

## **SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF RITUAL OF SACRIFICE ON EID UL ADHA (RESEARCH BASED STUDY ON SATELLITE TOWN RAWALPINDI)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper deal with research findings regarding sacrifice, short historical background of sacrifice and then what is the symbolic importance of animal sacrifice on EidulAdha. Eid is just not a religious ritual for the people but it more then it. It symbolize many believes, messages, concepts and notions linked with history, religion and even future of the people. The concept of sacred and profane has also been discussed. This research was conducted in Satellite Town Rawalpindi. Qualitative anthropological techniques were used to collect empirical data.

**KEYWORDS:** Atoning, Sanctification, Profanation

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sacrifice is offering of food objects of the life animal to a higher purpose in particular divine beings as an act of worship. Animal sacrifice is a ritual of killing of animal as a part of religion. Ritual of sacrifice is not a new ritual. Human sacrifice was practiced in many ancient cultures. People would be ritually killed in a miner that was supposed to please spirit or God. History has seen human sacrifice upon death of king, priest and great leader. Human sacrifice in the time of natural disaster, drought, and earthquake was common in ancient culture. Animal sacrifice apparently started from hunting gathering societies, this is a one concept about the origin of sacrifice. While according to the other concept, sacrifice started as concept of God emerged in human societies. It is an old ritual which can be seen throughout the history. Due to the symbolic importance of sacrifice ritual this has passed through many phases and has become fully organized in different religions, with the passage of time. In Muslim culture EidulAdha is a religious ritual in which Muslim practice the sacrifice of animal, which has much Symbolic value as well.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present research is conducted in Satellite Town Rawalpindi in Punjab Province of Pakistan. It is situated in the center of Rawalpindi. Methodology of the current research was based upon qualitative anthropological research methods which include socio-economic survey, participant observation, key informant interviews, interviews, case studies and focus group discussions were used to collect empirical data. We choose two key informants in the village on our personal judgment basis, which knew most of the people in the town and their socio-economic conditions. Participant observation was used in order to get first hand and accurate information about the respondents. In-depth interviews were conducted with the elder members of society to get detailed information. Case studies were conducted to get a detailed presentation of data related to different events. This research was a 15 days study conduct from 1<sup>st</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> May 2013. Stratified random sampling based upon social class was used for selecting members for interviews.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In the past, it was common to kill animal in ritual as an offering to entities and deities in exchange of protection

and information. In the Bible and Holy Quran and many sacred books of humanity contain references to animal sacrifice and although many belief systems has used this method throughout history as a way to approach the gods, the true meaning and symbolism of these rights are vast and versatile.

Animal sacrifice as described in the Holy Scriptures of many different cultures represents something even greater, the sacrifice of the animal passions that animal live inside every human being. The true offering to the gods is the human soul free from animal instincts that tend to dominate the mind. Stopping a person from becoming enlightened, killing the animal is killing the lower passion of soul. In the time when most people were illiterate, rituals were a way to tell a person how he or she should behave. Building rights and symbols were manuals to communicate something without the words. Animal sacrifice had the purpose to inform people about the need to kill the inner animal in order to be worthy of blessing.

### **THE RITUAL OF EIDULADHA**

EidulAdha is famous in local people with two names “Al EidulKbir” and “QurbaniwaliEid” It is a major feast. It is distinguished from EidulFitar, which is the minor feast comparative to this. EidulAdha is actually celebrated by Muslims two month and ten days after EidulFitar. Eid means recurring festival, the name of EidulAdha mean the feast of sacrifice. It is celebrated on 10<sup>th</sup> Zilhaj (Islamic month)

On 9<sup>th</sup> day of Zilhaj pilgrims proceed to the plain of the mount of Arafah outside Makkah and they spend their time totally in worship. This is the core of worship of Hajj and without this Hajj is not performed. After it they perform Muzdalifah, and then they proceed to three pillars to cast 7 stone at the symbol of Satan. This ceremony is symbolizing the worship activities of Hazrat Ibrahim and Hazrat Ishaq. It is also famous with the name of Rajam, means throwing of stones on Satan.

### **SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF EIDULADHA**

At the end of Hajj (annual pilgrimage to Makkah), Muslim remembers and commemorate the trial and triumphs of Prophet Ibrahim. People believe that Hazrat Ibrahim was an example, obedient to Allah, by nature upright, and he was not of the polytheists. He was grateful for his bounties. People choose him and follow him on to a right path, they think him good in this world and in the next he will most surely be among righteous.

During the celebration of EidulAdha Muslim remember Hazrat Ibrahim trial by slaughtering an animal such as sheep, camel, cow and goat. People think that Allah has given them power over animal and allowed them to eat meat but only if they pronounce His name at the soul act of taking life. People slaughter animal in the same way throughout the year. By saying the name of Allah at the time of slaughter, they are reminded that life is sacred. According to the people this act of slaughter is symbolizing that man is most powerful creature on the earth and this power is given by Allah, if they will not take the name of Allah their power will be none. They are powerful because they are taking the name of Allah and following it, so power is embodied in the obedience of Allah.

One of Abraham’s main trials was to face the command of Allah to kill his only son. Upon hearing this command, He prepared to submit to Allah’s will. When He was all prepared to do it Allah reveal to him that his sacrifice had already been fulfilled. This act had shown symbolically that his love for His Lord superseded all others that he would lay down his own life or the lives of those dear to him in order to submit to God.

The meat from sacrifice from EidulAdha is mostly given away to others. One 3<sup>rd</sup> is eaten by immediate family and relatives, one 3<sup>rd</sup> is given to friends, and one 3<sup>rd</sup> is donated to the poorer. The act symbolizes people willingness to give up things that are of benefit to them are close to their hearts, in order to follow Allah’s command. It also symbolizes their

willingness to give up some of their own bounties, in order to strengthen ties of friendship and health, those who are in need. They recognize that all blessing come from Allah so they should open their hearts and share with others.

It is very important to understand the sacrifice itself as practice by people, has nothing to do with turn away for their sins or using the blood to wash themselves from sins. The symbolism is the attitude, a willingness to make sacrifices in their lives in order to stay on straight path. Each of them makes small sacrifices, giving up thing that are fun or important to them. They think that a true Muslim is one who submits his or herself completely to the Allah, willing to follow Allah's command completely and obediently. It is this strength of heart, purity in faith and willing obedience that their Allah desires for them

The objective of sacrifice is to express gratitude to the Almighty. When people offer their lives symbolically to Almighty by offering the sacrifice of an animal they are expressing their gratitude on the guidance of submission which was expressed by Hazrat Ibrahim by sacrificing his only son. People think that the flesh of sacrificial animal does not reach to God; it is only their piety that reached to God. Allah has subjected them to their services so that they may give glory to God for guiding them, the way of righteous and their Prophet.

People another attitude toward slaughter is not that of blood atonement, or seeking favor with Allah through another death, but rather, the act of thanking Allah for one's sustenance and the personal sacrifice of sharing one's possession and valuable food with one's fellow human. The ritual itself is not the sacrifice, it is merely a method of killing when the individual kill as quickly as possible and acknowledge that only Allah has the right to take a life and those they do so as a humble member of Allah creation in need of sustenance just like another species in Allah's creation.

The animals used for sacrifice are useful in many ways for human, for example camel in desert countries is useful for carrying burden or for giving milk and so for oxen and goat also good for meat and milk and camel's hair can be woven into cloths, goat , cow and skin of other sacrificial animals can be used for leather product but when they are used for sacrifice, they become symbols by which people show that they are willing to give up some up their own benefits for the sake of satisfying the needs of their poorer. This is not the sacrifice of just need even it is the sacrifice of wealth in the way Allah for the help of poorer.

People thinks that sacrifice is bunch of worships for example when they make an animal stand or bow down in the direction of the Baytullah and also direct their own faces towards the house of God and present the sacrifice animal as offering to God by saying they are actually offering themselves to God, this offering is foundation of Islam, because the meaning of Islam is that one.

## **THE CONCEPT OF SACRED AND PROFANE**

The concept of sacred profane or holy or common, clean or unclean is integral to understanding the ritual of sacrifice of animal. Since God is holy then anything associated with God and his service is considering holy. The locations of sacrifice, knife use for sacrifice, rope to use the tie or untie the sacrificial animal and sacrificial animal all are also holy. But what is unclean must not come in contact, at all cast, with what is holy.

People are very clear about their concept of sacred and profane. They know that everything that is not holy is common. Common things divide in two groups, the clean and the unclean. Cleanness is the usual intermediate state of most person and things. Clean things become holy when they are sanctified, but unclean objects cannot be sanctified. Clean things can be made unclean by being polluted. Holy items may be profaned and become common. They may even be polluted and made unclean. The unclean and the holy are stated that must never come into contact with each other.

On the basis of concept people make their judgments that which animal is clean and which is unclean, which is edible and which animal is forbidden, eating unclean animals are forbidden. To select the animal for sacrifice people have very clear criteria.

- All 4 legged animals which are cattle can be sacrificed.
- Sacrificed animal should not be flawed and should be of appropriate age.
- The time of animal sacrifice begin after offering the Eid prayer.
- Diseased animals are animal who have scratched skin, lambs, disable animals are not fit for sacrifice.

Above mentioned standard to select the sacrificial animal have symbolic reasons in it. People think that these animals (sacrificial animal) will led them to heaven and would be a cause of their salvation. They will into heaven by riding on these specific animals, so that animal should healthy, free of disease, pure, clean and beautiful. Selection of these animals represents the willingness and happiness of the person on the command of Allah.

There is another symbolical exposures regarding with the body structure of sacrificing animal. There is a concept that specific animal full of hairs on its body, it will be more beneficial and will bring countless virtue as it has countless hairs on its body.

## CONCLUSIONS

When a religion losses the connection of philosophy that gave birth to its practices and people start to perform ritual mechanically as if it is the act of practicing the rights that bring knowledge and not what they symbolize or represent, this religion start to decline. In the people of Satellite town, the ritual of sacrifice is perform with enthusiasm because they know the philosophy of sacrifice and how it is associated with Allah's happiness. They not only practice ritual of sacrifice as a traditional tool of recreation but the thing it as a vital practice in their lives. Instead of knowing EidulAdha holistically they know and understand the meaning and the functions of each act of sacrifice.

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