

# Eid-ul-Azha

**Sacrifice has always played a vital role in the 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, 22:34)**

SYED ASHRAF ALI

*"It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah: It is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to you: And proclaim the Good News to all who do right." -- The Holy Quran (22:37)*

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 not only to enjoy an auspicious day of joy and happiness but also to receive Allah's mercy and reward through sacrifice, patience and constancy.

The great festival Eid-ul-Azha, 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 the 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, the cherisher and sustainer of the worlds.

Sacrifice has always played a vital role in the 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, 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 earthquakes, to extinguish volcanic eruptions, to win wars, to ally tyrants, to appease or eulogise gods and goddesses.

Human sacrifices have also been made by various nations in various forms and for various purposes since the dawn of civilization. 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.

Never, never indeed, on this day of a cold star has any other father tried to slaughter his own son with his own hands, and in full senses, simply to obey God's Commands.

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 Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them). It was indeed a great trial of the will of the father and the son. By way of the trial the father had the Command conveyed to him in a vision. To make sure that it was not an idle

dream, and, if it was a real order, to make sure that his son consented, Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) consulted the son. The son not only readily consented but also offered to stand true to his promise if his self-sacrifice was really required.

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 his father was taking him 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 the 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 Ibrahil 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 rewarded 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 glorious incident indicates, is 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.

Prophet Ibrahim's (peace be upon him) seeing in a vision that he, too, was sacrificing his son, his preparation to fulfill it literally and lastly the Divine commandment to sacrifice an animal in his stead indeed marked the abolition of the savage custom of human sacrifice.

The world today stands indebted to the righteous Patriarch and his dedicated son for their noble example in uprooting the age-old savage custom.

The unparalleled episode of Hazrat Ibrahim and Hazrat Ismail's (peace be upon them) unshakeable dedication and obedience to Allah had a very significant influence not only on the people of the East but it also had great impact in the West, like the holy Mi'raj of Prophet

Muhammed (peace be upon them) deeply influenced the letters both in the East and in the West.

Even a towering personality like the great Homer was moved to a great extent. The legendary Greek poet emulated the glorious example of the devout father and his obedient son and used a similar episode in his world-renowned epic poem Iliad.

While sailing for Troy to rescue Helen, the Greek fleet under the overall command of Agamemnon was detained at Aulis by a terrible wind blowing in the opposite direction. Days passed, but the fleet could not proceed. A sooth-sayer told Agamemnon that the wind would subside only if his daughter was sacrificed to goddess Diana. Agamemnon sent for his daughter Iphigenia, who was at home, on the plea that she was required to come to Aulis in order to marry Achilles. When Iphigenia came and saw that the preparations were at foot not for her marriage but for her murder, she implored to be spared, but in vain.

The moment came for the priest to behead her. The priest raised the sword, but when it came down, it struck not Iphigenia and whisked her away, making a goat appear on the altar.

The story, which has a striking similarity with that of the sacred and serene sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim and his son Hazrat Ismail (peace be upon them), clearly indicates that Homer was influenced by the glorious incident, which occurred on the plains of Mina in 1800 BC.

It is true that in the case of the Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them) there was no question of war, it did not originate from the lips of a soothsayer, no daughter was there, no plea was necessary to convince the son, nor was there any protest from or unwillingness on the part of the son to be sacrificed.

But in spite of all these minor differences, Homer's description of the human sacrifice to appease the goddess Diana, the last minute miraculous replacement of Iphigenia by a goat by Diana, the last minute miraculous replacement of Iphigenia by a goat by

Diana, the acceptance by Diana of the intended sacrifice of Agamemnon -- all testify eloquently to the fact that Homer indeed was influenced by the historic incident at Mina.

It is really surprising that some inadvertently all 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, pleasure and gaiety, 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 the bone of his bone, the heart of his heart- his dearest son. What is needed on this glorious occasion is sacrifice form 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.

As already stated, Allah does not



delight in flesh or blood and it is the genuine outpourings from the hearts, firm in constancy and patient perseverance that please Benign Providence. What is more, through the system of denying ourselves the greater part of the food derived from the sacrificed cattle for the sake of the poor brethren, our symbolic act finds practical expression in benevolence, and that exactly is the virtue sought to be taught.

Eid-ul-Azha indeed is a festival with a difference. Each and every Muslim should try his or her level best to celebrate this auspicious occasion every year in a befitting manner. What Allah expects on this sacred occasion is giving of our whole being to Him. It is by the mention of Allah's Sacred Name that a Muslim sacrifices an animal. It is not an empty mention of a

word that the Muslims make; their very hearts should tremble at the very mention of the Holy Name. Each Muslim should bear in mind that if he sacrifices an animal over which he has full control, it is much more necessary that he should lay down his life in the way of Allah, who is not only his master but also his creator and sustainer.

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. It teaches us not to love life over much, seeing that we must one day part with it. It teaches us to face death with resignation.

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## Health and human rights

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GOOD health is central to creating and sustaining the capabilities that poor people need in order to get rid of poverty. It is a key asset of the poor, which contributes to their greater economic security. Good health is not just an outcome of development; it is a way of achieving development. Amartya Sen notes: "... good health and economic prosperity tend to support each other. Healthy people can more easily earn an income, and people with a higher income can more easily seek medical care, have better nutrition, and have the freedom to live healthier lives."

In other words, sick people are more likely to become poor, and the poor are more vulnerable to disease and disability. Therefore, ill health is both a cause and a consequence of poverty.

### Meaning of health rights

The right to health is not a right to be healthy. The state cannot provide people with protection against every possible cause of ill health or

disability, such as the adverse consequences of genetic diseases or the adoption of unhealthy lifestyles. Therefore, health right, indeed, is a "right to the enjoyment of a variety of facilities and conditions that are necessary for good health."

These can be divided into two basic components: those related to health care and those related to general living conditions affecting health, such as safe water, food, environment, sanitation and shelter. These conditions also include freedom from discrimination, torture, inhuman treatment, harmful traditional practices, etc.

More specifically, the right to health can be understood as a right to an effective and integrated health system, encompassing health care and other determinants of health. So when we talk about health rights we mean that government, as the key duty bearer, must create conditions in which everyone can be as healthy as possible.

### International instruments

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly

in 1947, proclaims everyone's right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services (Article 25).

Right to health has been protected in many other international and regional human rights treaties, like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966; Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), 1984; Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989; and International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (MWC), 1990.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which monitors compliance with the ICESCR, adopted a General Comment on the Right to Health in 2000. According to the General Comment the right to health con-

tains four elements -- availability (functioning public health and health care facilities, goods and services, as well as programs in sufficient quantity), accessibility (health facilities, goods and service accessible for everyone within the jurisdiction of the State party), acceptability and quality.

Accessibility has four overlapping dimensions -- non-discrimination, physical accessibility, economical accessibility (affordability), and information accessibility. The third element is acceptability (all health facilities, goods and services must be respectful to medical ethics and culturally appropriate, as well as sensitive to gender and life-cycle requirements). And the fourth element is quality (health facilities, goods and services must be scientifically and medically appropriate and of good quality).

The right to health, like all human rights, imposes on the state 3 types of obligations: respect; refraining from interference with the enjoyment of the right to health; protect; ensuring that third parties (non-state actors) do not violate the

enjoyment of the right to health; and fulfill; taking positive steps to realise the right to health.

### Bangladesh context

The constitution of Bangladesh provides that "the state shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the improvement of public health as moving its primary duties..." (Article 18). It has also provisions for peoples' right to other determinants of health.

The country adopted a National Health Policy in 2000 with fifteen aims and objectives. These objectives include: development of nutrition and public health, accessible health services for the poor and rural population, primary healthcare for the Upazila and Union Council, reduction of maternal mortality, development of reproductive health, up-gradation and modernisation of health services, introduction of family planning methods for the ultra poor, special provision for the mentally and physically handicapped population etc.

The existing regulatory framework for monitoring health service,

however, remains weak. There are 45 laws related to various aspects of health. For example, laws related to specific diseases/health situations such as Epidemic Disease Act (1897), Prevention of Malaria Ordinance (1978), Eye Surgery (Restriction) Ordinance (1960); laws related to breast milk substitute, quality of food, quality of drugs, use of narcotic, women and children's health, health of labourers, environmental pollution and so on. None of these laws deal directly with the rights of patients/clients.

### Client charter of rights

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) formulated the Clients' Charter of Rights (CCR) in 1998. The charter recognises peoples' right to information about the services available from providers, right to safe and continuous services, right to choose the form of treatment and family planning methods, right to receive services on priority basis in emergency situation, right to confidentiality, right to be informed about the services received, right to be respected, express opinion and feel

at ease, right to receive clients' own copies of treatment/health related reports, and right to inform relevant authorities and get redress, if the clients' rights are hindered or compromised for any reason.

### In quest of responsive health service

To ensure people's right to health in line with the above-mentioned comments of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the health service should be accountable, transparent and responsive to people's need. The formulation of CCR is only the first step in emphasising the individual's right to health.

The charter was developed without the broad participation of civil society, other government departments or other stakeholders. The result was a CCR with a narrow focus of health rights i.e. only on the health services, and without the institutional and legal mechanisms in place for it to be used as a tool by clients to demand their rights. Therefore, the MoHFW should revise the charter involving different stakeholders so that it encompasses

right to health services as well as other determinants of health.

In addition to that, the government should ask all health service providing institutes to develop their own charters highlighting their vision and mission, details of service provisions, and details of grievance redressing mechanisms.

A citizens' charter, by definition, should be developed through the participation of stakeholders. Without it the charter is just a statement of intent rather than a live, meaningful, contract between the state and the citizen, which is what it is meant to be.

Citizens should also be engaged in monitoring compliance with the charter, and during the review of the charter, which should take place periodically. To make a citizens charter an effective tool for ensuring peoples' right there must an effective mechanism for redressing grievances, and for monitoring users' feedback continuously.

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## Time to focus on the re-rolling mill industry

RAJIV GOPAL

THE re-rolling mill (RRM) industry in Bangladesh is one of the most important suppliers to the construction industry. Every square foot of construction requires 5-6 kg of rolled products. With the economy booming, (a growth rate of 5.7% per year for the past 15 years), and the construction industry in particular accounting for 9.2% of GDP and growing at 8.0% per year, the scope and potential of the RRM is huge.

The RRM industry started emerging in the 1970s to meet the needs of the newly independent Bangladesh, and was followed in the early 1990s by the emergence of steel mills. Currently, there are nearly 100 steel mills, 250 RRM, and 100 integrated facilities in

Bangladesh. The total output capacity is 2.4 million tons per year.

Despite the growing global and domestic demand for steel products, the RRM industry in Bangladesh has not invested in improving the quality of products or expanding the production capacity. Most re-rolling mills are operating below optimal capacity due to constraints such as frequent power disruptions, low pressure gas supply and low quality and erratic supply of raw materials. Nearly 100 rolling mills are non-operational.

Factories look and think much like they did thirty to forty years ago; their focus is limited to domestic markets and basic low value products; business to business integration with global supply chains is non-existent; machinery,

processes and technology are outdated and unreliable; consolidation remains low, and even medium size firms are few in number. Policy makers, civil society, and financial institutions need to focus their attention and encourage the sector to grow out of its inertia. Few donors and development agencies have ventured into the sector or come up with sustainable programs and results.

The industry faces many challenges, some intrinsic to the country as a whole, some specific to the RRM sector.

### Bangladesh re-rolling mill industry

Most of the RRM are small in size, with a capacity of 600-800 tons per month (tpm), and the steel mills are a little larger with 1200 tpm

average capacity. Most of the rolling mills are located in Dhaka (Shyampur/Fatulah, Narayanganj and Tongi/ Gazipur) and Chittagong, and most of the steel mills and integrated re-rolling mills are around Chittagong.

### Market analysis

With the positive global economic outlook, the steel industry worldwide is expecting an exponential growth in steel consumption in the near. It is estimated that:

- Steel consumption will rise rapidly in the next 10 years to reach a level of 140 million tons per year by 2020, of which 55% (77mt) will be long products.
- The past 10 years have experienced a 33.6% growth rate in global crude steel production.
- The international demand for steel is expected to grow by 5%

everywhere.

- India is poised to achieve steel production of over 100 million tons annually by 2019.

### How is Bangladesh positioned to deal with this opportunity?

Even with local demand high and global demand rising, the RRM industry in Bangladesh continues primarily to produce as it has for the past decade, without improving product or increasing capacity. This represents a huge loss of opportunity for Bangladesh, and it leaves the industry vulnerable to competition from imports in the future.

**Export opportunity:** The scope to export is evident. China, for example, has more than doubled export of steel products, and has turned

into a net exporter of steel in the first half of 2006 from being a net importer in 2005. This demonstrates not only the growing global demand for steel but also the upcoming opportunity in the export market as China now begins to focus inwards -- an opportunity Bangladesh should not miss. Similarly, the Gulf countries are experiencing strong economic growth and are investing heavily in industry and infrastructure, leading to a shortage of steel in the Arabian Peninsula. Existing steel producers and re-rolling mills are forming joint ventures with large-scale investors for quick expansion to meet the massive demand. These joint ventures are expected to result in win-win cycles for the countries involved.

Bangladesh may be able to take

advantage of this export opportunity, provided that the RRM are able to produce the appropriate quality at the right price.

Recognising that optimal operation of the RRM sector is of paramount importance to the industrial and infrastructural growth of the country, IFC-SEDF has identified this as a focus sector in Bangladesh.

Based on an industry survey and field studies, IFC-SEDF has made the following four key recommendations for the RRM industry:

- Implement cost-reducing, energy-efficient modifications for the mills, for example, Recuperator for reduction of gas consumption and Modified burner nozzle for scale loss reduction.
- Identify product diversification

opportunities to help move up the value curve, for example: manufacture quenched and tempered bars.

- Address the large, but ignored, export market.
- Collaborate efforts to overcome power/raw material constraints, for example: form networks which share the benefits of a communal generator.

Given the scope for growth, profitability and export, and also given the vulnerability to import substitution, RRM owners need to improve products and expand capacity quickly. This is very much the need of the hour for Bangladesh industry.

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