

The Hikmah of Eid al Fitar

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Revised 2017, Published in Daily News and Mag Weekly Pakistan on 21st Oct. 2006

Every nation or community observes some festivals which indicate their socio-religious, historical and cultural significance. The day when by the order of Nimrud[1] Ibrahim(as) was dropped into the blazing fire and that was instantly cooled down for Ibrahim Khalilullah (as), became the day of Eid for his Ummah. The day when Yunus (as) was released from the Fish, it was an Eid for his followers. When Essa(as) extended the following Dua: [2]

"O Our Rab! Descend upon us Maidah from the heaven, which may become Eid for us".

Therefore, the day when Maidah was bestowed to the followers of Essa (as) it became their Eid. Similarly, the Ummah of Mohammad (S) observed Eid as a divine reward on the completion of the month of Ramadan. Eid al Fitar is such a joyful day when bliss and gentleness spreads over the entire world. I am cherishing a glorious but neglected period of the Muslim History when the flag of the Bani Fatimah [3] had risen from North Africa and was waving with full force in the Arabian Peninsula and parts of Europe. It was the period of the 14th Shia Fatemi Ismaili Imam al Muiz[4], when the conqueror of Misr, Sayyedna Johar al Siqali[5] had founded the city of "Al Muizziyyatil Qahera" and built "Al Jame al Azhar"[6], which is derived from "Az Zahra"(the Radiant), the famous nickname of Sayyedah Fatimah (as), the only daughter of Mohammad (S) from Khudaijah the other daughters being from the first marriage of Sayyedah Khudaijah. Al Muizziyyatil Qahera became the hub of intellectuals from far and wide as Al Jame al Azhar was a favorite seat of learning. What tyranny it is that today this ancient academic institution - al Azhar is in the clutches of the militant radical cult of Wahabi Salafis, who are promoting intolerance instead of harmony from this place and defaming Islam. Sayyedna Johar al Siqali publicly bears testimony in the Az'an(the call to Salaat), to the Wasayat and Imamah of Amir al Mumineen Ali (as) after the Risalah of Mohammad (S). The phrase "Haiyya Ala Khayril Amal"(rush to the best of deeds), which was dropped from the Az'an by the second Khalifah, was also revived and echoed from the Minarat of al Azhar. The landmark achievements of the Fatemi Empire were magnificent Masajid, splendid Madaris, great hospitals, organized Baz'ars, business areas, road and travelers resting places which pointed out a superb culture and prosperous society. The city of Al Qahera was at the height of its glory on account of the enlightened approach of its rulers.

According to the historians of Misr, Aimmat Fatemiyyen started the custom of firing the Ramadan and Eid cannons, which was adopted by succeeding rulers. The Fatemi Imam

ordered a cannon be placed on Muqatam hill so all Muslims would hear the signals of Sehr, Ift'ar and Eid. Many Ramadan celebrations and traditions introduced during the Fatemi era have lasted till today. The roads and streets of Al Muizziyyatil Qahera were decorated with coloured Fawanis (lamps) from the beginning of Ramadan till the end of Eid season. Regarding the origin of Fawanis it is said that Shia Fatemi Ismaili Imam al Hakim wanted to light the streets of Al Muizziyyatil Qahera during ibadah season and Eid festival so he ordered all the Shaikhs of Masajid to hang Fawanis that could be illuminated by candles. As a result, the Fanoos became a custom that has never been neglected. Another narration states that during the time of Shia Fatemi Ismaili Imam al Hakim, women were not allowed to leave their houses except during Ramadan; but even then they travelled with a little boy carrying a copper Fanoos which was then used as a tool to announce the arrival of a woman to caution men in the street to move aside. As the laws against women softened, women were allowed to go out as they wished but people liked the idea of the Fanoos, and so it became tradition that little children carry them at night in Misr till today.

Celebrations of Eid would begin following the Salaat al Maghribayn of the last day of Ramadan. The Shia Fatemi Ismaili Imam used to visit for Salaat al Eid mounted on the royal horse with his retinue. The royal procession was started from the Bab al Eid (one of the doors of al Qasar al Imam al Fatemi in the north eastern part). The Imam carried the A'sa (walking stick) of his great grandfather Rasulullah(S) in his hand for Barakah. The Musalla (Eid Gah) was built by Sayyedna Johar al Siqali[7], near the Bab al Nasr. The atmosphere was filled with the sound of Takbir'at. Al Imam al Muiz completed Eid Salaat with total devotion. Sayyedna al Qazi al Nauman[8] recited Takbir. After completion of the Salaat, the Fatemi Imam and Khalifah rested on the Minbar, offered Salaam upon the attendants of the congregation and then delivered a Khutbah full of eloquence. After delivering the first part of the Khutbah, he sat down at the higher step of the Minbar while with him on lower steps were Sayyedna Johar, Commander of the Fatemi Forces, Ammar bin Jafar and Shafi, the flag bearers. He recited the Kalimah: **"La 'ilaha 'illal'lah Muhamaddun Rasulullah Aliyan Waliullah"**, twice and then began the second part of the Khutbah. Finally he recited Dua with repentance and tears. His manner of Dua itself manifested that he was also one of 'Ahl al Zikar'. Tears automatically rolled down from the eyes of the listeners. At the end of the Khutbah, Al Imam al Muiz proceeded towards the cantonment, and from there he went to Al Qasr al Mualla, where a huge crowd waited to attend the Safrah (Dastar Khawan) arranged on behalf of the Fatemi Imam. A very long and spacious Safrah was spread for the guests. What a blissful time it was, when the emperor and the public mixed with each other. It was an ideal empire that gave a new phase of renaissance to the Ummah. It provided a perfect opportunity to understand the Nabawi practice in the faculty of politics. The Fatemi Ismaili Imams strongly demonstrated the meaning of divine politics. They left a clear example for us and for generations to follow.

The second feast on the occasion of Eid al Fitar for dignitaries and elites was arranged usually in Ewan al Zahab. A large silver plate of sweets was placed before the Imam and he took some for the blessings. This magnificent scene is described by the "Ruby of Badakhshan", "Hujjat e Khurasan", Sayyedna Nasir e Khusraw: [9]

“It was the tradition of the Bani Fatimah to decorate the court and arrange a ceremony. Prominent figures from all corners, like aristocrats, courtiers, Ulama and Sad’at were invited. After Sal’am and Tehniy’at session, a feast was served in the honour of the guests. Each invitee was seated, as per protocol. It was the first audience of Dai Nasir in the Fatemi court. He was mesmerized by the grandeur of the court. He discussed at length the arrangements of the feast and where a wide variety of fancy food dishes in the form of trees and palaces made of sugars were prepared”.

Sweets and nut markets were flourished in Al Muizziyyatil Qahera, providing the sugar for making al Alalik, a kind of sweet in the shape of lions and horses. Kunafa and Atayef, traditional Ramadan sweets, were also introduced during the Fatemi period. Eid al Fitar cookies, a longstanding festive feature of the traditional feast in Egypt, could date back hundreds of years to the Fatemi rule. Today’s “Mawaid al Rahman”, food tables laid out during the month of Ramadan for the poor, were inspired by the huge tables of food ordered by rulers and top officials for the poor during the Fatemi era. During the Fatemi era, Egyptians would give out candies to state officials, organize huge banquets. Fatemi Imam al Aziz would arrange two banquets on the occasion of Eid al Fitar. Following the Salaat on the morning of the Eid’s first day, Fatemi Imam sat at his Masnad to be served with the cookies. Celebrations were so lavish that new clothes, Dinars and different kinds of sweets were distributed to the masses.

It is noteworthy to discuss the intellectual interpretation of the Shia Fatemi Ismaili Dai with regard to the significance of Eid al Fitar. In his masterpiece, “Wajhe Deen” [10], Sayyedna Nasiri Khusraw provides an esoteric interpretation of Eid al Fitar. He explains: “In Zahir Eid al Fitar is the day when the Sa’im (fast-breaker) is liberated from Sawm (fast) and takes food and drink to gain physical strength. Similarly in Batin, Eid al Fitar is symbolic of Bab ul ‘ilm, Mawlana Amir al Mumineen Ali, who is Asas (Foundation) of the Dawah (of Islam). As people are freed from Sawm restrictions on Eid al Fitar, they would be freed from the Zulmah(darkness) and the Jahlat (ignorance) after attaining ‘ilm of Amir al Mumineen Ali; the spiritual strength of Mumineen through the ‘ilm of As’as is increased and they attain power. In Zahir, a Mumin celebrates and enjoys food, while in Batin he/she enjoys Maidah (spiritual nourishment) [11] which is the ‘ilm of the Tawil (esoteric science) bestowed by Amir al Mumineen Ali to the seekers. “Nahjul Balaghah” [12] – a collection of the sayings, sermons, and letters of Ali - is a good source to enjoy the blessings of the “Maidah”. Wilayah of Ali is the real Eid of his devotee because it allows him to attain spiritual strength. Maidah is the Naimah of Wilayah of the Imam from the progeny of Sayedash Shuhada, Abi Abdillah al Husain ibn Ali which Allah has granted to the seekers of Najaat(salvation).

On the joyous occasion of Eid al Fitar we should not forget the philosophy of Eid al Fitar and higher values of Islam. Our joy on Eid al Fitar should not be confined to celebrate it as a festival only but as a time to re-establish the broken hearts through moral and financial support. It is an appropriate time to demonstrate the Sunnah of Muwas’at[13] with full devotion. We should not forget the under privileged around us. It is a time to share the sorrows of people around us, in all possible manners. Youngsters should share

their time with elders who live with nothing but memories. All of us can contribute some of our time by volunteering for charity and the welfare of the society. Eid al Fitar is a renewal and reaffirmation of love, caring and sharing. Eid no doubt is a feast of joy and goodwill, and when it arrives we should try to be a part in sharing love and goodwill. It is also a festival of gifts, of sincerity, heart and charity of sacrifices. The festival of Eid is not like any other festival of other nations, in which they spend with *Isr'af*(waste), but it is a festival to recount the Naimah and offer Shukr. The Hikmah of Eid al Fitar is that a person should keep his mind clear from evil and remain far away from vices.

It is essential to consider deeply Ayah 114 of Surah al Maidah. The son of Mariyam (as) offered Dua with full devotion and submission as follows: [14]

"O Rabb! Send upon us Maidah from the sky, which may become Eid for us and for our future generations and it may become a miracle in our favour from You. Confer on us (physical and spiritual) Rizaq and You are the best sustainer of Rizaq".

If we consider with Marifah and Basirah the above Dua of Essa (as), the concept would be crystal clear that the above Dua al Mustaj'ab of Essa (as) is not only for his period but also for all ages and times to come. The believers of the past, present and the coming generations have been spoken in this Dua of Eid. This perpetual Dua of Essa Nabi (as) will continue till the Qayamah. The time for Eid is fixed but the spiritual Eid is beyond any limit of time. From the Aalam al Ruhani the Maidah of Hidayat descends, which is the real source of inner satisfaction and it is not possible through partaking of any physical food. Allah has granted Barak'at and Sad'at of Maedah in every age and epoch for the seekers of Naj'at. For the divine favour of Maidah, Dua, efforts, struggle and planning are helpful. Without Taqwa, attainment of Naimat and Naj'at is not possible. May Allah bless us in both worlds with the gift of Rizaq of Duniya and Aakhirah.

It is indispensable to study the following beautiful Dua: [15]

"O Allah! If our Rizaq is in the Sky, You may allow it to descend, if it is under the Earth You may put it out for us; if it is far then bring it closer to us. If it is closer to us then make it available without difficulty for us. If it is small in quantity then make it plenty. If it is sufficient, you may infuse in it Barakah for us", Aameen ,

Amir al Mumineen Ali (as) said: [16]

"Eid is for one which Siy'am has been accepted by Allah and He looks towards his devotion with admiration. The day in which no sin has been committed is a day of Eid".

Al Shakhs al Fazil, Saheb al Rasail says: [17]

Eid is the day when people get-together and remember Allah and His chosen ones.

The learned writer of 800 "Majalis Muayyadiyyah" says: [18]

"Eid al Fitar is the sign of culmination of the Siy'am of Ramazan. People would achieve Naj'at through Wala, as they get Naj'at of Siy'am through Eid. 'ilm is a divine food, the one who gets it, enjoys the sacred Eid forever.

Dua of Al Imam al Sajjad (as) comes on my lip which says: [19]

"O Allah! Send Salaw'at upon Mohammad (S) and Aale Mohammad (as). Listen to my secret Dua, grant acceptance to my Dua with respect and honor when I turn back from Sal'at al Eid. No Difficulty can break Your will and You are never unable to grant the

things asked from You; You are capable of everything. There is no fear and power except that of Allah, who is great and of a lofty status”.

May Allah continue His Naimah of Maidah towards us in Zahir and Batin. May Allah fulfill our Hajaat and remove Afaat. May Allah grant us more time with perfect health and facilities to collect provision of the final journey. Eid is an occasion when Muslims refresh the Sunnah of Musafiha and Muaniqah, without discrimination along with distribution of charity. May Allah grant all of us happiness in abundance and more time to collect good deeds, Aameen.

Bibliography and Notes

- 1). Nimrud, a biblical figure described as a king of Shinar (Assyria/Mesopotamia), was, according to the Book of Genesis and Books of Chronicles, the son of Cush, the great-grandson of Noah(as). The Bible does not mention any meeting between Nimrod and Ibrahim (as), although a confrontation between the two is said to have taken place, according to Jewish and Islamic traditions.
- 2). Surah al Maidah, Ayah 114
- 3). Read more: <http://iis.ac.uk/encyclopaedia-articles/fatimids>
- 4). The founder of Al Muizziyyatil Qahera, the 4th Shia Fatimi Ismaili Imam-Khalifah al-Muiz (953-975 CE) marks a watershed in the transformation of the Fatemi Empire from North Africa to an expansive Mediterranean power.
- 5). Jawhar al Siqili: Abu al Hasan Jawhar ibn Abdullah was originally a Sicilian. He was brought to Qairawan (now in Tunisia) after being arrested by Muslims. He served as a slave and was later released by Al Imam al Muiz. Then he was elevated as Vizier and the commander of the Fatemi forces. He conquered Fez in Northern Morocco, and conquered towards the Atlantic. After the Western borders had been secured, Jawhar as Siqili took Egypt in 969 from the Ikhshidis after a siege at Giza. The conquest was prepared by a treaty with the Ikhshidi Vizier Abul Fadl Jafar ibn al Fadl (by which Sunnis would be guaranteed freedom of religion).
- 6). Read more: <http://iis.ac.uk/encyclopaedia-articles/al-azhar>
- 7). Jawhar al Siqali,
- 8). Sayedna Qadi al Nauman is a paramount personality who had written numerous books on various subjects, and Da’aim ul Islam is one of them. It is considered to be the Shia Fatemi Ismaili Fiqah code of life. He served Shia Fatemi Ismaili Imams for 66 long years with pen and deeds. He is alive today through his writings. He became an example for scholars and taught them how to interpret religion, and protect Dawat. He provides us enough material of Maarif regarding Ahl al Bait and Imam of the era. In 363 (AH) he passed away in Misr and Al Imam al Muiz led his Salaat al Janazah.
- 9). “Safarnamah”, Sayyed Abu Moin Nasir Hamiduddin Khusraw, Dai of 18th Shia Fatemi Ismaili Imam al Mustansir, published Germany
- 10). “Wajhe Deen”, Sayyed Abu Moin Nasir Hamiduddin Khusraw, Khane Hikmah,
- 11). Ma’idah = spiritual food
- 12). Nahjul Balagha:
- 13). Read on Muwas'at: <http://durrenajaf.com/upload/5930e585d64be.pdf>
- 14). Ayah 114: Surah al Maidah
- 15). “Khazainu Barakat’il Dua”, Mumbai.

16). *Nahjul Balagha*:

17). "*Ikhw'an al Safa*", Al Imam Ahmad al Mastur, Qahera.

18). "*Al Majalis al Muayyadiyyah*", Sayyedna al Muayyad al Shirazi,

19). "*Al Sahifah al Sajaddiyyah*", Al Imam Ali Zain al Abideen, Qahera.

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