

The Hajj: The Ultimate Journey

Capturing the experiences of youths across the globe

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Introduction

The Hajj: the Ultimate Journey

As the month of Dhul Hijjah begins Muslims from every corner of the world are embarking to make their pilgrimage to Makkah in order to complete the third of the Furoo e Deen-Hajj. For many, this will be the peak of their declaration of faith and have been waiting patiently for it for all of their lives.

Hajj, this journey of a lifetime is an obligation on every Muslim who is able-bodied and has the financial means. The sole purpose of Hajj is worship of God. It brings together Muslims of all nations and colours to adopt two unidentifiable white pieces of cloth in an astounding expression of humility and unity. Of all the gatherings in the world Hajj stands out for the sheer scale of its size and diversity.

By choosing this harsh desert vastness, Allah (swt) has reinforced the idea that this world in reality is only an illusion, we are merely travellers here and that our meeting with our Maker can happen at any time. Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) was prepared to sacrifice his son for the sake of God; He was prepared to return to Allah (swt) what was rightfully Allah's to start with.

Living our everyday lives we tend to forget that all we have was given to us by God as a gift and in reality is not ours. May God grant us the ability to dedicate ourselves following the example of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s).

My prayers are with all those who made this book a reality and also with those making Hajj this year, that their dedication and sacrifice is accepted. As Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) mentioned 'for an accepted Hajj, there is no reward besides Paradise'. And let us not forget the thousands who suffer everyday at the hands of oppressors and the many more who are made homeless and destitute. For the Hajj teaches us that suffering and hardship do not discriminate between one ethnic group or another, one colour or another, that in the eyes of God we are one people. I also pray that God calls all of those who are not going to Makkah this year for the next Hajj. That we too have the opportunity to call out 'Labayk! Allahumma Labayk.' ('Here I am at Your service. O Allah, here I am at Your Service').

Farzana S Khimji
London, September 2005

Why I Decided to Go to the Hajj

by Sister Zahra Hijazi
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Life today has become an idle and incomplete existence. Especially as Muslims living in a Western society, we tend to get caught up with worldly affairs and as a result, we tend to neglect our spirituality. I had fallen into this meaningless spiral of existence. My life had become so routine. Each day would consist of endless tasks and jobs that I felt I had no time to sit back and relax, and definitely no time to advance my spirituality.

One day, I woke up. I started my day with open eyes and an open mind. I went to university and attended all of my classes, but I was staying focused on the world around me. I noticed that the people there were very conscious of their image – how they looked and how others looked at them. I also noticed that many people in our society care only for themselves and have no consideration for others. If a physically disabled person needed help, no one would stop to offer his or her hand.

I realised that the society I live in promotes materialism, self-absorption and inconsideration to others. These are morals I consider inhumane and destructive. It all disgusted me and I was even more disgusted when I realised that I too would become absorbed by this immoral way of life if I didn't do something about it.

I felt there was something missing in my life. I study, work hard and lead my life, but I wasn't quite sure where I was headed with it all. I needed something in my life that would give me a true direction, something that would allow me to become a better person, something that would let me appreciate everything I have in my life, and most importantly, something that would allow me to advance in my spirituality.

I wanted a spiritual awakening. I needed something in my life that would cause me to become more aware of my existence and to allow me to understand more in my life on this earth.

The Hajj was the answer to this. It is not only an act of submission to Allah (s.w.t.), but it is also a learning experience and a life-altering journey.

It is a way for Muslims to renew their religious interests and their faith in Allah (SWT). In spirit, the Hajj combines all of the other acts of worship in order to remember Allah (SWT) and that we have to act righteously in His way.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا

“Indeed he succeeds who purifies his soul.” (91:9)

Hajj is a journey for inner purification. Going on the Hajj is practising to lead a purposeful life. People who do decide to undertake this journey want to live a life with worthwhile

goals and lead a life with a definite focus. People with this sense of purpose willingly sacrifice whatever it takes to attain their goal.

I had made the decision to go and perform the Hajj. Before I had even left I was feeling the fulfilment of what I would soon be doing.

Before you leave, you must ensure that debts have been paid, your hates and angers towards relatives and friends have to be resolved, ask forgiveness from people you have wronged, draw up a will, and prepare for the journey both mentally and spiritually.

I could already see how the Hajj would change my life. It would allow me to be a better person, more concerned with the important things in life rather than the meaningless things.

I could see how my appreciation for people would change. During the Hajj pilgrimage, you meet so many people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds who have all come together to advance in their religion like you.

I could also see how I would appreciate my life. In the Hajj, you live in a humble and pious way. In *Ihram*, the men and women of all countries, races and status look alike. No one person has pride, power or rank over another person. At the end of the day, all people are equal in the eyes of Allah (SWT). The message you can learn from *ihram* is that what you look like on the outside does not matter; all that matters in a person is their sincerity in their striving for goodness and their faith in Allah (SWT).

The Hajj changes your outlook in so many ways in order to allow you to live a more righteous, meaningful and pious life.

The Hajj is an experience that gives you a proper direction in life. It allows you to live your life in the way of Allah (SWT), following a righteous path. You change your outlook on life, whereby you appreciate everything and live your life to please Allah (SWT).

I decided to go to the Hajj so I can start leading a more spiritual life, where everyday would allow me to mature spiritually and grow in my faith. I had come to realise that our sole purpose for being on this Earth was to be a pious and good-charactered Muslim, and I want to fulfil this criteria.

We have to realise that the Western society we live in promotes ideas that can easily lead us astray, so we need to cling to our religion and go to the Hajj, because at the end of the day...

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

“To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return.” (2:156)

Preparation for the Holy Pilgrimage of Hajj

Shabbir Murtaza Lakha
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Introduction

By embarking on the pilgrimage to Hajj, you are making one of the most important journeys of your life. You are submitting to the Will of Allah (SWT) and you are undertaking this endeavour purely to please Him. You are also following in the foot steps of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.).

Since the purpose of your pilgrimage is in essence a spiritual one, it is of paramount importance that you take all necessary steps to ensure that your Hajj is spiritually fulfilling and uplifting. As in most facets of life, the best way to ensure that you achieve your objective is to undertake thorough preparation well in advance. Therefore, the greater your spiritual preparation prior to going to Hajj, the greater your spiritual benefit from this auspicious journey. At the earliest opportunity it would be helpful to you to formulate a “*preparation plan*” and set out below are some tips as to what you may consider including in it.

Another important element in the preparation of achieving your spiritual objectives is to put yourself in as good a medical and physical condition as you possibly can. You may be spiritually prepared for Hajj but if you become bed ridden with illness and pain or if you become exhausted after a little exertion, then you are unlikely to achieve your objective. A great deal of frustration has to be endured by those who are left behind in Mecca because they are too unwell to make the journey to Arafat, Muzdalifa and Mina. Furthermore, by being fully fit you will also be able to assist those who are weak, infirm and the elderly – their prayers may well make an enormous contribution to the acceptance of your Hajj by Allah (SWT). Therefore, do not ignore your physical fitness in your spiritual equation. Again some tips have been set out below to help you prepare your own plan relating to your medical and physical condition.

Some helpful suggestions have also been set out below in relation to “travel logistics” and the importance of this should not be underestimated because if due to lack of organisational efficiency you are unable to make the journey then again you will fail to achieve your spiritual objective.

Your preparation plan has to be undertaken and completed well in advance of your departure for Hajj.

The tips set out below are merely suggestions to assist you in formulating your “preparation plan”. It is not meant to be, nor can it be, exhaustive or authoritative. Your preparation plan may well adopt some of these tips but contain many more of your own.

Tips for spiritual preparation

- First and foremost, be very clear in your mind as to precisely why you are making this journey. As you know, people go to Hajj for a variety of motives. What precisely is your intention in making this journey?
- During the course of this journey how are you going to obtain closeness to Allah (SWT)? Is it through prayers and supplications? Or is it through being compassionate and helpful to others? If both, what do you propose to do differently to what you normally do that will make the spiritual difference that you are hoping for? Itemise each such proposal in your spiritual plan and examine very carefully how you are going to implement it.
- Make sure that you have engaged in an adequate amount of reading on the spiritual significance of Hajj and have a clear understanding of the spiritual meaning of each aspect of the Hajj rituals. Make a list of the books and websites that may assist you and then commence your study of them well in advance of your trip. (see Appendix B for recommended reading)
- Make a list of all the supplications and salutations that will have to be recited throughout the Hajj trip and then ensure that you have your own copy of each of them. Try and take books which have as many of the items on your list of supplications, thereby ensuring that you carry as few books as possible.
- Take some time to understand the significance of the supplications that will be recited. For instance, ensure that you have an understanding of Dua-e-Arafat recited by Imam Hussein (A.S.) on the day of Arafat. Since you will be reciting a number of very important supplications and salutations, you will be enormously enriched if you have already invested some effort in reflecting upon them.
- Identify those supplications and salutations whose recitation you have found to be particularly spiritually uplifting and you may consider transferring them to an MP3 player which you can take with you. It may be a fulfilling experience to listen to them during your contemplative moments at Kaaba or at Mina or when you happen to be too tired to read anything.
- It is extremely important that you give special time to prepare for how you are going to deal with your open and serious enemy - Mr Iblis. Since you are proceeding towards a journey of exceptional spiritual significance, Shaitan will be determined to undermine and neutralise your efforts, at every step of the way. You will need to ask yourself as to what are your weaknesses that he may seek to exploit – rest assured he will surely attempt to do so. Is he going to make you very irritable and lose your temper when other Hujjaj do not behave in the way you would like them to? Is he going to make you selfish when you otherwise may not be? Is he going to plant doubts in your mind as to whether any of the rituals are devoid of any spiritual significance? Is he going to prevent you from guiding others in an Islamic manner? Is he going to make you feel proud and arrogant at your new found “piety”? These are some of the questions that

you may wish to start thinking about and add to your preparation plan. As your preparation plan develops you may be able to add many more questions of your own.

Tips for medical and physical preparation

Never underestimate the challenge that Hajj can pose to those who are unfit or unwell. With about 2 – 3 million people from all over the world congregated in a small area, together with the very high levels of pollution generated by over 20,000 vehicles stuck in near stationary traffic, this creates a powerful cocktail of illness, particularly respiratory and upper tract infections. Here are some tips to get you started with your preparation plan.

- Start exercising and ensure that you are fit well in advance of your journey.
- Have a thorough check up with your doctor.
- Take all the recommended vaccinations well in advance of the journey. [Try to avoid taking vaccinations at the last moment just in case if you happen to be unfortunate enough to develop any side effects – you do not want to take the risk of commencing your journey with a high temperature and body aches].
- Take all recommended precautions in preventing respiratory and other illnesses.
- Those with special needs have to be even more meticulous in their planning. For example, insulin dependent diabetics- if you need to carry insulin injections with you on flight make sure that you obtain a letter from your doctor and liaise with the airline well in advance. Make sure to take ample supplies of your special medication.
- Have a check up with your dentist. Having a severe and continuous toothache can be a serious challenge to meeting your spiritual objectives.
- Have your eyes checked and ensure to take spare glasses. You may also wish to consider taking sun glasses. If you wear contact lenses, daily disposable lenses are advisable, to reduce the risk of eye infections.
- Ensure to collect enough medication prescribed by your doctor/dentist.
- Face masks may be useful in reducing the effect of pollution and may assist in reducing the chances of catching respiratory infections.
- Make your own list of medical precautions that you may need to take. For example, only use bottled water for drinking and (when permissible during Hajj) to brush your teeth.
- Ensure to pack any special clothes that you may require during your journey. [During winter months Jeddah Hajj Terminal can be very cold during the night and therefore a jumper is essential.]
- Finally, check that you have complied with all the recommendations made by the doctor designated to your group.

Travel logistics

- Set aside some time to talk to those who have been to Hajj very recently and get their feedback.
- Ensure that your passport is valid for at least 9 months.
- Register with a Hajj group of your choice well in advance, otherwise you run the risk of having to go with a group that may not be suited to you.
- Obtain adequate travel and medical insurance.
- Have spare copies of your passport.
- Have spare copies of your medical insurance with clearly identified telephone numbers to call in case of medical emergency.
- Keep spare copies of the contact details of your group leader or other relevant contact numbers.
- Ensure that you have the mobile telephone numbers of your group if you get lost during Hajj.
- If you propose purchasing a local chip for your mobile phone whilst you are in Saudi Arabia, ensure to have your mobile phone unlocked, otherwise the local chip will not work with your mobile phone.
- Carefully examine your list of things to take and try to keep your clothing and toiletries to a minimum. [Remember your soap and shampoo should not be scented, as you cannot use them whilst in the state of Ihram.]
- “Travel light” will be the motto of your packing. If having packed your suitcase you find that it exceeds 20kgs you need to seriously re-examine every item and ask yourself if you really need to have it. All your necessities for the journey should be well within 20 kgs. Since you are embarking on a purely spiritual journey, why do you need to take material possessions that are not strictly necessary?
- Remember to take a writing pad and pen together with your preparation plan so that you can amend it with any new inspirations that you may acquire. Your note pad will also contain a list of all those who have requested you to pray for them.

As someone proceeding to Hajj, always be conscious of your important status and the corresponding responsibilities that go with it. Since you are proceeding to Hajj and willing to endure all the tribulations that may come your way, purely to seek nearness to Allah (SWT) and you will be visiting places of special spiritual significance, your prayers are very likely to be accepted Insha’ Allah. Therefore, please do not forget to add all of us to your list of those who have requested you to pray for them. Your prayers are our source of salvation and therefore your generosity in praying for us becomes all the more precious.

Finally, may Allah (SWT) accept your Hajj, answer your prayers, protect your loved ones and return you safely.

Emotions during the outbound flight

By Sister Shabnam Walji,
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Passport in hand, stamped, and ready to go. But this journey I am about to undertake is no ordinary journey – I am taking a journey towards Allah (SWT). On this journey, all my attention and focus must be for Allah (SWT) and the goal of reaching Him.

I am one of the privileged few that Allah (SWT) has invited. It is He who organised my Visa to be approved; it is He who is calling me to Him. Am I ready for such a big task? Are we ever ready? Slowly walking up the steps, into the plane – I realise that with each step, I am moving closer to Allah (SWT), and with each step the reality of the task ahead is getting more real! Why am I going for Hajj though?

وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ اِلَيْهِ سَبِيْلًا

“...pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) every one who is able to undertake the journey to it;” [3:97]

As we take off, we move higher and higher into the clouds. The people and the buildings get smaller and smaller, and there comes a point where they are no longer visible. It makes you realise just how small we are, and that in itself is rather humbling. Being so high up in the clouds really puts things into perspective. You realise how unimportant getting those designer pair of jeans is, or what will happen next on a TV programme. How will any of it help us in the next world – how will any of it please Allah (SWT). Therefore, detach yourself from the material things of this world, and focus on the next, as after all, the hereafter is for all eternity, so you want to ensure that you get the best place you can. In order to reach the higher stations in heaven though, we must first work to purifying ourselves. We shall be going to the holy Ka’aba, which is a place of purity;

وَعَهَدْنَا اِلَىٰ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ اَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطّٰئِفِيْنَ وَالْعٰكِفِيْنَ
وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُوْدِ

“... And we enjoined Ibrahim and Ismail saying: Purify My House for those who go around and those who meditate therein and those who bow down and prostrate themselves (in worship).” [2:125]

The Ka’aba is therefore purified – but are we? Surely it would be disrespectful to walk around someone’s house with muddy shoes. You must have clean shoes, and going to the

Ka'aba is no different, but it goes further that just being clean on the outside, we must also be clean on the inside!

The Captain makes an announcement over the speakers. *“We are now flying over France”*. France – that takes me back – how hard I studied for those French exams, not to mention the piles of books I had to read. Like most exams thorough preparation is vital, and the same is true for Hajj. After all Hajj is an exam, it is a test from the Almighty, so we don't want to get an 'F', we need to aim for that 'A+'. It is important to know the rituals I'll be performing, the reason I am performing them, and the problems I will encounter before I go, so I can get into the right frame of mind. I cannot go blindly - I have to be prepared. I would never have dreamed of going into that French exam without revising – and similarly I must read about Hajj before I go so as not to fall into any difficulty. Hajj is a series of tests and obstacles, and in order to pass the tests, it is essential that I prepare thoroughly, so my rituals will be performed whole heartedly and with full awareness, and Inshallah will be accepted by Allah (SWT).

Sitting on my seat, the lady next to me presses the button to call the Air Stewardess and within minutes the air stewardess comes to answer the call. My mind wonders – Allah (SWT) presses that button, triggering my heart to go to Him, and so I will be answering his call;

“Labbayk, Allahumma Labbayk. Labbayk. La shareeka laka. Labbayk. Innal-hamda wan-n'imata, laka wal-mulk. La shareeka lak.”

(Here we come, O Allah, here we come! Here we come. No partner have You. Here we come! Praise indeed, and blessings, are Yours-the Kingdom too! No partner have You!)

But answering Allah (SWT)'s call is not just repeating this phrase 3 times. It is responding to His call with insight and thoroughness, and before I am able to get into this state it is important that I know myself – because when I know myself I will know my Lord. But surely I know myself – or do I? Have I sat down and really thought about myself? What do I like about myself, what do I dislike? What are my virtues, what are my vices? Surely I don't want to go back the same person. I want to return a better person – more humble, more pious, more God-fearing, and most importantly – I want to return closer to Allah (SWT) and I want to remove those veils between us. I have been given an opportunity of a lifetime – I must grab it with both hands. I want to go to Hajj, and I want to *“Go get lost”*. I want to lose those vices and strengthen my virtues. It is Shaytan who is in control of my vices – BUT – it is time to kick him out of the driving seat, and take control of my own soul. When I will pick those stones in Muzdalifah, I will think of each of my vices I want to lose, and when I throw them at the Shaytans in Mina, I will be getting rid of them one by one – Inshaallah.

Flicking through the In-flight magazine, there is an advert to sponsor an orphan child in Africa. How much am I doing to help orphans or the poor?

لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ
وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ

“You shall not serve any but Allah and (you shall do) good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans and the needy, and you shall speak to men good words and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate.” [2:83]

I think of the words of our beloved Prophet; “Whoever wakes up without concerns for his fellow Muslims is indeed not one of them.” I am so lucky Alhamdulillah that I have loving parents, food on the table, and a roof over my head, and yet – there are hundreds and thousands of people in this world with nothing. I must not just sit back – I should be doing something to help them, because when questioned about it on the Day of Judgement – I don’t want to be empty-handed!

As I am sitting deep in thought thinking about the various ways I plan to help those less fortunate than me, a member of the cabin crew offers me a glass of water – ice or no ice ... definitely ice. Taking a sip of the cool refreshing drink my mind immediately turns to Imam Hussayn (AS). He had the intention to perform Hajj, however after discovering that some of the followers of Yazid had entered Makkah with the mission to kill him during the Hajj, he shorten his stay and changed his Hajj to Umrah, in order to preserve the respect of the House of God. In Karbala Imam Hussayn (AS) and the members of his household suffered from thirst, tremendous pain, and the hardship of sacrificing dear ones. They endured these difficulties for the sake of Allah (SWT) and for the sake of Islam. What sacrifices are we prepared to make for Allah (SWT)?

It gets a little chilly on the flight, so I take my sweater out of my backpack. I see the bag of sweets my Auntie brought for me at the Airport. What shall I be taking to give Allah (SWT)? If you are invited to someone’s house, you can’t go empty-handed – you must take something – maybe a cake, or a bowl of fruit – but something. What can I take to Allah (SWT) – He is the all Powerful, Creator of everything in the Heavens and Earths, how am I going to please Him? I realised that this trip is an opportunity to read the Qur’an, Du’as and submit myself totally and completely to Allah (SWT). Surely then, this is the best gift of all to take to Him. This is also the time, and the opportunity to seek a deeper understanding of the Qur’an. We read the Qur’an everyday, and yet, do we understand it?

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ

“Do they not ponder over the Word (of Allah) ...” [23:68]

We must really reflect on the beautiful and most perfect words of Allah (SWT). When someone talks to you – you listen and think about what they say – maybe even read between the lines of what they are saying. Allah (SWT) has sent this Book to us and

through it He is talking to us – so we must listen to what HE is telling us, and encompass it into our lives. Knowledge after all is useless without action. Alhamdulillah there is an ocean of knowledge out there and Allah (SWT) in all His kindness and grace has provided us with the swimming gear - we just need to take that jump!

The lady next to me starts to speak to me. She tells me that she is from a small town in Egypt, and I listen with interest. When I think about all the other people that are going to Hajj from all over the world it is amazing – Subhanallah! Muslims shall be assembling from every corner of the world for the Hajj, thus illustrating the solidarity of Islam. Islam teaches us to live together and care for each other, and it is important to uphold the fraternity that is ordained by the Almighty God among Muslims. It is such a warm feeling within, that all the millions of people there shall be escaping to Allah (SWT), and for no other motive, except for His sole pleasure. Hajj is a unification of the world’s Muslims gathered together to show their love for Allah (SWT), and with the intention of seeking nearness to Him. I think about the Imams and the Prophets, who were there before us, and it makes me realise how honoured I am. Thus, during this journey one’s heart and thoughts should remain focused on Allah (SWT) and the performance of Hajj exactly the way Prophet Ibrahim performed it.

We suddenly go through some turbulence. I am reminded of the words; “*Prepare for Hajj as someone who does not hope to return*”. Am I ready to die? Surely I want my heart to be totally purified before I die. This life is so short – there is no point reaching old age and then regretting a life wasted on errors and mistakes. We must act now, and never lose sight of the hereafter. We must constantly be striving towards Allah (SWT). But how can we ensure that we stay on the right path? That is easy – Allah (SWT) has given us the solution;

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“*And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We Will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good.*” [29:69]

Subhanallah, Allah (SWT) is great – we just need to make those small steps towards him, and He will Inshallah pull us closer to Him.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى

“*He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself.*” [87:14]

We land safely with the grace of Allah (SWT), and walking down the steps of the plane, I am taking those all important steps towards gaining nearness to Allah (SWT). The next few days are probably going to be the hardest of my life – emotionally, physically and spiritually. I shall be fighting my own battle with Shaytan to kill those vices, and refrain from evil, and at the same time, humbling and submitting with every part of my being to Allah (SWT), and taking Allah (SWT)’s Name with every breathe and every step I take. I

pray that each step I take will be a step closer to Allah (SWT) and with each step I am closer to purifying my heart, and my soul, and finding that inner peace;

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“... surely by Allah’s remembrance are the hearts set at rest.”[13:28]

The Holy Qur’an 3:97

In it are clear signs, the standing place of Ibrahim, and whoever enters it shall be secure, and pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, (upon) everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it; and whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient, above any need of the worlds.

Umrah e Tammattu

By Tahera S Dhalla

London, UK

It was Monday the 10th January 2005, and as the call of the muezzin echoed through the city of Madinah calling its people to come and prostrate for Dhuhrain prayers, and as the sun reached its peak, we knew this was our last prayer in this city of peace and tranquillity, in the city of the Prophet, before we embarked on taking the first steps towards fulfilling our duties as guests of none but the Lord Himself.

Today was the day that we would be going to Makkah via Masjide –e-Shajarah where we would be putting on our two pieces of shrouds. As we leave the city of Madinah, we make a conscience effort to leave behind every form of materialistic being within us, and submit ourselves to the will of God

For today our hajj truly begins, with the first obligation of umra –e tamattu, as one cannot enter the holy precincts of Makkah without having performed umrah, be it mufradah (i.e during the non Hajj seasons) or Tamattu (during the hajj season).

The sun began to set as we approached Masjid e Shajarah, the miqaat for those travelling from Madinah to Makkah and the air was filled with anxiousness yet excitement as to what lie ahead. The chatter amongst the 150 of us suddenly died as we made our way into the beautiful mosque to offer Maghribain Salaah, after which we gathered in the lusciously green compound to make our intentions.

Gathered together in the courtyard of Masjid e Shajarah, as we tightened our ehram, we made our niyyah for umra-e tamattu, and together in one chorus, recited the talbiyyah

Labbayk allahumma labbayk,, Labbayka la sharika laka labbayk, Inna al-hamda, wal-ni-mata, laka wal mulk

La sharika laka labbayk!

In response to Your call, here I am O Allah, here I am, You indeed have no partner, here I am, No doubt all praise and bounties are Yours, And so is the absolute domain, You indeed have no partner, Here I am!

As the words Labbayk left our tongue, a bolt of strength, courage, and resolve swept through our hearts and souls, and echoed through the walls of the mosque. We were answering the call of Allah! As the chants of labayk grew louder, our hearts began to beat faster. To feel the proximity to the house of God and to be able to answer His call is an emotion one cannot describe. For the first time in our life, we felt alive.

The contented and continuous hums of labbayk echoed through the bus for the remaining journey to Makkah, for it is narrated by the Holy Prophet (SAW) that whoever recites the

labbayk seventy times out of faith and devotion, Allah will assign thousands of angels to witness him immunity from the fire of hell.

It was also a time of deadly silence as people engaged in quiet reflection and deep contemplation, as the gravity of what lie ahead dawned on each and every one of us.

With the miles reducing by the second, the grandeur surroundings of Masjidul Haraam could be seen from a distance and after traversing through the various checkpoints set up by the Saudi government, we arrived at our hotel just before fajr.

It was indeed quite amazing how rejuvenated and energised we felt and despite not having slept through the night, we were ready, physically and emotionally to undertake our first obligation of Hajj. During Hajj, it seems almost as if your body runs on a spiritual clock, with the external watches truly becoming redundant.

After having prayed and re-grouped, we set out towards Masjidul Haraam, which Alhamdulillah was only a 5-minute walk from our hotel. Proximity to the Haram is a great advantage during the Hajj season due to the masses of people and traffic, which can make a 5 minute walk easily turn into a 25 min walk, and even more during peak hours of salaah (which happens to be 5 times a day hence being very difficult to avoid!!).

What was interesting to note is that amongst the swarm of people, every group had its own symbol and colour from florescent green headbands to bright pink scarves to dark green suits. It almost looked like a scene from a botanical garden!!! Except that the 'in' colour this year is white!!

As we entered the glorious mosque, with our gaze downwards, we were oblivious to the sounds and crowds. The air seemed to be filled with an aura of power and love and with each footstep bringing us closer to the Holy Kabaa, the weight of Allah's presence seemed to get heavier and heavier. It is impossible to truly understand what one feels, standing as a slave in front of the House of God, as one drop in front of the white ocean of millions, as a humble servant.

We stopped in our steps, with the Qibla in front, and as we raised our gaze to meet the site that every Muslim dreams of seeing, our heart filled with desires, our lips full of silence and our eyes streaming with tears. We cried out Allahuakber! Surely God is great!

Here we were, standing in front of the most absorbing, beautiful, magnificent, glorious site in this universe at which one could stare, day in, night out, month in, year out, and it would not be enough. We no longer need to visualise the Holy Kaaba, For WE ARE HERE! Labbayk Allahuma Labayk!! I am here O my lord!

At this point, one expresses their hajaat, for it is narrated that on seeing the Holy Kabaa for the first time, our hajaats are accepted. Not only that, but Imam Jaffer Sadiq (as) narrates

that “whoever looks at the Kabaa, rewards are written for him and his wrongdoings are written off until he takes his gaze away from it”

After having quenched our heart with the sight of the Kabaa, we focussed our efforts on fulfilling the obligations of umra-e tamatu. These would consist of Tawaaf, namaaz of tawaaf, saee and taqseer. In contrast to Umra-e-mufradah, there is no Tawafun nisaa, as this is done in the final act of hajj-e-tamattu after Mina.

We were constantly reminded by our group leader of our individual niyyah for each action, as niyyah is absolutely critical in Hajj. Unlike in whudhoo, ghusl, etc where it is sufficient to just be aware of what you are doing, in Hajj and Umrah, this is not sufficient. Instead, for every action that you do, a conscious and specific niyyah has to be made; otherwise your act would be rendered void and consequently, so would your hajj.

Hence, before starting tawaaf, we all ensured that we had made our niyyah i.e “I am doing tawaaf, for umraa-e-tamattu, hajj-ul-islam, wajib qurbatan illallah. There are variations of this niyyah for those who are not on their first hajj or those who are doing Niyabat, as this would not classify as ‘wajib qurbatan illallah’

The tawaaf commenced from the corner of Hajre-aswad , and this is clearly demarcated by a long black line on the marble extended to the boundary of tawaaaf, though with the masses of people doing tawaaf, even this line was not visible!! When people narrate about the numbers of people in hajj, it is certainly not an exaggeration, and never had we seen so many people, gathered in one place, doing the same thing at any one time! We were told that this was only the start, and as the time to hajj grows closer, the numbers would escalate exponentially! And it was true!

As we commenced our tawaaf, reciting the various supplications and small duas mentioned in the various books, we reminded ourselves of the purpose of what we were doing. We were submitting ourselves to the will of God. By performing tawaaf, one says that they are ready to give whatever they have in the world, themselves, their family, their wealth, in the way of Allah and only for His pleasure. As Ayatullah Mazaheri beautifully narrates, that by arriving to this state of complete submission and servitude, the veils between the servant and Allah are one by one torn away.

For in the crowd of millions, like a roaring white river, encircling a stone, the Kabaa reminded one of the sun in the centre, whilst the people are like stars, travelling in their orbits, in their aim to reflect the light of the sun onto their souls, attaining closeness to their creator.

As we passed rukne yamani, the corner of the Kabaa just after Hajre- aswad, it was amazing to note that till today, one can easily see the crack in the wall of the kabaa through which Sayyidda Fatema binte Asad entered. It is truly a miracle of Allah and it said that every time that the Kabaa has been renovated, the Saudi government have tried to

repair the crack but it still keeps on re-appearing!!! Subhanaalh. It reminds us of the ayat of the Qur'an:

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

“Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?” *Surah Rahman verse 13*

As we moved along the crowd of thousands in tawaaf being jostled in the rush, we noticed a blind old man with his back bent, his stick feeling for the ground, finding his way round the house of Allah unaided - no guide dog, no help, no support, except that faith in Allah that enabled him to circumbulate His House. It made us think... it made us grateful for what Allah had bestowed upon us, and we could not help but say Alhamdulillah!

We were able to complete our tawaaf and 2 rakaat namaaz of tawaaf behind Makaame Ibrahim and then proceeded to refresh ourselves with Zamzam water before commencing the Sae.

It was amazing to note how just one sip of zamzam was sufficient to quench your thirst and re-energize you, for never have we tasted water so sweet and so refreshing, for not only was zamzam a miracle of Allah, but the effects of drinking it alone are a miracle!

We began our saee, the movement 7 times between the mountains of Safa and Marwa, following in the steps of Bibi Hajara in search of water for her thirsty son Ismaeel, and as we walked from one mountain to the other, with each round, breaking the chains of materialism one by one, we were walking between the hope and fear of Allah, for that is 'sae' – it is a search, a migration to your destiny.

The final act of taqseer, trimming of hair from ones beard or head or the clipping of nails, at Marwa, brought us back from our spiritual realm to the earthly one, but this time, with a mission- a mission to be a transformed soul who in a few days time, on the Day of Arafaat, can be spiritually cleansed and re-enter the world as a pure, glorified soul for whom Hajj will be the turning point of their new lives.

We had completed our Umra-e –tamattu! Alhamdulillah. We now headed towards the coolers of zamzam to refresh ourselves.

As we sip the water of zamzam, quenching our thirst and re-energising ourselves, after completing our obligations, one cannot but feel an overwhelming sense of joy, emotional exhilaration, and intense contentment. It is almost as if one is walking on air, as one realises that they have not only completed one of the most sacred obligations of our faith, but is drinking from the same water that the Ahlul Bayt drank, walking on the same sand on which the prophets have walked, and above all, standing as a humble slave in front of the Magnificent, Omnipotent, Benevolent Creator Allah, in HIS House.

Experiences of the first time Hajji: A Spiritual Journey of the Soul

**Brother Salimabbas Bharwani
Peterborough, UK**

In the days leading up to my departure from my hometown in England I was very nervous especially when everyone I said farewell to kept reminding me of this 'opportunity of a lifetime'. I had already been blessed with the opportunity to visit the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah and perform my Umra a few years ago but this was something entirely different. Now I was a guest of Allah (SWT), being among the chosen few to visit his Holy House to seek forgiveness and spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, this pilgrimage of Hajj should not simply be viewed as a physical journey, whereby one travels to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah and then back again. Rather, it should be looked upon as well as felt by the pilgrim as a journey of the inner-soul that seeks purification and nearness to Allah (SWT).

*“If you intend to go on pilgrimage, before resolving on it devote your heart to Allah (SWT) stripping it of every preoccupation and every barrier.”
(Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (A.S))*

My first glimpse of the Ka'ba as I entered Majid-ul-Haraam seemed like a dream, leaving me speechless and overwhelmed with emotion. It is a feeling that is simply indescribable, even attempting to put it into words does not do it any justice. Your heart feels like it is open for the first time allowing you to truly experience the spirituality which flows from every corner of the Kahne Ka'ba. Even your mind cannot contemplate the magnitude of what you are witnessing.

To be able to touch the Ka'ba with your own hands sends a shock through your body. For the first time in your life you are able to feel and sense something so divine and sacred. It is almost like a spiritual connection has been created between you and your Lord, leaving your heart and mind at ease. This spiritual contentment is a blessing which attracts so many pilgrims every year. The deeper inner spirituality that you experience sums up the ethos of Hajj itself. Like death, performing Hajj is the most personal soul defining moment in a human being's life. It is a spiritual connection between man and his Creator. If this principle is realised then there is no boundary limiting how high the soul can ascend.

When entering the divine sanctuary of the Ka'ba, one feels a sense of security, after all this is the house of Allah (SWT), as the Quran states;

فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مِّمَّا مَكَرَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا
In it are clear signs and whosoever enters therein is safe (3:97)

The safety and security includes ones soul, as we pray seeking refuge from Allah (SWT) to maintain our piety. This can be seen in the supplication recommended to recite near the Ka'ba;

O Allah, surely You said "and whosoever enters therein he/she would be safe"; therefore, save me from the punishment of Hell Fire."

By performing Hajj and just being in this holy place, it's almost like a spiritual cleansing is occurring within. The environment is phenomenal; there is a real craving for worship and you can feel a spiritual buzz in the air. I can honestly say that whilst being on Hajj, you lose track of what time it is, what day it is, what month it is etc. It's almost as if these means of quantifying and measuring are irrelevant. Instead you remain engrossed in worship and prayer. I forgot all about my home life, worries, responsibilities because of the calm serenity and tranquillity of the Ka'ba as the Holy Quran declares;

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ
"(The Holy House is) blessed and a guidance for the nations." (3:96)

Such is the attraction of this sanctuary that you will spend as much time looking at the Ka'ba as you possibly can, for this in itself is worship. Speaking about Hajj in the last part of sermon I of Nahjul Balagha, Imam Ali (A.S) describes people as such:

"... The people go to it as beasts or pigeons go towards spring water. Like thirsty camels reaching water or pigeons flying towards their chicks in the nest, the pilgrims rush towards the House of the Beloved so enthusiastically that one has the impression that they have lost their control."

This is the very reason Hujjaj perform the Tawaaf, circumambulation around the Ka'ba is a personal act of worship between you and your Creator. During my Tawaaf I was able to contemplate, reflect and seek guidance and forgiveness from my Lord. Being apart of this movement and witnessing it, is truly a breath taking sight. Even more inspiring is the fact that from the beginning of time right until the end of time people have always and will

always continue to circumambulate around this epicentre of spirituality and divinity. This is truly one of Allah (SWT) greatest miracles. I even remember looking up towards the sky as I performed my Tawaaf, trying to envisage the Angels, as it is also narrated that they are continuously circling around the House of Allah (SWT).

As I went past the Golden Door of the Ka'ba tears flowed from my eyes. Raising my hands, I kept thinking how lucky and blessed I was to be standing on this sacred ground. It suddenly dawns on you the extent of Allah (SWT)'s infinite mercy and glory.

If a beggar knocks at the door of a rich man, you would not think anything special of the person who opens the door and bestows upon the beggar some sustenance like food or money. Yet the magnificence and greatness of Allah (SWT) is that He has invited me, He has made the arrangements for me to come to His door and then in addition, He showers me with divine blessings for my efforts! How merciful Allah (SWT) is. Furthermore, the sustenance provided by Allah (SWT) is not merely food or money, but divine bounties and eternal paradise!

As a child I remember being taught about Hajj in Madressa, all the details were explained concerning the various acts and rituals which need to be performed. This idea of having to perform all the acts is also stressed during lectures and listening to personal experiences. Yet, from an outsider's perspective, Hajj can be seen as merely a series of rituals performed by Muslims as ordained by God. But surely God ordains what is good for us because it serves to benefit us?

It is only now, having performed these so called 'rituals' have I realised that there is more to these acts of worship than simply the "doing of them". The key is to try and understand the true meanings and implications of our actions. Otherwise we will fail to obtain the underlying ethos and spiritual benefit which resonates when performing the various Hajj rites.

From my experience, I realised how beautiful and structured performing Hajj really is. Thinking back to all the various Wajibats I performed you can see a distinctive sequence and design with every aspect having a specific role in the ultimate goal of spiritual enlightenment.

For example, being in Makkah you are commanded by Allah (SWT) to go and leave His pure and sacred house so that you may embark on a journey to cleanse yourself and return when you are pure. So you travel to Arafat – a desert land inhabited by the overwhelming infinite mercy of Allah (SWT). It is here, that we are showered with forgiveness, absolved by our Creator who takes a step towards his creation. Now it is our turn to take a step towards Allah (SWT) and accept our new covenant, so we arrive at Muzdaliffa. Here, under the open skies we reflect on the evil vices and impurities within our soul and pick up stones which symbolise our acts of disobedience.

Following the sequence, we then respond to Allah (SWT)'s forgiveness by declaring to cast away our inner demons. So we travel to Mina and relieve our souls from the burden of sins by throwing the stones at the Jamarats and giving them back to Shai'tan. Then in consolidation we reaffirm our submission to Allah (SWT) by performing Qurbani and Halaq. It is only now that we are invited back to House of Allah (SWT) to perform the remaining Tawaaf's, Sa'ee and Namaaz.

As I finished my last Wajibat, I realised that I had just completed my first ever Hajj. I was overwhelmed with an intrinsic feeling contentment which cannot be put into words; you feel a sense of happiness and excitement towards Allah (SWT) which you cannot contain.

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا

“So when you have performed your devotions, then remember Allah as you remembered your fathers, rather with a more lively remembrance.”(2:200)

Without a doubt in my mind, performing Hajj can be a life changing experience and a spiritual awakening if it is maintained. The challenge in our society is to maintain our covenant with Allah (SWT) otherwise our hearts will stop freely moving in a circular motion and become attached to this world requiring us to go back regularly to “top-up” on our spirituality when it runs out.

Coming back from Hajj alters your whole perspective on life and coming from such a pure and spiritual place you can immediately feel, smell and sense the “filth” surrounding you. Inevitably this environment slowly erodes our soul with impurities so much that once again you lose perspective of Allah (SWT). I believe this is hardest challenge you face when returning from Hajj, even though the act has been completed it still needs to be perfected – this is where the real Hajj begins.

The Holy Qur'an 22:27

And proclaim among men the Pilgrimage: they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path,

The journey from Makkah – Arafat – Muzdalifa – Mina – Makkah

By Sister Fatema and Brother Rizwan Kanji
London, UK

We had just recited Maghrib and Isha salaa in haram. Niyyat for hajj-e-tamattu duly completed. This was now the beginning of hajj as we know it. Surprisingly, the haram was sparsely populated as hujjaj had already started making their way to Arafat. The peace and calm in the haram was a change from the past few days where it had been busy and heaving with activity and people. This change in atmosphere provided us all with the opportunity to gaze at the magnificent Kaaba, praying to the Almighty for a safe journey to our various destinations and above all the acceptance of our acts. Having stayed in Makkah for a few nights, the haram became our home and it was a sad moment to bid the Kaaba farewell, albeit just for a couple of days.

We were all now back in the hotel, congregated in the small hotel lobby, which was now very busy and overflowing to the street with hujjaj from the group. There was a sense of excitement which I can only describe as the feeling one feels when one has waited and prepared for this day, and it is so close, but not here yet. The excitement was inevitably coupled with nervousness and contemplation as we awaited our buses to begin this journey to Arafat.

To Arafat

We were finally on the bus and on our way to our first leg of the journey. The journey to Arafat took just over an hour. Arafat lies the furthest east from Makkah and the roads were filled with vehicles of all sizes, crammed with people heading for either Mina or Arafat. Mecca was now to become a temporary ghost town, with the exception of a few residents. Nearly 2 ½ million pilgrims were heading out of the holy city, all attempting to do the same act at the same time.

The bus dropped us at one of many entrances in Arafat and we were led to our well-provided cabins where we would spend the night and following day. The cabins were filled simply with mattresses, lined neatly side by side. We settled in and being the 9th eve of Zilhajj, and the wafat of Hazrat Muslim, we had a small majlis in a communal prayer area under the open sky. The breeze was cool, Arafat was quiet as only a few hujjaj had arrived. Due to differences in fiqh, some sects proceed to spend the night in Mina and come to Arafat the next day.

After the majlis, we were then left to either sleep in preparation for the long day ahead or spend some of the night in supplication, which most people opted for.

The night of Arafat was one of my personal highlights of the whole Hajj experience. The air was filled with peace and serenity and gave us an opportunity to truly reflect upon our lives so far and contemplate what lay ahead the next few days. Arafat is a place for contemplation and reviewing our lives. The night of Arafat was awesome and life-changing promises were made between individuals and the Almighty, shared between only the two parties. It felt like a private audience with the Almighty in a land He has invited you to. The complexity of emotions and feeling cannot be expressed in word, but those who have experienced it and those who will experience it will know exactly what I mean. We tried to get some sleep upon the advice of the group leaders so as to avoid being tired and withdrawn the next day. After Fajr salaa, most of us managed to get some rest and awoke an hour or so before Zohr, when the wuqoof would commence, i.e. the time ordained to remain in Arafat.

After freshening up, (as much as was possible in the state of ihram!), we grouped outside our cabin for Zohr salaa. Dua Arafat, as taught to us by our 3rd Imam, was then recited along with a couple of other recommended duas and ziyarats. The rest of the time was spent engaged in our individual supplications. This too, was a truly uplifting experience. After all, what is Arafat except a barren plain upon which millions of pilgrims converge, with no social, racial or cultural boundaries between them? It is said the day of Arafat is a dress rehearsal of the Day of Judgment, when mankind will rise from their graves. There would be an immense feeling of equality and humbleness, yet each individual would be accountable for their own actions. This was indeed the case, it seemed as though mankind had gathered on this plain, under white tents/cabins that stretched from one horizon to the other.

It was an afternoon that one wanted never to come to an end. It was a day of seeking forgiveness in a place where God does not withhold His generosity and mercy. It was a day to reflect, to contemplate, and to remember our loved ones, both alive and deceased. But alas, as the pink tinge surrounded the sun, and as it began its descent in the sky, we knew our time in this place had come to an end. Witnessing this beautiful sunset filled our hearts with a tinge of sadness, yet at the same time we felt a sense of contentment and gratefulness as we had been given the opportunity to partake in this breathtakingly simple yet spiritually uplifting stage of hajj. As the sun began to depart from the sky, we too would depart with it and the plains of Arafat would be left soulless in the darkness. What an experience!

To Muzdalifa

Now we would embark upon our second leg of this experience, to Muzdalifa or Mash'ar al Haram as it is otherwise known. This whole movement from one stage to another, with specific appointed times at each stage, is a reminder to us of our temporary existence in this world. We should not settle and make ourselves comfortable on this earth as if this is

where it will all end, for this is but the beginning of a greater goal, to reach the Almighty. That is why the Hajj is not considered a journey as such, as all journeys come to an end. Rather it is a series of stages that we must pass in order to approach our ultimate goal towards the Almighty.

We boarded our bus to Muzdalifa at Maghrib time and arrived within an hour. We found a place to lay our musallahs and it is here in Muzdalifa that one must pray their Maghrib and Isha salaa. In fact, this is the one occasion where *all* muslims pray these salaa together rather than separately. After salaa, we started to collect our pebbles in preparation for the next day when we would have to perform the “*rami*” or stoning of the Shaytan. Our group leaders assisted in showing us what size pebbles to pick, approximately the size of a thumbnail. This act represented the arming of oneself to fight one’s own demons. We picked 70 pebbles in total (only 49 were needed but spares would come in handy as we later found out).

Having amassed our pebbles that would serve as our weaponry the following day, it was late night and the women and elderly were told we had a few hours to stay in Muzdalifa, after which we would be driven to Mina. The men, however, laid out their sleeping bags as they were to stay in Muzdalifa till Fajr. This night too was to be spent on reflection and supplication.

The whole purpose of the stay in Muzdalifa as Dr Ali Shariati describes in his book, is for us to think, to plan and strengthen our spirit, to collect arms and prepare for the battlefield. I often wondered the reasoning for staying in this particular place overnight, but it is the night of contemplation and communication with our Lord.

Sayyid Mohammed Zia Abidi so aptly describes this night of 10th Zilhajj as being: “*a night when the breeze of God’s mercy is blowing and the rain of His forgiveness is falling. The doors of God’s favour are opened to man*”. What a blessed night! Most of us engaged in various supplications whilst offloading a few snacks we had brought to eat. We literally had a roadside view with vehicles bumper to bumper from the end of one road to well beyond the horizon. Soon, we too would join the seemingly static stream of buses to Mina.

Most of the men tried to catch a nap before they would be driven to the Muzdalifa-Mina border where they would pass the remainder of the night. The weather was chilly and the men tried to keep warm under their sleeping bags. The area we occupied soon became surrounded by other pilgrims who to set up camp for the night. The washrooms were a few minutes walk away and just a series of cubicles surrounded by pilgrims in no orderly manner. The random “queues” were amazingly long, as long as 40 minutes! So beware!

To Mina

Soon after midnight, the group leaders ushered the ladies and elderly/sick onto the buses to embark on the third leg of the journey to Mina. We gathered our belongings and took one last look at the men-folk, whom we would see the next day with their heads shaved off! The journey to Mina was the longest due to the unavoidable traffic congestion. Nevertheless we arrived in Mina just after 2am.

Mina, which lies 4 miles east of Makkah, is simply a narrow valley bound by huge mountains. However to us, it just seemed to be an endless sea of identical tents, all grouped in a numerical zone system that we never really figured out. It was a wonder how people managed to locate their tents! Fittingly known as “tent city”, this was our third stage in the journey and where the day ahead had one of the most symbolic actions, the stoning of the pillar of shaytan. We were warned that this is where it gets difficult particularly due to the crowd of people, all armed with stones, some with not good aim! To our surprise, the “pillars” were no more and they were replaced by a 25-metre screen representing the three levels of shaytan. By the Almighty’s grace this was a lot easier than we were prepared for, and needless to say that one must have an awful aim to miss a 25-metre screen!

We were in Mina for a total of 3 nights (including the night of travel). The second day saw us return to Makkah to perform the Hajj rites such as Tawaf, Sa'ee etc. after which we returned back to Mina. On the 3rd morning, having completed the final rami, we began the preparation for the final leg of the journey, back to where it all began 3 nights ago - Makkah. As recommended by our 5th Imam prior to our departure we held Majlis -e- Hussain. We departed immediately after Dhuhr and arrived an hour or so later. Our final return to Makkah signified the completion of the obligatory rites of Hajj. We reminisced about the previous few days and our experiences and prayed that our newfound spirituality would accompany us back home, and that we would be able to keep it up once lured back into our routine way of life. The final day in Makkah was a poignant one indeed. All we could do now was to pray for our efforts to be accepted, for a safe journey home but most importantly, for the opportunity to return to the most sacred of places."

The Holy Qur'an 22:33

*You have advantages in them till a fixed time, then
their place of sacrifice is the Ancient House.*

Experiences on the Plains of Arafat

by a 23year old brother
Peterborough, UK

In the Name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful. He whom gave me and approximately 2.5 million people the opportunity, privilege and honour to embark on a journey that would open my eyes to a whole new world and experience. When choosing the title 'experiences on the plains of Arafat' a few days before embarking on hajj, I thought that it would be the easiest topic to write about. Far from it. To be able to put my experience that day into words is not easy. And I seek help only from Allah (SWT) to accomplish this task.

Arafat, is the plain on which all hujjaj must halt from midday to sunset. These few precious hours are the essence of the hajj. It is in these hours that people supplicate to Allah (SWT) seeking sincere forgiveness for all past transgressions against laws decreed by Allah (SWT). In most of the rites of hajj we are physically *doing* something. Whether it be walking around the Kaaba, throwing stones at the pillars in Mina, or running back and forth between Safa and Marwa. But here, on the plains of Arafat, we were not required to do anything like this.

As we arrived on the coach, it almost looked like a prison camp with all the wire fences cordoning off different sections of the huge camp with flags from all over the world flying above various kinds of tents. It was strange to think that we were here to do nothing but supplicate the following day, but I remember feeling nervous just as I has before all the other rites. Hoping that I would get it right. Do what was required. But most of all, be spiritually uplifted. After unloading the food and luggage, and receiving a briefing about the following day we receiving a brief majalis by Maulana Kalbe-Abbas, after which we all got into our cabins and slept.

The morning started with Fajr prayer after which I decided to grab a few hours sleep as I knew it would be a tiring day ahead.

'Allahu-akbar, Allahu-akbar, Allahu-akbar' It was then, the last three takbirs of Asr salaah when it hit me. Now is the time. Those precious hours have begun. My companions and I went back to the cabin to decide on how we were going to proceed with the day. We gathered our dua books. A lot of people it seemed just wanted to get through as many duas as possible that day, which is fine. Personally, I had selected only a few duas which I had decided to read slowly and carefully and try to fully understand them. These included the Ziarat of Imam Mahdi (ATF), Dua Nudba, Dua Kumayl, and the Invocation of Shabaniya.

Jabal ar Rahma, the mount of Mercy, could be seen in the distance from our camp. Everyone whom I has spoken to about Hajj had visited the mountain and I did not want to miss out on this opportunity. My friend and I decided to make a go of it and as time was precious, we left immeadiately. What was going through my mind, was something that I

read before I even left Heathrow. It was apparently recommended to stand at the foot of the mount on its left hand side, facing Makkah. It is around this area I deduced that our living Imam, the sun behind the clouds would be. I must say that during these moments and since we arrived in Arabia, I did feel very close to my Imam.

As we walked, we realised that although the white monolith looked very close to our camp. It would not be an easy task to reach it as there were many other camps between us and the mini-mountain. Even crossing a road was difficult as there were eight foot fences serving as central reservations. There was one wire-mesh door which we managed to squeeze through, as well as various broken fences and peoples camps. We got a lot of puzzled looks I can tell you! Just when we thought that it would take an age to get there, within twenty minutes of leaving our base camp, we clambered up a dusty mound for an amazing site to be seen, awaiting us at the top. There it was. Not huge. But magnificent all the same. There were so many people that from where we were standing, it looked like a mound with ants crawling all over it. We stood. Just for a moment, to take it in. Then we ventured on. As we approached, the pipes spraying water a few metres above us had a momentary cooling affect. We searched for a good spot as far left of the mount as we could get, then sat just at the foot of the mount on a huge boulder. I was feeling nervous. After drinking some now warm water, I decided to just sit and reflect for five minutes. Just look around at all the people here. Everyone around me was supplicating in one way or another. All beseeching Allah (SWT) for forgiveness for the transgressions against the divine laws He has set down for human kind through his mercy. I heard once that sometimes we cannot see the spiritual benefit of the things we do in this world until we reach the next world. To a non-Muslim, looking at this 'spectacle' of millions of people, all dressed in two pieces of cloth, muttering to themselves or to some unseen being in front of them, tears flowing from there eyes, some shaking where they stand, and some wailing where they sit, it may all look slightly strange. It was then that I pitied those people who could not see the immense beauty in all of this. There was no arrogance here. Everyone was asking for something, forgiveness, through the way of repentance. There was no pride here, every one was lowly before the Magnificence of Allah (SWT). It was with this in mind, I picked up my first book. Dua Kumayl. Before I began, I asked for the forgiveness and wishes of all the people who I could remember and those who had asked me to pray for them.

“Whoever supplicates for his absent brother in faith a call from the Divine Throne will say: let on hundred thousand times be for you. So I thought it was not advisable to leave one hundred thousand supplications certainly answered for on that might or might not be answered.”Imam Sadiq (a.s)

Apart from those people, who had asked me, I thought of my family, in particular, my wonderful parents. Were it not for them and the honour bestowed upon me by Allah (SWT). I would not be standing in this sacred place in proximity to Imam Mahdi (ATF).

I began Dua Kumayl. This beautiful, powerful dua, which we all listen to inshallah on Thursday nights at our local mosques. Because I am not fluent in the Arabic language, all

my duas and supplications were read in English on the plains of Arafat. Some may criticise me for this, but I wanted to understand what I was reading as fully as possible, especially on this day. And I'm glad I did. Ammerul-Mommineen's words hit me hard. Before I knew it, I had become part of the crowd with the tears readily flowing. The sun was beating down, but nothing comparable to the black fire that awaited those who would incur the wrath of Allah (SWT) on the Day of Judgment. All I could think of was the horrible sins I had committed, first acknowledging that these awful acts going through my head *were* sins, and then imploring Almighty Allah (SWT) to forgive me for committing them, which at the time seemed unforgivable. Why was I here? What had I done to deserve this honour? Especially with all the transgressions I had committed against my Creator. This is Allah's Mercy. This is why He is the *most* Beneficent. His Mercy is limitless. I did not cry out of fear of the fire. I cried because I was ashamed. I cried because for many years I was totally thankless for all the bounties and blessings Allah (SWT) had bestowed upon me and my family.

I stood up, balancing myself on the rock I was previously sitting on and raised my hands in the air clutching my book. I had now finished Dua Kumayl, and had now picked up my second book, Ziarat of Imam Mahdi (ATF). He was here. This moment, I felt like I was as close to him as I had ever been. So I began, out loudly, calling out his Ziarat. I cried for my Imam. I cried for his intercession, for his help in aiding my forgiveness from Allah (SWT). I cried to Allah to make me a worthy follower of my Imam. I cried out to Allah (SWT) to hasten his reappearance so that security and justice would prevail in the world in the light of his divine guidance.

Adam (AS) came here, Ibrahim (AS) came here. Our holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) came here, on *this* day. Accompanied by his friends, Imam Hussayn (AS), too, raised his hands in supplication to Allah in this place. The sun on the day of Arafat set amidst the moaning and weeping of Imam Hussayn (AS) and his companions. Can a person not be moved to tears in this place where Allah does not withhold his generosity and forgiveness?

We did not want to leave. But our strict time period for our little mission had gone into overtime so we decided to finish the duas we were reciting and then make a move back to base camp.

As I walked away from Jabal Ar-Rahma, I kept looking over my shoulder to catch those last glimpses of the mountain before we climbed over the other side of that dusty hill we initially clambered over to get here. Getting back was much easier, and as we walked into the camp. The sense of achievement was immense. I really felt at peace with myself. But the day was not over. There were still a couple of hours to go until sunset, and the time where we would depart to our next station. So I decided to grab a quick snack and drink before performing wudhu again and sitting myself down in the designated prayer area in our camp. While here, again, I thought of how lucky I was to be here. This is the day when all your sins have been forgiven and you can start afresh as it were. Everyone in the camp seemed to be in their own little worlds and it was actually a lot more peaceful here, but spiritually it was not as uplifting as the atmosphere at the mount. It seemed like the day

was winding down as maghrib time slowly approached. We were all asked to sit in our cabins as we waited for the bus to arrive to take us to Muzdalifa. As I was sitting in the cabin, I remembered someone telling me that the sunset in Arafat was a sight to be seen so I decided to wait just outside, standing on a slightly raised platform. The sun was clear above the mountains in the distance and I could actually see it slowly descending as the colours in the sky constantly changed the way they do. I stood and watched until it completely disappeared over the horizon and left a golden film above the mountains. It was a beautiful end to a beautiful day.

My advice to all those brothers and sisters, who have the honour of going for Hajj and supplicating in this sacred place on this most sacred of days, is to really reflect on who you are, why *you* here in this place and not someone else? Mentally prepare yourself. Don't sleep on this day. Yes, you will have a long night and day ahead of you, but these precious hours could affect your entire life on a conscious and spiritual level.

“He who stays in Arafat and al-Muzdalifa, performs the Sa’y between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa, circumambulates the Kaaba, performs prayer in the standing place of Ibrahim, and after completing all these acts says to himself or has the impression that Allah has not forgiven him, is the biggest sinner.” Imam Sadiq (AS)

(This article is dedicated by the author, to Imam Muhammad ibn Hassan al-Mahdi al-Qaim (may Allah (SWT) hasten his reappearance) And my parents (may Allah (SWT) grant them mercy))

The Holy Qur'an 22:032
***That (shall be so); and whoever respects the signs of
Allah, this surely is (the outcome) of the piety of
hearts.***

Experiences on the Plains of Arafat

By Sister Marian Beydoun
Sydney, Australia

Leaving the Kaaba to go to Arafat represents the beginning of mans creation.

We were now ready to commence this vital part of our Hajj trip.

We were now all in a state of Ihram. It was an amazing sight to see all our fellow brothers and sisters in white, looking so peaceful and ready for the ultimate self-purification.

As we left the Kaaba, I felt so sad to be leaving this most sacred place which I had now become so attached too, but I knew that I would be back there in a few days, Insh'Allah, purified of my sins and ready to speak to Allah (swt) upon returning to the Kaaba feeling purified.

We left Makkah on the Friday night at around 11pm and arrived in Arafat at 3am the following morning.

It was the most incredible experience to know that know our Hajj journey was really beginning. With all the women in one tent and the men in the other...let's just say it was a very cosy affair!

It was such a great feeling to be able to spread out our sleeping bags on the floor and sleep in the most humble manner which I had never experienced before.

After 2 hours of sleep it was time for Fajr Prayers. At this stage I had become so used to the idea of sleeping only a few hours a day. It was so beautiful to wake up for Fajr prayers in the morning and then recite Ziyarat Ashura till sunrise.

As sunrise approached I could see the sun shining through the small gaps of the tent.

That morning the sun was shining at its best. It was the time when I was able to sit in solitude and gain the insight, knowledge, freedom and love in the sunlight.

Arafat was just as I had imagined it...an endless dry, flat plain covered with the smoothest white sand and of course not to mention the hot blazing sun.

All the Hujaj were like dead people...detached from everything in this world, wearing a shroud and waiting for God's mercy. I had read that the Plains of Arafat resembled the Day of Judgement....Now I had really understood what they were talking about. There were millions of pilgrims from different nations uniting on this plain. All wearing the white shroud with their hands raised in supplication.

Our time in Arafat was so short but I knew that its divine blessings were so great. So my aim was to really try and survive with as little or no sleep as possible so I could remain attentive towards Allah (swt) for the whole day. This was the day of supplication.

The day I kept my mind free of every kind of worry or useless thought.

My day was spent in the remembrance of Allah (swt) whether it be reciting Quran, Duas or Tasbeeh.

Looking back at all my experiences during Hajj, I must admit that Arafat really played the most special and most spiritual part of my trip which I will never forget.

I really felt my dua's being answered as I sat in solitude for most of the day, pondering and reflecting about all the things I wanted to achieve, the knowledge I wanted to gain, the sins I wanted to repent for and ask forgiveness to Him who is the Most Forgiving.

It was the most emotional time for me. A time when I would weep everytime I would read a Dua...I felt so honoured to be one of His guests today.

The main highlight of Arafat was knowing that Allah (swt) was listening to all our Dua's and requests and Insh'Allah He would forgive us for all our sins.

All the pilgrims recited Dua' Arafat which really played a big role and effected me immensely. The power of this Dua' was really beyond explanation.

Most of my day was spent outside the tent, sitting on my prayer mat on the dusty plains of Arafat....It was an incredible feeling.

As I sat down feeling the heat of the sun on my face, I started to ponder and write down and the sins, mistakes and improvements I wanted to ask God to forgive me for or ask Him to give me to Tawfeeq to achieve.

It is said that the biggest sin belongs to one who returns from Arafat thinking that he has not been forgiven, that is he or she is disappointed with God's mercy.

It was here that I started to think about the fact that it was in Arafat where Prophet Adam (as) had confessed his sin and was forgiven. It was the same place where Prophet Ibrahim (as) supplicated to God...all the messengers of God had prostrated themselves in this place and now I had the pleasure of raising my hands in supplication in the same place as all these messengers.

I can't describe the emotions I felt as I wept and offered my repentance for all my sins one by one as I kept seeking refuge against Shaitan...I really felt that I was talking to God and I know that he was listening to me...what more could I ask for.

Arafat was so special in that I was able to take the time to thank Allah (swt) for all His bounties in this life, for my hearing, my sight, all my senses he had blessed me with, for my family and all those loved ones around me, and all His bounties He has blessed us with.

If I was to summarise this most unforgettable day in Arafat I would have to say that the highlight was to be given the chance to talk to God the whole day with no interruptions. How many times in our life are we able or do we take the time out to just think of God for a whole day without any other thoughts or interruptions?

A day where I could thank God and ask Him for all the things I wanted to achieve in this short life, to talk to Him about all my aspirations and best of all to know that He has forgiven us Inshallah for all our sins.

As the sun was setting in Arafat, I knew that it was coming to an end. It was a time where I couldn't help but shed tears for Imam Husain (as) and his companions as we continued to the next part of our Hajj journey.

Inshallah this amazing spiritual journey to Arafat will not be lost.

The Holy Qur'an 2:125

And when We made the House a pilgrimage for men and a (place of) security, and: Appoint for yourselves a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrahim.

And We enjoined Ibrahim and Ismail saying: Purify My House for those who visit (it) and those who abide (in it) for devotion and those who bow down (and) those who prostrate themselves.

Stoning the Devils

Sister Azra Fazal

London, UK

Imagine going shopping, with a one thousand pound voucher to buy anything from anywhere-no restrictions-it's up to you how you spend it. So you browse through a shopping centre attracted to the window displays and buy all your favourite things, to the extent whereby you buy more than you can fit in your house/wardrobe. You also realise some of it doesn't work to your expectations or provide you with real pleasure and some of them aren't the right size or shape or colour. A lot of it seemed like a great idea at the time but now, you're regretting having even thought about buying it all. Some of it's beginning to just gather dust-piling up at the back of your wardrobe/loft/garage/spare room. You really want to return them.

Now imagine going for Hajj. You've wandered through life, sometimes with goals, sometimes just aimlessly, but all the while with an abundance of free-will to make your own choices. As you've wandered, you've been tempted by life's window displays and adopted others' opinions, speech, behaviour, attitudes-some of which, you realise, don't actually please you deep down inside, some of which actually end up hurting you/others, some of which are now beginning to pile up as huge burdens on your shoulders and as black spots on your heart-something you're acutely aware of and really want to throw right back at Shaitan... "no thanks!"

That's what Ramy's all about.

Mina is a valley situated between Muzdalifah and Makkah-in fact it shares a boundary with Makkah. Many hajjis can come and go without actually having to spend days and nights in Mina to access the Jamarat, depending on where they stay in Makkah. We, however, stayed in Mina, for a few days and enjoyed the sharing of tents with 70 or so other people all striving for the same goal. This was one of the most beautiful yet trying time and to this day, I still find it almost impossible to get through my day, or sleep at night because I don't have the bustling of many people all around me, sharing my space. It's also one of the most trying times because you not only have to learn tolerance of those different characters in your group-but also tolerance of the different habits and characters of people in different groups as tents are close to each other and bathrooms shared.

After collecting our pebbles in Muzdalifah, we stayed there for the night. In the early hours of the morning, the women boarded the coach and left for Mina. In the mean time, the men made their way to the border shared by Muzdalifah and Mina as they could only enter Mina after sunrise. Alhamdulillah, when the women reached Mina a couple of hours later, we were dropped off not too far from our tent but still had a chance to see the thousands of rows of tents housing the millions of other hajjis. It was truly breathtaking. This sight helped us to try and visualise how grand this whole journey was and was one of the few moments that left us all feeling completely insignificant among a mass of servants all humbly replying to Allah's labayk. Today was the day of Eid. A day of great

celebration but I didn't yet feel like it was quite Eid, as there was just far too much to do and think about.

After a short walk, we reached the tent and began to settle in. The group had one, large, white tent which was divided into two; one section for the men and one for the women. Everyone found a space and although we were exhausted, we soon started to talk excitedly about our new home for the next few days and about what lay ahead. Some shared their previous experiences, some talked only of what they had heard from others back home, and some sat in complete silence, half in awe of finally having reached the place where they would soon face their shaitans and half in excitement and anticipation.

In the meantime, the group leaders and volunteers went to check out the Jamarat and determine whether it would be a good time for us to go and do the first instalment of our three Rami. We were told to be prepared as the volunteers could call us at any time to line up and start walking towards the Jamarat.

Finally, the call came and we all began lining up in threes. Like soldiers ready to face our enemy-bold, brave and prepared yet shaking and trembling in fear. We stood in lines wearing goggles to protect us from flying pebbles (and sandals?!), clutching our precious pebble bags and feet firmly in sandals we were all ready to loose in the crowds!

I was certainly prepared physically but began to think...am I spiritually ready? I've got my arms and ammunition but as Ayatullah Mazaheri explains, Mina is no ordinary place:

"Mina is a place of hopes and aspirations, mercy and forgiveness, nobility and grace."

I had to get my mind into gear... *"I'm a soldier. Walking towards my enemies. But who are they? Shaitans? Temptations? Sins? Ideals? Oh Allah I'm doing this all to gain Your favour, mercy and forgiveness. But what use is stamping towards the jamarat and stoning those three stone devils if I don't stamp towards and stone my own devils? I am my own worst enemy, Ya Allah, and I've succumbed to my own desires, temptations, nafs. Hitting these Jamarat won't be easy at all, with the crowds and pebbles and pushing, but in comparison to successfully hitting my own inner shaitans, this physical act will be easy. Ya Allah help me in what I am about to do. And help me to hit at my own sins and shaitans and resolve to hit them and get rid of them forever. Will I be successful? Can I gather up the courage to admit to my own faults, cry to Allah and return home and not do them again...ever?! Now that is the hardest thing. Even the toughest, strongest and bravest of soldiers can be weakened at that thought. Ya Allah give me real strength."*

As we got closer to the Jamarat, I was surprised. They were no longer tall pillars as we'd seen in pictures but each one has been extended so they look more like walls, each one about the size of a double decker bus! The three Jamarat are called al-Jamarat al-Uola (first column), al-Jamarat al Wusta (Second column) and Jamarat al-Aqaba (third column).

On Eid day, pilgrims only perform Ramy of Jamarat al Aqaba, but perform Ramy of all three during the next two days.

So as we began walking towards Jamarat al-Aqaba and saw the other two, the hadith explaining this act came to my mind. It is said that when Prophet Adam (a.s.) performed Hajj, accompanied by angel Jibra'il, and left Mina for Makkah, Shaitain appeared before him at the site where al-Jamara are, three times. Shaitain tried repeatedly to prevent him from performing the Hajj rituals. However, Prophet Adam (a.s.), with the help of Jibra'il, overcame Shaitan's temptations by throwing seven pebbles at him in the three sites. Thus, this act became a part of the Hajj rituals for all who followed. According to other ahadith, this happened to Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) when he was commanded by Allah to sacrifice his son. Shaitan appeared before him three times and tried to tempt him away from the Allah's order. Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) conquered Shaitan by throwing seven pebbles at him.

Here we were standing near the Jamarat al-Aqaba, ready to charge ahead. The pebbles were in our palms and the ladies' arms were linked in strong chains. The men stood firmly holding hands alongside us to ensure we were protected from people pushing. Much to the delight of many in our group who had performed Hajj before, there were no flying champals to avoid! However, the pebbles did strike back and a couple of us were hit. But that didn't stop us. With all our might and fury at our own weaknesses, we threw those pebbles, trying hard to make sure all seven hit the jamarat. Holding each pebble, we tried to think of a bad trait/attitude/act that stained our hearts and furiously threw them as if to throw that sin/characteristic away... for good! We all desperately wanted to be rid of our Nafs al-Amarah – our unconscious souls that urge us towards evil.

This reminded me of something I had read, by Sayyid Mohammed Zia Abadi:

“Pebbles can be symbols of worldly riches thrown away for the sake of God. Pilgrims practice these symbols and spiritual acts to ensure their victory, for God's promise is truthful.”

After having thrown all seven, we quickly turned around, bent down and hurried through the crowd to re-join our group. We were all filled with excitement at having battaled shaitan and felt as though we'd won this first confrontation at least. So excited, in fact, that when we returned to our tent, a very close relative of mine, who was in charge of keeping the rest of my family's pebbles safe, felt so successful that she excitedly threw them all away. When we sat down to gather our thoughts, we began to prepare for the days ahead and she suddenly realised her mistake. We didn't know whether to laugh or cry as the pebbles used to hit the jamarat can only be those collected from Muzdalifah!!! But Allah (swt)'s Mercy really shone through as another girl in our group had collected almost double the necessary amount and with help from others who also gave us their spares, we managed to gather enough pebbles to complete our Ramy. A Ramy to never forget.

Alhamdulillah, everyone completed their Ramy successfully throughout the three days and no-one was seriously hurt.

Now we just pray, sincerely, that Allah (s.w.t.) accepts our a'amal. On the third day of Ramy, we were greeted with a breath-taking sunrise....start of a new day? We all sincerely hoped so. So I stood there wondering... *“can I do it? Can I fulfil all these promises I have made to you, oh Allah, to change my character? Can I turn all my thoughts, reflections and promises into reality?”*

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

‘Oh you who believe, if you help the cause of Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet.’ (The Holy Qur’an; 47:7)

Now, the test really begins.

The Holy Qur’an 2:158

Surely the Safa and the Marwa are among the signs appointed by Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or pays a visit (to it), there is no blame on him if he goes round them both; and whoever does good spontaneously, then surely Allah is Grateful, Knowing.

Hajj as a Newly Married Couple

By Brother Aarif and Sister Parviz Suleiman

Toronto, Canada

The decision to go to Hajj four months after our wedding was definitely a challenging one. We were just beginning to get adjusted to our new lives together, and when the opportunity presented itself to go to Hajj, we were not sure how prepared we would be. After our return however, we can honestly and sincerely recommend that any young couple who is contemplating performing the Hajj do so as soon as they can.

Marriage can be defined as the merging of two people. Two individuals go into a relationship with often very unique personalities, different backgrounds and different upbringings. Once they have lived together they find that a unique metamorphosis occurs. Those two people, with their own individualities find that after being together their personalities begin to mould together. Traits from one spouse rub off on the other. Through a process of compromise and adjustment, what was once two individuals, has formed into a new entity called the “couple” (this isn’t meant to scare those who aren’t married yet!) From what we’ve learned, this is when life begins. Every step taken from this point forward is taken in a different context. The individual in us takes a backseat to the entity of greater importance, “the couple”. Whereas we may have been used to be making decisions on our own, now every decision is made with your spouse in mind. Marriage is the formation of a covenant with a person.

Just as marriage can be seen as a merging process, the act of Hajj can be seen as a merging process as well. The difference is, where as, marriage is the merging with another person, Hajj is a merging process with Allah (SWT). Hajj is both a physical, and spiritual journey towards the Creator. Every action performed throughout this journey is designed in such a way that we, step by step, are drawn closer and closer to our Lord. This is not merely done through physical actions. On the contrary it is, what these actions represent, that moves us. In order for us to do this we must go through a spiritual transformation. We come from a society which puts a great deal of emphasis on individuality. Everything we do in this world is done to foster and grow our ego. Hajj is the breaking down of this ego. At every step of our journey we realized more and more how insignificant we are. When we first reached the Ka’abah we were swept up in the emotion and the love of Allah (SWT), thanking Him for giving us the opportunity to visit His house. The longer we were there however, the more we realized how we did not deserve this opportunity.

Initially due to our ego, we would get annoyed at the slightest inconveniences. If we were pushed during Tawaf, we wanted to push back, if someone took our spot in line, we wanted to argue. Throughout the process of our journey, however things began to change. By the sheer power of the Hajj experience we were humbled. There were fellow brothers and sisters from all over the world, who had to sacrifice much more to make the journey. Where we would complain about sleeping arrangements, others would sleep on the streets. We would see brothers and sisters praying with such conviction to our Lord we felt ashamed. We began to question ourselves. While initially where we were thanking Allah

(SWT) for bringing us to Hajj, quickly however, our “thanks” was soon replaced by pleas for forgiveness. Our pride had tricked us into thinking we were well on the way to Heaven, Hajj has taught us how far we have to go. The trials of our journey step by step broke down this ego. Things that were so important seemed to mean nothing. What we knew about ourselves was breaking away. In Ali Shariati’s book *Hajj*, he says, that Hajj is a way to die before you die. Every step in the Hajj is designed to represent death and our resurrection. That is how we felt. We did not want to be who we were before. We wanted that part of our ego to die, and for us to begin a new life with a new focus. Where initially we put ourselves first, we wanted to put Allah (SWT) first. We resolved that at every point from now on, every action and decision would be made with Allah (SWT) in mind. Hajj became the formation of a covenant with Allah (SWT).

This brings us to why we feel that going to Hajj as a newly married couple is such a perfect fit. Upon examination, one can see that the concept of marriage and the concept of Hajj share many of the same principles. Both involve a type of rebirth. In marriage you are reborn from a single person to a married couple. A new life begins for you with new responsibilities and new priorities. With marriage you have formed a pact with another person to live your life always keeping the other person’s interests at heart. In Hajj you are reborn from an ego driven being, to a person who lives for a greater purpose. You come back having formed a pact with Allah (SWT), not to commit the same sins you committed before you left. You come back not just living your own life, but also living for the sake of Allah (SWT). This is where by going to Hajj as a newly married couple you can prosper. In marriage you make a pact with another person, in Hajj you make a pact with Allah (SWT). If you do these two things closely together you can in a sense form a new “tri-lateral” agreement. Every action from that point forward is done not only with your spouse in mind, but under the context of becoming closer to Allah (SWT). You begin your new life with your spouse and at every point you are living for the sake of Allah (SWT). The critical and life forming decisions are made with the knowledge and fear of Allah (SWT). You love each other for the sake of Allah (SWT). You start a family for the sake of Allah (SWT). You raise God-fearing children for the sake of Allah (SWT). You establish a home and contribute to the community for the sake of Allah (SWT). By both of you going to Hajj at the same time, and so early in your relationship, it ensures both of you are on the same page in your spiritual journey towards the Divine.

Going to Hajj as a newly married couple also has other benefits. It is said the true Hajj begins when you arrive home. This is where we are tested to see whether the covenant we made with Allah (SWT) was sincere, or merely words. This is where as a married couple the two of you can support one another. If one falters, the other is there to pick you up. Right away when you get back you have a ready-made support system to help resist the temptations of shaytan. Also by performing Hajj in the younger part of your life, you can reap the bigger benefits. You have more years ahead of you to live a life that is pleasing to Allah (SWT). At a younger age you have the opportunity to stop doing the things that tarnish your soul before they have had a chance to completely corrode your heart.

Going to Hajj so soon after starting a new life, is by no means an easy decision. So many factors come into play. There are social concerns, family concerns and financial concerns to consider. There is also of course the fact that, as a new couple, you want to spend more time together than the logistics of the trip allow for. It is not easy, but the future rewards are far greater. May Allah (SWT) give us all the strength to stay on the right path. Inshallah we pray that we all get the opportunity to go to His House and perform the acts that please Him.

The Holy Qur'an 2:189

2:189] *They ask you concerning the new moon. Say: They are times appointed for (the benefit of) men, and (for) the pilgrimage; and it is not righteousness that you should enter the houses at their backs, but righteousness is this that one should guard (against evil); and go into the houses by their doors and be careful (of your duty) to Allah, that you may be successful.*

Dua-e-Kumail at Jannatul Bagee

Sister Shaheen and Brother Abbas Merali

London, UK

It was a night I had been looking forward to months in advance of our departure for Hajj, and Alhamdulillah, it not only met, but also surpassed my expectations. The event in question? The famous recitation of Dua-e-Kumail on Thursday night, outside the best of locations: Jannatul Bagee, with the home and tomb of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and Sayyida Fatemah Zahra (AS) on one side, and the resting place of his grandchildren and other family members on the other.

This was the night when thousands of the Shias of the Ahlul Bayt from all over the world, gathered together and recited what 'Allama Majlisi calls the best of all supplications. Amidst all these noble personalities it was only natural that our hearts were all at peace and the environment was especially conducive to the recitation of the Dua, as it is known that the souls of the departed saints are in the area where they are buried.

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

'Think of not those who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead, Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provisions.' (3:169).

Hence, this is why it is highly recommended to go for ziyarat and pay your respects and ask for hajaat near the tombs. Indeed, the spiritual energy was high and there was an undeniable aura of calm and peace.

We arrived at this very location at around 9.30pm, half an hour early to the predicted starting time, eager not to miss any part of it. Yet despite being early, the area outside Bagee was already packed with people, as far as our eyes could see; everyone waiting in anticipation for the Dua to begin.

After sitting down and making ourselves comfortable, I decided to open the filofax we had received from the group organisers which contained most of the amaals for the Hajj, ziyarats and many Duas, including Dua-e-Sabah, Dua-e-Nudba and Dua-e-Jawshane Kabeer. While waiting for the program to commence, I began reciting Dua-e-Mashloul, The Supplication of the Lame Man.

This beautiful Dua of Imam Ali's placed me in a frame of mind beneficial for reciting the upcoming Dua. This is very important because, as Hasan Mamdouhi states in his book "Du'a – Supplication", there are 3 constituents for supplication. The first constituent is the attraction between the supplicant and Allah. The second is the supplicant, who should have certain conditions for his supplication to be responded to, for example, he should be sincere in his intention. As the Prophet (SAW) states:

“Invoke Allah, your God, with sincere intents and pure hearts.”

Other conditions are that one should have good manners in supplication and the invocation must be real and genuine. This is because in Dua, the mouth's tongue should express the heart's tongue; therefore a wandering or ignorant heart cannot be a supplicant. The third constituent is Allah, whereby the supplicant should recognize his God and should know that Allah is unique.

Reciting Dua-e-Mashloul therefore allowed me to clear and focus my thoughts towards Allah and my purpose for being there; as Hafiz, the Iranian poet writes:

***There is no wall between a lover and a beloved,
You yourself are a wall, then get removed.***

After half an hour, the program began with a short introduction in Farsi, followed by a serene recitation from the Holy Qur'an, aired via the various loudspeakers strategically placed down the length of Baqee. A hushed silence fell over the crowd, only to be replaced by the sound of men and women openly weeping during the recitation and subsequently after, during the lamentation that followed. Although this lamentation was also in Farsi, the haunting recitation was enough to inspire one's own individual lamentations and remembrance of the lives of the Masoomeen.

Soon, the long-awaited Dua began. Just to reiterate, Dua-e-Kumail is named after Kumail Ibn Ziyad Nakha'I, who was a confidant amongst the companions of Amir al Muminin, Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib (A.S.). This sublime Dua was first heard from the beautiful, though anguished, voice of Imam Ali. According to 'Allama Majlisi (Allah's Mercy be on him) Kumail had attended an assembly in the Mosque at Basra that was addressed by Imam Ali, in the course of which the night of the 15th of Shaaban was mentioned.

Imam Ali said: ***“Whosoever keeps awake in devoutness on this night and recites the Dua of Prophet Khizr, undoubtedly that person's supplication will be responded to and granted.”*** When the assembly at the Mosque had dispersed, Kumail called at the house where Imam Ali was staying, and requested him to acquaint him with Prophet Khizr's Dua. Imam Ali asked Kumail to sit down, record and memorise the Dua that Imam Ali dictated to Kumail.

Imam Ali then advised Kumail to recite this Dua on the eve of (i.e. evening preceding) every Friday, or once a month or at least once in every year so that, added Imam Ali:

"Allah may protect thee from the evils of the enemies and the plots contrived by impostors. O' Kumail! In consideration of thy companionship and understanding, I grant thee this honour of entrusting this Dua to thee."

Throughout the Dua-e-Kumail, and indeed the entire night, the atmosphere was spiritually charged with people weeping openly and privately and asking from Allah - *The Aid of those who seek assistance* - through the words of the Imam, and in doing so following the hadith of the Prophet which states:

“Supplication is the weapon of the believer, the pillar of religion and the light of the heavens and the earth.”

As we neared the end of the Dua, the intensity increased manifold as thousands of people raising their hands high to Allah, chanting the verses of ‘Ya Rabbi, Ya Rabbi, Ya Rab’ in tandem, asking from Him through the waseelah of the most sublime of personalities that surrounded us. It was an inner experience that I don’t think I will ever forget Glory be to Allah, Praise be to Allah, There is no God but Allah, and Allah is the greater than anything else.

Unfortunately, like all good things, the night drew to a close with ziyarat, and everyone began making their way out. As for me, I left with an overwhelming sense of gratitude to Allah for allowing me to be a part of a night that I will not forget for the rest of my life. This only increased when I later found out that such a gathering had not occurred for 3 years. My only regret of the evening was that we did not recite Dua-e-Faraj altogether—however, in hindsight, they probably didn’t want to push it too far with the Saudis! Usually even reciting ziyarat on your own is an invitation for harassment; however, during the entire night the guards did not approach us, although they heavily cordoned off the area for us in case of any troubles.

For those of you who will, Inshallah be granted the opportunity of going to Hajj in the future, and are going to be in Madinah on Thursday night, I leave with you with some recommendations that helped me make the most of this special night. I hope and pray that these recommendations, as well as this account of my experience of Dua-e-Kumail at Jannatul Baqee, will be of some value in making your own experience of this amazing event unforgettable. Please remember all of us in your Duas there!

Recommendations to make the most of this night:

- Don’t waste your time talking or just looking around – use the time before it begins and during the lamentations which you many not understand:
- Reciting Duas and dhikr of Allah
- Contemplating on the personalities that surround you
- Reflecting on the upcoming Hajj
- Contemplating on your life and your goals
- Soaking in the atmosphere!
- This will help focus your thoughts, making the recitation of the Dua more sincere, and Inshallah Allah will respond to your supplications!

However, do spend a few minutes speaking (or using sign language!) to your neighbours. Get to know Shias from all over the world – make international connections! A good way to break the ice is to take some tabarruk – and send some thawaab to your marhumeen as well.

Take some time to look up and gaze at the stars and contemplate the beauty and splendour of Allah's creation – and do shukr for the fact that you're in Madinah-tun-Nabi – the City of the Prophet. Why not make a list of the bounties of Allah that you have to be thankful of on that day?

Take some sweets to give to the children that you meet on the way. Also, (and this may be a handy tip throughout the Hajj) keep a lot of small change with you to give to the needy as you go from place to place.

Last but not least, hope for the best but expect the worst – unfortunately this collective program does not happen every year – so if it doesn't, be prepared! However, there will be lots of groups reciting the Dua, so join one!



A glimpse of the crowd outside Jannatul Baqee, on Thursday Night.

Life Post –Hajj

**Sister Abir Khalil
Sydney, Australia**

Farewell my dear friends, farewell! It was starting to feel real, the journey was coming to an end. Sadness filled my heart, my friends were departing back to their countries, back to the other parts of the world, back to their normal routines, back to their friends and families. The next couple of days were filled with farewells. Mixed emotions overwhelmed me, one minute I was happy at the thought of returning home, one moment I was sad to leave this place, one minute I missed my new found friends, and one minute I had to be strong to help others get through this emotional roller coaster.

We undertook the journey together, the Journey to Allah (SWT) and finding our inner selves. We were together for prayers, dua, tough times, sad times, stressful times and happy times. Allah (SWT) blessed us with great health and the opportunity to visit His house and now we all must leave and return to our homes. The final night went by quickly. The hours swept by like minutes, the minutes like seconds. “O Allah (SWT) please enable me to return to this Holy Place again and again, Inshallah’.

All bags packed and ready to go. I wanted to go home instead of holidaying in Lebanon for a couple of weeks. I just wanted to go to Australia and put into practice all that I had gained from this experience. At Jeddah airport we waited and waited. I practiced patience. There was no need to get upset at the waiting game or the disorganisation of the airport. I am a hajji now; I have been re-charged and energised with the blessings of Allah (SWT). I tried my best in Hajj so I wasn't going to waste my efforts on useless things. My mind worked overtime. It went to Madinah then it went to Makkah, then back to Madinah again. The Ka'aba has been imprinted in my mind forever. I was disappointed in myself: why didn't I spend more time at the Haram?. I missed the Haram, I just wanted to go back. I thought to myself, if only I could go back now just for 5 minutes to say goodbye one last time. My inner self was struggling with all these mixed emotions. The Haram gave me something and I wasn't going to know what that was until I returned home.

In Lebanon, I would sit with learned people and we would exchange our Hajj experiences, I learnt tips from several Hajj pilgrims on how to make myself a better person and how to keep on striving towards Allah (SWT). I wasn't concerned with the tourist places in Lebanon, my enjoyment was knowledge. You would only find me in places where Islam, Allah (SWT) or knowledge was shared. Watching, learning, speaking, listening. When people around me were immersed in idle chat, I would feel uneasy, incomplete, and sad. Sometimes I couldn't sleep because of continuous thoughts on Hajj and how much I was going to change when I returned home to Australia. Finally, the moment arrived. I was returning home to Australia.

Home sweet home! Welcome home! Alhamdulillah I am home. Back to my own room, hot running water whenever I wanted, and whatever food I desired. It took a while for my body to adjust to the time difference. My nights were turned into days. My body felt

continuously tired, friends and family were eagerly catching up with us, wanting to hear about fantastic experiences. Seeing my Hajj friends again was amazing. Our friendship was stronger and genuine. Our experiences together gave us something to cherish and love forever.

I thought I would give myself a week or two to catch up on sleep and friends and then I would get into the full routine of regular night prayers and dua. One of the tools I had kept from Hajj.

Time went by, and I was back at work. I would read Qur'an, do some dua, do dhikr, but I only seemed to have time for the wajib. Life was tough, I didn't have time for the night prayers. Everything was moving too quickly. Pondering and reflecting Allah (SWT) was impossible due to the lack of time.

Reminiscing with my Hajj friends, chatting over the net with the other hujaj and sharing a Hajj website made me realise that post-Hajj is not easy. They were also suffering the post effects of Hajj. I wanted to go back to Hajj, I wanted more time to worship Allah (SWT), I didn't want the distractions of this materialistic world. Sometimes I would feel depressed, wishing that I could turn back time and make the pilgrimage to Allah (SWT) all over again. My brother bought me an alarm clock from Makkah and so it wakes me up to adhaan (the call to prayer). I occasionally turn it on at other times and listen to the call to prayer. It brings back many wonderful and memorable moments. I close my eyes and reminisce how we would rush to pray, rush to make Dua, Tawaf and the feeling of spiritual uplift. Obeying Allah (SWT) was simpler in the Hajj because I didn't have the many distractions I have now.

However, I am a new person. I have trained my inner soul to fight the desires of this world. I undertook a journey in Hajj which was self purification and attaining nearness to Allah (SWT). I view the world differently now. It's not as important to me as it was a couple of months ago. My time is more precious, I want to dedicate every moment I have to the remembrance of Allah (SWT), I want to help other muslims who are in unfortunate circumstances, I want to guide non-muslims, I want to continuously purify my soul, I appreciate what Allah (SWT) has given me, the way I pray and make dua is more focused, my Islamic knowledge has increased, I want to be one of the best servants of Allah (SWT).

Sometimes it's a struggle because if you let your guard down, against shaytan, then he works quickly in trying to make you disobey Allah (SWT). I constantly pray to Allah (SWT) for guidance, strength and forgiveness. Last week, I felt that I was losing my spirituality. I was depressed. It is like trying to keep a heap of sand in the palms of your hand but the grains slowly fall out in between your fingers and you can't stop them. Hmmmm What do I do? Do I just sit back and let Shaytan work his ways and win. No way! I am a servant of Allah (SWT) and I am not going to let the satanic whispers get to me. I am a Hajji now and the satanic whispers may come more often because the shaytan wants power. However, Alhamdulillah, I continuously speak to my Hajji friends to re-live

the times at Hajj. We talk about our weaknesses and strengths, and how to get closer to Allah (SWT). We encourage each other in good deeds, we swap good books, we exchange views over the net and in person. This is the post effects of Hajj.

We are not supposed to think of Hajj as just a memory, it is more than that. It is just the beginning of our Journey to Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) rewards us when we make dua and He helps us get closer to Him if we ask for it. It takes constant effort and Inshallah we will get there. Constant pondering, reflection and Dua will help us keep the Hajj spirit alive. The constant reminder we get from discussing our experiences with our Hajji friends is another great tool. Inshallah we will all fight and remove the obstacles of shaytan and remain spiritual and steadfast on the path to Allah (SWT)

May Allah (SWT) grant us tawfik and give us the opportunity to undertake the Pilgrimage to Makkah again and again.

The Holy Qur'an 22:029

Then let them accomplish their needful acts of shaving and cleansing, and let them fulfil their vows and let them go round the Ancient House.

Returning from Hajj

Nisar M Visram

London, UK

I lifted my head from my companion's shoulder and rubbed my eyes. I could hear the engine of the plane drowning out the distant conversation emanating from the front of the aircraft. Everybody around me was asleep. I looked out the window and saw a clear blue sky, the sun stretching in full glory, the view below obscured by a thin layer of cloud. My friend whose shoulder I had slept upon was himself sleeping upon another brother who in his sleep, hung loosely into the aisle. I ran my hand playfully across my shaven head and once again glanced out of the window. It was at this point that I began to contemplate my return home.

I began thinking about others before me who had returned from Hajj, and how it had affected their lives. As I recall, my first thought was about Al-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz, or Malcolm X. I remembered how he had returned from Hajj deeply affected by the equality and unity of the Muslims, despite their different races, and he famously proclaimed 'I met a man with blonde hair and blue eyes who I could call my brother'. He defiantly rose up against oppression, stating that Human Rights, Justice and Equality should be established 'by any means necessary', travelling far and wide to enhance the universality of his message. His stand eventually, as he had anticipated, resulted in his assassination.

I then thought about another individual deeply affected by his pilgrimage. This was the great revolutionary of the 19th Century, Jamal-al-Deen al-Afghani. Living in India, he was unhappy about the situation of the Muslims. He felt they were forgetting their religion and adopting the colonial culture, whilst their leaders were corrupt and selling the interest of their people for personal gain. At Hajj he saw the strength of Muslims and the potential of the great religion, based on its unity and worthy principles. The experience changed his life and he charged onto the forefront of the political arena. After Hajj he learned a number of languages and travelled to different regions, criticising the unjust wherever he went without any fear of potential repercussions. He was deported from Afghanistan, Turkey, Egypt, France and Iran on account of his fiery rhetoric. Upon his death he had left behind a generation of revolutionary students and the seeds to awaken a nation.

I recalled hearing about how the colonial forces used to fear the mass movement of people returning from Hajj, concerned that during their stops on their way home their new zeal would lead them to attempt a united uprising. This led them to pursue a number of policies, particularly during the early 20th Century, to stem the flow of pilgrims and to monitor their movements. Even today, in some areas, there are still obstacles put in the path of some Muslims who desire to go for Hajj.

I closed my eyes and rested back against my seat, drowsily watching an air-steward walking towards us, then shuffling past my companion who slept off the end of his chair. I smiled and closed my eyes – and this is when I remembered the last Hajj of the Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W). Indeed, it was on his way back that he stopped and made the famous

announcement, which according to the Quran perfected the religion, and if he had not delivered the command, it would be as though he had not preached anything at all. I wondered for a while why Allah (SWT) chose such a time, on the journey home, and not at another point of the pilgrimage.

I then recalled Imam Husayn bin Ali (a.s), the grandson of the Prophet (S.A.W), and how he tragically had to cut his Hajj short and to leave Makkah. He did not return home, but went to a distant land. Indeed he did not sacrifice a cow in Mina, but his household was slaughtered in Karbala.

So what about me, the returning pilgrim? I must admit, my immediate concern was how my family would react to my shaven head and I was eager to be reunited with them after so long. The Sheikh accompanying our group had told us that we must not do anything to discourage potential pilgrims from undertaking the journey, and to avoid speaking of the hardships of the trip. We had been advised that there were many ways to discourage people from going to Hajj via one's conduct and deeds, and it is the responsibility of the Hajji to safeguard these. I reminded myself of these facts as I once again turned to the window.

A fatigued light now tinted the sky, but the sun was nowhere to be seen. The clouds below now looked thicker and darker in places where they bulged together. I began to notice the engine of the plane once again and heard a sleeper stir in slumber behind me. I rested my head against the window and contemplated what the Quran says regarding the Hajj. In Sura al-Baqarah, verse 200 it states regarding the completed pilgrimage,

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمْ مَنَاسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذَكَرِكُمْ آبَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا

‘And when you have performed your rites, remember God as ye remember your fathers, rather with a more intense remembrance.....’

And in Sura Raad, verse 28 it says,

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

‘..Certainly! By God's remembrance (only) are the hearts set at rest’

As I recalled these verses I remembered the unique experience of tawaaf, and how it was a necessity that on reaching home, the pilgrim must place Allah (SWT) at the centre of his life. Whether at work, at college, with friends, with family, in prosperity or in distress, Allah (SWT) takes complete precedence and around Him alone do our hearts circumambulate. For His sake the Muslim keeps his beard, for His sake the lady wears her Veil and for His sake the believer enjoins good and forbids evil. I also recalled the stoning of the Satan, and the need to fight those destructive vices on returning home, including jealousy, pride and arrogance.

As I sat upright I recalled how, together with the verses in Sura al-Baqarah mentioned regarding Hajj, Allah (SWT) differentiated the believers as being those who care for the hereafter as well as this world, as opposed to the disbelievers who care only about this life. There was indeed a requirement for the Muslim to be constantly aware that he will return to his Lord and be accountable for his deeds. It was at this point that my thoughts suddenly fell silent and I turned back towards the window. Looking at the clouds, I recollected how one night I had strolled for a short time around Mina and had seen intense poverty around me. There were rows of people who slept out on the open floor, poorly dressed, with scarce food. I guessed that some may have saved money their entire lives just to undertake this journey. I was certain many brought stories of tragedy and oppression from their own countries. Around the world there are areas where people are being killed and discriminated against. There is corruption, deviation and the restriction of human rights even in the most developed nations. Islam is being misunderstood, its rules violated and its practices targeted.

Returning home, having met the global Muslim nation, it is clear that the believer can not live a life of ignorance and self-indulgence. The Prophet (SAW) has said that one who does not show concern for his Muslim brother every morning is not a Muslim. Having witnessed the state of the global population, the faithful must escape from a drifting existence and a plant-like routine, and must hasten to that which gives Real life. Indeed for many, Hajj is not a rebirth but a first awakening, and the cleansed one must endeavour to stand for justice and work for the establishment of Human Rights for all, not merely a selected few, and to preserve this for future generations. Malcolm X and Jamal-al-Deen al-Afghani are two examples of those who, being changed by Hajj, went on to change the world. And above all examples, the message of Imam Husayn (a.s) is piercing and universal.

My companion on the plane next to me awoke and lifted his head. He chuckled towards our brother at the end who was now scrambling himself up from the aisle and back into his seat in a drowsy panic. My friend then peacefully closed his eyes and gently rested his head upon my shoulder. I leant my head against the top of his and returned to my sleep.

Hajj: Attaining Security

Brother Imran Panjwani

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When we consider the yearly pilgrimage of Hajj, we are directed to reflect on our own existence, realising that the only significant centre in which our lives should revolve around, is God. Yet, we can miss the concept of ‘attaining security’ from Hajj. What does this mean?

In the Holy Qur’an, in Sura-al-Imran, it states:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ
فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ
حُجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

‘The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka: Full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings:

In it are Signs Manifest; (for example), the Station of Abraham; whoever enters it attains security; Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah, - those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures.’ [3:96-97]

The word used in the Qur’an for ‘security’ is ‘*aaminen*’, which essentially means ‘safety’, ‘peace’, ‘security’ and ‘protection.’ Thus, God tells us that when we believe and enter into His guidance, we are coming into a place of security.

This resonates the meaning of Islam. Linguistically, ‘Islam’ comes from the root word ‘Salaam’ (as well as ‘Silmun’). ‘Salaam’ has several meanings: ‘soundness’, ‘unimpairedness’, ‘well-being’, ‘peace’, ‘peacefulness’, ‘safety’ and ‘security.’ And, ‘Islam’ means ‘submission’, ‘resignation’ and ‘reconciliation’ (to the will of God). These meanings exemplify the core nature of Islam as fundamentally complete and reliable, providing flawless and comforting protection. This protection is to be sought in God by resigning to His will.

We can now see that our whole purpose of performing Hajj is to understand the deep-rooted thread of security that runs throughout Islam. We now need to comprehend what type of security Islam provides and how we should be obtaining it. Islam provides security in terms of harmony and stability – personally and collectively. Personally, by professing our unconditional belief and love for God, we develop our natural inclination to move towards God. Since God is All-Knowledge, we are moving to a place that has perfect guidance for our lives. And, since God is All-Wise and All-Loving, we are moving to a

place that gives us wisdom and nurtures love within us, instead of hate. This movement bring us inner peace since it fills us with the most natural characteristics that human beings are inclined to.

When we suppress this disposition, we move into a place of insecurity since we are moving into a place that is unnatural. Human beings can be extravagant, angry, impolite and impatient yet their core essence is to find happiness and love. As social animals, we find it difficult to totally isolate ourselves from the world because we have been created with the natural instinct to communicate, converse and care. So, when we reject being compassionate to an innocent child or feel disgusted over an unjust atrocity, we feel guilt. Even though we may hide this or feel guilty for a passing moment, it exemplifies the goodness in our natures. It is this goodness, which Islam seeks to collectively encourage:

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ
بِالْجَنْبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ
مُخْتَلًا فَخُورًا

الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ
وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا

'And serve Allah and do not associate any thing with Him and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbor of (your) kin and the alien neighbor, and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess; surely Allah does not love him who is proud, boastful; Those who are niggardly and bid people to be niggardly and hide what Allah has given them out of His grace; [4:36-37]

The mutual care in society, as propounded in the Holy Qur'an, is self-evidently shown by how people reacted to the recent London bombings. Reports from the BBC and documentaries showed that people of all races, religions and colour came together to express their disgust at the act of terrorism. People felt it was natural to help others in distress after the bombings and genuinely felt guilty when they couldn't or were lucky because they escaped the explosions by being in another but proximate location or were delayed by a few minutes.

Hajj therefore becomes a journey to understand the security and goodness that Islam offers. The shedding of our garments and the sacrifice of the animal show us that these actions are not merely rituals but rituals which create an exclusive relationship between us and God. We show that we do not need any garment to rely on except that which is willed by Allah and gives us purity and modesty. We show that we sacrifice what Allah has commanded, since He supersedes everything. A test by Allah is for our development. This personal discovery of finding Allah (s.w.t) (since we have blinded ourselves to His apparent and manifesting nature – God ‘embraces all things.’) exemplifies our attainment for security in our life. We are trying to find the path we are all traversing but choose to ignore.

So qualities like contentment, simplicity and patience should be found in Hajj as the only focus during and after the pilgrimage is progressing towards God. It is precisely remaining in the fortress of God after Hajj that is most important. We can fail to take the qualities that we acquire during Hajj with us when we leave for home from Makkah. What happens after we find some peace by being in the places which God has sanctified? These places, such as the station of Ibrahim, exist everywhere. They do not merely reside in Hajj. The concept is Oneness of God and so harkening to all that He has commanded is an everyday action.

When, however, personal discovery is redefined in light of short-term passion and goals, life becomes insecure. This was recently illustrated in the realm of relationships and happiness in *The Times*. In a cover story entitled ‘*How to have an affair and not get found out*’ (which comments on a book called ‘*Affair*’ by H. Cameron Barnes, that teaches you how to commit adultery) Chris Ayres writes, ‘When I tell Barnes that I found his book quite sinister, he tenses visibly. His book, he says, does not encourage affairs. Instead, it advises those who choose to have affairs on containing the damage...’ Ayres then quotes Barnes, ‘When properly managed,’ writes Barnes, ‘an extramarital affair can be one of the keys that unlocks the door to personal discovery, spiritual enrichment and a happier and more fulfilling life.’

Barnes’ justification for adultery exemplifies a spiritually coated self-fulfilling mission of short-term love and sex. According to his reasoning, anything that provides a contrasting experience, however morally ambiguous, is ‘personal discovery’ and ‘enrichment.’ The fickle amongst us may be swayed by the crafty use of words but the reality is that adultery is promoted in Barnes’ book, even though he claims it’s a ‘how to guide’ rather than a book that preaches the values of adultery.

This reasoning is self-evidently damaging as it destroys the very values that bring security to an individual’s life - commitment, trust, honesty and openness. When these upstanding principles that seek to promote happiness and safety are corrupted, an individual’s life is filled with fear and suspicion. People would constantly be keeping an eye on each other, tracking phone calls, checking correspondence and fretting over each other’s absence. Is this a more ‘fulfilling life’ or a depressing and worrying one?

Thus, there is a wisdom in what God says to us and by understanding the rationale of His guidance, we become aware of what principles bring us stability and those that do not. Indeed, the Holy Qur'an is described as 'containing correct scriptures', 'full of wisdom' and '...if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy.'

So, how should we attain this security? This principle is 'piety.' The Arabic word for piety is 'taqwa.' As you can see, I have used the word 'piety' as translation from Arabic to English and no doubt you may have come across another definition such as 'God-fearing.' There can be a difficulty in translating taqwa and I have only used the common definition of 'piety' to introduce the subject-matter. 'God-consciousness' is a better translation and I shall use it in this article.

God-consciousness or taqwa is defined by Prophet Muhammed (p.b.u.h) as 'Observing/following God's instructions and abstaining from all the prohibited things.' I have chosen this narration by the Prophet because it neatly encapsulates what taqwa means and in this short article, there is little space to delve into all the places that taqwa is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.

In analysing this narration, we observe that fundamentally, God-consciousness is obedience to God. It is the absolute following of what God has sanctified (for example, giving in charity) and what He has prohibited (for example, telling lies). Further analysis would dictate that God-consciousness is not a stagnant state; rather it is a developing one. Man can continually increase his 'observation' of God's instructions and 'abstinence' from all the prohibited things.

By doing this, one attains a state of awareness of God's commands, the reasons behind them, why we should we follow them and the true reality in which we live in. Ultimately, it is the consciousness of the purpose of creation. The Holy Qur'an expressly states that God gives this awareness when we keep our duty to Him:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّكُمْ فُرْقَانًا

'Oh ye who believe! If you keep your duty to God, He will give you discrimination (between right and wrong).' [8:29]

And in another verse God states:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

"Observe your duty to God. God is teaching you and God is knower of all things." [2:282]

Viewed in this way, God-consciousness is a necessary principle for our existence as it enables us to understand the purpose behind it thus providing us with the correct meaning of our lives. We can then attain a virtuous state (a state that Allah (s.w.t) is pleased with) whereby our intellectual, material and spiritual characteristics are directed towards Him. This translates into having an enlightening and purposeful existence, strived for due its own merit and which reaps material and spiritual benefits, both in this life and the hereafter. Imam Ali (p.b.u.h) elaborates on these benefits:

‘O creatures of the Lord! I advise you to be afraid of Him. I advise you to adopt piety, because, piety is the safest way to salvation and the best support for religion. Keep yourself attached to it and never forsake it. It shall lead you to places of safety, to positions of honour and pursuits bringing you peace and contentment.’

Nahjul Balagha

Therefore, piety gives us this security as it opens our eyes to what is beneficial for us. This brings us stability and therefore comfort. Hajj is a primary example of how we should be striving to become more God-conscious. We should be yearning to go on this pilgrimage since it allows us to enter into a particular state which is exclusive between us and God and allows us to reflect on the purpose of our lives with no corruptions or distractions. If we can't bring meaning to our lives, we are drifting, not living. This is tragic as we have denied ourselves value and direction.

Appendix A

50 Alternative Things to do in Hajj

By Muhammad Alshareef

- 1 Smile in another Muslims face
- 2 Say Salam to strangers
- 3 Shake someone's hand and ask about their health
- 4 Buy tea for someone
- 5 Offer to get someone's groceries
- 6 Sit with a Hajj group from another country and ask about Islam in their village
- 7 Carry someone's bags for them
- 8 Guide someone ill to the infirmary
- 9 Shun vain talk
- 10 Recite talbiyah loudly, encouraging others
- 11 On the days of Eid, walk through the tents reciting talbiyah loudly reminding others
- 12 Gather stones for people
- 13 Offer to throw on behalf of unable Hajjis
- 14 Guide people to the Jamarat
- 15 Lower your gaze
- 16 Remind people of the lives of the Ahlul Bayt
- 17 Read Qur'an with the Tafseer
- 18 Do the authentic Dhikr of the morning and evening
- 19 Make dua during your Sajdah
- 20 Stand to the side of a gate and offer people water/tea as they leave
- 21 Give major attention to shy people in your group
- 22 Remind people of patience, why they came here, and the example of our Ulumaa' in Hajj
- 23 Explain a Hajj Khutbah you may have heard to those around you
- 24 Explain the importance of purifying ones actions for the sake of Allah

- 25 Phone relatives (from Makkah) on Eid day
- 26 Make dua for forgotten friends (and the author of this list)
- 27 Don't allow Muslims to fight during Hajj
- 28 Help people find a place to sleep
- 29 Remember - during the heat - the unending torment of hellfire
- 30 Say 'Laa ilaaha illa Allah, wahdahu laa sharika lah, lahul Mulk wa lahul hamd, wa Huwa 'ala kulli shay'in Qadeer' 100x
- 31 Say the dua of entering the market place when you go there
- 32 Give charity to those who sell meager things (sandals/eggs)
- 33 Attend the Halaqahs that are given in Mina
- 34 Stay for the 13th of Dhul Hijjah
- 35 Remind people to go home as better Muslims
- 36 Forgive people that wrong you
- 37 Talk to 10 different people from 10 different countries
- 38 Compliment someone sincerely
- 39 Visit the hospital and thank Allah for all that he has given you
- 40 Take young Muslims and invite them to sit with the elders. Make them the centre of attention
- 41 Give a tafseer class after Salah / ask someone knowledgeable
- 42 (For men) On the days of Eid, offer perfume to those around you
- 43 Ask about the health of senior women in your group. Make sure they are attended to
- 44 Focus hard on helping those immediately near you
- 45 Take people to the slaughter house and help them / Or assist them in purchasing their slaughter coupons
- 46 Remember specific blessings Allah has bestowed upon you and say Alhamdulillah
- 47 Pray to Allah using his 99 most beautiful names (al Asmaa' al Husna)
- 48 Use a Miswak
- 49 Fill your pockets with candies and give to the children that you meet
- 50 Always intend reward from Allah for everything you go through during Hajj

Appendix B

Recommended Reading

A Manual of Hajj Rituals

Grand Ayatullah as-Sayyid Ali al Hussaini as-Seestani
Published by Imam Ali Foundation, London

Hajj

Ayatullah Sayyid Mohammad Zia Abadi
Published by Ansariyan Publications, Qum
(also available on www.al-islam.org)

Hajj: Reflections on its Rituals

Ali Shariati
(also available on www.al-islam.org)

Pilgrim's Guide: Selected Supplications

Translated by Dr. Liyakatali Takim
Published by Royal Printing House, Ontario

Secrets of the Hajj

Ayatullah al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Husain Mazaheri
Published by Ansariyan Publications, Qum
(also available on www.al-islam.org)

Appendix C

Duas recited during the HAJJ

Compiled by Sister Azra Walji, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

This year I was fortunate enough to be able to make the holy pilgrimage to Makkah and Alhamdulillah it was wonderful. One of the factors that really helped was an excellent 'Dua Filofax' provided to us by our Hajj Group (may Allah (swt) bless them and all their volunteers). This filofax enabled all hajjis to easily find the right dua for all steps of the hajj, and as translation was included, much benefit could be obtained.

There are duas for every step of the way – starting from when you leave home. We ask for His protection of us and our belongings and to reach our destination safely. By remembering Him even before leaving home enables us to realize that Hajj begins well before you reach Makkah!

We went first to Medina where beautiful ziyaraat are recommended to be recited at Masjidun-Nabawi and Jannatul Baqee. Before entering the Great Mosque, we ask permission to enter through Idhn-ud-Dukhul, as it is mentioned in the Holy Quran (33:53) that one should not enter the house of the Holy Prophet without permission. This dua is especially touching and it is said that if you feel your heart is moved and tears come to your eyes while reciting it then that is a sign that permission to enter the holy shrine has been granted to you.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ
غَيْرِ نَازِلٍ فَإِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا
مُسْتَأْنَسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا
يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ

“O you who believe! do not enter the houses of the Prophet unless permission is given to you for a meal, not waiting for its cooking being finished-- but when you are invited, enter, and when you have taken the food, then disperse-- not seeking to listen to talk; surely this gives the Prophet trouble, but he forbears from you, and Allah does not forbear from the truth” (33:53)

After spending almost a week in Madinah, we proceeded towards the Holy City of Makkah. On the way we stopped at Masjid-e-Shajarah to tie our Ihrams. This is the same

mosque where our Prophet and all our A'imma tied their Ihrams when they performed Hajj.

When performing Ghusl of Ihram, we ask Him to make the Ghusl a purification for us, a safety and a cure. This is a beautiful dua to recite whenever performing ghusl. Then, when tying the Ihram, we thank Him for granting us the Ihram as a covering and as a means of worship and to fulfil our obligations, and for allowing us to be able to perform the Hajj.

The Talbiyya is obligatory but its longer version includes the Talbiyya's recited by other Prophets on their way to Makkah.

There are specific Duas to be recited upon entering Makkah and also Masjidul Haraam itself, the main thing that we ask for is that our visit (to Him) be rewarded by freedom from Hell fire:

“O Allah! You have said in Your Book, and Your Speech is the Truth “And proclaim the Hajj to the people they will come to you on foot and on every kind of camel from far away” O Allah! I wish to be amongst those who answered your call. I have come from a distant land and far region hearing Your call and answering You, obeying Your commands, all of that is due to Your Grace to me and kindness towards me. Praise be to You for what You have granted me, I can thereby seek closeness and nearness to You, I can seek a favourable position in front of You and forgiveness for my sins and ask that You turn repentant towards me through Your favours. O Allah! Bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, prohibit my body from the fire, grant me safety from Your punishment and chastisement, by Your Mercy, O Most Merciful One.”

There are many Duas to be recited in the Haram and during Tawaaf but due to immense crowd it is difficult to carry any books or papers! Try to memorise a few short duas or keep a small booklet with you. If you drop it, don't even think about trying to find it! After Tawaaf and its Namaaz after drinking water of ZamZam, we have to ask Him to make the water a source of knowledge, sustenance and cure. There are also many Duas to be recited during Sa'ee and often it is easier to read from a book here. You might also want to tag along with an Iranian group and listen to them reciting Dua e Jawshan e Kabir while walking.

On the 8th of DhilHajj, we left for 'Arafaat. This scared land has an amazing sense of spirituality. On the Day of 'Arafaat, that it seemed that no one was interested in anything other than Duas and Aamals. From early in the morning people busied themselves with their Dua books or just engaged in contemplation. As time for the 'Wuquf' began, everyone prayed and the Dua of 'Arafaat was recited.

'Arafaat, though there are no specific wajibaats other than being there, is referred to as the most important part of the Hajj. When you are there it is easy to understand why. The Du'a of 'Arafaat is a lengthy and detailed Du'a from our 3rd Imam which really causes us to ponder deeply on the bounties we enjoy from Him – creating us, perfecting us and

blessing us with guidance and inspiration out of His grace. We acknowledge all the blessings and organs with which He has blessed us and for which we will never be able to fully thank Him. We come to realize that no one cares for us as He does, and seek protection from His wrath. We compare His beautiful qualities with our base selves and ask forgiveness for our weaknesses. One beautiful section elucidates that all our organs are blessings from Him and yet we use them all to disobey Him.

After Maghrib time set in, we left for Muzdalifah and there we pray that it should not be our last visit there:

“O Allah! Do not make this my last visit to this place, grant me a visit to it as long as I am alive; O Allah! Save me from the fire.”

After arriving in Mina, when stoning the Jamarah we ask Him to keep Shaitaan away from us. During the Qurbaani, the Duas include the ayats from Quran which Nabi Ibrahim (A.S) recited, and then we ask Him to accept from us as He accepted the sacrifice of Nabi Ibrahim (A.S).

When men perform the Halaq (shaving of the head), they ask that for every hair, light be granted to them on the Day of Judgement.

When returning to Makkah to complete the Hajj, we ask for help and health with which to be able to complete the Hajj.

All these Duas have their own special significance. Alhamdulillah, we received a lot of guidance and may He grant us the Tawfiq to ask from Him alone and to understand and implement the messages from these amazing supplications.

Appendix D

Imam al Sajjad and Shibli

Imam Al-Sajjad, Ali ibn al-Hussayn (as) was received by Shibli when he was back from Hajj and the following dialogue occurred between them:

The Imam (as): Did you perform Hajj, Shibli?

Shibli: Yes, son of Allah's messenger

The Imam (as): You stopped at Miqat, put off your sewn clothes, and washed yourself, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did

The Imam (as): As you stopped in Miqat, did you intend to put off the garment of disobedience (to God) and put on a garment of obedience (to Him)?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you put off your sewn clothes, did you intend to get rid of ostentation, hypocrisy and intrusion in suspicious matters?

Shibli: No, i did not?

The Imam (as): As you washed yourself, did you intend to wash yourself from sins and offenses?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not really stop at Miqat, put off your sewn clothes, and wash yourself.
You washed yourself thoroughly, entered the state of Ihram, and intended to perform hajj, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did

The Imam (as): As you washed yourself thoroughly, entered the state of Ihram, and intended to perform hajj, did you intend to wash yourself thoroughly with pure repentance to Allah?

Shibli: No i did not.

The Imam (as): As you entered the state of Ihram, did you intend to abstain from every matter that Allah deems unlawful?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): As you intended to perform Hajj, did you intend to get rid of any pledge that you took with anyone other than Allah?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not wash yourself thoroughly, enter the state of Ihram, or intend to perform hajj.
Did you enter Miqat, offer the two-rakat prayer of Ihram and say labbayk?

Shibli: Yes, i did.

The Imam (as): As you entered Miqat, did you intend to meet all the qualifications of the visitation of the Sacred House of Allah?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): As you offered the two-rakat prayer, did you intend to seek nearness to Allah through the best deeds such as prayers and the deeds by which servants of Allah can obtain His rewards?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): As you said labbayk, did you intend to utter any statement of obedience to Allah and shut your mouth against any statement of disobedience to Him?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not enter Miqat, offer the two-rakat prayer of Ihram, or say Labbayk.

You entered the sacred Precinct, saw the kaaba, and offered, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did

The Imam (as): As you entered the Sacred Precinct, did you intend to abstain from backbiting any individual of Islam?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): As you arrived in Makkah, did you intend to direct towards Allah and no one else?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not really enter the Sacred Precinct, see the kaaba, or offer prayers.

You circumambulated the Holy House, touched the corners, and performed the Sa'ee , did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did

The Imam (as): As you performed the Sa'ee, did you intend to seek refuge of Allah (from the trickeries of Satan and evil temptations) and that He, the Knower of the unseen, knew this from you?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): In that case you did not really circumambulate the Holy House, touch its corners, or perform the Sa'ee. You caressed the Black Stone, stopped at the standing-place of Ibrahim (as), and offered a two-rakat prayer there, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did.

The Imam (as) then cried so loudly and said: To caress the black Stone is to shake hands with Allah. Look, poor man, do not ever waste the reward for the thing that is greatly sacred and do not breach your caressing by the act of violation (of God's Instructions) and seizure of illegal things, just like the sinful.

As you stopped at the standing place of Ibrahim (as), did you intend to stop at every act of obedience (to God) and leave every act of disobedience (to Him)?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): As you offered the two-rakat prayer, did you intend to offer the same prayer that was offered by Ibrahim (as) and to disappoint Satan?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not really caress the Black Stone, stop at the standing place of Ibrahim (as), or offer the two-rakat prayer there.

You came near the well of Zamzam and drank from its water did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did.

The Imam (as): As you did, did you intend to come near to acts of obedience (to God) and cast your sight down acts of disobedience (to Him)?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): In that case, you neither really came near that well nor did you drink from its water. You roamed, walked and frequented to Mount Safa and Mount Marwa, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did.

The Imam (as): As you did, did you intend to be between hope and fear (of God)?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not really roam, walk or frequent between Safa and Marwa.

You then left for Mina, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did

The Imam (as): Did you intend to save people from your tongue (words), heart (ill intention), and hand (deeds)?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not really leave for Mecca.

You halted in Arafat, mounted Jabal-al-Rahma (Mount Mercy), recognised Nemira Valley and supplicated to Allah at al-Mil and Jamarat, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did.

The Imam (as): As you halted in Arafat, did you intend to recognise Allah, Glorified is He, and His knowledge, and recognise that He is holding on the the record of your deeds and that He has full acquaintance with your hiddens and secrets?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): AS you mounted jabal-al-Rahma, did you recognise that Allah would have mercy upon every believing man and woman and see to every Muslim male and female?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you were on Nemira, did you recognise that your advices and warnings to people are fruitless unless they are originated from Allah's instructions?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you stopped at al-Alam and an-Nemirat, did you recognise that these signs would testify for your acts of obedience (to God) and would keep you like the Keeping Angel's whose mission is to keep you according to Allah' instructions?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not really stop on Arafat, mount Jabal-al-Rahma, recognise Nemira, supplicate to Allah, or stop at an-Nemira. You passed by the two signs (Al-Alamain), offered a two-rakat prayer before so, walked in Muzdalifa, picked up pebbles there, and passed by al-Mash'ar al-haram, did you not?

Shibli; Yes, i did

The Imam (as): As you offered the prayer, did you intend it to be thanksgiving...that saves from every hardship and alleviates all difficulties?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you walked between the two signs without turning to right or left, did you intend not to turn away from the right religion with heart, tongue, or other organs?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you walked in Muzdalifa and picked up pebbles, did you intend to get rid of every act of disobedience and every item of ignorance and to fix in your behaviours every item of knowledge and good deed?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you passed by al-Mash'ar al-haram, did you intend to carry in heart the slogan of the pious people and the God-fearing ones?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): In that case, you did not really pass by the Two signs, offer a two-rakat prayer, walk in al-Muzdelifa, pick up pebbles there, or pass by Mash'ar -al-haram. You reached in Mina, threw the pebbles (i.e. performed the Ramy-al-jamarat),had your hair cut, slaughtered your sacrificed animal, offered prayer in Kheif Mosque, returned to Mecca, and performed Tawaf al-Ifadha, did you not?

Shibli: Yes, i did.

The Imam (as): As you arrived in Mina and threw these pebbles, did you feel that you achieved your aim and that your Lord would settle all your needs?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you threw these pebbles, did you intend to stone Eblis, your enemy and challenge him through your precious Hajj?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you shaved your head, did you intend to purify yourself from all filth and liabilities of people that lie on your shoulders, and to get rid of sins as if your mother had just given birth to you?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you offered prayer in Kheif Mosque, did you intend that you would never fear anything except Allah and the responsibilities of your (past) sins and that you would hope for nothing except Allah's mercy?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): As you slaughtered your sacrificial animal, did you intend to cut off the throat of greed by clinging to the reality of piety, and to follow the exemplary tradition of Ibrahim (as) who intended to slaughter his dear son (so as to carry out God's order)?

Shibli: No, i did not

The Imam (as): As you returned to Mecca and performed Tawaf-al-Ifadha, did you intend to supply yourself with Allah's mercy, return to the obedience to Him, cling to His love, perform all His precepts, and seek nearness to Him?

Shibli: No, i did not.

The Imam (as): In that case, you neither reached Mina, nor did you throw these pebbles on Satan, nor did you shave your head, nor did you perform the rituals of the Hajj, nor did you offer prayer in Kheif Mosque, nor did you perform Tawaf-al-ifadha, nor did you offer sacrifice for the Lord. Go back, you did not perform Hajj.

Appendix E

Useful things to take

Taken from <http://www.geocities.com/hayatanneosman/Hajj-Tips-1.html>

First of all, *don't take anything valuable*. The Hajj is crowded, and you'll be very busy. It's only too easy to leave things behind, and nearly impossible to find them later.

Essentials:

Bedding, if the group doesn't provide it. You'll want a thin mattress, one or two sheets, a light blanket, and a pillow.

Shoes: The best kind for both men and women is cheap plastic flip flops that you find comfortable but wouldn't feel bad about losing. Be sure to take an extra pair.

Clothes:

For men, an extra set of ihram towels;

For women, whatever simple, modest hijab they find convenient

For both, a change of clothes for the Eid; extra underwear and socks.

Even Eid clothes should be inexpensive. It's not a fashion show!

Money:

You'll need some for tips, possibly taxi fare, cold drinks, plus whatever food you want to buy.

Don't take too much money, though. Divide the money among the members of your group.

Food: Even if your food is provided by your group, you will still want some salty and some sweet snacks. Chips and biscuits in tins keep well and are easy to store.

Don't take any fresh food (and don't buy any on the Hajj) except for oranges, which are easy to store and have tough peels to keep their fruit clean.

Most people take very simple, low-bulk foods, such as cheese, tuna, corned beef, olives, dates, bread, and jam or preserves.

Due to competition for toilet facilities, the Hajj is a good time to forget your high-fibre diet.

Please don't buy any fresh or cooked food on the Hajj, except in a very superior restaurant!

Drinks: Tea (bags are easiest), instant coffee, sugar, instant milk, and instant fruit drinks, like Tang.

Mix your drinks with bottled or bagged water.

Toiletries

A first-aid kit.

Unscented soap. You can buy it at any market in Saudi Arabia. Just say you want soap ("savon") for the Hajj.

Disinfectant liquid, such as Dettol.

Unscented deodorant.

Laundry detergent, such as Ariel or Tide.

Tissues or toilet paper. Buy a large quantity!

A razor, if you plan to shave.

A small pair of scissors. You'll want to trim your hair and nails.

Any medicine you take regularly, including skin medicine.

Cornstarch, to use instead of talcum powder, which is perfumed.

Sunscreen lotion. Of course, you would use this after you remove your ihram, because of the perfume.

Shampoo, but remember that it has perfume, too.

Other

A small, inexpensive copy of the Qur'an. If you don't read Arabic, there are several new editions with English explanations, including very small ones.

A Hajj guidebook.

Reading glasses, if you need them. Hang them on a string around your neck. Reading glasses have got to be one of the most frequently lost items in the Hajj!

Lots of big plastic shopping bags for garbage, plus some small plastic zipper bags.

A parasol, or umbrella, for the sun.

A phone card. You can buy them at the airport, any PTT (telephone company) office, and some banks. This will make calling home much easier.

A small notebook and a pen. You'll want to exchange addresses with your fellow Hajjis, and maybe to keep a diary, too.

A needle and thread, just in case.

In cooler weather, as this year, you might need a sweater at night.

DON'T TAKE:

Gold, jewels, or any other valuables.

Expensive Cameras.

Political literature of any kind.

Fresh fruit (except bananas and oranges.)

Fresh vegetables

Fresh meat.

Babies and small children (if you can help it.)

Gas cylinders or other cooking equipment.

Appendix F

Miscellaneous Tips for a Happy Hajj

Extracts taken from articles written by Sister Sukaina Hemraj and Sister Hayat Anne Osman

This article does not give religious fatawa, just practical advice to make your Hajj easier and more enjoyable. When the mechanics go smoothly, there's more time to concentrate on the spirit.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO GO?

Go with an organized group. Although some young men go alone, and some families camp out on the pavement, these are not the ideal ways to comfort and peace of mind. Remember that when there was choice of ways of doing things, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) always chose the easiest.

All groups offer a guide, transportation, and accommodations. Other services vary. Ask: Is the accommodation in Mina? (If not, you have to hang around Mina until midnight each night before going back to Makkah.)

How many people will share each room or tent?

How many will share each bathroom?

What type of toilets will there be? (Western, Eastern, or both?)

What shower facilities there will be?

Which meals are provided? What kind of food will be served?

Will there be lectures, classes, or workshops? In which language(s)?

Are the buses air-conditioned?

Will you have a tent in Arafat? Air conditioning? Toilets? How close will you be to the mosque?

Some groups provide hotel accommodations. These range from the new luxury hotels down to the simplest, most old fashioned types. Many groups put ladies in one hotel room, men in another. Some expect some guests to sleep on mats on the floor.

Some groups put you up in tents. A so-called tent may be an actual cloth tent, or it may be a tin shanty with a carpeted, cement, or bare earth floor.

Some groups provide apartments. With others, you sleep in schools.

Food service also varies. The most expensive groups feed you in first-class restaurants. Others cook for you. Still others expect you to find your own food.

MAKE IT EASY

Before you get off the bus, decide where you will meet if you get separated.

In Makkah, choose an easy-to-find place in the Haram: a particular door, under a clock, by Safa or Marwa.

In Makkah, families/spouses are reunited, and tend to go for meals and to the haram together. If you are travelling on your own, unless solo time is what you want (as was the case with me) it could get very lonely. So consider going with someone you are comfortable with.

Over the years, Madinah has changed drastically. So much so that it is very difficult to know what's where without some guidance. Be it in the haram of the Holy Prophet, Jannatul Baqee or the outside ziyarats. The group I went with did not offer much guidance to the ladies especially in the haram. As a result, those who were in Madinah for the first time (which included all my room mates) found it very difficult to know what's where, especially because everything's very restricted and unclear to see. Alhamdulillah, there were some members in the group who had been for ziyarat/hajj very regularly so my room mates planned to go together with them one morning to get a good explanation. My advice would be if you are caught in a similar situation, arrange to go with someone who knows as soon as possible.

Sometimes the arrangements of the group might not fit in with my plans and expectations (for example the group reciting certain duas out side Jannatul Baqee). At first I'd go along, but soon realised that I was spending precious moments doing what I was expected to do, rather than what I would have liked to or needed to do. From then on, I planned my own timings and whereabouts, but made sure I respected meal times, seminars and other such essential meeting times.

Make sure are not carrying a camera, radio, cassette, or CD player when you go to mosques in Makkah and Madinah. You won't get in!

In Arafat, identify a door of the mosque, a first-aid station, or something similar. Then if you do get lost, don't hunt around for the others. Go to your meeting point and stay there! Use the buddy system: pair off. Each person in the group should have a partner. If this is your first Hajj, you should have an older person who's seen it all before. You can lend your strength and benefit from the other's experience. Stick together, no matter what. If you have children with you, assign each child one big person for the entire Hajj. Children should have identification pinned to their clothing. It's best to put small children on a leash or lead.

People with medical problems (including drug allergies) should wear some kind of tag identifying the problem.

There may be people in the group you don't see eye to eye with. During the rest of the trip this would not be a problem, because not everyone spends time together. However, Arafat/Mina you are all together always. It is here that it becomes difficult to tolerate

people you are not getting on with and to be patient. However a continuous reminder of your purpose there, and seeking Allah's help in being patient and seeking his protection from the whispers of satan will bring you through it – no problem.

Secondly, there are many acts that we carry out here, which have philosophical and spiritual aspects to it. These aspects are good to know beforehand so one can reflect on them before each act. Whether or not you'll get this device from the group is unpredictable so its best to be very well read before you go. It's probably good to read some good books and listen to some lectures, probably starting 2 – 3 months beforehand.

ATTITUDE CHECK

The Hajj is different from any other event on earth. Millions of people from dozens of countries and speaking dozens of languages converge on one tiny valley and become intimate neighbours. There are bound to be delays, misunderstandings, and unsuccessful arrangements. People are sure to forget things, get tired and confused, and make mistakes.

Remember that:

- The Hajj is a once-in-lifetime obligation to Allah, Who gave you the health and money to perform it.
- All of the Hajjis are your brothers and sisters.
- Any cross word, any selfish act may ruin your Hajj, Allah forbid.
- Allah will reward you thousands of times over for any act of kindness, no matter how small.

FINALLY

Please, please pray for all your Muslim brothers and sisters