

## ***Sacrifice: The Making Of A Muslim***

### ***Building Our Communities Brick By Brick***

How is a wall built? How do the individual blocks 'join ranks' to turn into a solid and impregnable wall? As a wall is composed of many building blocks, so must our communities be built upon the strengths of individuals like yourself. As each brick supports and builds upon others, so must Muslims cement their bonds, and gain in height and strength at each step. When the wall is seen from a distance, the blocks may look indistinguishable due to their uniformity, but like human beings, each retains its inner individuality. No one is required to sacrifice this, as indeed it is the diversity of strengths that is the beauty of an Islamic community.

But if each block is unwilling to carry the burden of others above it or build upon those below it, it is impossible to construct a strong wall. Similarly, the most valuable bricks will have to go into the foundations below ground, never to be noticed or appreciated by anyone. Yet they are bearers of the greatest load, and without their sacrifice the building can not even begin to rise. Indeed many blocks may have to be broken in the process!

Similarly, without the help of the individuals in the Muslim community, through their unique and creative skills, their time for counselling of those in need, their activism and financial contributions, Islam cannot be expected to survive, let alone spread to the hearts of individuals of other communities. Every single one of us has something exceptional to offer to Islam and our communities, no matter how little it may seem, and whether we recognize it or not. Ask yourself today: "What little can I do to make a difference in the life of others?", "What is so unique about me, my skills, and my personality that could be of benefit to Islam?", "When was the last time I did some good action that truly required sacrifice on my part, which may be known to Allah alone?", "What have I done to thank Allah for all His blessings, the greatest of which is the guidance of Islam?"

Let us turn to Allah to help us lest our human frailties overwhelm us when sacrifices are demanded of us, and to seek His forgiveness for all our shortcomings and failures:

***"Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which You did lay on those before us; Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Release us from our sins, grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us..."*** [Quran 2:286]

*In memory of Ustadh Khurram Murad (1932-1997)*

For further study on this topic, refer to: "Sacrifice: The Making of a Muslim" (Khurram Murad), "Dying and Living for Allah" (Khurram Murad), and "To be a Muslim" (Fathi Yakun).



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# ***Sacrifice:*** **The Making Of A Muslim**

***"Do people imagine that they will be left at ease because they say 'We have faith!' and will not be tested? But certainly We tested those who were before them.."*** [Quran 29:2-3]

***"Whoever is not concerned with the problems of Muslims is not one of us."***  
[Hadith]

***"Revolutionaries are the children and young people...  
The young people are the ones who most quickly identify with the struggle  
and necessity to eliminate the evil conditions that exist."*** [Malcolm X]

We read these and similar verses of the Quran, Hadith, and sayings of our leaders, yet often forget the implications of the powerful message contained in these statements: the need to sacrifice our wealth, time, pleasures, desires, comfort, and if need be, our life for Islam. Even though the spirit of sacrifice is an inherent part of each of Islam's fundamental pillars, it is perhaps best realized and exemplified in the timeless journey of *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to the Sacred House in Makkah. To understand what true sacrifice is, it would be enough for us to ponder over the selfless response of Prophet Ibrahim when he heard the extraordinary call of Allah - to willingly give up his greatest love and hope for the future, his son, for His sake.

### ***Just Imagine...***

Just imagine where we would be today without the heroic efforts, sacrifices, and patience of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his devoted Companions in building the vibrant Islamic society of Madinah? What would the Muslim community in the West be like without the outstanding struggles of our civil-rights activists, Islamic leaders, social workers and sincere scholars who laid the foundations of our existence here?

What allowed them to accomplish such monumental feats was their conviction that no matter how great the task, how steep the obstacles, how scarce their resources, and how few the people to assist them in their cause, they *have* to do the work! It was this burning desire to please Allah that compelled them to believe: "If I don't do the work today and if I do not take the initiative, who else will?" To them Islam was a responsibility, a passion, and indeed the totality of life! But how hesitatingly we walk in their footsteps today. For sure, each and every one of us has something extraordinary and positive to offer to the cause of peace and justice today!

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### ***It Ain't No Piece of Cake***

Nobody says Islam is easy. Nothing of any value ever is. Indeed it is not easy to wake up for *Fajr* prayer on a cold winter morning. It may not be convenient to cook food for your ill neighbour. Nobody thinks that going to Islamic classes early Saturday morning is undemanding, when everyone around you is partying late Friday night. Nor is volunteering at an Islamic conference or a local food bank effortless. It may not be pleasant to offer others your shoulder to cry upon when their personal or family life is in crisis. Sure, resisting the peer pressure at school, university, or work place is extremely challenging. And we know it requires real faith and guts to speak out against oppression, racism, and tyranny.

Therefore, Islamic life is a life of sacrifice par excellence. It entails a struggle (*jihad*) that must be ceaselessly waged, to actualize Islam, inwardly and outwardly, to make it a living reality.

### ***Sacrifice: A Struggle to Surrender***

***"There is no Islam without struggle, and there is no struggle nobler than sharing Islam with those deprived of its beauty and blessings."***

[Sayyid Qutb]

Sacrifice means giving up things which are valued or desired. Those things may be (1) tangible, countable like our time, wealth or life, or (2) intangible, immeasurable like our feelings, attitudes, opinions or aspirations. They are given up for the sake of something that is more worthy or more urgent to us (Quran 6:162). Without sacrifice, our lives would be devoid of harmony and cooperation, full of conflict, a prey to self-centredness and immediate gratification of desires.

### ***Islam: It's Shahadah at Work***

***"We are perhaps living in times when living for Islam is more difficult than dying for it."***

[Abdul Malik Mujahid]

Why must Islam be so emphatically linked with the idea of struggle? Cannot a person be a good Muslim without involving himself or herself in a struggle requiring sacrifices? The answer is: No. And for very obvious reasons. Islam is not merely the confession of a faith which is made once in a lifetime. It requires a radical reorientation of life and thought. The confession is not merely verbal; it is an act of witnessing (*Shahadah*) which must transform our life into a living testimony of faith. You enter Islam by saying *Shahadah* (bearing witness). But you can live in Islam *only* by constantly *doing Shahadah* (Quran 2:143, 22:28). This will bring you in ceaseless confrontation with false gods inside you and outside you. Every act of sacrifice nourishes your *Iman*; for it transforms a verbal confession into a living reality. Therefore, it is through sacrifice that you can truly learn to love Allah, and to live and die for Him!

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### ***Sacrifice: Your Path To Becoming Muslim***

*Being* Muslim requires *becoming* Muslim. Becoming Muslim, after the seed of *Iman* (faith) has been sown in the heart, is a two-fold process: (1) to invite one's own self and (2) to call humanity, to live under the sovereignty of One God alone. Both are inextricably linked together, both are to be taken up simultaneously. As with reforming oneself, inviting humanity too is not a passive call, to be practised for a certain number of days or to be done only in speeches or certain occasions. It is an active, dynamic process; a movement. And it is at the collective level that struggle, and hence serious sacrifices, are required.

### ***Allah's Best Gift***

***"This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your way of life."***

[Quran 5:3]

Indeed, today we take Islam for granted. Do we really treasure Islam as a gift? Islam is not just one gift among many; it is *the choicest gift of God!* Out of all the countless bounties of Allah, none can be greater than His gift of guidance and knowledge to us. How blessed and comforted we are to have certainty of the true meaning and purpose of our mundane life, while we see so many around us in our own communities, struggling with hopelessness, depression, and hollowness in their lives!

Not much comes to us in life without endeavour. We gain only what we earn by our strivings. The soil is there, the water is there, the seed is there; but the soil will not turn seeds into crops unless we dig it, plough it, sow the seeds, water the plants, protect them and harvest the crop. Without sweat and toil, the gifts of God all around us will not yield their full treasures to us.

### ***Collective Struggle: Walking & Working Together***

***"You are a corner among the many corners of Islam, so don't let Islam be attacked from your side!"***

[Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him]

It is obvious that while walking on your personal way to God, you will need to attain greater and greater heights of sacrifice and self-discipline to succeed in seeking His pleasure. But once you decide to come together with others to struggle, you stand in greater need of making sacrifices. Without them, neither your organized collective struggle can take a durable shape, nor can you aspire to be successful in your mission. ***"God loves those who, fighting in His way, join ranks as if they are a wall of molten lead"***, says the Quran (61:4). What a beautiful and meaningful parable! Strong and solid, fused and welded, without cracks or divisions. That is how members of a Muslim community, joined together in bonds of love, marching to the beat of the 'drums of hope and faith', strive to invite people to do good and eliminate evil.