

HAJJ

Introduction

The word Hajj, linguistically, means heading to a place for the sake of visiting; in Islamic terminology, it implies heading to Makkah to observe the rituals of pilgrimage. Hajj is obligated by Allah upon every Muslim, male and female, who is physically and financially capable. It is obligatory only once during the lifetime of a Muslim. Allah Almighty Says

Surah Al Imran Chapter #03 Verse #97

Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah,- those who can afford the journey;
but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures.

Hajj is not a new institution introduced by Islam; rather it is as old as the Ka'bah itself. The whole origin of Hajj is rooted to the acts of devotion of Prophet Ibraaheem. This demonstrates that Muhammad did not innovate this institution; all he did was to clear it of all the evil practices that had crept into it.

Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five pillars of Islam. Hajj was made obligatory in the 9th year of Hijra. The Holy Prophet sent off 300 Muslims under the leadership of Hazrat Abubakr Siddique to Mecca so that they could perform Hajj. That was the year when it was banned for the Mushrikeen to enter Ka'ba. It was also made unlawful to perform Tawaaf with naked body.

The following year, 10th Hijra, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) announced a head of time he himself would perform Hajj that year. He led tens of thousands of Muslims to Hajj that year and demonstrated to Muslims how to perform all the rites and rituals of the Hajj. This Hajj is known in history as Hajjatul Wida' or Farewell Pilgrimage because this proved to be the last Hajj the Holy Prophet (pbuh) performed. At the end of this farewell pilgrimage, the divine revelation that had started some 22 years ago came to an end with the following verse of Surah Al-Maidah:

“This day have I completed My commandments for you, and have brought to its fullness the favor that I have bestowed upon you, and have chosen Islam as your religion”

Hajj is an act of worship just like Salat and Saum. Muslims from all over the world gather in Mecca in the last month of Muslim calendar and worship Allah. Hajj is a special worship that lasts for several days. This is an occasion that brings Muslims of all countries, colors, and races to one place – the Ka'ba. This is a unique opportunity of worshipping Allah collectively in a large gathering at one place.

Significance & Philosophy Hajj

Hajj is the one of the imperative practice of Muslims, It is the 5th Pillar of Islam. Allah Says in Qur'an

Surah Al Imran Chapter #03 Verse #97

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but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures.

Here, failure to perform Hajj if you have the means to do so, is described as Kufr. Its explanation is found in two Hadith of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him:

Whosoever possesses provisions and conveyance for the journey to the House of God, but in spite of this, does not perform Hajj, then his dying is like the dying of a Jew or a Christian (**Tirmidhi**).

Whosoever is not prevented from proceeding for Hajj by any clear, dire need that he must fulfill, or by a tyrant ruler, or by a disease which confines him, and yet he fails to perform Hajj and dies in this condition, he may as well choose to die either a Jew or a Christian (**Darimi**).

Elucidating this Hadith, Umar said: I wish to impose jizyah (poll tax meant specifically for non-muslims who were exempt from conscription) on those who do not perform Hajj in spite of possessing the required means. They are not Muslims, they are not M

From the commandment of Allah and its elucidation by the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and his Caliph, you can clearly see that Hajj is not something, which may or may not be performed according to personal whim. It is Obligatory at least once in a lifetime on all Muslims, wherever they live in the world, who can afford to make the journey and who are physically able to. Responsibilities to one's family or business are no grounds for exemption.

Effects of Hajj

1. Effects on Personal Life (Individual)

Surah Hajj Chapter #22 Verse #28

"That they may witness the benefits (provided) for them, and celebrate the name of Allah..."

(a) Journey for Allah

We usually think of journeys as of two kinds: those made for business and those made for pleasure. In both cases, it is to fulfill your worldly desires and benefit yourselves that you leave your homes, separate from families, spend money – all is done for your own sake. No question arises of sacrifice for any higher, sublime purpose.

But the journey that is the Hajj is quite different in nature. This is not meant for any personal end. It is undertaken solely for Allah, and the fulfillment of the duty prescribed by Allah. Nobody can be prepared to undertake this journey until and unless he has love of Allah in his heart as well as fear of him, and is convinced that Allah wants him to do what he is doing. That you are willing to bear the privations arising from separation from your family, to incur great expenses on a journey that will bring no material rewards and to suffer any loss of business or job, all are signs of certain inner qualities: that you love and fear Allah more than anything, that you have a strong sense of duty to Him, that you are willing to respond to His summons and ready to sacrifice your material comforts in His cause.

(b) Virtue and Piety

You will find that your love of God heightens as you start preparing for your pilgrimage journey, with the sole intention of pleasing Allah. With your heart longing to reach your goal, you become purer in thought and deed. You repent for past sins, seek forgiveness from people whom you might have wronged, and try to render your due to others where necessary so as not to go to God's court burdened with injustices that you may have done to your fellow beings. In general, the inclination for doing good intensifies and abhorrence for doing evil increases. After leaving home, the closer you get to the House of God, the more intense becomes your desire to do good. You become careful so that you harm no body; while you try to render whatever service or help you can to others. You avoid abuse, indecency, dishonesty, squabbles and bickering, because you are proceeding on the path of God. Thus your entire journey constitutes an act of worship. How can, then you do wrong.

(c) Pride and vanity will disappear

When the pilgrim reaches a certain point in his journey on the way to Mecca, he must put on Ihram, the mendicant-like clothes consisting of two unsewn sheets of cloth and a pair of sandals. What does putting Ihram symbolize: whatever your position in the world, before God you must come as a beggar and destitute, as in outward appearance so in the depths of your heart. Take off your colorful clothes; put on simple ones. Do not wear socks. Keep your heads bare. Do not use any perfume, nor comb your hair. Do not use any kind of adornment. Stop sexual relations with your wives, refrain even from any gestures, which may arouse eagerness for, and be reminder of, these relations. Do not hunt, and do not help anyone you see hunting. Adopting such outward postures will influence your inner lives also. You will develop an ascetic attitude. Pride and vanity will disappear. Humility and peace of mind will grow. The impurities that have sullied your souls due to indulgence in worldly pleasures will be removed and a feeling of godliness will dominate both your internal and external selves.

(d) Hajj is the way of perfection of faith

Hajj is rightly said to be the perfection of faith, since it combines in itself all the distinctive qualities of other obligatory acts of prayer, patience, privation of amenities of life, devotion, Zakat, slaughtering the sacrifice and supplication. In fact, the physical pilgrimage is a prelude to the spiritual pilgrimage to Allah when man would bid goodbye to everything of the world and present himself before Him as His humble servant saying: 'Here I am before You, my Lord, as a slave.

(e) A person forget material comfort

The Haji (pilgrim) is trained to completely forget the material comforts and glamour's of the worldly life, he avoid the use of oil, scent, perfume, etc., wearing only two pieces of unsown cloth, does not cut hairs and nails, he keeps himself busy day and night worshipping Allah and carrying out the rites of Hajj. In short, he abandons all his desires and submits to Allah with Ikhlas (sincerity), Ittiba (obedience) and humbleness, calling out to His Lord: "Here I am before You, My Lord, as a slave of You..."

2. Effects on Collective life (Social)

Every nation and society has a center of unity where they get together to worship God. They see prosperity and culture as relics of unity. People of the society get to know each other and understand each other's difficulties. They form a unified front to remove these difficulties and achieve their goals. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

Surah Hajj Chapter #22 Verse #34

“And to every people We appointed rites of sacrifice, that they might mention the name of Allah...”

With this idea, Hajj has been made a pinnacle of worship in order that Muslims who gather to perform Hajj can praise their Lord and Master, be thankful for His blessings, and humbly pray to Him for the removal of their difficulties. Muslims living in various parts of the world get to know each other, lay the foundation of social culture, give advice to each other, and provide opportunity for collective struggle.

Hajj is comprised of several acts of worship to God. People of different nationalities, languages, and colors gather in the millions at Mecca during this time. The concept of one humanity upheld by Islam is explicit during the Hajj pilgrimage. It is a time when people have the same thought, carry the same prayer on their lips, and are uniformly dressed. There is no discrimination between master or laborer, black or white, elite or lowly, native or foreigner. This equality before God becomes apparent in the multitude of human beings that assemble for this holy pilgrimage.