

## Meaning of '*Id-ul-Adhā*

1. The two '*Ids* of Islam do not commemorate some event in the Holy Prophet's life such as his birth or victory in some battle or similar event. Rather, every Muslim makes some personal effort to improve himself (by fasting or by sacrifice) as the real object of celebrating the '*Id*.
2. Moreover, '*Id-ul-Adhā* and *Hajj* mark an event in the life of another prophet, Abraham. It shows great selflessness of the Holy Prophet Muhammad that he gave such importance to another prophet, who arose about 2500 years before him, many of whose followers belong to other religions, namely, the Jewish and Christian religions.
3. We commemorate these events in the life of Abraham because he built the Ka'ba at Makkah, or re-built it from a ruined condition, so that people would come to it for pilgrimage to remember the teaching that God is One. Abraham's life was devoted to teaching that God is One, and that nothing we see in this world is a deity. He proved by arguments that no heavenly object, no idol of stone, and no king possessed the powers of God. Similarly, no river, mountain, or even priest, is in any way God. All these things are themselves under the control of the laws of God.
4. The religion taught by Abraham was simple: You must believe that God is One, and worshipping Him means that you must sacrifice or give up some worldly desire in order to become a better person. So the monument he built, the Ka'ba, is also a simple structure, compared to the great churches and temples of other religions.
5. Abraham's later followers, by the time that the Holy Prophet Muhammad appeared, had made religion a very complicated matter. The Jews had made the **practice** of religion complicated by introducing rules relating to small details. People's attention was entirely focussed on fulfilling all kinds of minor details of worship, while forgetting that the aim of worship was to improve a person's behaviour. The Christians had made **belief** very complicated by introducing useless philosophical discussions about how God could be one and also three, and to what extent Jesus was Divine and to what extent human.

6. By means of instituting the *Hajj* and *'Id-ul-Adhā*, Islam drew the attention of Jews and Christians to the fact that the religion practised by Abraham, their own patriarch, was simple, both in its beliefs and in its practice.
7. With Muslims too, we find that: they ask questions or argue about small details of religious practice, or they indulge in theoretical discussions of no practical consequence about matters of belief. For us Muslims too, the lesson of *'Id-ul-Adhā* is to turn our minds to how simple a religion was taught by Abraham, which the Holy Prophet Muhammad came to revive: “Follow the religion of Abraham, the upright one” (the Quran, 3:96).
8. The Quran says: “Proclaim to mankind the Pilgrimage” (22:27). It doesn't say here “Muslims” but “mankind”. There are two meanings of this. One is that a time would come when the gathering of Muslims at Makkah for the Pilgrimage would represent every section of mankind, i.e. every race, nation, colour, language, profession, economic status, etc. Remember that this verse, to call mankind to *Hajj*, was revealed to the Holy Prophet when he himself or his followers **could not perform the *Hajj*** due to their persecution by the Quraish. Yet at such a time, he calls mankind to *Hajj*! The second meaning is that, although *Hajj* is for Muslims, yet it has a significance for all followers of Abraham, in that they are being called to return to his original religion.
9. The Quran (37:100–108) relates the story of the attempt of Abraham to sacrifice Ismail in accordance with his vision. Human sacrifice, especially of a young boy or virgin, was very common in the world in his time. In fact, it was being done in India even one or two hundred years ago. This is why Abraham thought that he was being asked to sacrifice Ismail. By this incident, Allah taught that He does not require any human being as a sacrifice, but he requires you to sacrifice the animal desires of your own selves. This incident also teaches that if we show our **complete readiness and absolute willingness** to do something very difficult in Allah's way, then Allah lifts its burden from us and makes it much easier for us to do it, just as Allah lifted the burden from Abraham of having to sacrifice his son and gave him the much easier task of sacrificing a lamb.