

# EID-UL-ADHA/ Festival of Sacrifice

Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Festivals and social life of human beings are closely inter-related. Since man has commenced social life on the earth, festivals have, perhaps, been held right through. There is no nation in the world, and has every been, which has not earmarked a few days for this purpose. The festivals are, in fact, the life line of the society. Getting together of individuals, demonstration of common sentiments, collective merry-making, performing uniform rituals signifies the binding trait, by which people collectively transform into a well-nit society, and not only spirit of unity takes route but gets refresh and revived, intermittently.

Usually, an analytical study of festivals celebrated in different countries and among various nations shows that every festival is celebrated in memory of prominent events, either linked to a revered personality or concerned with a specific religious occasion. Nevertheless, one such celebration is necessary for a festival, which has common interest for members of a nation or citizens of a country and towards which they have deep emotional attachment. For this very reason, people of one nation or country do not take any interest in the festivities of another nation or country, and even if they want to take, for some formal compulsions, they can not. The reason for this is, traditions which are linked to the festivities of one religion can not, as much, stir the sentiments of people of another nation, as they can in its own race. There are numerous ways, in various nations, of celebrating festivals. Some carnivals are confined to dancing and singing, fun and frolicking. In others. Revelry exceeds all perimeters of civilization to reach indecency, coercion and horror. In still others, decent recreations are performed along with serious rituals. While in some cases, capitalizing on social gatherings, people are infused with superior values and efforts are made to make them enamour and endear some singular objective. In other words, the style in which festivities are conducted is scale on which the nature, ambitions and longings of a nation can be smackly gauged. Higher the moral spirit in a nation, more civilized and temperate will be its festivities. Similarly, the more morally depraved will a nation be, the more degenerating scenes it will present in its feasts.

Since **Islam** is a universal reforming movement, which is not related to a specific nation or country, rather invites people of the whole world towards a single Allah-worshipping culture. Hence, where it has moulded every part of

human life into a peculiar mode, festivals of Islam have also been given a unique shape, which is contrasting to all the other festivities in the world. The significance of festivities in a social life and the urge for collective celebrations, felt in the society, is not ignored in Islam, rather all efforts have been made to derive maximum benefit from such occasions, but the style and celebrations of festivals and its moral values are fundamentally differentiated. Here, an attempt is being 'made to draw the attention of the readers towards the three most significant aspects of which:

A global movement can not favorably view the national festivals which are based on varying national traditions, to which are associated the interest and sentiments of just one community and in which it is naturally impossible for one community to wholeheartedly celebrate with another. Such are, in fact, the forces which trigger the national division and disintegration. As they facilitate one community to disintegration. As they facilitate one community to consolidate within itself, similarly they also assist in detaching and driving away one community from another. Thus, a movement which skips nations and addresses humanity as a whole and strives to bring all the human creatures on a uni-culture platform, will not only reject such festivals but can not even tolerate them because they prove to be stumbling block in the achievement of its objectives of global unity and universal brotherhood. The natural need for its objective is that all nations, which are in its fold, get rid of their national festivals and earmark festivals in which all of them could participate: which be simultaneously national and international. The base of which be not on national traditions and sentiments but on the customs and maxims having common significance for humanity.

Additionally, when a global movement is **Allah** fearing too, then it forbids all such festivals and celebrations which remind of pristine faith. Islam replaces them with festivals which strongly reflect worshiping of the singular Allah.

Along with the worship of **Allah**, the objective of high morality mandatory comes into existence which demands that a God-worshiping movement should offer its followers such festivals which are free from cruelty, arrogance and indecency; in which fun and frolicking is within civilized limits and expression of joy is with sophistication; which should not merely end on carousing, rather the fervour brought about by festival, in a collective life, should be fully utilized to attain ultimate moral goals.

All the three traits are apparent from the festivals earmarked by Islam for its followers. Islam dispensed with all national and religious festivals of nations, in Iran, Egypt, Arabian Peninsula and Syria, which came into Islamic fold. They were replaced by festivals which are known as **Eid-UI-Fitr** and **Eid-UI-Azha**. Former is celebrated after successfully completing 30 days of fasting during the month of Ramadan - observed to obey the instructions of Allah. Thus after

complying with His instructions, Muslims are required to thank Him, for enabling them to do so. Latter is commemorated in the memory of an unparalleled sacrifice, offered over 4000, years ago by a truly loyal individual, to his Allah. It can be distinctly established that none of these two festivals are associated with a specific nationality. Rather two such factors are made the basis of their festivals with which the sentiments of all single-Allah -worshipping human beings can be evenly attached. Thus both the festivals are a reflection of pure obedience of **Allah**. There is not an iota of hero-worshipping or devotion to some human being. Further, the course prescribed for the celebration for these festivals is such that a style more decent, sophisticated, sober and brimming with moral benefits can not be hypothesized. Subsequent generations of Muslims have smudged, to some extent, the true glory of Islamic era, by ignorant deeds.

The form of celebrating **Eid** during the lifetime of **Prophet Muhammad** (P.B.U.H) is outlined below, to give readers an idea, by which they can accurately visualize the decency of festivals.

On the morning of **Eid** , all Muslim men, women and children would bathe and slip into the best apparels, provided to them by Allah. Before leaving for the prayers of **Eid-ul-Fitr**, all the affluent people donated a specific mount as sadaqah, to ensure that nobody remained unfed on **Eid**. On the contrary, after the prayers of **Eid-UI-Azha**, animals were sacrificed, at the early hours of the day people would come out of their homes. It was mandatory for men, women and kids to exit so that the strength and glory of Muslims demonstrated; everyone participated in prayers and also got an opportunity to enjoy this together. **Eid** prayers were held on the outskirts of town for enabling larger number of people to participate. All the Muslims would chant:

**Allah is great, Allah is great. No one but Allah be worshipped. Only Allah is great . All the praise reserved for Him** -on their way to prayers. The atmosphere of every lane, by-lane, market and street used to be filled with these slogans, by which the entire town would echo. After assembling at the Eidgah ground, the entire gathering would line-up to perform prayer under the stewardship of **Prophet Muhammad** (P.B.U.H). Then **Prophet Muhammad** (P.B.U.H) would get up to deliver sermon. Unlike Friday prayers, the sermon was delivered after the prayers to allow maximum number of people to listen to the most important speech of their leader. This occasion came just twice a year. In the absence of microphone, then, first address used to be the gathering of men, then **Prophet Muhammad** (P.B.U.H) would move to that part of the ground where women were gathered, to address them separately. These sermons, besides educating and persuading, counseling and preaching, would throw light on all the critical issues, concerning Islamic society, which were present at that time. In case of potential armed or political mission, the arrangements to be made were also announced there and then. Attentions of

the people were also drawn towards the organizational requirements and every individual, in accordance to his status and capacity, would partake in fulfilling them. There are some precedents where women even offered to remove their jewellery, to present to the Islamic organization. This gathering would then return from Eidgah, and the instruction was to return from different route from the one they came, so that no part of the town remains untouched by their rejoicing and from the echo of - Allah is great.

On their return from the prayers, all the affluent Muslims would offer sacrifice on **Eid-ul-Azha**. This sacrifice is not only meant to recap the event but also the spirit of an aged alien from Iraq, who offered to sacrifice his only son, at the behest of Allah, and by His grace of **Allah**, just in time, permitted him to sacrifice the lamb, instead. Exactly on the same date and time, every year, Muslims the world over repeat the same act and revive their spirit that they too, like **Prophet Ibraheem Alaihissalam, (P.B.U.H)** , are **submissive and docile subjects of Allah**. Like him, they are also prepared to sacrifice their lives, offspring's, wealth and every other belonging, on the will of Allah and their life and death is just for Allah. This spirit is reflected by the act of sacrificing animal and by the words uttered at the time of sacrificing animal.

**I have turned to the one who is the Creator of the skies and the earth. I follow the same path, followed by Prophet Ibraheem,(P.B.U.H) and I am not among those who share others with Almighty. My prayers and my sacrifice, my life and my death, every thing is devoted to Allah - the Sustainer of the world -Who has no associate. This is what I have been ordered and I am among the obedient subordinates of Allah. O Allah! This belongs to You and is being presented to You, in the name of Allah, Who is great.**

While cutting the animal, the above words were voiced and this scene was watched by all women and children in the family so that all of them have the same spirit of sacrifice and obedience revived. Then the meat was distributed among relatives and under privileged. Skin of the animal or its monetary value was donated to poor folks. Additionally, charity was done generously and wholeheartedly so that the **EID** is not reduced to be the festival of only prosperous section of the society.

This was the **EID**, celebrated during the era of **Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H)**. Besides these "Official celebrations", youngsters would organize some games privately and girls would get together, at homes, for singing folk songs. But this practice was confined within the acceptable limits and nobody was permitted to exceed that. Rather, the leaders and prominent figures would even maintain arm length distance from these permitted forms of rejoicings of youths so that they are not encouraged and do not dare to indulge in unwarranted exhibits.

The attitude of leaders, at that time, can be judged from an instance, quoted in authentic traditions that once, on the day of **EID**, **Prophet Muhammad** (P.B.U.H) entered his house and found that two girls from the neighborhood were sitting with his wife **Hazrat Ayesha** and singing songs. The songs were not based on romance and passion or boozing and reveling, rather they were the songs written at the time of Battle of Baghas. Even the girls were not professional artists or vocalists but belonged to respectable families who, when getting together, would sing virtuous songs for the sake of relaxing and entertaining themselves. **Prophet Muhammad** (P.B.U.H) did not interfere in their self entertainment and quietly went into a corner and lied down by covering himself, with a bed sheet, from head to toe. After a while, **Hazrath Abu'bakr** turned up and scolded his daughter Hazrath Ayesha saying what menacing act is going on at the residence of Prophet of Allah. Hearing him, **Prophet Muhammad** (P.B.U.H) removed the sheet from his face and said: leave them, every nation has an Eid, today is ours. On this **Hazrath Ai'sha** remained silent but the girls stopped singing. As soon as Hazrath Abu'bakr turned his back from them, Hazrath Ayesha signalled them and the girls quickly disappeared. It is evident from this instance that youngsters were allowed to enjoy, through decent games and singing, but seniors never participated or encouraged them. Subsequently, the rope was let loose and the elders ignored to keep a tab. As a result, in addition to rejoicing and freaking out, the situation has arisen where.