

Hajj and Its Significance as a Symbol of Muslim Unity

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Abstract: The institution of Hajj as one of the pillars of Islam has a lot of significance to the Muslims. Both the Qur'an and Sunnah are explicit on the obligation of hajj on those who have satisfied all the necessary legal pre-requisites. We hope to delve on what significance the hajj holds for the Muslims and how it stands as a symbol of Muslim Unity. There are also some textual injunctions on the necessity for Muslim unity and some discussions on the current challenges threatening the unity of the Muslims.

Key words: Hajj, Significance, Muslim, Unity

1. Introduction

Hajj is one of the fundamental obligations in Islam. It is binding on every legally capable (*Mukallaf*) male or female Muslim once in a life time. The obligation of hajj was institutionalized in the 6th year After Hijrah (Sabiq, S., 1992, p. 528). Allah (SWT) says:

Pilgrimage to the sacred House is a duty to Allah for mankind for whom who is able to make the journey (Qur'an 3:97).

In suratul Hajj Allah (SWT) proclaims:

And call upon the people for Hajj, they will come to you on their bare feet or riding any weak camel, and they will come to you from very far places (Qur'an 22: 27).

2. Prophetic Guidance on the Obligation of Hajj

The prophet (SAW) has indicated that Hajj is an obligation on the Muslims in a number of Ahadith, for example the prophet (SAW) has said:

Islam is built on five pillars: the acknowledgement that there is no deity beside Allah, and that Muhammad is His Messenger, the observance of Salat, the giving of Zakat, fasting during the month of Ramadan and performance of Hajj (Al-Baihaqi, A., 1989, p. 105).

3. Conditions for the Obligation of Hajj

Hajj is obligatory on those who satisfy the following conditions: (Al-Jaza'iri A. J., 1999, p. 244).

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- Maturity – (not a minor).
- Sanity – (not lunatic, senile or imbecile).
- Financial ability from lawful means (not ill-gotten wealth).
- Physical ability (not physically disabled due to old age or sickness).
- Sufficient security of the highway and also all places of worship at Makkah that guarantees effective safety of life and property.

4. Delay in Performance of Hajj after Fulfilling All the Above Conditions

Some Muslim scholars held the view that a Muslim who has satisfied all the conditions mentioned above should hasten to perform the Hajj without any delay. This is in his best interest because he does not know precisely what the future holds. Some unforeseen circumstances might arise that could be a hindrance to having the chance of performing the Hajj. The prophet (SAW), has warned that if a Muslim has all the means to perform the Hajj and he refused to do so deliberately such a person may wish to die either as a Christian or as a Jew (Abu Aziz S. Y., 2009, p. 242).

Shaykh Abdullahi bin Fodio also opined that the burden of maintenance of wives and children should not be taken as an excuse for delaying the performance of hajj. He also had the feeling that even without enough provisions a Muslim can undertake the journey to Makkah with the hope of getting Allah's assistance (Bin Fodio A., 2009, p. 98). Perhaps it was this conviction which made Abdullah to embark the journey on Hajj moving on foot all the way from Gwandu to Kano where he stopped and did not proceed to complete the journey to Makkah due to some pressing reasons.

We have several hundreds of thousands of Nigerian pilgrims who travelled towards Makkah on foot for several years ago. Some of them have succeeded in reaching Makkah and performing their hajj while many others stopped on their way. Some lived and died in the Republic of Chad and Sudan and their descendants are still living in those places.

5. Significance of Hajj

The institution of hajj has a lot of significance to the Muslims morally, spiritually, economically, socially and politically. The observance of hajj is a fulfillment of moral and religious obligation. It is a moral duty which attracts a lot of reward from Allah (SWT). Hajj also facilitates the attainment of higher spiritual elevation. During the Hajj seasons the pilgrims devote and dedicate all their time in worship (*Ibadah*) and this brings them closer to Allah (SWT). The more a servant comes closer to Allah, the more spiritual elevation he attains. In fact throughout the hajj, the pilgrims enjoy a special kind of spiritual satisfaction. There are also economic benefits attached to Hajj. It is a kind of International trade avenue which attracts commercial transactions of great magnitude. Pilgrims and residents of Makkah used to buy and sell goods coming from different parts of the world. This huge volume of trade serves as a booster to the economic prosperity of the Muslims in general terms.

Socially, Hajj serves as a ground that fosters greater understanding and social cohesion among the Muslim Ummah. Fraternal and friendly relationships are often established between Muslims coming for Hajj from different parts of the world. This helps to bring the Muslims closer to each other. They may learn and share experiences of their different situations of life in areas where they live.

Hajj also has political significance. The annual conference is a kind of league of all Muslim nations coming

under the umbrella of Islam. Although at present the Muslim world is lacking a single political leader but during hajj all pilgrims are bound by a common leadership.

6. Hajj as a Symbol of Unity for the Muslims

Down the ages, the institution of hajj has remained a very strong unifying factor for the Muslim world. The unifying influence of the yearly gathering of brotherhood of Muslims from all nooks and crannies of the world is hard to be over-estimated.

It afforded opportunity for Negroes, Berbers, Chinese, Persians, Syrians, Turks, Arabs, rich and poor, high and low to fraternize and meet together on the common ground of faith (Hitti P. K., 1970, p. 136).

At the scene of the hajj, everyone loses his individual identity of tribe, color, race or position. No one can be recognized. According to Shari'ati:

The scene is like the Day of Judgement from one horizon to the other. All the people are wearing the *Kafan* (shroud)... Names, races nor social status make a difference in this great combination. An atmosphere of genuine unity prevails (Shari'ati A., 1970, p. 10).

Hajj is a true demonstration of unity and oneness. All differences and distinctions are marginalized and even their names, they all bear "*Hajji*". There is a mysterious communion from one heart to another. They all feel that they are Muslims foremost before being anything. Hence they share a unifying sense of belonging to the family of Islam.

A non-Muslim writer, P. K. Hitti admits in un-equivocal terms the unifying force of Islam. He said:

Of all world religions Islam seems to have attained the largest measure of success in demolishing the barriers of race, colour and nationality (Hitti, op. cit.).

The pilgrims wear a common dress — the *Ihram*, they do everything in common while undertaking *Tawaf*, *Sa'y*, standing of *Arafat*, staying at Minna and throwing the pebbles at *Jamarat*. No difference or any considerations for anyone — all are servants of Allah. This is a true demonstration of oneness, distinctions of class race, rank and geographical origin are all destroyed, nothing but *Iman* and righteousness are eminent.

Lari observed:

This brotherhood is deeper and higher than mere natural brotherliness, for it is the unity of a shared aim, the unity of shared convictions, the unity of joint beliefs, and the unity of hearts (Lari S. M, 2011, p. 120).

The *Ka'abah* the only direction of *Salat* (prayer) itself stands to symbolize the Unity of Muslims. When it comes to prayer the Muslims all over the world face a common direction. Therefore *Ka'abah* is a source of unification for the Muslim world.

7. Necessity for Muslim Unity

Islam transcends tribal, racial or national boundaries in its unifying value system. Hajj is one of the unifying factors which paves for Muslim Unity at the global level. Muslims share many things in common which makes them one entity. They share common beliefs, face a common direction (*Qiblah*) while praying, they all pray five times daily, they all fast the month of Ramadan, they all give Zakat (those who have the means) and all upholds the Qur'an and Sunnah as the primary basis of Shari'ah. The Muslim world therefore should always remain under

the banner of a unified international community of Islamic brotherhood. Allah (SWT) says:

Surely this community of yours is a single community and I am your Lord so worship Me (Qur'an 21:92).

When the prophet (SAW) migrated to Madinah he tried to unite the *Ansar* and the *Muhajirun* under the banner of Islam. All the Muslims became united and demonstrated the true spirit of Islamic brotherhood (Al-Mubarakfuri S., 2005, pp. 174–179). The *Ansar* shared all what they have with the *Muhajirun* — farmlands, houses, animals, merchandise and were even ready to divorce some of their wives in favour of the *Muhajirun* so that they could marry them. In fact this kind of true brotherly feeling exhibited by the *Ansar* was never seen before in the history of mankind.

The prophet (SAW) has taught the Muslims to love each other, assist each other, and never harm each other. Whatever a Muslim possesses he should try to share it with others, otherwise he is not a true Muslim.

The prophet (SAW) has said:

None of you is a believer till he like to his brother what he likes to himself (Al-Suyuti J. A, 2006, Vol. 2, p. 753).

The prophet (SAW) has described the unification of the Muslims in his saying:

The similitude of Muslims in their mercy for one another, love for one another is the similitude of a human body, if part of it suffers affliction then the rest of the body will respond in awareness and reaction (Al-Suyuti, Ibid, p. 532).

The prophet (SAW) emphatically states that all Muslims are brothers and sisters to one another; he said:

A Muslim is a brother to his fellow Muslims (Al-Suyuti, Ibid, p. 668).

Allah (SWT) says in Suratu Hujurat:

The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers, and fear Allah that you may receive mercy (Qur'an 49:10).

In Suratu Al-Imran Allah (SWT) has made it an obligation on the Muslims to remain united. He says:

And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided (Qur'an 3:103).

8. Current Challenges

Right now the Muslim world is at the receiving end. The enemies of Islam particularly the non-Muslims are doing everything possible to undermine and destabilize the unity of the Muslims. They use different strategies to penetrate the rank and file of the Muslims in order to create discord and disharmony among them. The Muslim world is endowed with so many natural resources which the non-Muslims need and they do not have. So they try to create a situation of chaos and anarchy among the Muslims which enables them to have easy access to their resources.

It must be admitted that right now the unity and strength of the Muslim world is adversely weakened due to incessant internal and external wrangling. The Muslims unfortunately have allowed themselves to be divided (Maududi S. A, n.d, pp. 34–36) and they end up fighting and killing themselves, while their enemy is just watching.

It is time the Muslim world should wake up from its deep slumber by following strictly the divine injunctions contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah in their best interest.

9. Conclusion

It could be understood from our discussion that hajj serves as a great potential ground for unifying the Muslim world. There are clear Qur'anic verses and prophetic Traditions which make it mandatory on the Muslims to always remain united. The greatest lesson we can learn from Hajj is that we are all equal servants of Allah and we should do our things in common as a single family of Muslims. Our lives should be governed in accordance with the dictates and provisions of the Shari'ah. We should remain united, we should remain our brothers' keepers, we should have a true Islamic brotherly feeling to all other brothers where ever they may be in this world.

It is sad to note that even though the wisdom behind the annual gathering of hajj is to unite all the Muslims, we still have problem. We still have some Muslims who feel that they have no business with other Muslims to the effect that they can even fight and kill them. The contemporary Muslims are divided on political and sectarian grounds and the enemies of Islam are capitalizing on this un-usual misnomer supporting one group to fight the other. What is happening right now in many parts of the Muslim world is very disheartening. Some Muslims are behaving as if their Islamic consciousness is completely lost. I must concede that, it is time the Muslims change their attitudes the better for them. The Muslims should be united under the banner of Islam, not minding minor differences of understanding. Unless the Muslims are ready to be united definitely their future will continue to remain bleak.

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