

Joy of Sacrifice

SYED ASHRAF ALI

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.

Popularly known as *Bakrid*, *Eid-ul-Azha* is celebrated on the tenth of *Dhul-Hijja* through immolations and prayers in memory of the glorious sacrifice of the Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them) and shows the way in which both father and son cheerfully offered to suffer any self-sacrifice, however painful or difficult, in order to obey Allah's Command.

The word *Eid* in Arabic means joy. But *Eid-ul-Azha* is certainly not an occasion for immoderate gluttony or gourmandism. It is a solemn, sacred festival which enables a *Banda* to enjoy through *Azha* -- sacrifice and surrender, resignation and renunciation, selflessness and total submission to the Will of *Rabbul Alameen*.

Celebrated concurrently with the slaughtering of the animals in Mina, Saudi Arabia, by the *Hajis* and the days of *Tashriq* in the auspicious month of *Dhul-Hijja*, *Eid-ul-Azha* is also known as *Eid-al-Kabir* or "the Great Festival." Some also call it *Eid-ul-Qurbani* or the "Sacrificial Feast", and "*Yaum an-Nahr*." In Bangladesh and Paschimbanga (in India) it is also known as *Kurbanir Eid*.

Sacrifice has always played a significant role in the chequered history of mankind. Sacrifices have been made to get rid of natural calamities like flood and cyclone and earthquake, to evade famine, to solicit rain, to stop volcanic eruptions, to win wars, to ally tyranny, to appease or eulogise gods and goddesses. Human sacrifices had indeed been made by various nations in various forms and for various purposes since the dawn of civilisation. The glorious and inimitable attempt of *Hazrat Ibrahim Khalilullah* to slaughter his son *Hazrat Ismail Zabihullah* (peace be upon them) as a sacrifice in obedience to God's Command, however, stands unique in the annals of history. Never, never indeed, on the clay of this cold star has any other father tried to slaughter his own son with his own hands, and in full senses, simply to obey the Master's Command.

It was indeed a great and momentous occa-

sion when two men, with concerted will, "ranged themselves in the ranks of those to whom self-sacrifice in the service of Allah was the supreme thing in life." The glorious incident, which took place in Mina some 3,800 solar years ago, 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 matters of policy or convenience; that all our life in this world must be lived as in the presence of Benign Providence; that no task or responsibility, however difficult or heavy a burden it may be, is greater than what we can bear. It teaches us, in the words of the Holy *Quran*, that "short is the enjoyment of this world: the Hereafter is the best for those who do right." It teaches us that a Muslim does not live with his body, but lives with his spirit. 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.

The historic incident in Mina, wherein a ram was sacrificed in lieu of a human being, put an end to the horrible system of human sacrifice which was common among most ancient people. The world today stands indebted to the righteous Patriarch and his dedicated son for their noble example in uprooting the age-old savage custom.

Moslems all over the world celebrate *Eid-ul-Azha* every year and hundreds and thousands of sheep, cows, goats and camels are sacrificed on the 10th day of *Dhul-Hijja* in the name of Allah. Unfortunately, however, very few of us celebrate this auspicious occasion in a befitting way. Very few realise that *Rabbul Alameen* does not need the flesh and blood of the animals. What He asks for is the *Taqwa* (which has been mentioned 211 times in the Holy *Quran*) and not lives in a physical sense. *Sura al-Hajj* in the Holy *Quran* declares very clearly: "It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches God, it is your piety that reaches Him. He has thus made them subject to you, that ye may glorify God for His guidance to you. And proclaim the Good News to all who do right."

It is very clear that what Allah, in His infinite Mercy, desires from the *Bandas* on this sacred occasion is giving of our whole being to Him. It is by the mention of Allah's name that an animal is sacrificed. The utterance of the

Quranic verses affirms and asserts over and over again: "Truly my prayer, and my sacrifice, my life and my death, are all for God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds." It is not an empty mention of a word that Moslems make, the very hearts of the *Momens* tremble at the mention of the Holy Name. Each and every Muslim sacrificing an animal should bear in mind if he can sacrifice an animal over which he has full control for a particular period of time, how much more necessary it is that he should lay down his life in the Way of Allah, Who is not only his Master but also his Creator and Sustainer. It will indeed be a sin if we forget the supreme sacrifice made by the Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail (peace be upon them), buy an animal from the market, slaughter it just for the sake of fun and gourmandism, and celebrate this auspicious day through mere pleasure and gaiety, extravagance and dissipation, unbridled merry-making and uncouth entertainment. No Muslim, nay no human being, has any right to humble the unparalleled sacrifice of the Prophet Ibrahim and his son (peace be upon them) by equating it with the mere slaughtering of an animal with no *taqwa* behind it. We will certainly insult those salts of the earth if we celebrate *Eid-ul-Azha* only through expensive clothes and delicious dishes, and not through prayers and penance, sacrifice and benevolence.

Allah has very kindly given us power over the brute creation and permitted us to eat their meat, but that too if we pronounce His Holy Name at the solemn act of taking the animal's 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 (as the immodest and sinful Brigitte Bardot thinks) and is never permitted in Islam. Nor does the Most Perfect Deen of Allah permit extravagance or wastage in the name of religion on any occasion whether through slaughtering of cattle on the day of *Eid-ul-Azha* or through any other means. *Eid-ul-Azha* is 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 sublime message that *Eid-ul-Azha* conveys.

The writer is a former Director General, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.

But the music plays on ...

SHIFTING IMAGES



MILIA ALI

WE often indulge in nostalgic musings to relive glorious moments of our past. But nostalgia can also take us down a path of regrets. Of late, whenever I sing, I am filled with a doleful longing for my first harmonium, which is no longer with me.

I clearly remember the day my parents and I climbed into the back seat of our Volkswagen with *Ustadji* (Munshi

Raisuddin) sitting in front, to make a trip to "Jatin & Co" in old Dhaka to order a harmonium. My parents discussed the details with the shop owner -- "German reeds" and "scale changer" -- and the deal was struck. In three weeks the glistening dark brown wooden instrument arrived, smelling of new polish -- its shining black and white keys awaiting my soft touch to bring them to life. Even my name was inscribed on a brass plate in the front. To my dismay I noticed that "Milia" was spelt "Melia," but it was too late to make any corrections. What mattered was that the harmonium was all mine. It found a proud place in my bedroom. During the first few weeks of our companionship I would even wake up in the middle of the night to check that it was really there!

Being a naïve eight year old, I believed that the acquisition of a harmonium would win me a preferred status in the wonderful world of music. Little did I know that my long, arduous musical voyage had only just begun. I soon discovered that acquiring the harmonium was much easier than learning to play it -- or the more difficult task was ensuring that my voice sang in perfect harmony with it. However, the music box remained a silent witness to all the long hours of practicing and training my voice to synchronise with the many notes and sub notes. *Ustadji* guided me through this labourious process until I learnt to sing and play a "full song" with the harmonium as an accompaniment.

I transitioned into classical music and started using the *tanpura* for some period. New teachers and gurus came on the scene and the locations of my homes changed, but the harmonium remained a constant in my itinerant life. It accompanied me to new countries, its warm notes comforting me on many a solitary evening. At times when I thought I had lost my music, its keys re-opened the door to my musical world. It was my connection to the magical realm of Rabindra Sangeet, even when I was far removed from my familiar culture.

The harmonium also gave me those rare moments of pride. As a child I remember accompanying my aunts to the Curzon Hall for a concert where a singer sang Tagore's compositions playing the harmonium. I ardently wished that someday I would achieve this great feat ... Destiny favoured me. Years later I sang with my beloved harmonium in the Curzon Hall, which was a part of the Physics Department where I was a student. Among my many musical performances I remember this one vividly, because it was a realisation of a childhood dream in which my harmonium played a major role!

During the course of my music career I acquired a new harmonium -- a "state of the art" instrument -- while the old one lay neglected in a corner. Later, when I came back to live in Dhaka it returned to its roots. Since it was in need of tuning I took it to a music shop. Realising that the harmonium was unused and neglected, the man who tuned it asked if I would to sell it to him. He was also a singer but could not afford buy a new harmonium. I was touched by his story and agreed to give it to him as a gift on the condition that he would take good care of it.

So it was done -- almost like a rite of passage my harmonium passed on to a new owner. I felt sad but reasoned that it had found someone who needed it more. However, to this day I have not reconciled with this impulsive and emotional decision.

I often wonder where the harmonium is -- has it received the honour and respect it deserves or does it lie abandoned in a nook or cranny? I guess I will never know, but its notes still play in my ears. My first harmonium was not just an instrument -- it was a symbol of my parents' love for music and their aspirations of wanting their daughter to become an "accomplished singer." A reminder of their efforts to ensure that I developed a passion for the arts. Its loss has left a void in my heart because it has taken with it a large part of my personal and musical history!

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Durga Puja and our religious sentiment

JYOTIRMOY BARUA

HINDU religious festivals are famous worldwide for their colourfulness, and even with our diminishing numbers we celebrate those festivals like nothing happened to us. The so-called communal harmony in our country has long gone and left us with the rhetoric of harmony to chew it with the residue.

The fundamental element in our daily life has resulted in decreasing the Hindu community from 22% to 6% in the last 43 years, resulting in loss of importance in the politics of the country. There used to be a common conception that the Hindus were the 'vote bank' for the Awami League (AL). They did get friendliness from AL and rejection from BNP (BNP and Jamaat e Islami Bangladesh. But over time, AL realised that if they relied on a particular religious minority for their politics it could backfire. So they, along with all other political parties, have started attacking the Hindus and looting their houses and business places. This has forced them to either leave the country or face death. AL benefited in both cases; if there was death then they could blame BNP and Jamaat for the atrocities; and if the victims left, AL could grab their properties! BNP and Jamaat leaders had also followed the same path, and they collectively managed to reduce the number of Hindus to 6% in just 43 years' time.

Attacks on temples and festivals have become a common phenomenon. Durga Puja is the prime target for vandalism and creating panic among the locals. The practice has become so widespread now that the Hindus plan to keep back-ups in case their idols fall under attack by the majority. One might task, what about law

and order in the country? I don't know which country you are thinking of but I do know now that no law in this country will be able to prevent this happening in the coming years.

Nothing works when it comes to providing protection to the religious and ethnic minority groups in this country. The laws are best read in the books and not in practice. Law enforcers are sometimes part of the atrocity, and local governments seem to become deaf and dumb when it comes to safeguarding the minorities. Between October 1 and December 30, 2002, there had been 355 political killings, 3,270 rape incidents and a large number of arson attacks and looting of the belongings of Hindu families. No question was asked in during the full tenure of the elected political government!

After 8 years, due to an order by the Hon'ble High Court Division in connection with a Writ Petition, a Judicial Inquiry Commission was formed on December 27, 2009. They received 5,571 specific complaints of violence against more than 20,000 accused. The Commission, however, investigated 3,625 complaints. Upon completing the investigation they submitted their report before the Hon'ble High Court on April 29, 2011. The report has never been made public, like all other previous judicial inquiry commission reports. The Official Secrecy Act still plays a vital role!

In a press conference on April 29, 2011, Mr. Moudud Ahmed, a prominent leader of BNP, ruled out the allegation of communal attack on the Hindus and involvement of the BNP activists in the aforesaid rape, looting and vandalism in 2002, and also claimed that those were not communal attacks but fights between AL and BNP activists. Mr. Ahmed's statement essentially involved clear denial and polit-

ical polarisation, and this has become the trend in the case of all communal attacks against Hindu, Buddhists, Adibashis and the Ahmadis.

Communal violence has an inherent politics, but political violence does not necessarily have to be communal. The two problematic terminologies contributed to some sort of legitimacy of the violent attacks on the religious and ethnic minorities, as if they wouldn't have happened if the politics or hurting of reli-

We have to live with this ground reality and unless there is strong action by the majority to protect the minorities and strict adherence to the existing laws, or even enactment of a new one to cover communal violence, it will remain a never-ending problem.

gious belief were not involved in it. The desire of the rulers to hide the ugly truth that there are communal tensions has been the main barrier against finding a way out. The religious sentiment of the minorities had not been evaluated as being the same as the sentiment of the majority people.

This is not the case when it comes to hurting the sentiment of Muslims. The recent comments by the Telecommunication and Information

Minister Abdul Latif Siddique against Hajj and the Tablighi Jamaat have given rise to demands for taking stern action against him, including hanging him until death. As a prompt action against such atrocity against Islam, Mr. Siddique has been removed from the ministry and the AL. Several cases have been filed against him in many districts of the country. It is very encouraging to see such prompt action being taken.

It would have been better if insults against all other religious belief were also taken as seriously by the government and the majority people. When some Muslims loot or vandalise temples then the sentiments of the Hindus or Buddhists are also hurt. But the state mechanism seems to become blind in addressing those incidents. Since February 28 to September 28, 2013, in 51 districts, at least 146 Hindu temples were attacked, about 500 Hindu families became homeless, 5 people were killed and 65 were injured. No one raised their voice against this hurting of the sentiments of the Hindus!

In the last two weeks in 15 districts, at least 22 Durga Puja Pandal were vandalised by the local Muslims. bdnews24.com reported on September 27 that 82 out of 408 Puja Pandal at Rajshahi have been declared as risky (important) by the police! This is the scenario in most of the districts. Even after 43 years of our independence, religious festivals of minorities face threat of being attacked by the Muslims. We have to live with this ground reality and unless there is strong action by the majority to protect the minorities and strict adherence to the existing laws, or even enactment of a new one to cover communal violence, it will remain a never-ending problem.

The writer is Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

QUOTABLE Quote

Believe that life is worth living and your belief will help create the fact.

William James

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- Indian lutes
- Pile
- Maine national park
- Eyeball
- Lone Star State officer
- Bike parts
- Make progress
- Uneven hairdo
- Fair
- Singer Robert
- Manga a time
- "Oh, wow!"
- "My word!"
- Go carousing
- Make brownies
- Tooth part
- Neutral color
- Sculptor Henry
- Hero of an old kids' TV series
- Sneaker problem
- Salad base
- Corrals
- Put on, as a play

DOWN

- Plopped down
- Rink stuff
- Receipt line
- Slow passage
- Up
- Mystery writer Woods
- Tokyo's island
- Nest item
- Saloon supply
- Foreach
- Fiery crime
- Succeed
- The Jetsons' dog
- Pond growth
- Not at all cool
- Cry loudly
- Opening
- Golf peg
- Carpenter
- Out-of-the-park hits
- Starr of the comics
- Endowment
- Valuable rocks
- Catchy music
- Poem of praise
- Took the title
- Musician's job
- Gain's mother
- Scarlet

CRYPTOQUOTE 8-14

GEYNSUW UTXTJNY ENYTDI; NGJN'Y SZT SI NGT NGEZKY NGJN'Y QUSZK QENG GEYNSUW. -- PDJUTZPT HJUUSQ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: REPENTANCE IS NOT SO MUCH REMORSE FOR WHAT WE HAVE DONE AS THE FEAR OF THE CONSEQUENCES. -- ROCHEFOUCAULD

Yesterday's answer

R	I	N	G	S	I	S	L	E	S
I	D	I	O	T	N	I	E	C	E
M	A	P	L	E	S	T	A	R	E
					D	A	S	H	
					P	U	P		
C	A	T	S	M	E	O	W		
A	T	O	M	A	R	O	M	A	S
Y	O	G	I	S	T	R	I	B	E
S	P	A	T	E	S	D	R	E	W
					H	E	A	D	S
					P	A	D	S	
					O	S	A	K	A
					S	H	R	E	W
					T	E	E	N	S
					S	H	A	G	S

A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

HENRY by Don Trachte