

Eid That Brings People Together

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According to the Islamic tradition, there are two festivals observed by Muslims every year – Eid-ul-Fitr just after Ramzan and Eid-ul-Zuha in the month of Haj.

Eid-ul-Fitr literally means ‘festival of breaking the fast’. Like other festivals, Eid-ul-Fitr is a symbol of an important article of faith. It reminds one of an Islamic belief in the form of social practice.

Muslims believe that human life is divided into two parts: the pre-death period and the post-death period. One who follows divine commandments in the pre-death period will be rewarded in the post-death period.

Just before Eid-ul-Fitr, Muslims keep a fast throughout the whole month of Ramzan. Fasting symbolises life in the present world in which Muslims follow God’s commandments. Eid-ul-Fitr denotes the reward that will be given by God Almighty in the Hereafter in return for our good deeds.

Fasting in the month of Ramzan is not simply giving up food. In fact, it symbolises abstention from all kind of practices that are unlawful in Islam.

The Arabic word for roza is ‘sawm’ which means abstinence. Abstaining from food and water in the daytime during Ramzan reminds Muslims that they have to lead their lives with a sense of responsibility. They have to remind themselves that, in the present world, they have to adopt a life of abstinence, taking something and leaving something. This is the true spirit of Ramzan.

Then comes the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, a symbolic reminder of the fact that one who leads a responsible life in this world will be rewarded with a life of happiness in eternal Paradise.

Eid-ul-Fitr also has a social connotation. On this day Muslims go out of their homes, offer a

congregational prayer, meet their neighbours, exchange good wishes with other people and eat and drink without any restriction. All these activities are reminders of life in Paradise.

Eid-ul-Fitr may be a Muslim festival, but Muslims, like other communities, live in a society, in a neighbourhood. This makes Eid-ul-Fitr automatically a social festival. Therefore, Muslims meet not only with their religious brothers, but also with neighbours of other denominations and with their colleagues at work or in business.

It is this social aspect of Eid-ul-Fitr that has led to the practice of Eid Milan. Muslims observe Eid Milan by inviting their neighbours and others to spend some time with them. In this sense Eid-ul-Fitr promotes social harmony.

Like other festivals, Eid-ul-Fitr cannot be observed in isolation. It is but natural that the festival begins as a Muslim tradition but, in practice, it turns into a social festival. When Muslims visit shopping centres during the pre-Eid period to purchase things for the festival, they are bound to meet their fellow brethren. Then when they leave their homes to go to mosques, they again meet other members of society. Thus, every activity

of Eid-ul-Fitr automatically turns into a social activity. In this sense the observation turns into a human festival rather than a Muslim festival, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly.

Eid-ul-Fitr has a form, but at the same time there is a spirit inherent in all the festivity. In terms of form it may seem to be a limited festival, but in terms of spirit it is a universal festival. If Eid-ul-Fitr is observed in its true spirit it will energise the whole community, bringing people together in harmony and gratitude.

Eid-ul-Fitr therefore truly means Eid-ul-Insaan or a festival of humankind.

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