

News Cleanliness *Com Edn me* on Eid-ul-Azha *25-1-05*

Cleanliness is said to be next to godliness, and according to one Hadith, it is half of faith. But come Eid-ul-Azha, and all such considerations seem to disappear. Goats, sheep, cows, bulls and even camels are tethered outside private houses for days before the blessed event itself, which in its own way creates hygiene problems for the neighbourhood. Come the day itself, and these private houses become little private slaughterhouses. City administrations work overtime to try and keep up with the garbage-collection involved in this exercise. Meanwhile, blood flows alongside narrow streets and heaps of innards pile up at street corners.

Such sights are unheard of in other countries of the world where Muslims live and participate in this ritual, including in the Gulf countries and even in Saudi Arabia, which is considered the citadel of Islam. In these countries, citizens wishing to participate in the ritual of sacrifice buy their animals from designated markets and the animals are then taken to slaughterhouses outside the city, or at least away from human habitation. On Eid day, the animals are duly and ritually slaughtered, the meat cut into the desired sizes and either picked up by the owner or delivered to the relevant house. There is no mess on the streets, no carcasses or bloody sights that the more squeamish might wish to avoid.

In Pakistan too, more enlightened residents in some cities - like some neighbourhoods in Gulistan-e-Johar, Karachi - as well as those who live in apartment buildings, make similar arrangements. They take their animals to an empty plot in the area, jointly put up a tent and hire a chowkidar to look after the creatures, and then arrange for the sacrifice itself, with a representative from each house supervising his own ritual. Those who can't afford to buy animals also buy 'shares' in a cow or goat, and participate in a community ritual of sacrifice. Both initiatives are worth encouraging on a larger scale, and something that the local governments could consider institutionalising for the future.