

Hardship and Sacrifice of Hajj

In the Name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful
Brothers and Sisters in Islam

Today is Eid, Eid-ul-Adha, the Eid of Sacrifice... and today our Muslim Brother and Sisters in Hajj complete the rites and procedures of Hajj.

We take this opportunity to supplicate to Allah that He accept their Hajj, forgive their sins, bring them all to their homes safe, make their Hajj reach their hearts, change them into strong believers, and make them useful to our Islamic Ummah

We also take this opportunity to supplicate to Allah to make us among those who will be blessed by performing Hajj and Umra in future years In'sha'Allah.

Two aspects of these holy days are worthy of our study and examination: **The hardship of Hajj, and the Sacrifice associated with it**

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, it is a must for the adult Muslims who can afford it both physically and financially

Allah Says in Surat Al Imran (3:97) The translation of the meaning is "Pilgrimage is a duty people owe to Allah - Those who can afford the way (journey)"

In performing Hajj, a Muslim suffers many hardships. He takes out of his time, his money, his effort, and his health to perform this worship

Physical effort is required in performing Hajj: travel in itself is a physical hardship, Tawaf, walking and rushing between Safa and Marwa, the Rajm (stoning) of Iblis, and you do that in an ocean of humans. An unparalleled crowd

Many other hardships of financial expenses, travel, dress code, and other restrictions

And one wonders: How can a Muslim, in the midst of all these hardships and with all such suffering, devote himself to the worship of Allah and perform pilgrimage? The answer to this question is simple if we consider the case of the other worships that Allah commanded us to do, also if we were to consider any meaningful action or task that we are to accomplish

There is always a mission, a goal, that we are to attain, yet there are always impeding factors that stand between us and that goal. And, those who are successful, do not let these impeding elements from preventing them from reaching the goal and accomplishing the mission

Success never comes easily whichever success we talk about

In education and studies, one has to spend these long hours of reading, working out practices and exercises, and research to get the knowledge he seeks

In professional life, it takes tremendous effort, trials and error, and many hardships and disappointments, before one reaches any degree of success

In raising children, it takes out of parents time, comfort, money, and emotions, to do a sincere effort leading to a successful mission

This is the way life is, and this is the way Islamic worships are as well. Islam is a way of life that makes worship part of our lives just like eating, studying, and raising our children. An integral part that blends with both aspects of our existence; physical and spiritual

In our daily prayers, we take out of our time and effort to do them on time under all circumstances and conditions to strengthen our belief and our ties to Allah, as we worship Him

In fasting, we struggle with hunger and thirst as we strengthen our belief and our ties to Allah, as we worship Him

In Zakat, we pay out of our wealth, we help others as we help ourselves, and in this way again we worship Allah

In all these are hardships, but there is a goal, and our objective is the successful achievement of the mission. And, in going through these hardships, we learn how to deal with them and how to overcome them. And that makes us better humans and stronger Muslims

And, in Hajj, is a greater hardship, if we examine the fact that it is only mandatory for those who can afford it

In Hajj, we see a great wisdom, as we struggle with all the hardships of Hajj, we are to sincerely worship Allah

The goal is the worship and the impeding factors are those of our daily lives

A concentrated dose of hardship we experience in this Hajj yet it is the same kind we have to deal with every day

And we have to deal with it, overcome it, and successfully accomplish our mission of sincere and devoted attachment to Allah and His way, simply worshipping Him

Yes, in the midst of all this life hardships like working for income and dealing with people, we have got to remember Allah at all times and worship Him sincerely, worship Him as if we see Him, because if we do not see Him, He sees us

In Hajj, we live the same circumstances in a comprehensive, concentrated and intensified form

And as we examine ourselves as we practice the other aspects of our lives and worships. As we achieve our goal and feel the rewards, benefits, and joy of success. We then feel that every effort that was put in the process was worth it

In our prayer, as we take the time to do it, we feel the rewards of tranquillity and humbleness in our soles, we feel the rewards of renewal and strength in our hearts, and we know that the ultimate reward of Allah's Satisfaction is awaiting us

And we know then that we did not waste our time or our effort in performing this prayer

And in Hajj, the same happens. Those of us who have been through it know exactly that. Yes there are hardships in Hajj, but there are the rewards as well. Rewards in this life and rewards in the hereafter

May Allah help us all realize these rewards and enable us to his way and to his satisfaction

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The second point for discussion today is sacrifice. And, in the story of Ibraheem, pbuh, is a great insight for us.

Allah says in Surat Assaffat (37:100-111)

"O my Lord! grant me A righteous (son)!" So, We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. Then, when the son reached the age of serious work with him, he said: "O my son! I have seen in a dream that I offer you in sacrifice: now see what is your view!" The son said: "O my father! do as you are commanded: you will find me, if Allah so wills, one of the steadfast." So when they had both submitted to Allah, and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead, We called out to him, "O Ibraheem! you have already fulfilled the dream!" - thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was a clear trial - And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice: And We left for him among generations to come in later times: peace and salutation to Ibraheem! Thus indeed do We reward those who do right, for he was one of our believing servants.

An aging man was about to sacrifice his only son as he believed that this was a command from Allah. Neither he or his son argued, disputed, or even doubted the message, nor did they hesitate in the execution.

That was a test from Allah, and what a test, a great one given to two great people.

That was Prophet Ibraheem, a great prophet, who was willing to sacrifice his son as he had sacrificed his father's love before. As he rejected idolatry, he gave away love and support and even peace with his father and his people, a big sacrifice for the sake of Allah.

Allah says in His Holy Book (29:2,3), the translation of the meaning of which is:

"Do people think that they will be left alone on saying, "We believe," and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false."

Tests come from Allah, no doubt, and only the true believers can pass those test, and the key to passing is sacrifice.

Sacrifice is the act of weighing what our hearts and souls desire against Allah commands and wishes, then deciding to give up our desires and wants in order to conform to Allah's commands and prescriptions.

And, sacrifice has many forms. Following the straight path implies sacrifices.

Maintaining worships involves sacrifice. Spending money, effort, and time to serve Islam and Muslims involves sacrifice.

Being an active member of one's community is a sacrifice.

Being a good example to be followed is a sacrifice.

Allah says in His Holy Book (3:195), the translation of the meaning of which is:

"And their Lord has accepted of them, and answered them: "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: you are members of one another: those who have immigrated and left their homes, and were driven out therefrom, and suffered harm in My Cause, and fought, and were slain,- verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath; - a reward from Allah, and from Allah is the best of rewards."

This Ayah demonstrates a typical sacrifice pattern for the early Muslims, the companions of the prophet, pbuh. They sacrificed their wealth, their wives and families, their parents who rejected Islam. They were tortured and they were exposed to many forms of suffering. They sacrificed all for the sake of Islam and in Allah's Cause. And their reward is the pleasure of Allah and His Gardens. They are no doubt the true winners.