

Allah says: "Behold! Safa and Marwa are among the Symbols of Allah." (2:158) Throughout the Quran He enjoins such reverence for His Signs.

The entire experience raises the pilgrim's soul beyond the mundane & trivial fancies of worldly things. When one enters the city of Makkah, one does so, **not** as a sightseer, an archaeologist, **nor** passer through. Although the structure of the Masjidul Haram, which houses the Kaaba, can easily vie as a "Wonder of the World," its simple & structural grandeur manifests as a Sign for anyone that materialism is ephemeral, and that only Allah is Eternal & Lasting. This city & this edifice, to which millions flock for Hajj, is in fact a "Wonder of Allah." Beyond the transcending materialism, it is His House, of which He said, "Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men & a place of safety..." 2:125

The Hajj transcends the narrow focus of man. An experience such as circling the Kaaba can but elevate the mind. Few can leave such an experience and cling to their nationalistic traditions and cultures which often become the cesspools of bigotry, elitism, racism and oppression.

One cannot help but reflect upon the peace & tranquillity of Allah's creation when viewing the sky from the Valley of Muzdalifa. The vast expanse overwhelms the mind. It is a glorious sight. The transition of one's temperament increases. The still calmness of the night tunes the mind to the spirit of reflection. Here you come naturally into meditation. There is **no** haggling, **no** noise, **no** hustle or bustle, **no** irritation, **no** anxieties, **no** worries. Out here, under the open sky, one can draw upon the creative spirit provided by Allah. One is here as but a grain of sand. Your life is dependent upon Allah. Here you glorify Him. You are made totally aware that only He controls life & death. Every time your strength ebbs, you close out your mind from the physical & draw upon the spiritual & the body responds. It is no exaggeration. You are not imagining this. You are here, experiencing this vista of life.

Outward Actions: O Pilgrim do not unknowingly limit your experience by exceeding the limits of the rituals and their meanings. O Pilgrim do **not** even approach idolization of the physical symbols such as the Kaaba and the Black Stone. O Pilgrim do not be overwhelmed by the

historic aura of the events & neglect the true object of worship: The Transcendent One, Allah. To Him & Him Alone, belong all Praise & Glory. **It is not their flesh nor their blood that reaches Allah; it is your awareness of Allah that makes way to Him.** (22:37)

O Pilgrim do **not** concentrate on the outward actions of Hajj, taking care of the minutest details of the rituals to be meticulously performed in space and time. O Pilgrim try to discover the real significance and the inner value of Hajj.

How many times have we evaluated how our sublime experience of standing in His presence with other Muslims has changed our day to day life for the better? We are overjoyed by the presence of such a large number of our co-religionists, and by the unity displayed among the diverse & sometimes discordant elements of the Muslim Ummah. Standing in the Divine Presence we feel that we have crossed the limits & abandoned the barriers which have kept us away from Allah & His creation. Momentarily we forget that we are fragmented & tormented by petty mundane loyalties & selfish motives.

On the Day of Judgment we will have no more opportunities to make amends. On the day of Arafat, we still have unlimited opportunities to make amends to our lives and change the direction of our lives for the better.

Removing the "ihram" gives many the freedom to return to old ways; forgetting the pledge to Allah of living His Message selflessly. **Paradise Lost!**

You should soar high & be exalted & ennobled because of the extraordinary & righteous effort you exerted for the sake of excelling & attaining perfection ...**Who could have a better religion than someone who submits completely to God, is a good-doer & follows the religion of Abraham, a man of pure natural belief?** (4:125)

Abraham's way: **Paradise Found.**

Return to your part of the world & illuminate human conscience with the truth of monotheism for the liberation of mankind. Sweep away forever modern day idol worship. Let your Hajj shine! Live Islam as sunshine! Sunlight is a key factor in photosynthesis, a process crucially important for life on Earth. Similarly Islam as light is a key factor in the synthesis of the soul, a process crucially important for the life Hereafter.

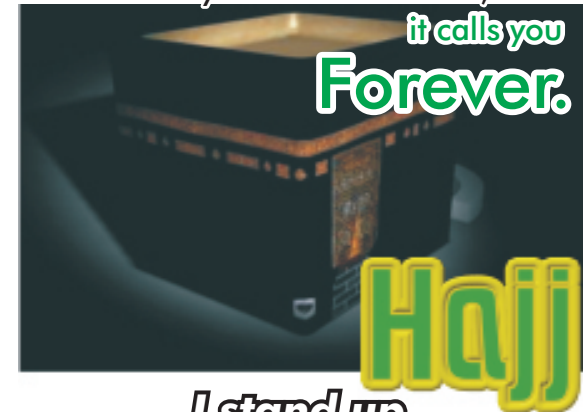
Hajj: The Spiritual Illumination!

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Before you visit Makkah,
it beckons you.
When you leave it behind,



I stand up

for Your service,

© Allah!

I stand up.

I stand up.

***There is no partner
with You.***

I stand up

Verily, Yours is the Praise

The Blessing

and the Sovereignty

of the Universe.

***There is **no** partner
besides You.***

Here I am, O Allah, answering Your call. All of them, wearing the same apparel. All of them experiencing the same emotions. Their aims sacred, their thoughts pious. And all of them uttering the same words: “Here am I, O my Lord, answering Your call...” For the last 1400 years, Muslims from all over the world have continued to come every year to perform the Hajj. A place to learn powerful lessons. Hajj attracts a tremendous gathering, in one focal point, of people belonging to all the nations and corners of the world.

People arrive in fast jets, cars, boats, trains, walking, and even riding animals. Europeans, Africans, Asians, Chinese, Indians. People from the Philippines, Australia and America (North and South). Look about, to your right and to your left. Viewing the great masses in the valley of Arafat you get the feeling that the estimated 3 million must be an undercount. Bowing in prostration are thousands – men and women – rows upon rows. They are very different and very alike in many ways. All hues, all heights; male and female; the young, the old, the infirm. This, without doubt, is the greatest experience in human life. There is no interpreter available to translate for diverse Hajjis. Yet language represents no real barrier to the warmth and friendship derived from the essence communicated to one another. Here, you see and experience the magnificent power of Allah. You think, a bit amused at the fleeting thought, of great kings of the past who boasted of their power to command great armies at the snap of their fingers. Look at this. Whoever had the honour to command this kind of army? Who can bring men and women from their beds at 3:00 a.m.? You feel humble, yet proud and grateful to know this wonderful exhilaration. This confirmation of your faith.

The word Arafat is synonymous with knowledge & discovery. It is here at Arafat that mankind’s return to this site is equated with a “new birth.” It is related by its root to mutual

acquaintance. Here in this valley, Adam and Eve became acquainted with each other. So it is here that mankind had its beginning. Standing at Arafat is a tiny preview of facing the Creator on the Day of Judgment. Nearby, in Mina, Ibrahim (peace) demonstrated his faith by placing his own son Ishmail upon the altar. An eternal lesson in faith and submission to the One Allah. When one returns here for this rite with a clarity of mind and purpose, one is assured of the promised blessings. “It is as if you were again arriving in the world from the womb of your mother.” Newborn: without falsehood, pretense, tricks and politics. Pure direct Islam.

The extremely hot sand of Arafat and the intense heat from above teaches people to value Allah’s bounties. This heat tells you why the Muslims place such preeminence on Allah’s gift of water to mankind. Every experience on the Hajj makes you cherish His countless bounties. As you travel from Arafat to Muzdalifa you sense a transition of the mind’s reflections. The day of Arafat is filled with excitement. The mind actively grasping, the activities beheld. Now as the sun declines, the mind ebbs from its enthusiasm to match the serenity of the evening.

Under this glittering sky, you feel yourself becoming a “grain” among the sands of the shore. This night you see the masses of mankind spread out below, as far as you can see; and above, the stars, as far as you can see. You thank Allah for the signs he gives mankind to ponder.

Hajj eliminates race and class distinction. It educates us all, re-educates us all. It spreads the absolute certainty of the oneness of human life. At the end we hit the head of the Satans many times. To demonstrate our belief and conviction that we have no connections with devils. Rapidly flying pebbles after the peace of Arafat. This means that war must go on, even after the victory. The war never ends for the end is the beginning. It is truly awe inspiring. As you watch the mass of humanity. Humanity is the only way to describe it, because it is truly a cross section of our planet, people from every walk of life, rubbing shoulders, sharing almost nothing in common except the seeking of God’s pleasure.

Malcolm X experienced the same scene, and it completely changed his attitude. In a letter he wrote, “There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and the non-white.”

Hajj...it is a journey to Allah alone. Hajj...symbolizes the equality & universality of Islam. It provides the world the best opportunity to observe the unique impact of a shared belief. A gathering of millions in a small area poses daunting tasks of human management. Food, lodging, transportation, law & order, could numb any group of experts. What amazes the world is the love, discipline & self-sacrifice which overcome most of the hurdles.

If such a degree of mutual respect and tolerance could be achieved in this one place, why can’t it be used as a model for the rest of humankind? After all, Islam doesn’t dictate respect and tolerance exclusively to Muslims. God says in the Quran, “O mankind! We created you all out of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous of you. God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (49:13).

A Transcending Reality: It is often asked why the returning believers speak always in superlatives, such as “magnificent,” “wondrous,” “inspiring,” “overwhelming.” Quite truthfully the Hajj is a transcending reality beyond verbal or literary description. Everything from the trivial to the majestic is multiplied a thousandfold from the moment the believer vows his intention to make the journey until he completes his farewell circuit around the Kaaba.

Let us recall the Hajj ritual known as Sa’ee (walking briskly between the hills of Safa/Marwa).

Behold! We gave the site to Abraham (peace) of the House

Saying, ascribe nothing as a partner unto

Sanctify My House for those who compass it round or stand up, or bow, or prostrate therein...



(The Quran 22:26)