

THE UNIVERSAL MESSAGE OF HAJJ

Equality, Unity, and Peace



MAULANA
WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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MESSAGE OF HAJJ
EQUALITY, UNITY, AND PEACE

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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FOREWORD

Hajj is a congregational act of worship. Muslims from around the world gather at Makkah to perform the pilgrimage. The Hajj rite begins on the 7th day of Dhul Hijjah and ends on the 12th day. Every year, approximately two million individuals take part in this worship. The pilgrimage serves as a unifying platform that brings Muslims from different nations together in a religious gathering, fostering a profound sense of unity within the Islamic community. Their God is one and their Prophet is one. Hajj is a profound demonstration of unity and solidarity.

The pilgrimage of Hajj is a sacred journey towards God. It represents the highest level of closeness to one's Lord in this worldly life. While other forms of worship serve as a means of remembering God, however, Hajj is a means of attaining proximity to God. If other forms of worship are the worship of God at the level of the unseen, then Hajj is the worship of God at the level of the Seen (*shuhood*). Hajj is a divine encounter: It is a meeting with the Almighty. When a person embarks on the pilgrimage and reaches the sacred destinations of Hajj, he experiences extraordinary divine feelings.

It is as if he has left behind his own world and entered into the realm of God. While performing the Tawaf, he feels a profound connection with his Lord. He hastens towards Him with great zeal. He undertakes the journey solely for His sake. He offers his sacrifices in His presence. He symbolically casts stones at His adversaries. He beseeches Him for his every desire. He seeks from Him all that he needs. During the occasions of Hajj or *Eid al-Adha*, by sacrificing an animal, a believer symbolically pledges to devote his entire life to the path of God.

There are two aspects of Hajj, it is a form of worship as well as training that encompasses all the aspects desired from every individual in Islam. Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy for all mankind, and it is the duty of the pilgrims (and Muslims) to actively engage in the propagation of the religion of God all over the world. The message of Hajj (and Umrah) is for individuals to embody the spirit of Hajj (and Umrah) in their daily lives, and that is to disseminate the divine message to the world.

The history of Hajj is associated with the lives of the Prophets—Abraham and Ishmael, who laid the foundation of ushering in the era of monotheism worldwide. Prophet Muhammad served as the fundamental cornerstone of this revolution. ‘The Brothers of Prophet Abraham’ advanced the

FOREWORD

monotheistic mission in its first stage in the 7th Century. It is the responsibility of The Brothers of Prophet Muhammad to carry forward this mission to the next stage, by taking the divine message to the world.

The mission of the Muslim Ummah is to invite people to God. After completing Hajj, endowed with the spirit of dawah, Muslims should engage in disseminating the divine message worldwide.

Wahiduddin Khan

January 1, 2015

New Delhi, India

HISTORY OF HAJJ

The history of Hajj is associated with the lives of the Prophets—Abraham and Ishmael, who laid the foundation of ushering in the age of monotheism.

Hajj is a global and congregational act of worship. Its dates are determined according to the lunar months. The rituals of Hajj are performed within five days, from the 8th to the 12th of Dhul-Hijjah, in and around the places of Makkah. The history of Hajj is associated with the lives of the Prophets—Abraham and Ishmael.

It was God's plan to establish a revolution based on monotheism. For this purpose, God sent many prophets in ancient times. However, no team was formed through these prophets. As a result, the desired revolution based on monotheism could not be established in ancient times. Afterward, God Almighty devised a new plan through Prophet Abraham. In accordance with this plan, Prophet Abraham settled his wife Hajar and his son Ishmael in the desert of Arabia. The Quran refers to this event with the following words of Prophet Abraham: "O Lord! I have settled

some of my offspring in an uncultivable valley near Your Sacred House” (14:37).

Prophet Abraham was born approximately four thousand years ago in Iraq and died at the age of 175. He called the people of his time to monotheism, but polytheism and idol worship had become so deeply ingrained in their minds that they were unable to accept the message of monotheism. Prophet Abraham spread the message of monotheism to several generations. However, during that period, polytheism had become deeply rooted in society, making it difficult for people to disengage from it and think independently. From the moment of birth, individuals were exposed to the influence of polytheism, to the extent that their minds became completely conditioned under the influence of their environment.

At that time, following the command of God Almighty, Prophet Abraham formulated a new plan. The plan involved creating a new generation outside of the urbanized cities, in an uninhabited desert. To accomplish this, Prophet Abraham settled his wife Hajar, and his infant son Ishmael in Makkah. Over a long period of time in this desert environment, a living nation was produced through the process of prolonged procreation. It was in this nation that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad bin Abdullah (peace be upon him), was born in 570 AD. After he received Prophethood

he worked among these people, and thus a team was formed. It is these people who are known as the Companions of the Prophet (*Sahaba*).

The great history that was created in the wake of Prophet Muhammad's mission was established in accordance with the divine plan. Prior to the advent of the Prophet of Islam, numerous prophets appeared over the course of thousands of years. While these prophets proclaimed monotheism, they were unable to establish a social revolution based on monotheistic principles as desired by God Almighty. God desired that through the Prophet, a monotheistic revolution would be established, bringing an end to the era of polytheism and ushering in the era of monotheism worldwide. Ultimately, God intervened in history to facilitate this revolution through special divine succour, which was necessary according to God's creation plan. The realization of this project unfolded according to God's law of cause and effect. Prophet Muhammad served as the fundamental cornerstone of this revolution. He was the founder of this revolution.

The special plan of God Almighty began four thousand years ago in the Arabian desert through Prophet Abraham, Hajar, and Prophet Ishmael. This plan was carried out over a long period of time, resulting in the formation of a unique generation known as the descendants of Ishmael. Recognizing the exceptional

qualities of this race, a scholar bestowed upon them the title of “a nation of heroes.” It was within this distinguished lineage that the Prophet of Islam and his Companions were born. Consequently, through God’s superior arrangement, favourable circumstances unfolded. From its inception to its culmination, it was an immensely profound divine plan. The Prophet of Islam and his Companions, who laid the foundation for the glorious history of Islam, were indeed the outcome of this very divine plan.

The Quran explicitly states that the significant revolution that took place during the time of the Prophet and his Companions was not the personal accomplishment of any individual, but rather the direct result of God’s superior plan. In this regard, there are two verses in the Quran:

“They wish to put His light out with their mouths. But He will perfect His light, much as those who deny the truth may dislike it; it is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion, so that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, however much the polytheists may dislike it.” (61:8-9)

This means that these people intend to extinguish the light of God through their words, but God will ensure the perfection of His light despite the opposition of the disbelievers.

Prophet Muhammad has also emphasized this fact clearly. One notable example is the conquest of Makkah, which took place around 20 years after the commencement of his mission in 610 AD. During that time, Makkah held great significance throughout the Arab region. Traditions recount that during the conquest of Makkah, as the Prophet entered the city as a conqueror, he humbly lowered his neck out of a sense of humility. Witnesses observed that his beard touched the saddle of his mount. Then, at the gate of the Kabah, he delivered a sermon that included the following words: “There is no god but God, Who has fulfilled His promise, granted His succour to His servant, and defeated the confederates alone.” (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 4547)

SACRIFICE AND ISLAM

The spirit of sacrifice forms the essence of all Islamic acts and deeds. This occurs when one feels that he is under direct supervision of God.

On the occasion of Hajj and *Eid al-Adha*, Muslims worldwide perform the ritual of sacrificing an animal in the name of God. This act of sacrifice is not isolated from daily life; rather, it is related to every facet of a person's existence. It signifies that believers should live in this world embodying the spirit of sacrifice. The spirit of sacrifice forms the essence of all Islamic acts and deeds.

The Quran states: "I created the jinn and mankind only so that they might worship Me" (51:56).

This means that the purpose of creating jinn and mankind is solely to worship God. But what does worship truly entail? The Prophet of Islam explained it thus: "Worship God as though you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, then indeed He sees you." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 50; *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 8) This means that one should worship God with the mindset of perceiving His presence as if one can see Him, and even if one is seeing Him, one should be

aware that He sees them. This hadith shows what is the right way of life for human beings.

His consciousness should be so awakened that he starts feeling as if he is seeing God. This feeling should permeate his entire life with a divine hue. His every word and action should instil in him the feeling as if he is seeing God, and that everything he does is under the direct supervision of God. It is living life with such heightened awareness which is known as worship. This level of consciousness is achieved by an individual only when he has made God his sole concern.

THE PILLARS OF ISLAM AND HAJJ

Shahadah, Salah, Sawm, Zakat, and Hajj are the five pillars of worship in Islam. These five pillars must be established in one's life in both form and spirit.

The concept of worship is related to every aspect of a person's life. There are five fundamental pillars that form the basis of worship. The Prophet of Islam described these pillars as follows: "Islam is built upon five pillars: bearing witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God, establishing the prayers (*Salah*), paying the obligatory charity (*Zakat*), performing the Hajj pilgrimage, and observing fasting during Ramadan." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 8)

It is as if these are the five pillars on which the building of Islam stands. A structure is something that is visible. In this hadith, the metaphor of a building is used to illustrate the essence of Islam. Just as a building cannot be erected without pillars, the establishment of Islam is also dependent on these five pillars. To establish Islam means to establish these five pillars in one's life.

There is both spirit and form of these five pillars of Islam. Undoubtedly, the primary importance lies in

the spirit, but the form is equally essential. Just as the spirit requires a body to exist, similarly Islam cannot exist without its form. In this context, the spirit is of utmost importance, but it can only be effective when accompanied by the form; it cannot stand alone without the form.

Kalima: Testimony of Monotheism

Among these pillars, the first pillar is known as Tawheed, meaning to accept the oneness of God. It has a form that is accompanied by its spirit. Its form is to recite the prescribed Arabic words (*Kalima Shahadah*) in one's own language. *Maarifah* is the spirit of this *Kalima* which involves finding God at the level of discovery. The valid recitation of this *Kalima* is based on *Maarifah*. Without *Maarifah*—God-realization, reciting the *Kalima* is merely the utterance of a few Arabic words; it does not encompass the true spirit of the declaration of monotheism.

The ancient Greek philosopher Archimedes was in search of an answer to the question of how ships float on water. He was deeply immersed in this quest. One day, while he was taking a bath in a water tub, he suddenly had a breakthrough and discovered the law of nature known as the law of buoyancy. He was so thrilled that he swiftly leaped out of the tub, exclaiming, "I have found it, I have found it!" (*Eureka, Eureka*).

This example helps us grasp the true meaning of reciting the *Kalima*. The recitation of the *Kalima* of Monotheism is, in essence, an external manifestation of inner realization. Undoubtedly, it holds paramount importance among the pillars of Islam, but its significance stems from one's inner comprehension rather than mere verbal pronunciation.

***Salah*: Prayer**

Prayer is the second pillar of Islam. Like the other pillars, prayer also has a specific form. As we know, its form includes standing, bowing, and prostrating. At the same time, there is a spirit of prayer, which is surrender. Surrendering oneself completely to God, and making Him the focal point of one's life in the true sense of the word. It involves adopting a God-oriented life, which is mentioned in the Quran as remembering God abundantly (33:41). The purpose of prayer is also remembrance as stated in the Quran (20:14). Remembrance in this context, goes beyond the formal recitation of specific phrases; rather it entails constant remembrance of God with true feelings on every occasion.

When a person lives in this world, he goes through various observations and experiences. During this time, he should be able to convert worldly experiences into divine experiences, this process is called *tawassum*

in Quran (15:75). It involves seeking spiritual nourishment from everything. True prayer instills in a person the mindset of seeking spiritual nourishment for himself from everything. When this spirit is combined with the form of prayer, then a person's prayer becomes genuine prayer. Otherwise these words of the Prophet, "Go back and pray, for you have not truly prayed" will apply to him. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 757)

Sawm: Fasting during Ramadan

Fasting is the third pillar of Islam. The form of fasting involves abstaining from eating and drinking from dawn until sunset enduring hunger and thirst throughout the day. The spirit of fasting is patience. That is why the month of Ramadan is called the month of fasting (*Sahih Ibn Khuzaima*, Hadith No. 1887) This indicates that the month of Ramadan is specifically regarded as the month of patience.

What is patience? Patience means that a person begins to live a life of self-discipline in this world. He exercises control over his desires. He should not be provoked despite provocation. He can co-exist peacefully with others without letting his ego come in the way. In the realm of social life, when faced with shocks and challenges, he endures them without allowing their impact to affect those around him.

***Zakat*: The Prescribed Charity**

Zakat is the fourth pillar of Islam. The form of *Zakat* involves allocating a portion of one's earnings to spend on the needy as commanded by God. This is the form of *Zakat*. The spirit of *Zakat* is the well-wishing of the people, which entails recognizing the interconnectedness of all humanity. It involves embracing a truly human-friendly approach toward others. Instead of living only for oneself, one must live for the betterment of all humanity. Merely giving a prescribed amount of *Zakat* without possessing a sincere attitude of well-wishing towards others would render it incomplete, that is, the true spirit of *Zakat* remains unfulfilled. (2:264)

Hajj: Pilgrimage to Makkah

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam. The literal meaning of Hajj is to travel from one place to another. In religious terms, Hajj refers to the journey in which a person departs from his homeland and travels to Makkah to perform the rituals of Hajj on fixed dates in the month of Dhul-Hijjah and also offers animal sacrifice in the name of God. This is the prescribed form of Hajj.

The essence of Hajj lies in the act of sacrifice. When both the prescribed form of Hajj and the spirit of sacrifice are combined in a person's life, then he is

considered to have performed the worship of Hajj in the true sense.

During Hajj, all pilgrims offer animal sacrifice at Mina. Muslims around the world celebrate *Eid al-Adha* on specific dates. *Eid al-Adha* is regarded as a partial participation in the worship of Hajj. Through this festival, Muslims worldwide express their connection with the Hajj performed in Makkah.

Once Prophet Muhammad was asked, “O Messenger of God, what are these sacrifices? He replied, “This is the *sunnah* of your father Abraham. (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 3127) This means that the sacrifice that is offered during the Hajj is to follow the way set by Abraham.

Therefore, in order to understand the reality of Hajj and sacrifice, it is necessary to study the life of Prophet Abraham from this aspect. Through this study, we shall not only learn the historical background of Hajj and sacrifice, but we can also grasp their true significance. Hajj and *Eid al-Adha*, with their ritual of sacrifice, serve as a pledge to revive the tradition established by Prophet Abraham. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the true nature of sacrifice in the light of the life of Prophet Abraham.

PROPHET ABRAHAM

God chose Prophet Abraham to settle his wife Hajar and son Ishmael in the Makkan desert so that a new generation could be formed through them which is free from conditioning.

Prophet Abraham bin Azar was born in the ancient city of Ur, located in present-day Iraq, in 1985 BCE. He lived for over 175 years. “Ur” served as the capital of ancient Iraq and was a prominent center of the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia. Prophet Abraham, known for his exceptional qualities and unwavering devotion, called upon his contemporaries to God. He even conveyed his message to the then-ruler of Iraq, Nimrod. Despite presenting compelling arguments, none were willing to accept his call to monotheism. When Prophet Abraham completed his mission and left Iraq, only two individuals accompanied him—his nephew Lot and his wife Sarah.

Before Prophet Abraham, various prophets of God were sent to different regions at different times, conveying the message of monotheism to people. However, these people continued to reject their message. They

responded to the prophets with ridicule and mockery, treating them with disdain (The Quran, 36:30).

One era of the prophets concluded with Prophet Abraham. It became necessary to formulate a new plan for calling people to God. For this purpose, God chose Prophet Abraham. Subsequently, Prophet Abraham, accompanied by his wife Hajar and young son Ishmael journeyed through different cities until they eventually arrived at the site where Makkah stands today. According to a narration, this journey was guided by the angel Gabriel (Jibril). (*Tarikh al-Tabari*, Vol. 1, p, 254)

Hajar was the wife of Prophet Abraham. From her, a child named Ishmael was born. As part of a divine plan, Prophet Abraham took Hajar and their young son Ishmael to the location of Makkah in Arabia and settled them there, despite it being completely uninhabited at that time. The Quran briefly refers to this incident:

“[Remember] when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, make this a city of peace and help me and my children to keep away from worshipping idols. My Lord, they have led so many men astray! Anyone who follows me is with me, but if anyone turns against me, You are surely forgiving and merciful. O Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivable valley near Your Sacred House, Lord, so that they might establish their prayers. So, make people’s

hearts incline towards them and provide them with fruits so that they may be grateful.” (14:35-37)

The Quran briefly mentions the story of Hajar, but a detailed account of her story can be found in the well-known Hadith recorded in Sahih Bukhari. The narration is as follows:

“Abdullah ibn Abbas narrates that Hajar was the first among women to tie a waistband around herself to conceal her pregnancy from Sarah’s suspicion. Abraham then brought Hajar and their child Ishmael to Makkah. During that time, Hajar used to breastfeed Ishmael. Abraham placed them beneath a large tree which is now the location of Zamzam. At that time, there was not a single person in Makkah and there was no water there. Abraham left a bag of dates and a water skin for them before departing. Hajar followed behind him and said, “O Abraham, where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is no person and nothing else?” Hajar said this to Abraham multiple times, but he did not give a reply to her words. Hajar then asked him, “Did God command you to do this?” Abraham replied, “Yes.” Hajar said, “Then God will not abandon us.” Hajar returned while Abraham set out. When he reached the place where he could no longer be seen, he turned his face towards the direction where the

Kabah is presently located. He raised both his hands and prayed:

O Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivable valley near Your Sacred House, Lord, so that they might establish their prayers. So, make people's hearts incline towards them and provide them with fruits so that they may be grateful. (The Quran, 14:35-37)

Hajar nursed Ishmael and drank water from the leather bag. She continued like this until the water in the leather bag ran out, and she became thirsty. Ishmael also grew thirsty. When Hajar looked at her son, he was restless due to thirst. Driven by her son's condition, she set out in search of water. She reached the nearest hill, Safa. Standing on top of the hill, she scanned the valley to see if there was anyone in sight, but she could not spot anyone. She descended from Safa. She repeated this process until she reached the valley. Hajar lifted her dress and ran in distress, she was dead tired. After crossing the valley, she arrived at the Marwah hill. She stood there, looking all around, but no person came into sight. She proceeded to walk between Safa and Marwah seven times. Abdullah ibn Abbas narrates that the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said that people perform the *Sa'i* (walking between *Safa* and *Marwah*) between these two points. Then she ascended

Marwah. There she heard a voice. Wanting to listen to the voice, she told herself to keep quiet. When she tried to listen, she heard the same voice again. She said, “If you have made your voice heard to me, then can you help us in this situation?” She observed that there was an angel near the station of Zamzam. The angel struck the ground with his heel or wing, and water gushed forth.

Hajar started constructing a basin-like structure and used her hands to gather the sand around it. The more water she poured into her water bag, the more it would well up like a spring. Ibn Abbas narrates that the Messenger of God said that God had shown mercy to Hajar. If she had left Zamzam as it is Zamzam would have turned into a flowing spring. Hajar drank from the water and gave it to her son. The angel said to Hajar, “Do not fear abandonment. This is the House of God, and both this child and his father will build this House. God does not abandon His people.”

Hajar lived in this manner for some time. She continued until some people from the Jurhum tribe or the inhabitants of Jurhum’s settlement approached from the direction of Kada’. They descended into the mountainous part of Makkah. There, they noticed a bird flying around and concluded, “This bird must be flying over water. We have lived in this valley, and there

was no water there.” They sent one or two individuals to bring the news. They saw the water and returned to inform the others. Then the rest of the people came to the water source. The Messenger of God stated that Hajar was near the water. They asked Hajar for permission to settle there. Hajar responded, “Yes, but you have no rights over the water.” They agreed. Abdullah ibn Abbas narrates that the Messenger of God said that Hajar herself desired people to inhabit this place. They settled in this place and called their family members, who joined them and stayed there. As more houses were constructed in Makkah, Ishmael grew up and learned the Arabic language from the people of Jurhum. The people of Jurhum developed an affection for Ishmael, leading him to marry one of their girls. Hajar passed away.

When Ishmael got married, Abraham came to visit his son but could not find him. He inquired about Ishmael from his wife, who informed him that Ishmael had gone out in search of sustenance for them. Abraham asked about their circumstances, to which she replied that they were experiencing hardship and living in difficult conditions. She expressed her concerns to Abraham. In response, Abraham advised her that when her husband returned, she should convey his greetings and ask him to change the doorstep of their house.

When Ishmael returned, he noticed a change. He asked if someone had visited her, and she confirmed, “Yes, an old man came and inquired about our well-being. He asked about our situation, I replied, “We are going through immense hardship and distress.” Ishmael asked if he had conveyed any message for him, and she replied, “Yes, he sent his greetings to you and asked you to change the doorstep of your house.” Ishmael said that he was my father. He has instructed me to leave you. You should return to your family.” Ishmael divorced his wife and married another woman from the Jurhum tribe.

Abraham remained in his own land according to the will of God. Afterward, Abraham again came to Ishmael’s dwelling but did not find him there. He then approached Ishmael’s wife and inquired about Ishmael. She informed him that Ishmael had gone out in search of provisions. Abraham asked about their well-being, to which she replied that they were in good condition, in a state of contentment. She praised God. Abraham asked about their food, and she mentioned that they eat meat. He further inquired about their drink, and she informed him that they drank water. Abraham prayed, “O God, bless their food and water.” The Messenger of God mentioned that during that time, there was no cultivation in Makkah, and had there been any,

Abraham would have also sought blessings for it. If People from other lands relied on its meat and water, it would not suit them. Abraham said to Ishmael's wife that when her husband returned, she should convey his greetings and instruct him to preserve the doorstep of their house. When Ishmael returned, he asked her, "Did anyone come to you?" She replied, "Yes, a dignified good-looking person came to her and she praised the visitor." He asked about our well-being and I updated him. He also inquired about our condition. I informed him that we are in a good state. Ishmael asked if they had conveyed any other message. She said, "Yes, he sent his greetings to you and instructed you to protect the doorstep of your house." Ishmael said, "He was my father, and you are the doorstep. He has commanded me to keep you with me.

"So Abraham stayed in his homeland as long as God desired. Afterward, he came one day again and saw Ishmael sitting beneath a tree near Zamzam, repairing his arrows. When Ishmael saw Abraham, he stood up and engaged in the affectionate interaction that occurs between a father and his son. Abraham said, "O Ishmael, God has given me a command." Ishmael responded, "Then carry out what your Lord has commanded you." Abraham asked, "Will you assist me in this?" Ishmael replied, "I will support you." Abraham stated, "God

has commanded me to build a house here.” Abraham then gestured towards a raised spot nearby. Both of them laid the foundation of the house. Ishmael would bring the stones while Abraham would build them. As the walls grew higher, Ishmael brought a specific stone, known as the Black Stone (Hajar al-Aswad), and placed it there. Abraham would stand on that stone while continuing the construction, and Ishmael would pass him the stones. Together, they would pray, “Our Lord, accept this from us, for You are the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” They proceeded with their construction and performed Tawaf (circumambulation) around the house, repeating their invocation:

“O our Lord, accept this from us, for You are the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3364)

THE GREAT SACRIFICE

The great sacrifice mentioned in the Quran (37:107) was a divine plan carried out through Ishmael in the Arabian desert so that a center of monotheism could be established in Makkah.

When Ishmael grew up, Prophet Abraham had a dream in which he saw himself sacrificing his son Ishmael with his own hands. In accordance with this dream, Prophet Abraham prepared himself to carry out the sacrifice. However, it was a symbolic dream, signifying that the true meaning behind it was to devote his son to the mission of monotheism as per the divine plan, a mission that was destined to begin in the barren desert of Arabia.

The incident of Prophet Abraham is mentioned in chapter 37 of the Quran. As per his dream, he laid his son Ishmael on the ground for sacrifice. At that moment, the angels informed him that his sacrifice had been accepted, and he was instructed to sacrifice a ram (*dumba*) instead of his son. Following this, he carried out the sacrifice accordingly. In this context, the Quran mentions: “And We ransomed him with a

great sacrifice” (37:107). This signifies that Ishmael was saved through a great sacrifice.

In this verse, the word ‘great sacrifice’ refers to Ishmael, not to the ram. Prophet Abraham offered the ram as a ransom, while Ishmael was selected for a more momentous sacrifice. What did this greater sacrifice entail? It involved Ishmael being settled along with his mother Hajar in the desolate wilderness of Makkah, with the purpose of establishing a new generation through them. During that period, the area was nothing but a desert, devoid of any means of sustenance. Hence, it was called a great sacrifice in the Quran. This great sacrifice was a divine plan devised by God, which was carried out through Ishmael, the son of Abraham in the Arabian desert. The Quran briefly mentions this incident as a reference, whereas the Hadith provides a detailed account of it.

Chapter 37 of the Quran mentions this dream. According to the narration, after seeing the dream, Prophet Abraham intended to sacrifice his son. At that moment, the angel informed him that he should sacrifice an animal, a ram (*dumba*), as a ransom for his son. Subsequently, Prophet Abraham carried out the sacrifice as instructed (The Quran, 37:107). As known from the narration in Sahih Bukhari, following this incident, Prophet Abraham settled his wife Hajar

and his son Ishmael in the desert of Arabia. It is the place where Makkah is located. It was at this place that Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael later built the Kabah and established the system of Hajj.

SYMBOLIC SACRIFICE

The animal sacrifice performed during Hajj and *Eid al-Adha* is, in fact, akin to devoting oneself to the divine mission at the level of sacrifice. It is, indeed, an external manifestation of an internal spirit.

The purpose of settling Hajar and Ishmael in the desert in such a manner was to produce a new generation. The urban settlements of that time were deeply entrenched in a polytheistic culture. Anyone born in that environment would inevitably be influenced by polytheistic beliefs. Consequently, understanding the message of monotheism was difficult for them. Hajar and Ishmael were settled according to a plan, in the remote desert, far away from civilized cities. This was done so that in the natural surroundings, their descendants could be raised, free from the influences of polytheism—a generation that would be entirely untainted by polytheistic conditioning. Through procreation generation after generation, this process continued until the nation of Ishmael came into existence.

Within the same nation, in the year 570 CE, the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ibn Abdullah

ibn Abdul-Muttalib, was born. In 610 CE, God Almighty appointed Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a prophet. Following this, he started the mission of monotheism. Among the descendants of Ishmael, he found those precious individuals who are known as the Companions of the Prophet. With the support of this strong team, he accomplished something unprecedented in history. He carried the call of monotheism forward, advancing it from the intellectual phase to the stage of revolution.

The worship of Hajj is a rehearsal of the great dawah plan set in motion by Prophet Abraham. It can be seen as a reenactment of that very plan. During the specific dates of the month of *Dhul-Hijjah*, Muslims from all corners of the globe come together, reliving the historic event involving Prophet Abraham and his descendants.

In this manner, Muslims worldwide renew their commitment each year to faithfully follow this exemplary model established by the Prophets, according to their circumstances, in every era, they will continue the practice of inviting others towards God, ensuring its continuity until the Day of Judgment.

In this act of Abraham, sacrifice occupies a central position. The spirit of sacrifice is indispensable for its successful performance. To ensure the continuity

of this spirit of sacrifice, Muslims across the globe perform the sacrifice of animals at their respective locations and during the time of Hajj. They perform this sacrifice on the occasion of *Eid al-Adha*, and pledge to keep this spirit alive by making God a witness to their actions. The animal sacrifice performed during Hajj and *Eid al-Adha* is, in fact, akin to devoting oneself to this divine mission at the level of sacrifice. It is, indeed, an external manifestation of an internal spirit.

Human beings possess five senses. Psychological research has revealed that when a situation engages all of a person's senses, it has a more profound impact on his mind. Merely contemplating the spirit of sacrifice in an abstract manner does not leave a lasting impression. Animal sacrifice serves as compensation for this limitation.

When a person willingly engages in the act of animal sacrifice, with the sincere intention to dedicate oneself to the divine cause, all of his senses are actively involved. He thinks with his mind, sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, touches with his hands, and after the sacrifice, he also tastes it. Through this complete sensory engagement, he grasps the essence of sacrifice at a deeper level. He becomes capable of fully embracing the spirit of sacrifice, which becomes an integral part of his being.

THE REALITY OF SACRIFICE

During the occasion of Hajj, by sacrificing an animal, a believer symbolically pledges to devote his entire life to the path of God.

During the occasions of Hajj or *Eid al-Adha*, the act of animal sacrifice encompasses two dimensions: one is its spirit, and the other is its form. In terms of its spirit, sacrifice represents a commitment or pledge. The physical act of sacrifice serves as a pledge in action. The importance of this form of dedication is widely recognized and acknowledged.

To provide an understanding of the concept of sacrifice, here is an example. An incident of November 1962 serves as an illustration of this concept. During that time, there was a significant threat posed by a neighbouring country's aggression on the eastern border of India. The entire nation was plunged into a heightened sense of urgency and tension.

During the demonstrations, one notable incident occurred when 25,000 youths from Ahmedabad collectively made a resolution to defend the country against external attacks, even if it meant sacrificing their lives. After reaching this decision, each individual

contributed one rupee from his own pocket, resulting in a total collection of 25,000 rupees. They then presented this money to the Prime Minister of that time, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, as a gesture of their commitment and service. While presenting the money, they conveyed to the Indian Prime Minister that these 25,000 rupees symbolized the pledge of 25,000 youths to dedicate themselves to defending their country.

These youths expressed their spirit of sacrifice symbolically through 25,000 rupees. These 25,000 rupees were not the actual sacrifice; they served as a mere token. This concept is similar to the idea of animal sacrifice, where the act itself holds symbolic meaning. By sacrificing an animal, a believer symbolically pledges to devote his entire life to the path of God. Hence, during the time of sacrifice, it is said, “O God, this is from You and for You” (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 2795), which means, “O God, You are the giver, You gave it to me; now I entrust it to You.”

COMPANIONS OF THE PROPHET

The Companions of the Prophet brought about a revolution based on monotheism and set in motion a significant intellectual revolution in human history.

Four thousand years ago, Prophet Abraham was born in the ancient city of Ur in Iraq. There, he continued his mission of calling his people of that time to the right path. However, the conditioning of the people of his community had become so strong that they were not willing to accept his message. In response to this, under the command of God, Prophet Abraham started a new plan.

The implementation of this plan began when he took his wife Hajar and their young son Ishmael to the desert of Arabia and settled them in an uninhabited environment.

Through this particular plan, a new generation was born in Arabia. It was within this generation that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, was born in the year 570 CE. From this very generation, the individuals who are known as the Companions of the Prophet were also born. The Companions of the Prophet were

essentially the contemporaries and devoted followers of Prophet Muhammad. In the Quran, they are referred to as the “best of community” (3:110). The Companions of the Prophet possessed exceptional qualities, and their attributes are mentioned in various places in the Quran. In this context, a verse from the Quran is quoted here:

Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are firm and unyielding towards those who deny the truth, but compassionate towards one another. You see them bowing and prostrating themselves, seeking the grace of God and His good will. Their marks are on their faces, the traces of their prostrations; they are described in the Torah and in the Gospel as being like a seed which sends forth its shoot, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands firm on its own stem, delighting the sowers. He seeks to enrage the disbelievers through them. God has promised forgiveness and a great reward to those of them who believe and do good works. (48:29)

In the Quran, special qualities of the Companions of the Prophet are mentioned in relation to two historical predictions. One prediction is mentioned in the Torah, and the other is found in the Gospel which is explained

later in this section. In the Torah, the Companions of the Prophet are described in these words:

“He came with ten thousand of saints.”
(Deuteronomy 33:2)

According to the reference in the Bible, the Companions of the Prophet possessed a saintly character.

The noble attributes of the Companions of the Prophet, as mentioned in the Quranic verse, are given in the following sections.

Acknowledging the Prophet before Historical Recognition

Among these qualities, the first quality is indicated by the phrase in the above Quranic verse (48:29): “And those who are with him,” referring to those who accompany the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). When did they accompany him? They accompanied Prophet Muhammad during a time when his personal historical greatness had not yet been established. They recognized Prophet Muhammad based on his intrinsic merit, perceiving an extraordinary personality within an outwardly ordinary individual. They acknowledged his status even before he attained widespread historical recognition. They recognized the Prophet before his esteemed reputation became evident in any way.

The Companions recognized Muhammad, the son of Abdullah bin Abdul Muttalib, as the representative of God and wholeheartedly submitted to him. They supported the Prophet of Islam during times of difficulty (The Quran, 9:117).

Remaining United Like a Fortified Structure

The second attribute of the Companions of the Prophet, as mentioned in the above Quranic verse (48:29) as ‘compassionate towards one another’ signifies their deep compassion and goodwill towards one another. This attribute holds exceptional significance when considering that, like any human group, the Companions also had their fair share of differences. However, they remained united like a strong and fortified structure (The Quran, 61:4). They proved their ability to stay united despite their differences, to be well-wishers of one another despite grievances, and to build a positive personality within themselves despite negative circumstances. It was precisely this attribute of the Companions that empowered them to establish a revolutionary movement centered around monotheism, which ultimately changed the course of human history.

Bowing and Prostrating in Prayer

The third attribute of the Companions of the Prophet is expressed by the phrase “bowing and prostrating

in prayer” (The Quran, 48:29). This indicates their complete submission to God. They had reached a state of total surrender and possessed a profound understanding of God’s greatness. When individuals consciously comprehend the absolute power of God and recognize their total helplessness, they willingly submit themselves to Him with humility. In their hearts and minds, there is no greatness left but the greatness of God. God becomes their sole concern. This exemplifies the essence of perfect monotheism, and the Companions of the Prophet had attained the highest level of this monotheism in the perfect sense

Utmost Conviction and Trust in God

The fourth attribute of the Companions of the Prophet is described in the above Quranic verse (48:29) as “Seeking the grace of God and His goodwill.”

This indicates that the Companions had a deep-rooted conviction in the existence of God. They had unwavering faith in God, recognizing that He is the ultimate Bestower and Withholder and that success and failure are determined by His will. They placed their utmost trust in God, prioritizing Him above all else. Their hopes and aspirations were entirely dependent on God.

Qualities of Sincerity, Piety, and Humility

The sixth attribute of the Companions of the Prophet, as expressed in the words refers to ‘the visible marks

on their faces from the traces of prostration.’ (The Quran, 48:29) This indicates that the Companions had attained the highest level of qualities such as sincerity, piety, and humility. These qualities are the defining characteristics of perfect humanity, these are the qualities that make a man a superman. A person possessing these qualities is considered to have a divine personality. Without a doubt, the Companions of the Prophet exemplified perfection in these attributes.

A Nation of Heroes

Following this, the above Quranic verse (48:29) mentions the specific attribute of the Companions of the Prophet, which is expressed in the words of Jesus Christ in the Gospel. He likened the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed that a man planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, it grows into the largest plant and becomes a tree, providing shelter for birds to nest in its branches (Matthew 13:31-32).

This attribute of the Companions of the Prophet, briefly mentioned in the Torah and further elaborated in the Quran, pertains to their individual qualities. These qualities were present in every Companion at the highest level of perfection. In the words of an Orientalist, these qualities transformed each Companion into a hero. (Philip K. Hitti: *History of the Arabs*, p. 142)

Ushering in a Revolution based on Monotheism

Another attribute of the Companions of the Prophet, mentioned in both the Gospel and the Quran (48:29), is depicted through a parable that illustrates the social revolution brought about by the Companions. This parable takes the form of a tree, symbolizing their impact and influence. The seed of this tree was planted in the Arabian deserts approximately two and a half thousand years before the birth of the Prophet of Islam. Its roots can be traced back to the sacrifices made by Prophet Abraham, Hajar, and Ishmael. Over time, this tree grew and flourished, passing on its legacy from one generation to another.

The Companions of the Prophet were the successors of this historical lineage. Through their exceptional sacrifices, they took the ideology of monotheism to the era of a profound intellectual revolution. This revolution set in motion a new process in human history, leading to significant global transformations. French historian, Henri Pirenne (d. 1935) acknowledged this revolutionary event by stating: “Islam changed the face of the globe, the traditional order of history was overthrown.”

Astonishing the Farmers

The phrase ‘The farmers are amazed’ (The Quran, 48:29) in this alludes to a historical backdrop. During

the early stages of the mission of the Prophet and his Companions, it was a recurring event that the messengers of God sowed the seed of the call of monotheism, but it failed to grow into a thriving tree. However, it was through the Companions of the Prophet of Islam that this incident occurred for the first time. This development brought immense joy to the entire world, as they had been anticipating for centuries to witness the flourishing garden of the call to monotheism.

Faith and Righteous Deeds

The above Quranic verse (48:29) also states that among them are those who believe and do good works. God has promised them forgiveness and a great reward. This glad tidings is directly for the Companions of the Prophet and indirectly for all those who discover the role of the Companions and carry it forward in subsequent generations until the Day of Judgment. Sustaining this legacy is a challenging endeavour that entails innovative thinking and rejuvenating capabilities in those who engage in this mission. Those individuals who demonstrate the noble qualities of faith and righteous deeds in future generations will be included in the glad tidings as mentioned in the Quran.

THE SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF HAJJ

Social unity is prominent during Hajj when pilgrims from all around the world come together. Hajj becomes a profound demonstration of unity and solidarity.

Hajj holds immense importance as an annual pilgrimage in Islam. It takes place in the final month of the Islamic lunar calendar, known as Dhul-Hijjah. The rituals of Hajj are performed in and around the Kabah, situated in Makkah, within the Arabian Peninsula. This sacred worship is regarded as the culmination of all acts of devotion, encompassing various facets of religious observance. One such significant aspect is its social relevance.

The element of social unity is prominent in the practice of Hajj. Encyclopaedia Britannica (1984), describes Hajj as follows: “About 2,000,000 persons perform the Hajj each year, and the rite serves as a unifying force in Islam by bringing followers of diverse backgrounds together in religious celebration.” (Vol. IV, p. 844)

Every year, approximately two million individuals take part in Hajj, and this pilgrimage serves as a unifying

platform that brings Muslims from different nations together in a religious gathering, fostering a profound sense of unity within the Islamic community.

In the Quran, the command of Hajj is mentioned as follows:

“And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security” (2:125).

This signifies that God has designated the Kabah as a sacred place where people return to find peace. The term “place of return” in Arabic is akin to the modern concept of a center. It is a gathering place that serves as a common reference point and symbol for all.

Every year, Muslims from all corners of the world converge upon Makkah to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. In 2012, their number reached approximately three million. During the Hajj season, Makkah and its surroundings are filled with people of diverse backgrounds. They speak different languages and dress in various attire. However, upon arriving here, their thinking becomes unified. They come together to worship the same God. Throughout the Hajj, their focus remains steadfastly on the same God. Thus, Hajj becomes an act of worship that, with all its

acts and rituals, imparts lessons of social cohesion and centrality.

The history of Hajj is connected to the lives of Prophet Abraham and Prophet Ishmael. These two individuals are not only revered as prophets of God by Muslims but are also recognized as great prophets by adherents of other major religions. As a result, the practice of Hajj has acquired a historical significance and grandeur that surpasses any other religious observance in the world.

Prophet Abraham was born in ancient Iraq, and his son Prophet Ishmael was born there as well. During that time, Iraq was a flourishing civilization. Azar, who was Prophet Abraham's father and Prophet Ishmael's grandfather, held a high position in the governmental system of Iraq. In Iraq, there were abundant opportunities for Prophet Abraham and Prophet Ishmael to achieve a high position. However, they could not reconcile with the polytheistic beliefs prevalent in Iraq. In their pursuit of worshipping only one God, they decided to leave the region, which served as a center for the worship of multiple deities. They departed from the fertile lands of Iraq and embarked on a journey into the barren deserts of Arabia, where there existed a direct connection between the Creator and the creation. It was there

that they constructed a place of worship dedicated to the worship of the one God—the Kabah.

This action of Prophet Abraham and Prophet Ishmael can be described in alternative terms: instead of adopting multiple deities as their refuge, they chose to make one God as their refuge. In pursuit of this objective, they built the House of God (Kabah), which serves as the worldwide center for the worship of the One True God. This center of monotheism also serves as the central focal point for the observance of the Hajj rituals. Let us examine some aspects of the rituals performed during the worship of Hajj.

Talbiyah

During Hajj, the pilgrims frequently recite the talbiyah in the form of the following phrase:

“Labbayk Allahumma Labbayk, Labbayk la sharika laka labbayk, Innal-hamda wan-ni’mata laka wal-mulk, La sharika lak.” (Here I am, O God, here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Verily, all praise, blessings, and dominion belong to You. You have no partner.)

By saying these words repeatedly, a psychological state is cultivated within the pilgrim that greatness belongs to one God alone. All other forms of greatness pale into insignificance compared with the supreme greatness

of God. This profound realization serves as the key to unity. Unity and solidarity cannot be achieved in an environment where each individual claims superiority over others. When individuals are ready to lose their personal sense of greatness in favour of another, this results in unity and solidarity.

Tawaf

Similarly, an important part of Hajj is Tawaf which involves circumambulating the Kabah. People from all corners of the world who gather in Makkah during the Hajj season commence their journey by performing the Tawaf around the Kabah. This act symbolizes a practical admission that their endeavours will revolve around a single focal point. They move in the same circle. This parallel can be drawn to the physical centrality observed in the solar system, where all the planets orbit around the Sun, the central point. Similarly, Hajj imparts the profound lesson that man should center his life around the worship of one God and revolve within this divine circle.

Sa'i

Afterward, the pilgrims proceed to perform *Sa'i* between Safa and Marwah. They start from Safa and walk towards Marwah, then return from Marwah to Safa. This process is repeated seven times, completing

seven rounds. This act of *Sa'i* teaches the lesson that a person's efforts should be restrained within certain boundaries. Without limits to their pursuits, they would wander aimlessly. However, when boundaries are established, individuals remain focused within them. They continuously return to the same points where their fellow pilgrims continue their activities.

This is the case with the other rituals of Hajj as well. All the rituals of Hajj are performed with a unified focus, despite their various aspects. It is as if there is a divine force like a magnet attracting all the scattered elements towards a single point.

When people from different countries arrive at the sites of Hajj, they discard their national clothing and wear a common garment called Ihram. Wearing the Ihram involves donning an unstitched white cloth, one around the waist covering the lower body, and the other is draped over the shoulders covering the upper body like a shawl. Consequently, millions of individuals are dressed in identical attire of the same colour.

The Gathering at Arafat

After engaging in various rituals all these people gather in the vast field of Arafat and a remarkable scene unfolds at that moment. It appears as if all the differences among human beings have suddenly vanished. People

have let go of their conflicts and have become one, just as their God is one.

When all the pilgrims, dressed in the Ihram attire, come together in the expansive field of Arafat, observing from a height, it seems as though, despite differences in language, colour, status, and gender, everyone has become completely united. Different nationalities seem to merge into a larger nationality. The truth is that Hajj showcases such a profound demonstration of unity and solidarity that no other example of this can probably be found anywhere else in the world.

The Kabah

The Kabah is the *Qibla* (direction of prayer) for Muslims. Muslims face the Kabah five times a day while offering prayers. It is as if the entire Muslim world shares a common direction of worship. In general, this is a conceptual reality. However, during the days of Hajj, upon reaching Makkah, it becomes a visible reality. When Muslims from all around the world arrive here and face the Kabah while performing prayers, it feels as if the shared Qibla for all the Muslims of the world is one and the same.

The Kabah is a square-shaped structure. Around this structure, people perform Tawaf, which involves circumambulating the Kabah in a circle. Shoulder to

shoulder, they move around the Kabah in a circular motion, which teaches the lesson of unity and collaboration, acting as a single entity, coming together, and working collectively. It is a practical demonstration of movement in response to a single command.

This is also an external aspect of a great training system that everyone is required to remove their individual clothing and wear the same simple attire. Here, the distinction between the king and the commoner disappears. The privileges of Eastern and Western clothing vanish into thin air. In the common attire of Ihram, everyone appears as if they have only one identity. All people are mere servants of God. Besides that, no one holds any other status or importance.

Visit to Madinah

Although the prescribed rituals of Hajj are concluded in Makkah, most pilgrims also visit Madinah after completing Hajj. The ancient name of Madinah was Yathrib. However, towards the end of his life, the Prophet of Islam made it his center. Since then, it has been known as *Madinat al-Nabi* (the City of the Prophet). Madinah is its abbreviation. Masjid al-Nabawi built by Prophet Muhammad, is located in Madinah. His grave lies inside the Masjid al-Nabawi. The remnant signs of his prophetic life can be seen all around.

In such circumstances, when pilgrims reach Madinah, it serves as a profound lesson for them in unity and social cohesion. In the Prophet's Mosque, they are reminded that they have only one guide. As they depart, they realize that in spite of the multitude of geographical and national differences among them, they are all required to follow the path shown by the same Prophet. They endeavour to make him the guiding force in their lives. Regardless of their numerous and diverse backgrounds, their God is one and their Prophet is one.

THE SPIRIT OF HAJJ

Hajj is a comprehensive act of worship. It is a form that encompasses all the aspects desired by every individual in Islam.

There are two verses in the Quran regarding Hajj. Their translation is as follows:

“Call mankind to the Pilgrimage. They will come to you, on foot, and on every kind of lean camel, by every distant track so that they may witness its benefit for them and, on the appointed days may utter the name of God over the cattle He has provided for them. Then eat their flesh, and feed the distressed and the needy” (22:27-28).

Here, the benefits mentioned refer to spiritual gain. During the occasion of Hajj, the means to attain these spiritual benefits are referred to as the “Symbols of God.” (The Quran, 2:158) These symbols are the historical commemorations of the mission of monotheism that was established in this land through the prophets. The rituals performed during Hajj serve as reminders of that prophetic history.

The meaning of *Ihram* is that a person transitions from a materialistic culture to a divine culture. By performing *Sa'i* between Safa and Marwah, the pilgrims reaffirm their commitment to dedicate themselves, just like the people of Prophet Ishmael, to the religion of monotheism. When they throw pebbles at the Jamarat, they symbolically declare, though in symbolic language, that they will repel Satan, following the example of Prophet Abraham. By offering sacrifices, the pilgrims pledge to abandon materialism and embrace a life devoted to God.

Gathered in the field of Arafat, all pilgrims reflect upon the time when they will be held accountable on the day of Resurrection. Ultimately, the pilgrim returns with the (urgent) message of the Prophet of Islam, which he gave 1400 years ago:

“Verily, God the Almighty has sent me as a mercy to all people, so convey this message to all the people on my behalf” (*Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabeer* by Tabarani, 20/8).

This means that God has sent me as a mercy for all people, and it is the duty of the pilgrims to convey my message to all human beings. The lesson in this is that O Muslims, you should actively engage in the propagation of the religion of God all over the world. Your running, standing, speech, and silence—everything should be dedicated to this mission.

Hajj is considered the supreme form of worship. This statement is not shrouded in mystery but is a well-established reality. Upon contemplation of the rituals performed during the annual Hajj pilgrimage, it becomes evident that due to its numerous benefits, Hajj is rightfully hailed as the greatest form of worship. During Hajj, Muslims from all corners of the world undertake a journey to the sacred land of Kabah, transcending geographical boundaries. This pilgrimage is not merely a movement of inanimate stones, but a journey undertaken by living beings, individuals endowed with the faculties of sight, hearing, and comprehension. Thus, when these diverse individuals embark on the pilgrimage from different parts of the world to the Hijaz region during the Hajj season, it naturally culminates in a global assembly. From this perspective, it can be asserted that Hajj represents a mobilization of worshippers on a global scale.

When more than two million believers embark on their journey of Hajj from their homes, they engage in repeated interactions with others. It is during these interactions that the process of introducing Islam to people from different countries begins. The pilgrims encounter new experiences during this journey, which expands their horizons. They go through different stages during this journey. Thus, for them, the Hajj pilgrimage becomes synonymous with religious tourism. Along

this journey, there may be differences and conflicts that arise among fellow pilgrims. However, as per the Quranic verse, the pilgrim “must abstain from indecent speech, from all wicked conduct, and from quarrelling while on the pilgrimage.” (2:197) The pilgrim adopts the way of tolerance on such occasions. In this way, Hajj serves as a training ground for unity despite differences.

The truth is that Hajj is a comprehensive act of worship. It is a form of training that encompasses all the aspects desired from every individual in Islam. However, the benefits of Hajj are only obtained by those who perform it with a conscious awareness of its spirit.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HAJJ

The real importance of religion lies in the spirit, not in the outward form. God always observes the intentions of the individuals.

One aspect of the Prophet's method was that his focus was always on the inner spirit, rather than outward appearances. If there were any differences arising from ignorance in external matters, he considered them insignificant. However, when it came to matters of true importance, his approach was always firm and unwavering.

An incident of the Prophet's Final Hajj is mentioned with slight variations in wording in *Al-Bukhari*, *Muslim*, and *Abu Dawood*. It took place in the last year of his life. After performing the Hajj, the Prophet was seated in Mina. People would approach him and seek guidance on the rulings and issues related to Hajj. Someone would say, "I was unaware of the ruling, so I trimmed my hair before performing the sacrifice." Another person would say, "I have already performed the sacrifice before stoning the pillars (*Ramy*)." The Prophet would respond to each of them, saying, "Do as you have done, there is no harm." Similarly, people

continued to approach him, repeatedly inquiring about matters related to a change in the order of performing rituals. The Prophet would repeatedly assure each person, saying, “There is no harm, there is no harm” (*La haraja, la haraja*). (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 1857)

The narration from Abu Dawood (No. 2015) includes the following statement: “Do as you have done, there is no harm. Harm is for the person who humiliates a Muslim. Such a person is an oppressor. This is the person who did wrong and perished.”

In religion, the real importance lies in the spirit, not in the outward form. It is possible for someone to meticulously observe external practices while disregarding the spiritual aspect, which renders their efforts worthless. God always observes the intentions of individuals. If the intention is good any shortcomings or variances in external practices are forgiven. However, if someone’s intention is not good, their actions hold no value in the sight of God, regardless of how meticulously they attend to external matters. Meticulously observing the form may seem attractive, but it has no value in God’s sight.

HAJJ: A CAUTIONARY NOTE

It is crucial for Muslims to engage in introspection and evaluate the sincerity of their intentions while performing any action, especially while performing Hajj.

In a Hadith, it is mentioned: “There will come a time when people will perform Hajj for entertainment, the middle class for business, the scholars for fame and reputation, and the poor for seeking monetary help.” (*Kanz al-Ummal*, Hadith No. 12363). This indicates that a time will come when individuals from different social strata will approach Hajj with varying intentions. The wealthy will engage in Hajj as a form of recreation, the middle class will view it as an opportunity for business, scholars will use it as a platform for showcasing their knowledge and gaining recognition, and the poor will seek monetary help through it.

This hadith is indeed quite alarming. In light of this, it is crucial for Muslims, particularly in the present age, to engage in introspection and evaluate their action whether or not they are sincere in intention.

Those who are wealthy should sincerely ponder whether their Hajj is driven by true piety or if it is merely a form

of leisure and entertainment. The middle class should question their intentions and determine whether they embark on the pilgrimage for genuine spiritual benefits or for material gains. Scholars, too, need to introspect and assess whether their journey to the House of God is primarily for seeking connection with God or if it serves as a means to boost their leadership among the people. Likewise, the poor should reflect on whether they have approached the House of God as a means of seeking blessings from God or if their focus has shifted towards seeking help from their fellow human beings.

The Prophet has predicted the state of the Muslim community as it approaches its decline. In the early period of Islam, the spiritual aspect of religion prevailed while the materialistic aspect remained subdued. However, in times of decline, the spiritual aspect diminishes among people while the materialistic aspect becomes prominent in all aspects of their lives.

In the early, golden period of Islam, the condition of people was such that the spiritual aspect of religion dominated, and its material aspect was suppressed. Conversely, during times of decline, material aspects take priority, and certain superficial and ostentatious elements are labelled as piety. This phenomenon is evident in the context of Hajj, Umrah, and other acts of worship in Islam as well.

THE BENEFIT OF HAJJ

Hajj is a transformative journey that reconnects a pilgrim with his innate nature. This benefit is only attained by those who perform the pilgrimage with the right intention and spiritual mindset.

According to a narration, the Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him, stated that when a believer completes the Hajj pilgrimage and returns home, he is spiritually rejuvenated. He returns after Hajj like a newborn child. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1820)

To understand the meaning of this narration, let us refer to another hadith, in which the Prophet of Islam, explained that every individual is born on nature and it is their parents who later turn them into a Jew, Christian, or Magian (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1385).

After reflecting on these two narrations, it becomes clear that when Hajj is performed with sincere intention and spiritual devotion, it has the power to transform the pilgrim, similar to what is commonly known as “de-conditioning” in modern terms.

The underlying concept is that every individual is influenced and shaped by their surroundings. The act

of Hajj serves as a means to set oneself free from this conditioning. Hajj is a transformative journey that aims to de-condition every individual, allowing them to reconnect with their innate nature. Essentially, the person who was previously bound by external conditioning becomes aligned with their true nature through the experience of Hajj. He becomes Mr. Nature.

However, this benefit of Hajj is only attained by those who perform the pilgrimage with the right intention and spiritual mindset. For those who merely go through the outward rituals of Hajj without the full spirit, it remains just an outing lacking any deeper significance.

THE UNIVERSAL MESSAGE OF HAJJ

The universal message of Hajj (and Umrah) is for individuals to embody its spirit in their daily lives, and that is to disseminate the divine message to the world.

The Prophet of Islam performed Hajj in the later part of his life, and almost all of his Companions were present on this occasion. During Hajj, he delivered a sermon on the Day of Sacrifice, which is known as the Farewell Sermon (*Khutbat al-Wida'*). In this sermon, he addressed his Companions and said, "Let the present ones inform the absent ones" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1741), meaning that those who are present should convey the divine message to those who are not present.

Most likely, the result of this command by the Prophet of Islam was that after him, all the people engaged in the prophetic work of inviting others to the path of God. They spread the message of Islam throughout the majority of the inhabited world at that time. This shows that the conclusion of Hajj is, in fact, the beginning of a new endeavour. When the rituals of Hajj come to an end, a much greater mission begins. It is calling people

to God. It is as if Hajj serves as training, and dawah work is the practical application of that training.

According to a Hadith, the rituals of Hajj are symbolic enactment of various stages of the life of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham's entire life was dedicated to inviting people to the path of God. Every believer has to follow this path in his life. For instance, wearing the Ihram signifies a life of simplicity. *Tawaf* represents devotion and dedication. *Sa'i* conveys the message that a believer's efforts should be directed toward God alone. Animal sacrifice teaches the lesson of living a life of sacrifice. Stoning at *Jamarat* signifies the act of distancing oneself from Satan. Uttering "*Labbaik, Labbaik*" upon reaching the field of Arafat serves as a reminder of being present before God on the Day of Judgement, and so on.

Hajj is the major pilgrimage, while *Umrah* is a minor pilgrimage. However, the message of both is the same. The purpose of the Shari'ah is not for people to repeatedly perform Hajj and Umrah. Rather, its purpose is for individuals to embody the spirit of Hajj and Umrah in their daily lives after once performing them, and to disseminate its message to the world.

AFTER COMPLETING HAJJ

The mission of the Muslim Ummah is to invite people to God. After completing Hajj, endowed with the spirit of dawah, Muslims should engage in disseminating the divine message worldwide.

The commandment of Hajj is mentioned in the Second Chapter of the Quran. One of the verses in this regard states: “When you have performed the acts of worship prescribed for you, celebrate the praises of God as you celebrated the praises of your fathers, or even more fervently than that.” (2:200). Remembering God after completing the Hajj rituals does not merely involve mechanically repeating words of remembrance. Rather, it signifies the duty of inviting people to the path of God. It means spreading the message of God to all humanity, equipped with the spirit of Hajj through performing it according to the Abrahamic tradition. This task of invitation has to be continued every year after Hajj.

Post-Hajj actions mean to invite all people to God’s creation plan. This interpretation finds its source in the practice of the Messenger of God himself. It is reported that Prophet Muhammad fulfilled the obligation of the

Farewell Pilgrimage with his Companions. Upon his return to Madinah, he addressed his Companions in detail, conveying the following message: “Verily, God has sent me as a mercy to all people. So convey my message to others, may God have mercy on you, and do not dispute among yourselves as the disciples of Jesus, son of Mary, did” (*Sirat Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 2, p. 607).

The mission of the Muslim Ummah is to invite people to God. The purpose of Hajj is for Muslims to come together at the historical site in Makkah every year, where they engage in various symbolic rituals and remember the Prophet’s call to invite people to God. Subsequently, endowed with the spirit of dawah they should disseminate the divine message worldwide, just as the Companions of the Prophet spread this mission across the globe.

BROTHERS OF ABRAHAM, BROTHERS OF MUHAMMAD

'The Brothers of Prophet Abraham' advanced the monotheistic mission in its first stage in the 7th century. It is the responsibility of The Brothers of Prophet Muhammad to carry forward this mission to the next stage, by taking the divine message to the world.

The Prophet of Islam was born in Makkah in the year 570 CE and he passed away in Madinah in the year 632 CE. This is approximately 2,500 years after the era of Prophet Abraham. He was born as a result of Prophet Abraham's supplication (The Quran, 2:129). The Quran states: "Then We revealed Our will to you [O Muhammad], saying, 'Follow the religion of Abraham, the upright in faith; he was not one of the polytheists.'" (16:123)

This is not a trivial matter. It is, in fact, an announcement of historical reality. The Prophet of Islam and his Companions were the culmination of a 2500-year historical process. Prophet Abraham initiated a historical process through his extraordinary sacrifice in Makkah. This process, progressing through its natural

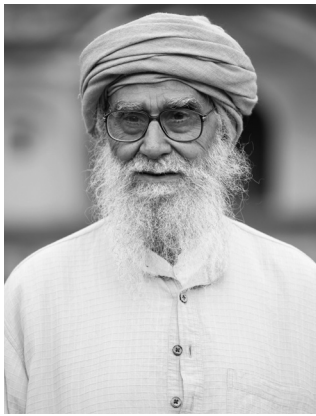
stages, reached its culmination in the seventh century CE. It was during that time that specific individuals were born in Arabia who are known as the Companions of the Prophet.

Through the sacrifices of the Prophet and his Companions, another historical process began in the 7th century CE. This process spanned more than a thousand years, culminating in the 20th century. Now, there is a need for a new group that embodies the completion of the subsequent historical process. After the Prophet's Companions, this will be the second group after the Companions of the Prophet, which has been called *Ikhwan-e-Rasool*, The Brothers of the Prophet, as mentioned in a tradition, narrated by Abu Hurayrah, in which the Prophet of Islam said, 'I want to see my brothers.' The Companions of the Prophet said, 'O Prophet of God, are we not your brothers?' The Prophet replied, 'You are my Companions. My brothers have not yet come. They will come in later times.' (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 249)

It is as if the Prophet of Islam and his Companions were 'the brothers of Abraham', and the group that will emerge later will be the brothers of Muhammad. 'The Brothers of Abraham' advanced the dawah mission in the 1st stage, and now it is the responsibility of The Brothers of Prophet Muhammad to carry forward this

dawah mission to the next stage, by taking the divine message to the world.

The pilgrimage of Hajj is a sacred journey towards God. It represents the highest level of closeness to one's Lord in this worldly life. While other forms of worship serve as a means of remembering God, however, Hajj is a means of attaining proximity to God. If other forms of worship are the worship of God at the level of the unseen, then Hajj is the worship of God at the level of the seen. Hajj is a divine encounter: It is a meeting with the Almighty. When a person embarks on the pilgrimage and reaches the sacred destinations of Hajj, he experiences extraordinary divine feelings. It is as if he has left behind his own world and entered into the realm of God. When he performs the *Tawaf*, he feels a profound connection with his Lord. He hastens towards Him with great zeal. He undertakes the journey solely for His sake. He offers his sacrifices in His presence. He symbolically casts stones at His adversaries. He beseeches Him for his every desire. He seeks from Him all that he needs.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual guide, and ambassador of peace. His English translation of the Quran and its Commentary are widely appreciated for their simplicity, clarity, and ease of understanding. He has authored over 200 books; and two magazines, *Spirit of Islam* and *Al-Risala*; and recorded thousands of

video and audio lectures. Demonstrating the relevance of Islam in the modern idiom, this material delves into Islam's spiritual wisdom, the Prophet's non-violent approach, its relationship with modernity, and other contemporary issues.

For his seminal contributions to world peace, Maulana received numerous national and international awards including the 'Demiurges Peace International Award' by the Nuclear Disarmament Forum AG under the patronage of the former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev (2002). The Government of India honoured him with the 'Padma Vibhushan Award' (2021), and the 'Padma Bhushan Award' (2000) for his contributions to spirituality. He was also the recipient of the 'Rajiv Gandhi Sadbhavna Award' (2010), the 'Communal Harmony Award' (2000), and the 'National Citizen's Award' by Mother Teresa (1996), to name a few. In 2001, Maulana founded the *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International* which is actively carrying his legacy forward by distributing copies of the Quran and peacefully conveying the spiritual message of Islam at a global level.

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A mong all Muslim acts of worship, Hajj holds a prominent position. In one Hadith, the Prophet called it “the supreme act of worship.” But it is not just the rites of pilgrimage that constitute this importance, it is the spirit in which Hajj is performed. Hajj assumes a supreme act of worship when it is undertaken in its true spirit, and performed in the proper manner. It will then be the greatest act in a pilgrim’s life: he will never be the same again. To go on the Hajj is to meet God. When the pilgrim reaches Meeqat, the border of the Sacred Territory, he is filled with awe of God: he feels that he is leaving his own world, and entering God’s. Now he is touching the Lord, revolving around Him, running towards Him, journeying on His behalf, making a sacrifice in His name, praying to the Lord and seeing his prayers answered.

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