

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HAJJ

In the concluding *ayah* of *The Bride of the Qur'aan*, Surah Rahman, Allah Ta'aalah describes Himself as *Master of Grandeur and Honour*. In this light it is observed that the more than ninety-nine names of Allah Ta'aalah belong to two major groups; those which expound Allah's grandeur and majesty and those which expound His honour. The former are known as the attributes of *jalaal* while the latter are called the attributes of *jamaal*. Examples of the former are anger, punishment, might, power, ownership and kingdom. Mercy, compassion, generosity, tolerance, forgiveness, guidance and sustenance are examples of the latter. Because man has been endowed with the potential to do good and bad, to obey and disobey, Allah Ta'aalah constantly reminds him of these two types of His attributes so that he will neither be deceived by only hearing and reading of the attributes of *jamaal* nor will he become despondent by only thinking of the attributes of *jalaal*. For example:

- ◇ *Inform my servants that I, I am The All-Forgiving, Most Merciful and that my punishment is the painful punishment.*
- ◇ *Whoever does good will receive a better reward than that, and whoever does wrong; their faces will be toppled into the fire.*
- ◇ *...Forgiver of sin, Acceptor of repentance, Inflictor of severe punishment, Possessor of great strength, there is no deity but Him.*

The attributes of *jalaal* demand respect while the attributes of *jamaal* result in love. When the sincere worshipper is overwhelmed by the attributes of *jalaal* he displays utmost respect to Allah. Admiration of the attributes of *jamaal*, however, leads him to ecstatic love for Allah. Thus there are only two types of *ibaadah* in Islaam; those which are based on respect and those which are based on love. In fact, there are only two primary forms of *ibaadah*; *salaah* and *haj*. Every other form of *ibaadah* is secondary and a subsidiary or supplement of either *salaah* or *haj*. This applies to *zakaat* and *saum* as well; *zakaat* is a supplement of *salaah* and *saum* is a supplement of *haj*.

Salaah – A Display of Respect

Humbled by the greatness of Allah the true worshipper observes utmost respect when offering his *salaah*. Thus:

- ◇ He ensures that his body is clean and free of all types of *najaasah*; *haqeeqi*, *hukmi*, *hadath-e-akbar* and *hadath-e-asghar*. He also ensures that his clothes and the spot on which he is standing are not *najis*.
- ◇ Besides covering the private area he avoids wearing clothes which he would never wear in a courtroom, wedding ceremony or any other social function. Just as he never visits people of status wearing grease or paint-stained overalls, he does not perform *salaah* in such clothes.
- ◇ Standing straight he fastens his hands slightly below his navel, lowers his gaze (looking at the place of *sajdah* while standing, between his feet while in *rukoo* and his thighs while in *tashhud*) and he does not look around.

Further indication of humbleness and respect in salaah is found in the following:

- ◇ The postures of *rukoo*, *sajdah* and *tashahhud*.
- ◇ The statements *subhaana rabbiyal a'laa*, *subhaana rabbiyal 'adheem* and *attahiyyaat* . . . which are read in the *rukoo*, *sajdah* and *tashahhud* respectively.
- ◇ The sending of *salawaat* (durood) upon Rasulullah ﷺ after the recitation of the *attahiyyaat* at the end of the *salaah*.
- ◇ The *du'aa* that is made before making salaam at the end of the *salaah* and the *du'aa* that is made with raised hands upon completion of the *salaah*. (Bear in mind that although it is *mustahab* to raise the hands when making *du'aa* after *salaah*, *du'aa* and raising the hands are actually two separate proofs of humbleness and respect.)

Haj – An Expression of Love

Amazed at the attributes of *jamaal* the worshipper proclaimed: "O Allah, I love you!" Allah responded: "Mere lip-service is insufficient. You'll have to physically prove your love. The three most important issues in your life are your food, your drink and the fulfilment of your carnal desires. If you truly love me, sacrifice all three for me." Eager to prove his love the worshipper began fasting in the month of Ramadaan. On the twentieth day, however, Allah told him that he wasn't doing enough. "You only fast during the daytime (from dawn to sunset). During the nights you still eat, drink and fulfil your desires. Therefore leave your house; go to the *masjid* and stay there (make *i'tikaaf*) for ten days." The worshipper enthusiastically complied and as the day of *'eid* drew closer his anxiety to know whether he was going to pass the test

increased. However, the moment the crescent was sighted Allah told him that he had not yet passed. His house must have been too close to the *masjid*; maybe opposite or behind or around the corner. His sacrifice was therefore still insufficient. "Leave your town and go to Makkah" Allah commanded him. His spirit was not dampened. Instead he was overjoyed; he was going to visit the House of Allah. Thus he left his town and journeyed towards Makkah. When he reached the *meeqaat* Allah told him that to prove his love he would have to remove his normal clothes and wear two simple, unstitched pieces of cloth (one for the upper half of his body and one for the lower half). "How do you claim that you love me if you are still attached to your clothes?" When the worshipper changed his clothes for the two pieces of cloth called *ihraam*, Allah ordered him to verbally declare his love by uttering the *talbiyah*. The worshipper uttered the *talbiyah* and continued on his journey towards Makkah. When he eventually reached Makkah his heart almost exploded with joy, tears flowed from his eyes and he cried "Allah, Allah!" He made *tawaaf* of the Ka'bah even though he did not understand why he had to encircle it seven times instead of five or six. How could he question the wisdom of *tawaaf* if he claimed to love Allah? He adopted the same attitude when making the *sa'ee* between the mounts of Safaa and Marwah. To many observers his example was like that of a person who was looking for something very valuable, something which he treasured and loved. His zeal and devotion while making *tawaaf* of the Ka'bah and *sa'ee* between Safaa and Marwah were expressing his restlessness while *searching* for Allah. Due to intense love for Allah and a burning desire to meet Him it seemed as if he was looking for Allah everywhere.

At that moment Allah suddenly stopped him and said: “Do you think you’ve proven your love for me? Well you haven’t done so as yet! Makkah is a city and city-life is full of distractions. Therefore leave Makkah and go to the desert. Thus the worshipper goes to Arafah. Standing in Arafah, he cries “Allah, Allah!” However, Allah’s response is: “You haven’t proven anything! Why don’t you kill yourself for me? You’ll only pass the *test* if you kill yourself.” Even at this moment the worshipper is not deterred. Thus he proceeds to Minaa to kill himself for the sake of Allah. As he enters Minaa with the intention of fulfilling this last and final test, Allah congratulates him. “Don’t kill yourself; you have passed the test. Nevertheless, slaughter a camel, cow, goat or sheep. That is symbolic of sacrificing yourself for Allah.” This is the reality of *Haj*. Every action ought to be an expression of one’s love for Allah.

Quenching the Thirst of Love

Constant pondering over the attributes of *jamaal* gradually increases the worshipper’s love for Allah to the extent that a burning desire to meet and see Allah is kindled in his heart. Since this is not possible in the worldly life he develops a desire to visit and see anything that is attributed to Allah. The Ka’bah is attributed to Allah; it is called the *House of Allah*. Therefore one of the purposes of *Haj* is to quench the thirst of love. Shah Waliyullah writes in his *Hujjatullah-il-Baalighah* that: “Man often develops a strong yearning for Allah and needs something to fulfil this yearning. However, he will never find anything other than *Haj*.”

A Reminder of Death and Thereafter

In some aspects there is a strong resemblance between the *Haj* journey and the journey to the *Aakhirah*. Firstly, when Allah commanded prospective *hujjaaj* to take their own provisions instead of begging from the residents of Makkah and fellow *hujjaaj*, He added “*And undoubtedly the best provision is Taqwa*”. Scholars of *Tafseer* interpret this as a reminder to the would-be *hajee* that like *Haj*, death is also a journey – a journey to the *Aakhirah* – and he’s got to prepare for this journey to the *Aakhirah* with the same fervour with which he prepared himself for the *Haj* journey. *If you’ve been preparing for Haj for the last so-many months, why haven’t you started preparing for death and Aakhirah?*

It is in this light that when the *hajee* leaves his home he ought to think of the day he will leave this world never to return again. When he purchases the *ihraam* he should think of the day his *kafn* will be purchased, when he takes a bath before donning the *ihraam* he should think of how he would be given a bath after his death and having donned the *ihraam* he should continuously ponder over his situation when he will be enshrouded in the *kafn*. When he reaches the *Ka’bah* he should think of the Day he will reach Allah (the Day of *Qiyaamah*), when he stands in *Arafaat* he should imagine that he is standing in the *mahshar* (place of reckoning) and when he runs between *Safaa* and *Marwah* he should visualise himself running between the two pans of the scale of deeds.

A Symbol of Obedience

Viewed differently *Haj* is also a symbolic representation of our submission and obedience to Allah. Hence the huge sum of money spent to endure the restrictions of *ihraam*, sleep under the open sky in Muzdalifah and live in tents in Arafat and Minaa. *Tawaaf* of the Ka'bah even though we don't worship it, running between Safaa and Marwah although we're not looking for water like Haajar did and pelting the *jamaraat* whereas they are not Shaytaan but the sites where Shaytaan had appeared to Ibrahim in order to deter him from fulfilling the command of Allah all indicate to the same spirit of obedience. The continuous and tiresome movement of the *haajee* - from Makkah to Minaa, Minaa to Arafat, Arafat to Muzdalifah, Muzdalifah to Minaa, Minaa to Makkah and back to Minaa - is based on the same spirit of obedience. His fatigue and desire to rest do not matter at that moment; all that matters is the need to fulfil the command of Allah.

It is for the same reason that no matter how punctual a person may normally be with his *salaah*, in Muzdalifah he delays the Maghrib *salaah* until the time of *Ishaa* and then performs both Maghrib and *Ishaa* at the same time. As explained by Shaikh Abul Hasan Nadwi, this is because he worships Allah instead of *salaah*. Similarly he uncovers his head in *ihraam* despite his normally strict adherence to *sunnah* attire.

Drawing Allah's Mercy

Shah Waliullah writes in his *Hujjatull-il-Baalighah* that one of the most effective methods for drawing Allah's mercy is the assembly of a huge multitude of pious people at the right place

and the right time. This, he explains, is the reality of *Haj*. There can't be a more appropriate place for *du'aa* than the *Haram* regarding which Allah said in the Qur'aan: "In it are clear signs; (for example) the *Muqaam-e-Ibrahim*". Similarly there can't be a more appropriate time for *du'aa* than the days of *Haj* upon which Allah took an oath in Surah Al-Fajr and regarding which Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said: "There are no other days in which good actions are more beloved to Allah than these ten days". Shah Sahib explains further that when the *hujjaaj* assemble in the above manner and exert themselves in *du'aa* and *istighfaar* they are not deprived of Allah's mercy and forgiveness. This explains why Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said that Shaytaan is never seen more disgraced and angry than the day of Arafaat.

Earning Forgiveness

Shah Waliullah also mentions that another method of earning forgiveness from Allah is to frequently visit places which were revered by Allah's special friends. In this regard too, there can't be a better place than Makkah which was revered by the greatest of Allah's friends; Nabi Ibrahim, Nabi Isma'il and Nabi Muhammed *alaihimus-salaam*. Engaging in *ibaadah*, *tawbah* and *istighfaar* in such a blessed place must surely result in forgiveness. Thus Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said that person who performs *Haj* and abstains from sin, indecency and quarrelling with his companions and others returns home "like the day his mother gave birth to him (without a single sin)"

Show of Strength

Another benefit of *Haj* is that it is an excellent means of showing the world the strength and size of the Muslim ummah. Although Shah Waliullah raised this point approximately two hundred and fifty years ago, this was never as evident as it is today. There is probably no other religious gathering in the world that receives so much of media coverage as the Haj and it is arguably the largest in the world.

An Interesting Story

Shaikh Zaahid Al-Kawthari writes in one of his *Maqaalaat* that an elderly Mufti in Bulgaria was approached by a prominent member of his community to officiate the *nikaah* of his daughter to a former Christian who had just recently accepted Islaam. Hearing his request the Mufti asked the man whether he was really sure about this and suggested that he should reconsider his decision. The man was adamant and spoke highly of this new (or revert) Muslim. However, the more the man praised him, the more the Mufti insisted that they should not be hasty. Noticing that the man was getting annoyed the Mufti then explained: I was born in a Bulgarian Christian home. My parents passed away in my infancy. I was therefore adopted by a Muslim who treated me very kindly and gave me a sound Islamic training and education. He then sent me to Aastaanah (the former name of Istanbul which was a centre of Islamic learning in the Ottoman empire.) to pursue further studies. I gained knowledge from the senior '*Ulamaa* there and upon graduation I was appointed as the Mufti of this town; the post which I hold till today. Practically my whole life from then till now has been dedicated to the service of *deen*. Despite all of

this, the thought would very often pass my mind that ‘*maybe my previous religion is actually true, maybe I’m wrong in choosing Islaam because I’m obliged to my adoptive father*’. Whenever such thoughts passed my mind I immediately made *istighfaar* and asked Allah for steadfastness. These evil thoughts never stopped until I performed Haj. When I saw the *Ka’bah* and the other holy sites and I visited the blessed grave of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* they finally left me. If this was my condition and I was a *Mufti* for so many years, do you think that a man who accepted Islaam just yesterday ‘*will be able to endure the same jihaad*’? ... In short, if performed correctly, Haj and the visit to the blessed grave of Rasulullah *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* are a means of boosting one’s *Imaan*.*

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