made full of blessings and guidance for all beings who enter as reflected in chapter 96 of surah Imran.

During the period of Hajj in Makka hundreds of thousands of Muslims from all over the world assemble

here to please the command of Allah and seek the blessings of Almighty. The holy place, therefore, represents 'centripetal movement of Muslims to the Kaabah' and forms a 'nucleus of the Islamic world'. The performer of Hajj will be required to fulfil certain conditions which include wearing Ihram (plain cloth without stitching). Wearing jewelry, perfume, or luxurious clothes, cutting nails and hair are totally prohibited and a cleansed person is entitled to wear Ihram and he would follow certain guidelines as Allah explains in chapter 95 of surah Al-Maccedah: "Believers, kill no game while on pilgrimage. He that kills game by design, shall present, as an offering to the Kaabah, an animal equivalent to the one he killed, to be determined by two just men among you; or he shall, in expiation, either feed the poor or fast, so that he may taste the evil consequences of his

deed. Allah has forgiven what is past; but if anyone relapses into wrongdoing Allah will avenge Himself on him: Allah is mighty and capable of revenge." In fact, a pilgrim is prepared himself to die any moment during the period of Hajj. Therefore, no amount of worldly affairs will bind his mind and he will refrain from any kind of comfort. At Kaabah a pilgrim will perform certain rituals including seven times circuits around the Kaabah and seven times to Safa and Marwah, which means "to walk at a pace that is faster than normal and slower than running".

As a part of rituals a pilgrim is also required to sacrifice animal in the name of Allah as indicated in chapter 27 of Surah Al-Hajj: "Exhort all men to make the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on the backs of swift camels from every distant quarter; they will come to

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Lessons of Eid-ul-Azha

KAZI AULAD HOSSAIN

WHEN in the lunar month of zilqad the intending Hajj pilgrims start leaving Dhaka for the holy city of Mecca the well-to-do persons, who are required to sacrifice in the name of Almighty Allah on the day of Eid-ul-Azha also start thinking of buying sacrificial animals. After offering two "rakats" of Eid-ul-Azha congregational prayers and special thanks to Allah Rabbul Alameen (the Lord of the worlds) in the morning of the day of Eid-ul-Azha, the festival of Eid-ul-Azha formally starts with the sacrifice of animals in commemoration of the supreme sacrifice made by Prophet Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S) in deference to wishes of Allah.

It may be mentioned here that of all the Prophets (Peace be upon them) Benign Allah sent to this mundane world names of only six Prophets have been mentioned in the Holy Quran and Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S) is one of them. And not only he is one of them, he has a special position to the Lord Creator and because of such position Almighty Allah has graciously been pleased to call him as "Ibrahim Khalilullah or the "Friend of Allah".

Let the rich and the well-to-do persons enjoy delicious dishes prepared out of the meat of the sacrificial animals, but at the same time they should also remember the poor and the needy. Let us remember the inner meaning and significance of sacrifice and the great lesson that Eid-ul-Azha teaches, and act accordingly.

Muslim to offer prayers ("Salat") five times a day as indicated in the Holy Quran and in course of offering such prayers every day he has to raise his two hands up to his ears uttering "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is Great) eleven times. But his prayers will not be proper or in order unless he supplicates Benign Allah, interalia, all the eleven times in the following manner: "O Allah! I beseech You to shower Your peace on Hazrat Muhammad the way you showered Your peace on Hazrat Ibrahim." This is a clear indication of Almighty Allah's love for Hazrat Ibrahim Khalilullah.

Hazrat Ibrahim's position may also be gauged from the fact that once the Lord Creator put him to a severe test and he came out of that test with flying colours. Allah Rabbul Alameen commanded Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S) to sacrifice in His name what he considered to be the

dearest thing in his life. Obviously the dearest thing was his beloved young son Hazrat Ismail (A.S), and both of them were pleased to obey Almighty Allah's command. Consequently when all necessary preparations were made and apparently Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S) sacrificed his beloved son, it was found that his son was not actually sacrificed, instead, in the twinkle of eye a ram was put under neath his knife and the animal was sacrificed as ordained by Benign Allah, Hazrat Ismail (A.S) was standing nearby hale and hearty. So, the Friend of Allah, Hazrat Ibrahim, came out of this severe test with flying colours. This is in brief the background of the second greatest Muslim festival Eid-ul-Azha.

Now the question is why Almighty Allah asked Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S) to sacrifice his beloved son? What was the reason behind such sacrifice?

Allah surely does not do anything without any valid reason. His every action is certainly reasonable and logical. This action of Allah Gafur-ur-Rahim vis-a-vis the solemn sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim's son was aimed at bringing revolutionary changes in thinking of man. Man is by nature prone to take special or greater interest in his personal affairs than the affairs of other people. For instance, by and large, man is not serious to give relief of the poverty stricken people living in sub-human condition in the society he lives in.

In this context, it may be said that Benign Allah desired that at least man's virtues and merits should have upper hand over his vices demerits and lapses so that society would be a better place to live in. It was also His Desire that man should learn and endeavour to forego and sacrifice his personal interests to bring smile on the faces of the less

fortunate, needy and poor persons. And with this end in view Merciful Allah declared in Ayat (verse) 37 of Sura Hadj (pilgrimage) of the Holy Quran:

"It is not meat Nor their blood, that reaches Allah: it is your piety That reaches Him."

So, sacrifice of animals on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha in commemoration of the supreme sacrifice made by Hazrat Ibrahim teaches us a great lesson. If Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S) was pleased to sacrifice his beloved son, the best thing in his life, to please Allah, then we should be prepared to sacrifice at least a portion of our money, wealth, time and comfort for the poor and the indigent who badly need them.

For their gastronomic delight let the rich and the well-to-do persons enjoy delicious dishes prepared out of the meat of the sacrificial animals on the day of Eid-ul-Azha, but at the same time they should also remember the poor and the needy. Let us remember the inner meaning and significance of sacrifice and the great lesson that Eid-ul-Azha teaches, and act accordingly.

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