

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IS THE CONCEPT OF “SACRIFICE” OR “QURBANI” DURING HAJ AND EID-AL-ADHA..... QUR’ANIC?

Although what happened on the Day of Eid-Al-Adha, on 27th November 2009 (10th Zul Hijja 1430) is an annual ritual and enacted by millions of Muslims throughout the world and including the Hajjees slaughtering almost 4 million animals in Mina; it is time to separate the Qur’anic concept from the “traditional” practices which do not have any Qur’anic significance, besides some historical background. What encouraged me more than anything to re-vise this document was the following statements in the last two weeks, that:

1. Muslims need to emulate the practice of Ibrahim AS and Ismail AS by sacrificing (see below for “sacrifice”) that which one loves most. This concept of giving in the way of Allah, including Sadaqa, Zakah and Infaq, “that which you love most,” is an excellent idea, but is not relevant only to Ismail AS when we understand the True Qur’anic meanings. The speakers, in Masajid. postulating this idea, even went to the extent of making a sheep a pet for 6 months then slaughtering it, meaning that one needs to fall in “love” with that which you slaughter on the “altar” of Allah. The speakers claim that one needs to sacrifice one’s Ismail; obviously from the book, “Hajj by Ali Shariati”, and this not a new concept by a Shia writer and very enthusiastically pronounced by, one can call, ignorant of Qur’anic concepts and this said book has been around for more than 30 years and read by many during the early days of MYM.. Some are even getting emotionally carried away by this precept of “sacrificing one’s Isma’eel” to the extent that they want to sell their motor bikes. We should now wait for the sale notice of the motor-cycle to buy something cheap or get it free, to make the concept of sacrifice (un-Qur’anic) more effective. Did the public needed to be informed of this very “holy” behaviour of a good Muslim?

2. In the du'a during Khutbah the asking of Allah to accept the “sacrifices” from those who slaughtered (sacrificed to which Ilah) animals and to accept the Hajj of the people who “sacrificed” in the name of Allah (when Allah NEVER asked you to do so);

3. At Jummah after Eid-Al-Adha we were told in the Khutbah that Ibrahim AS was instructed to “slaughter” his son Ismail AS; Since when? Chapter & Verse? where is this in the Qur’an? It was a dream that Ibrahim AS had, and because of conviction and attachment to the Law of Allah, interpreted this as an instruction (One really needs to study the concept of Wahi from the Qur’an); and

3. Then the recital of Surah 6 Verse 162/3 (On the Friday before Eid-Al-Adha and in the first Arabic Kutbah during Eid, and reciting the translation as “sacrifice”:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لَا شَرِيكَ لِي بِهِذِهِ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أكونَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾
مَا كَانَ لِلنَّاسِ أَنْ يَسْئَلُوا اللَّهَ سَألًا فَكَانَ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ فَكَفَىٰ ذُنُوبَهُمْ عَظِيمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾

(163-164) Say: “My *Sal’at* and the means which I adopt to establish its system; in short - my living and dying - are all for the cause of *Allah*, the *Rabb* of the entire Universe, who has no partner. Thus have I been commanded and I am the first to submit to the commandment.”

Since نُسُكِي does not mean “sacrifice” one needs to find out how this custom became fabricated into the rituals sidestepping the instructions of the Qur’an and now this Verse is being recited by all without any thought, by even those who profess to know the Qur’an. نَسَكَ النَّوْبُ , "Nasakas saub" means he washed the cloth and thus cleaned it; “Muheet” says the real meaning of this word is to wash and make clean; all other meanings are extracted from and related to it. Since this is not the place to go into this subject of Arabic roots in more detail it would suffice to see how the incorrect usage came into being and became embedded in Islam:

In Arabic **مَنْسَكٌ**, “mansak”, is any place to and from which people are accustomed to travel and are familiar with, whether the path leads to evil or good; then **مَنْسِكٌ**, “manasik”, through usage came to mean the customs and practices of Hajj, and thus **نُسُكٌ** **يَا نَسِيكَتُ**, “nusukun or naseekhatun”, was understood to mean anything that has been made mandatory by Allah; thus "mansak" came to mean the obligations of man to the Laws of Allah (according to Ibn Qateebah it means anything that takes man closer to Allah). One sees how the original meaning changed through customs and thoughtlessness and gradually eroded into meaning blood or the animal that is slaughtered. The above Verse which is glibly recited actually means: **“Tell them that my Salah and my nusuk, i.e. my actions in life of following the Law of Allah; my life and my death are all dedicated to establishing or following the system dictated by Allah”**; obviously, in this instance, Salat would mean the complete code of life according to Allah’s system and “nusuk” means every practice in life”. With all the misconceptions that have crept into Islam it is incumbent to get to the explanations from the Lughat-al-Qur’an and the Qur’an itself, on the concept of “sacrifice” and “Qurbani”. (Those who are interested should read Sigmund Freud’s- Origin of Religion and they will soon see how the “Totem” of sacrifice came into being).

قَرِيبٌ بِمَقَابِلِهِ بِعِيدٌ ”Qareeb as opposed to ba’eed” is explained in Surah 21 Verse 19 as:

109 But if they turn back, say: I have warned you in fairness, and I know not whether that which you are promised is near or far.

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ آذَنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ
وَإِنْ آذَرْتِي آقْرَبٌ أَمْ بَعِيدٌ مَّا
مُوعَدُ وَاوٍ ﴿١٠٩﴾

According to this Verse “al qurb” means to be close to someone (with reference to distance); and “al qurbah” to be close to somebody with reference to rank. Therefore, in Verse 83 of Surah 2 “al qurba”, “wal qaraabah” means to be close to someone with reference to relationship; i.e. to be a relative:

83 And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel:^a You shall serve none but Allāh.^b And do good to (your) parents,^c and to the near of kin and to orphans and the needy,^d and speak good (words)^e to

وَأِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ
إِلَّا اللَّهَ تَعْبُودًا لِّأُولِي الدِّينِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَ
الْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا ۗ

Further in Surah Shura (42:23):

23 This it is of which Allāh gives the good news to His servants, who believe and do good. Say: I ask of you naught in return for it but love for relatives.^a And whoever earns good, We give him more of good therein. Surely Allāh is Forgiving, Grateful.

ذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهَ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۗ قُلْ لَا
أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي
الْقُرْبَىٰ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ
فِيهَا حُسْنًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

The Qur’an states: “qul la as’alukum alaihi ajran illal mawaddatah fil qurbah” which erroneously is taken to mean, “tell them that I demand no compensation for being a Nabi excepting that you love my relatives”. What the Verse really means according to Lissanul Arab is: **“O, Nabi (AS), tell them that I demand no compensation for my being a Nabi (AS), but at least fulfil the obligations that are due you as my relative”**. Another exposition explains is thus:

“These are the bounties and blessings about which Allah gives glad tidings to those who believe in the Truthfulness of the Divine Laws and do righteous deeds. In this regard, O Rasool! Tell them, “I do not ask for any reward from you for saving you from destruction and bringing you towards Allah.

But, you should give due regard to human relationships. Do not take your opposition to such extremes that you even forget the love and affection of your near and dear ones.” (Also refer 9:8; 25:57; 34:47)

Another way of looking at this explanation would be as Allah states in Surah 17 Verse 26:

26 And give to the near of kin his due and (to) the needy and the way-farer, and squander not wastefully.

وَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا ﴿٢٦﴾

“Give your relatives their right; “aatiyal maala ala hubbihi zawil qurba” and in Surah 2 Verse 177 it means that “he gives his wealth to relatives because of commitment to Allah,” i.e. “zawi qurba: la as’alukum alaihi ajran illa mawaddadah fil qurba”: would mean ‘your own relative’: i.e. qurbaakum: that is the absolving of your obligations towards your relatives, would be my reward:

and gives away wealth out of love for Him^d to the near of kin

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

This is the same thing which has been described in Surah Saba (34:47); “qul ma sa’altukum min ajrin fahuwa lakum;” “tell them that the reward I ask is for your own good,” (not for me):

47 Say: Whatever reward I ask of you, that is only for yourselves. My reward is only with Allāh, and He is a Witness over all things.

قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ ۚ إِنِ اجْتَبَيْتُمُوهُ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

Whichever way we understand the above explanations, it is a fact that the Allah’s Nabi AS did not ask anyone for rewards; nor did **any** Nabi announce that they wanted anything other than good for the people; (also refer 26:109, 26:1435, 26). At “taqarrubu” means to want to be close to someone and strive for this purpose. “Al muqarabah”: to come close to one another; and “al qurbaan” would now mean: “the thing (or “offering”?) with which Allah’s proximity or closeness is desired” (as if we need to this to appease Allah).

Surah Ma-idah (5:27) mentions two of Adam’s sons; i.e. two men about whom it is said; “iz qarraba qurbanan fatuq bilu min ahadihama”; “when they offered an offering and the offering of one was accepted” the Qur’an gives no details about this offering as to what it was and how it was presented; it could well be an act of kindness presented as an expiation or some good deed which had been done to get “closer” (the Laws) to Allah. Of course, how do we know that it was accepted? The fact that one is allowed to continue with one’s Qur’anic activities, is an indication of acceptance, from many examples in the Qur’an (this is not our subject for discussion in this paper).

27 And relate to them with truth the story of the two sons of Adam, when they offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other. He said: I will certainly kill thee. (The other) said: Allah accepts only from the dutiful.^a

وَاقْصُصْ عَلَيْهِمُ بَنِي آدَمَ بِالنَّحْوِ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبِلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَكُفِّرَ بِنِعْمَتِهِ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالاَ لَا فَتُكَلِّمُنَا قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

Another explanation of this Verse would be: “(Ishaac and Ism’ael were brothers. At first *Nubuwwat* remained within the descendants of Isaac. Thereafter, however, it was bestowed upon Ism’ael’s descendant (i.e. Muhammad, AS). The Jews were very envious of this.) To illustrate the results of envy, *Allah* relates to them, in due form, the story of the two sons of Adam; (i.e. two persons). Each of them made an offering to *Allah*. The offering of one of them was accepted, and that of the other was not. Thereupon, the one whose offering was rejected said to the other out of anger and spite, “I will surely kill you.” The other replied (I have done nothing against you that you should kill me) *Allah* accepts the offering from the *Muttaqeen*. You may stretch forth your hand to kill me but I will not do

so. I am very much afraid of disobeying Allah's Laws. It may, however, come about that in defending myself some harm may come to you. You will be responsible both for your intention to kill me and the injury you might receive at my hands. You will be the dweller of *Jahannam*. This is the recompense of *z'alimeen*."

The Qur'an does not mention the word "Qurbani or sacrifice" of animals slaughtered at the time of Hajj. The Verses refer to slaughtering are Surah 22 Verses 28 and 36:

28 That they may witness benefits (provided) for them, and mention the

name of Allāh on appointed days over what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds; then eat of them and feed the distressed one, the needy.^a

and

36 And the camels, We have made them of the signs appointed by Allāh for you^a — for you therein is much good. So mention the name of Allāh on them standing in a row. Then when they fall down on their sides, eat of them and feed the contented one and the beggar.^b Thus have We made them subservient to you that you may be grateful.

لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا
اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي آيَاتِهِ مَعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَى مَا
رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۗ كُلُّوا
مِنْهَا وَاطْعَمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ ۝

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ مِنْهَا
لَكُمْ فِيهَا حَيْرَةً ۖ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْهَا صَوَاتٍ ۚ فَإِذَا وُجِبَتْ جُنُوبُهَا
فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَاطْعَمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ
كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ۝

كُلُوا مِنْهَا

In both Verse the words used are *كُلُوا مِنْهَا*, "eat from them"; there is no mention of Qurbani or Nusuk or any references to sacrifice or offering. The Verses clearly state that animals must be used for food for one's self and to feed the poor and not as Qurbani (offerings of food, blood and meat is alien to the Qur'an). Thus, there is no concept of Qurbani during Hajj. *(It is further incorrectly believed by Muslims that Hajj "is NOT for the poor". The Qur'an, as explained above clearly states that after slaughtering the animals "eat of them and feed the poor man who is contented and the beggar..." If this is what the Qur'an states and these days requirements for the Hajjees are well provided via hotels etc, then what is the need to kill millions of animals in the name of Qurbani, since everyone is catered for. (The discussion of rich and poor is another one).*

The closeness to Allah is not with reference to physical distance or place. The more a person reflects on good qualities in himself, the more he becomes closer to Allah: and the way to reflect on these righteous qualities is to follow Allah's orders and abide by His Laws. In Surah Alaq (96:19) Allah says: "la tu'ti'u wus'judu waqtarib":

19 Nay! Obey him not, but prostrate thyself, and draw nigh (to Allāh).^a

كَلَّا لَا تَطِعْهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ ۝

"Do not follow or agree with the man who finds ways to avoid the Laws of Allah; instead obey the laws of Allah and thus become close to Him: i.e. through the Law of Allah reflect righteous qualities in yourself: this is what is meant by the awakening of man and the stability of his personality.

Aulia Allah (the "real" friends of Allah and not the charlatans) do not belong to a separate group, rather every Momin is an Aulia Allah; the Laws of Allah can be followed by being part of a society and under a system: it cannot be done as an individual hermit or in monasticism. Neither can Allah's proximity be attained through any other deity's or person's recommendation (Law of Mukafat).

"Qurbah, plural Qurbaat" (Surah 9 Verse 99)

99 And of the desert Arabs are those who believe in Allāh and the Last Day, and consider what they spend and the prayers of the Messenger, as bringing them nearer to Allāh. Surely they bring them nearer (to Allāh); Allāh will bring them into His mercy. Surely Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful.

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللهِ وَ
الْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَخِدُّ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرْبَةً
عِنْدَ اللهِ وَصَلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ أَلاَ إِنَّهَا
قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ
إِنَّ اللهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩٩﴾

And the way to attain closeness i.e. “aradan qareeba”: Surah 9 Verse 42:

42 Had it been a near gain and a short journey, they would certainly have followed thee, but the hard journey was too long for them.^a And they will swear by Allāh: If we had been able, we would have gone forth with

كَوْكَانَ عَرَضًا قَرِيبًا وَسَفَرًا قَاصِدًا
لَا تَبْعُوكَ وَلَكِنْ بَعُدَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الشُّقَّةُ
وَسَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللهِ لَوْ اسْتَطَعْنَا لَخَرَجْنَا
مَعَكُمْ يُهْلِكُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَاللهُ يَعْلَمُ

Everyone seeks immediate benefit, quick return. In the old ages, people slaughtered their animals and offered them as sacrifice to please their gods. The Jews used to incinerate these slaughtered animals; thus sacrifice by fire is oft mentioned in the Torah. Surah Aali Imran Surah 3, in Verse 183 states:

183 Those who say: Allāh has enjoined us that we should not believe in any messenger until he brings us an offering which is consumed by the fire.^a Say: Indeed there came to you messengers before me with clear arguments and with that which you demand. Why then did you try to kill them, if you are truthful?^b

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللهَ عَهْدَ إِلَيْنَا آلا
تُؤْمِنُ بِرَسُولٍ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَنَا بِقُرْبَانٍ
تَأْكُلُهُ النَّارُ قُلْ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ
مِّن قَبْلِي يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قُلْتُمْ قُلْتُمْ
قَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

“Biqurbanin ta’kuluhun naar” is a reference to this sort of sacrifice: they believed that if the sacrifice is accepted then the fire consumes the offering.

One should compare the practices of pagans and others before just accepting traditions without references to the Qur’an.

This is by no means the last word on the subject, so let the discussions continue. May Allah guide us all.

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