

## WHY UDHIYAH?

Before explaining why we make *udhiyah*, we first have to understand why we make *hajj*. Although there are a number of activities in *hajj* (*tawaaf*, *sa'ee*, the stay in 'Arafah, the stay in Muzdalifah, pelting of the *jamaraat*, offering of a sacrificial animal, shaving or trimming of the hair etc.), Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said that, "*Hajj is 'Arafah*" – as if *hajj* is only about 'Arafah. That, however, is not what he meant. Instead, he meant that the stay in 'Arafah is so important, it is as if there is nothing else in *hajj* besides 'Arafah. Thus, the *fuqahaa* agree that even if a person diligently observes all the injunctions of *hajj*, his *hajj* will be invalid if he does not spend any time – no matter how short – between *zawaal* of the ninth of Dhil Hajj and *subh saadiq* of the tenth in 'Arafah. On the contrary, if person spends some time between *zawaal* of the ninth of Dhil Hajj and *subh saadiq* of the tenth in 'Arafah, his *hajj* will be valid even if he omits all or some of the other injunctions of *hajj*. This means that 'Arafah is the climax of *hajj* – as though the pilgrim's aim in making *hajj* is merely to reach 'Arafah. The question now is, 'what is 'Arafah all about?' Looking beyond the performance of *dhur* and 'asr at one time and the fervent du'aas and cries for forgiveness, those who comprehend the deeper dimensions of our 'ibaadaat contend that 'Arafah is a meeting with Allah.

Before meeting with worldly kings and presidents (or any other dignitary), we take a bath, wear the best clothes and apply some perfume. In fact, we do this before attending any function. Similarly, before meeting with Allah in 'Arafah, we have to be clean. This meeting, however, demands spiritual cleanliness. Thus, we keep *saum* and exert ourselves in other '*ibaadaat* (obligatory and optional) in the month of Ramadaan. Hence, the last moment of Ramadaan is the first moment of *hajj*. Consider two questions viz.

~ When does the month of Ramadaan end?

~ When does *hajj* begin?

The answers to both these questions are the same – when the crescent of '*eid-ul-fitr* is sighted. The moment Ramadaan ends, *hajj* begins. Remember, Allah Ta'aala said:

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ

"*Hajj* comprises a (few) known months."<sup>1</sup>

These known months are Shawwaal, Dhul-Qa'dah and the first ten days of Dhul-Hajj.

In the past, in the days of kings and queens, whenever a man was granted a meeting with the king, he would be required to present the king with a gift. Similarly, when the *haaji* meets Allah, he too is required to present Allah with a gift. Since nothing is more valuable to man than his life, the most appropriate gift that the *haaji* could present to Allah is his life. Nonetheless, suicide is impermissible.

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<sup>1</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah, Aayah 197

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا

“Do not kill yourselves; certainly Allah is Most Merciful unto you.”<sup>2</sup>

So what does the *haaji* do? When Nabi Ibrahim (as) tried to slaughter Nabi Isma’il (as) in accordance with the command of Allah, Allah Ta’aala sent him a ram from the sky and told him to slaughter the ram instead. Thus, the *haaji* is commanded to slaughter an animal instead of himself. This sacrifice is his ‘gift’ to Allah.

In the Farewell *Hajj*, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* slaughtered one hundred camels. The reason for doing so is that the blood money for a human life is one hundred camels. Thus, if one may not sacrifice his life, it would be appropriate to slaughter a hundred camels instead. However, not everybody possesses so many camels. (That is why the blood money for manslaughter is paid by the killer’s ‘*aaqilah*’, a group of people related to the killer.) Furthermore, there would be a colossal problem if every *haaji* were required to sacrifice a hundred camels each. Hence, the *sharee’ah* requires the *haaji* to slaughter a single animal as his ‘gift’ to Allah.

I guess that you are probably wondering what all this has to do with *udhiyah*. We do not make *hajj* in Benoni, Springs or Lenasia. *Hajj* can only be made in Makkah. So why are we who are not *hujjaaj* commanded to make *udhiyah*? The answer to this is imitation; we are commanded to imitate the *hujjaaj*.

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<sup>2</sup> Surah An-Nisaa, Aayah 29

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَحَابَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ

“Recall the time when we made the *ka’bah* a place to which people repeatedly return . . .”<sup>3</sup>

It is for this reason that we observe countless people who repeatedly go for *hajj* and ‘*umrah*. We also observe that those who lack the ability to return fervently desire doing so. Thus, their hearts ‘bleed’ when they see the *hujjaaj* departing for *hajj*. When they hear the live transmission of the ‘Arafah *khutbah* on the ninth of Dhul-Hajj, they cry again. *If only they were there*. Pitying such people, Allah tells them not to despair. Sitting at home, you too can earn a reward similar to that of the *haaji*. Just imitate him. Remember the *hadith*:

من تشبهه بقوم فهو منهم

“Whoever imitates a people will be among them.”

Thus:

- ~ Just as the *haaji* does not cut or shave his hair and pare his nails while he is in *ihram*, the non-*haaji* refrains from doing so during the first ten days of Dhul-Hajj.
- ~ Just as the *haaji* recites *talbiyah*, the non-*haaji* recites the *takbeer-u-tashreeq*.
- ~ Just as the *haaji* sacrifices an animal called *hady* or *dam-ush-shukr* on the tenth of Dhul-Hajj, the non-*haaji* sacrifices an animal called *udhiyah* on the same day.
- ~ Just as the *haaji* slaughters after the assembly in ‘Arafah, the non-*haaji* slaughters after the assembly in the *musallaa* (‘*eid gaah*).
- ~ Just as the *haaji* only cuts or shaves his hair and pares his nails after slaughtering his *hady*, the non-*haaji* only cuts or

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<sup>3</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah, Aayah 125

shaves his hair and pares his nails after slaughtering his *udhiyah*.<sup>4</sup>

### Another Explanation

The people of Madinah had two annual festivals. After *hijrah* (migration), Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* substituted them with the two 'eids ('Eid-ul-Fitr and 'Eid-ul-Adha). The reason for this, as explained by Shah Waliullah (ra), is that every nation's festivals are based on either un-Islamic customs or praise for their heroes. The festivals of the people of Madinah were no different. Thus, Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* substituted them with 'Eid-ul-Fitr which is based on successful completion of the *siyaam* (fasting) of Ramadaan and 'Eid-ul-Adha which is based on the memory of Nabi Ibrahim (as). Now if you ask why we need to remember Nabi Ibrahim (as), the answer would be that Islam is based upon his *deen* (the Qur'aan uses the word *millat*).

مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“... The religion of your father, Ibrahim. He called you Muslimeen ...”

### The *Sunnah* of Ibrahim (as)

“What are these *adaahy* (plural of *udhiyah*), O Rasool of Allah?” asked the Sahaabah (ra). “The *sunnah* of your father, Ibrahim,” he replied.<sup>5</sup> Considering this hadith, we could say that the reason why we make *udhiyah* is simply because it was the

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<sup>4</sup> The contents of this article thus far have been adapted from a *bayaan* by Moulana Muhammad Hasan (ra). His *bayaan* is recorded in the book *Khutbaat-e-Akaabir* (V.2)

<sup>5</sup> Sunan Ibn Maajah, Hadith 3127

*sunnah* of Nabi Ibrahim (as). The motivation for observing this *sunnah* was to thank Allah for sparing his son Isma'il (as)'s life. Remember that Nabi Ibrahim (as) was commanded to slaughter Isma'il (as) in order to prove his love for Allah. He 'passed the test'. As he passed the knife on his son's throat and wondered why it was not cutting, Allah Ta'aala sent him a ram from the heavens and commanded him to slaughter it in place of his son. Consequently, Nabi Ibrahim (as) would slaughter a ram every year as a token of thanks to Allah for saving his son's life. Since we follow Nabi Ibrahim (as)'s *millat* (Islam is based on his *millat*) and Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* is from Nabi Isma'il (as)'s progeny, it is only appropriate that we follow his *sunnah* and thank Allah for saving Nabi Isma'il (as)'s life.

### **A Reminder**

Finally, the *udhiyah* also serves as a reminder. At the time of the slaughter, one is reminded that he should be prepared to sacrifice himself for Allah's pleasure. '*Nabi Ibrahim (as) was prepared to sacrifice his son to please Allah. How much am I prepared to sacrifice to please Him?*'

O Allah, guide us to the true spirit of *udhiyah*. O Allah, guide us to the true spirit of sacrifice, *aameen*.

و آخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين

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