

Karbala: The Soul of Islam

- By Syed Nadeem Ahmed Jafri

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Every year on 10th of *Dhul Hajj* Muslims celebrate *Eid ul Adha* by sacrificing an animal which is being purchased from the market. It is a symbolic sacrifice as the animal has not descended upon them from the skies, as it had for Ibrahim (as); but purchased from the nearby mandi or a market. They don't even know the history of the animal but still it is considered as a 'sacrifice'. It is a way of remembering the sacrifice of Ibrahim (as) and the purpose of this *Eid* is to share the meat with the relatives and poor people once in a year.

In the same way every year in the month of *Ramzan* Muslims fast for 30 days. The intention is to remember the bounties bestowed upon them by the Almighty Allah. By undergoing hunger and thirst Muslims try to relate with the plight of poor and needy who cannot have enough food in the day and thus give zakat and alms to them. The fast is the symbol of overcoming one's desires and the purpose is to inculcate compassion towards needy and destitute.

Muslims offer namaz 5 times a day. These '*namaz*' are symbol of devotion to the Almighty Allah. But is this all Allah (SWT) wants from us. This is a point we need to reflect upon and understand.

With the creation of Aadam (as), Allah (SWT) initiated the creation of mankind.

- “(And when your Lord said to the angels: *I am going to place in the earth a Khalif.*)” – (Surah-e-Baqra, ayah 30)

Aadam (as) was the first man created by Allah (SWT) and at the same time he was Allah's (SWT) *Khalif* on earth. In order to establish Aadam's (as) supremacy above angels, Allah (SWT) ordered them to prostrate in submission and respect in front of Aadam (as). All of the angels obeyed but *Iblees* refused to do so.

- “(Remember, when We asked the angels to bow in homage to Adam, they all bowed but ***Iblees, who disdained and turned insolent, and so became a kafir.***)” – (Surah-e-Baqra, ayah 34)

The refusal to submit itself to the supremacy of Aadam's (as) proved to be very dear to *Iblees* as he became a *kafir* though there are verses in Quran which do confirm that the *Satan* remained devotee of Allah (SWT) even after he was rejected. His prayers and devotion of many years became void and he lost everything he gained during these years. This proves that the soul of devotion and prayer is much beyond the symbolic representation. It is to accept the supremacy of Imam - the Vicegerent of Allah (SWT) along with devotion to the Almighty Allah (SWT). There are several ahadith mentioned in authentic books of different sects which convey that the Prophet (pbuh) said that his grandchildren are leaders of the people of Paradise. Thus they are the Imams.

On 10th of Moharram, Imam Hussain (as) and the people of his household were brutally martyred in the desert of Karbala. The way sacrificial animal during *Eid ul Adha* is a symbol of sacrifice of Ibrahim (as), the taziya (a scaled-down replica of the Shrine of Imam Hussain (as)) is the symbol to remember the great martyrdom of Imam Hussain (as). The animal is purchased from the market but still Muslims sacrifice it with the intention of fulfilling the ritual similarly taziya are prepared by artisans and Muslims carry out the procession with the intention of remembering the sacrifice of Imam Hussain (as) and the people of his household.

The incident of the sacrifice of Ibrahim (as) happened thousands of years ago yet Allah (SWT) has made it mandatory for us to remember this incident and offer a sacrifice year after year on the day of its occurrence. During Moharram the followers of Imam Hussain (as) indulge in matamdari and mourning. They cry remembering the atrocities which the Imam (as) and the people of his household faced during the battlefield of Karbala though they are thousands of year apart from the incident. It is to showcase complete solidarity with Imam Hussain (as).

Is crying against Islam? Crying is mentioned in Quran on different occasions. It has mentioned Yaqub's (as) crying over Yusuf (as). It also mentions that sky and the earth can cry over someone who is wrongly martyred.

- *“(The sky nor the earth cried for them, nor were they given respite.)” – (Surah-e-Dukhan, ayah 29)*

The verse refers to the destruction of Pharaoh and his army. Since they were brutal and bad neither the sky nor the earth cried for them. It can be inferred that the sky and earth shed tears when an innocent soul is wrongly killed. Thus crying and mourning on the atrocities faced by Imam Hussain (as) and his household is the conduct in sync with Quran and not *biddat* as given to understand.

Karbala is the unifier of humanity. Apart from Muslims there were non-Muslims who were blessed with generosity of Imam (as) – to be included in the group of pious ones – who fought alongside Imam Hussain (as) with the enemies. The Hindus who fought alongside Imam Hussain (as) were Punjabi Brahmin. Even today this community exists and they are called ‘Hussaini Brahmins’. (Ref: <http://hindu.bz/brahmins-fought-for-imam-hussain-in-the-battle-of-karbala/>)

The essence of Azadari of Imam Hussain (as) and his household is to showcase our submission to his supremacy. It is to convey that

- We remember the Imam and his message
- We are against those who are against him
- We stand for humanity
- We stand against oppressors
- We support those who are oppressed

Every year in Moharram we remember our Imam, we mourn and cry and showcase our love for him and make a strong resolve to follow the path shown by him.

#LabbaikYaHussain(as)

