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Eid-Ul-Fitr; a Unique Festival Time of Joy for Muslims

Eid -ul -Fitr is a unique festival. It has no connection with any historical event nor is it related to the changes of seasons or cycles of agriculture. It is not a festival related in any way to worldly affairs.

Its significance is purely spiritual. It is the day when the Muslims thank Allah for having given them the will, the strength and the endurance to observe fast and obey His commandment during the holy month of Ramadhan.

This day, in Muslim world, brings rejoicing and happiness. The rejoicing is not, however, at the departure of the month of Ramadhan; it is the happiness which man feels after successfully completing an important task.

So far as the passing away of the month of Ramadhan is concerned, Muslim religious leaders of the early days of Islam always felt profound sorrow when it came to an end, as they felt that they were being deprived of the spiritual blessings which were associated with the month of fasting.

To show the original Islamic feeling at the end of Ramadhan, I am quoting some of the sentences from an invocation by Imam Zainul-Abedeen. He says:-

"O Lord, Thou hast ordained Ramadhan to be one of the most chosen .. .. ; and Thou hast distinguished it from all other months, and chosen it out of all other seasons and periods; and given it preference to all the times of the year, by having sent the Qur'an and the light of guidance in it, and by having increased the faith, and by having enjoined the observance of fast in it, and by encouraging us to stand up for prayer at night, and by placing in it the glorious 'Night of Qadr' which is better than a thousand months.

"Therefore, in accordance with Thy command, we kept fast in its days, and with Thy help, we stood up for prayers in its nights; presenting ourselves, by means of its fasts and prayers, for Thy Mercy which Thou dist offer to us.

"And, verily, this month of Ramadhan stayed amongst us a welcome stay; and gave us a righteous company; bestowing upon us the most excellent benefits in the universe. Now, it departs from us at the completion of its time.
"Therefore, we bid it farewell as we did good-bye to one whose departure is hard upon us and makes us sad; and whose parting away makes us feel lonely."

Then he turns towards the month of Ramadhan, speaking in an endearing tone:-

"How much did we long for thee yesterday; and how intense will be our eagerness for thee tomorrow. Peace be on thee and thy excellence of which we have been deprived, and thy blessings which will no longer be with us."

These few words are the mirror which show the true Islamic feeling towards the month of Ramadhan and its blessings and spiritual benefits.

Eid-ul -Fitr is related to such a month of blessings, because it is on this day that the strict restrictions of the preceding month are lifted. Unfortunately, in some places, this resumption of the normal activities is misinterpreted as a licence to indulge in activities prohibited in Islam, like gambling, etc.

Fortunately, such trends are not common yet; but such people should be made to understand the significance of Eid -ul-Fitr. Religious observances of the Eid-ul-Fitr are designed to offer thanks to Allah that He helped us in accomplishing the aim of Ramadhan.

Surely, it would be an affront to Allah if anybody, after thanking Him for completing that spiritual training, goes right away sinning against Him!

Had such person known the meaning and purpose of Eid-ul -Fitr, he could not have indulged in such un-Islamic activities. Eid-ul-Fitr can be interpreted as a three-fold blessing:
First it provides one more occasion for the Muslims to thank God and remember His blessings.

Secondly, it affords an opportunity of spiritual stock-taking, after the month of Ramadhan. A Muslim can now ponder over the strength (or weakness) of his will power; he can see, in the mirror of Ramadhan, what were the strong (or weak) points of his character, because under the stress of fasting, the hidden qualities (or evils) of human character come to surface in such clear way which is, perhaps, not possible otherwise.
Thus a man gets a chance of self-diagnosis of the traits of his character, which probably no one else may ever detect.

Thirdly, it enjoins the well-to -do persons to share a portion of what they have with their poor brethren. On the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, a Muslim is obliged to give to the needy food-stuff at the rate of a prescribed weight, on behalf of himself and of every member of his family, including servants and guests who were sheltered under his roof on that night. It would certainly be pleasing to God if we did not forget these

lessons after Eid-ul-Fitr.

Incidentally, here the difference between religious and materialistic outlooks becomes sharper. Religion exhorts a man to give, by his own free will, a share of his wealth to those who are less fortunate, and to give it for obtaining the blessings of God. Materialism teaches him to snatch from others whatever they have got without any regard to the moral or ethical questions involved.

Thus, the religion tries to strengthen the highest qualities of the human character; materialism strives to make him the slave of the lowest animal instincts degrading him to the level of the beasts.

On this day, special prayers are held the world over, between sunrise and noon, when the Muslims assemble, in large congregations, wearing their best dresses standing shoulder to shoulder, demonstrating for everyone the universal brotherhood which is another distinguishing feature of Islam --- the religion of God.

In East Africa, special Eid barazas. are held in which the Muslims, as well as the non-Muslims, participate whole-heartedly. Thus, it provides the country-men with a chance to strengthen the ties of brotherly love and a national unity.

Let us re-dedicate our life to the cause of humanity, which is the best way to demonstrate our love of God. Let us resolve that our energies, in the coming year, will be directed towards strengthening a society based on mutual respect, brotherly love, and universal understanding.

Let us decide that, in the coming year, we will build a social order which would bring not only the material benefits, but also the spiritual satisfaction.

And, in the end, let us pray to God in these words:
"O Lord, make us clean from our errors by the close of the month of Ramadhan, and take us out of our sins when our fast comes to end. And bless us on this Eid day, the day of our festival and our break-fast; and let it be the best day, which passed over us, and forgive us our sins known and unknown."

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