

THE VIRTUES AND IMPORTANCE OF UDHIYAH – QURBANI – THE SACRIFICE



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Udhiya, commonly known and referred to as Qurbani, is a very great act of Ibadah (worship), and is very beloved to Allah. Originating from the great sacrifice which Ibraheem (A.S), the friend of Allah offered at his time, Allah instituted this practice to be part of the rituals done in the blessed month of Dhul Hijjah by pilgrims and non-pilgrims.

When one does 'Qurbani' he re-enacts the blessed act of Prophet Ibraheem (A.S), and recalls (to mind) the great sacrifice which this beloved Prophet was asked to offer to Allah. In this sacrifice, Ibraheem (A.S) was fully prepared, and had done everything to sacrifice his only beloved son by physically putting the knife on his throat for the sake of Allah.

This was indeed a most difficult test for Ibraheem (A.S). However, even though it was a great trial, he was able to show that Allah was more beloved to him than every single thing on the face of the earth, including the life of his only beloved son. Allah saw the strength of faith and obedience in His beloved Prophet (Ibraheem), and accepted his willingness to sacrifice Isma'il (A.S).

In exchange, Allah sent a ram from paradise and ordered Ibraheem (A.S) to sacrifice it instead of his beloved son. Thus, this great practice became a part of the religion of Islam, and was established with emphasis by the noble Messenger of Allah (S.A.S). Throughout his entire life in Madina which lasted for ten years, the Prophet (S.A.S) did Qurbani every year for this entire period. Even when he was a traveller, he still did the Qurbani. (*Tirmizi, Hadith No. 1507, Pg. 644, Vol.1, Published by Altaf and Sons / A similar narration is reported in Ahmad, Hadith No. 4955, Vol. 2, Pg. 282, Published by Maktaba Tijariya*)

On the occasion of the farewell Hajj, the Prophet (S.A.S) offered one hundred camels in Qurbani to Allah. He exhorted his followers to do the Qurbani, and reprimanded them for not doing it when he said,

'Whoever has the means (ability) to do a Qurbani and does not do it, let him not come close to our place of Salaah for Eid Salaah. (*Ibn Majah, Pg. 226, Published by Qademi Kutub Khana / Similar narrations are reported in Ahmad, Hadith No. 8280, Pg. 207, Vol. 3, Published by Maktaba Tijariya / Dar Qutni, Hadith 4743, Pg.500,*

Published by Reesalah Publishers / Hakim, Hadith No. 7727, Vol.5, Pg. 156, Published by Qademi Kutub Khana]

As mentioned by the great scholars and jurists, this statement of the prophet gives an indication that the act of doing Qurbani must not be taken lightly. Instead, it is an important duty that must be done by those who possess the means. It is for this reason, the great Imams of Fiqh like Imams Abu Hanifah, Awza'i, Sufyan Thawri, Laith and Ahmad have stated that 'Doing the Qurbani is waajib upon every free, adult Muslim who has the means to do so on the days of Qurbani (sacrifice)'. Other Imams of Fiqh have stated that doing the Qurbani is a very strong and emphasized practice of the Prophet (S.A.S) and it is makrooh (reprehensible) for one who has the means, to leave it out.

The Prophet (S.A.S) further exhorted his followers to do the Qurbani and said "Do the Qurbani for it is the way of your father Ibraheem (A.S) (*Ibn Majah, Pg.226, Published by Qademi Kutub Khana/ Similar narrations are reported in Ahmad, Hadith No.19303, Pg.78, Vol.7, Published by Maktaba Tijariya / Sunan Al Kubra, Hadith No.19016, Pg.485, Vol.9, Published by Dar el Hadith*)

From these traditions and from the practice of the Prophet (S.A.S) himself, an adult Muslim, male/ female, who has the means to do a sacrifice on the days of Qurbani, and is not a traveller, must do a sacrifice (Qurbani) and should not leave it out. The law/practice of 'Qurbani' comes every year, and so, one is required to do it on a yearly basis, as long as he/she possesses the means to do so. Doing it once in a lifetime or once in every two or three years is not sufficient for one who has the means to do it every year. As long as he/ she possesses the means, he/ she must do it.

It must be understood also that one who has the means to do Qurbani must first do it on one's behalf before it can be done on another's behalf. Therefore, a person who has the means to do a Qurbani must not leave it out in order to do it for the spouse, children or deceased parents. It must be done on his own behalf first, before doing it on another's behalf.

'Possessing the means'to do a qurbani, means that one must have the nisaab of Zakaah during the days of Qurbani. Therefore, one who is in the possession of the nisaab of Zakaah during the Qurbani days, must do a sacrifice. This should be done by either taking a share in a large animal or by sacrificing a small animal (like a goat or a sheep).

‘Qurbani’ as an act of Ibaadah (worship), brings about a great amount of blessings for those who do it. In this regard, the Prophet (S. A. S) is reported to have said ‘The son of Adam does not do any deed on the Day of Sacrifice that is more beloved to Allah than causing blood to flow (from the sacrificial animals). The animal will come on the day of Resurrection with its horns, hair and hooves. The blood gains an acceptance from Allah before it can fall to the ground. Therefore, do the sacrifice wholeheartedly’. (*Ibn Majah, Pg.226, Published by Qademi Kutub Khana / A similar narration is reported in Tirmizi, Hadith No. 1493, Pg. 639, Vol.1, Published by Altaf and Sons*)

In another tradition, the Messenger of Allah (S. A. S) said to Faatimah (R.A) ‘O Faatimah! Come and witness your sacrificial animal (being slaughtered), for surely, by the first drop of blood that falls on the ground, there will be forgiveness for you for every sin. Listen! It will be brought with its blood and flesh and will then be placed on your scale of deeds multiplied by 70 times’. (*Targeeb wa Tarheeb, Hadith No.3, Pg.160, Vol.2, Darul Fajr u Turath*)

It is narrated from Zaid Bin Arqaan (R.A) that the companions once asked ‘O Messenger of Allah! What are these sacrificial animals about? The Prophet (S. A. S) said, ‘It is the sunnah (practice) of your father Ibraheem (A.S)’. They asked ‘What is there for us, O Messenger of Allah? He said ‘For every hair, there is a good deed’. They asked ‘What about wool?’ He said ‘For every fibre of wool, there is a good deed’. (*Ibn Majah, Pg.226, Published by Qademi Kutub Khana / Similar narrations are reported in Ahmad, Hadith No.19303, Pg.78, Vol.7, Published by, / Sunan Al Kubra, Hadith No.19016, Pg.485, Vol.9, Published by Dar el Hadith*)

From these traditions, it can be seen that offering a sacrifice to Allah (by doing a Qurbani), is a very virtuous and rewarding act of worship which was initiated (upon Allah’s order) by the great friend of Allah, Ibraheem (A.S), and confirmed to be practiced by the most beloved of Allah, Rasulullah (S.A.S). Muslims must therefore, recognize the importance and deep significance of this blessed ritual, and ensure that they do their ‘Qurbani’ on an annual basis, especially those who possess the means to do so.

BEING A PART OF YOUR QURBANI

It must be understood that Qurbani is an act of Ibadah (worship) which must be done only for the sake of Allah, and must be carried out in the way prescribed by the Holy Prophet (S.A.S).

Qurbani is not a charity, nor is it done to feed the poor and needy. It is an independent act of worship which involves the sacrifice of animals and nothing else.

It should be done with the understanding that it will bring about the true spirit of sacrifice in one's life. While physically doing the Qurbani, one should recall the great sacrifice that Ibraheem (A.S) did, and try to develop the willingness to sacrifice for Allah's sake. If this is done, then Insha Allah, it is hoped that the true spirit of Qurbani will come into the lives of Muslims.

This however, can only be achieved when one does his own Qurbani (sacrifice) or witnesses his Qurbani being done. When one takes part in the slaughtering, sacrificing, distributing and partaking of his Qurbani, he is able to achieve all the blessings, rewards and benefits which the Prophet (S.A.S) spoke about.

However, when one sends his money in a foreign country to do his Qurbani, he becomes deprived of the true significance and benefits of doing a Qurbani for the sake of Allah.

Qurbani must not be treated as a 'charity' that is done to help the poor and needy in poor countries. To do Qurbani for this reason is totally wrong, and it is sinful to bring about such understanding. Muslims must be careful that they do not change the meaning, spirit and significance of Qurbani in Islam. Qurbani has nothing to do with feeding the poor and the needy. It has nothing to do with where the meat is distributed and who gets the meat. It is an act of worship in which one willingly offers his sacrifice to Allah, and is present to witness this offering that he is dedicating and giving to Allah.

When one looks at the Qurbani of the Prophet (S.A.S), one will clearly see that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.S) was very keen to sacrifice his animals, and to also witness the Qurbani that was done.

It is narrated that on the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet (S.A.S) did Qurbani of 100 camels. From this amount, he alone slaughtered and sacrificed 63 with his blessed hands. This obviously was not an easy task for him, seeing that there were many difficulties involved in slaughtering the camels. The fact that these camels had to be brought from Yemen to Makkah, and then taken one after the other, to the place of slaughter at Mina. Along with this, the difficulties involved in the actual sacrifice by cutting the throat of each camel and putting them to lie on the ground, are to be considered.

One can well imagine the amount of difficulties and the length of time taken in slaughtering these camels. Despite all these difficulties, and regardless of the fact that the companions (Sahabahs) were prepared and ready to do the slaughter of these camels, the Messenger of Allah (S.A.S) himself chose to do his Qurbani, and in this way, went on to slaughter 63 of these with his blessed hands.

Through this, the Prophet (S.A.S) taught his Ummah that the great virtues and full benefits of Qurbani are achieved when one does his Qurbani himself, and he witnesses the slaughter that takes place.