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## Reviving a Prophetic Tradition

By Muslim Link Staff

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Economist and Richmond, Virginia resident Tariq Jangda is busy with orders. Not online gift orders, but orders for goats. And lambs. And cows – but cows are huge, and he'll have to think about those requests.

For the third consecutive year, Br Tariq and other Richmond area Muslims are organizing a community sacrifice to revive the sunnah (tradition of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him) of sacrificing animals on Eid Al-Adha.

With the largely urbanized American Muslim population accustomed to buying their meat from area halal grocers, most area Muslims opt to order their sacrificial meat through local Islamic butchers, or they send money through a relief agency to have an animal sacrificed for the needy overseas.

“The majority of Muslims are not doing the sacrifice at all, and [especially] not locally,” said Br Tariq.

One big challenge is finding a place. Most city and county codes don't allow live farm animals to be stored in backyards or basements, and neighbors would be aghast at seeing a Muslim holding down a goat and cutting its jugular vein.

The Islamic Society of Greater Richmond (ISGR) – the masjid Br Tariq manages – found a perfect location in the Tuckahoe Plantation, a historic farming site over 600 acres in size equipped to host gatherings of thousands of people. It costs ISGR about \$10,000 to have Eid Al-Adha at the Plantation.

Although the numbers are increasing, only a few hundred Muslims participate in the sacrifice each year, which begins with fajr prayer followed by the Eid prayer and khutbah. ISGR provides heated, covered tents for the Eid goers.

Muslim community members place orders for animals with event organizers, and then masjid officials purchase animals from local farmers at bulk rates.

“The average price of a goat during the year is about \$75, but at [Eid Al-Adha] time the price goes up towards \$150 ... Muslim farmers and meat sellers are also making large buys,” explained Br Tariq. But, he added, there is no competition between the ISGR Eid effort and Muslim meat sellers. “Some vendors come to the Eid and help us in the sacrifice.”

On the Eid day, local farmers arrive at the Plantation with all the animals and some extras for Muslims who arrive without pre-ordering their animals.

The first time they held the sacrifice, Br Tariq made sure to involve local and state regulatory officials throughout the planning stage and officials were on-hand at the first event. “They were very happy with the way we conducted everything,” recalled Br Tariq.

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This year the event isn't equipped to slaughter cows. "We [had] cows last year but we found it very difficult ... we constructed a special cage ourselves," Br Tariq said. Virginia law mandates that cows be slaughtered standing upright in a cage-like enclosure rather than tied down. "We need someone professional experience in handling cows [to help us]," added Br Tariq.

The sacrifice event helps Muslims reconnect with not only their religious traditions, but also with each other. A major part of the event happens after the sacrifices.

"We eat the meat and have a barbecue ... and we give a lot of the meat to the needy on the spot, or take it directly to needy families. Everyone helps each other clean and cut their sacrifice. We also have programs for the children," said Br Tariq.

Br Tariq is trying to spread the idea to surrounding masajid, but he admits its hard because there is already a well established joint Eid prayer in the Richmond area. Getting more masajid involved means more people, and more money to help defray the costs of the event.

"We charged [community members] exactly what the farmers charged us last year, but this year we are adding a surcharge so we can make the event self-sufficient," he explained.

From a public relations point of view, though, the event might already have paid for itself.

The first time ISGR held the event, a group of animal rights activists protested and some entered the plantation. When they saw how humanely the animals were being treated before and during the sacrifice, they left. Even farmers who considered some of the animals as their pets were amazed at how the Muslims took special care not to have animals witness other animals being sacrificed or see their dead bodies. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave very direct instructions on being compassionate with animals, even at the time of sacrifice.

"People like this idea ... we get Muslims from as far away as Maryland, and this year we expect some from New York," said Br Tariq.

Under the sky and on the open fields, praying together and sharing together, these Muslims are making connections between themselves, with the millions of pilgrims on Hajj, and through time with the great test of the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) – all right here in Richmond.

For information on the event, email the organizers at [isgr@earthlink.net](mailto:isgr@earthlink.net) or visit [www.isgr.org](http://www.isgr.org) . Special thanks to Omar Smith for helping facilitate this news report. -- TML