

Islam
Hajj: Symbol of Universal Brotherhood and Peace
By Javed Jamil

Islam, literally meaning peace and defined as total submission to One God, stands on five pillars. Faith and prayer are primarily meant to ensure physical, mental, social and spiritual peace of individuals. Fasting and *Zakah* are aimed, in addition, at social and national peace. With Hajj, the system of peace assumes *global* dimensions. The annual pilgrimage to Makkah, the birth city of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be with him) and the seat of Ka'bah, the first place of the worship of God on earth, is a reminder to the world that Islam's mission of peace has global aims. And it is a reminder to Muslims that they *must* earnestly endeavour in that direction. It disseminates the message of *universal brotherhood* and *equality* irrespective of race, colour and creed not only among Muslims but also among the rest of mankind. Pilgrimages are popular in many religious communities, but the pilgrimage of Islam has a very special significance.

(1) It is associated with the first place of worship on earth, which serves as a *symbol of monotheism*, giving this a special historical and evolutionary significance. The symbolisation is of paramount importance. This being the greatest symbol of the *unity of God* also becomes the greatest symbol of the *unity of mankind*. It is reminded that since the beginning of human history man has been told to worship only one God. If certain sections of the human race have chosen to dilute monotheism, in one way or the other, it is their own error of judgement. The unity of mankind cannot be a practical reality unless the whole of mankind submits to one system. Only a system of God can be the rallying point for them. The historical significance of the place linking it to Adam, the forefather of all human beings and Abraham, the Patriarch of all Semitic religions including Judaism, Christianity and Islam is indisputable. This refreshes in the minds of Muslims their relationship to the *whole* mankind and their *very special* relationship to Jews and Christians. Thus Muslims extend an olive branch to the whole mankind especially to Jews and Christians conveying to them that they have common historical, spiritual and biological roots.

(2) It is a comprehensive, highly systematic and perfectly co-ordinated exercise having spiritual collective, socio economic and global dimensions. Pilgrims understand that this is a lifetime opportunity to seek God's forgiveness for their sins, enhance their proximity to their Guardian and mend their ways. They sacrifice their time, their money, their emotional attachment to their near and dear ones and their physical comforts for the pleasure of God. Their total involvement in spiritually elevating rituals for several weeks goes a long way to make them better human beings; a person who has performed Hajj has an increased credibility in the eyes of the people.

(3) People from all over the world gather at Makkah not only to pay obeisance to the Lord but also to listen to the sermon of the Imam of Kaaba, who has an unparalleled opportunity to bring home Islam's message of universal brotherhood, equality, justice, peace, to call for unity against the forces of evil, destabilisation, oppression and exploitation and to emphasise the role of God's system in world affairs. All pilgrims adorn the same cloth, join prayers together without any discrimination and invoke God collectively. This provides a *unique spectacle of equality and brotherhood* and determination to fight against evils.

(4) Visits to various places of historical importance at Makkah and Medina rekindle revolutionary fervour in hearts, minds and souls of pilgrims. They recollect the huge sufferings of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be with him) and his followers in the face of the severest kind of persecution and hostility, their unflinching faith in

God, their unshakeable determination and their ultimate triumph. When they return home, normally they are much transformed persons; most of them if not all demonstrate visible changes in their attitude towards themselves and the people around themselves. They are less likely to reach the same level of vices they had touched before they had embarked upon the pilgrimage. Many of them lead a truly pious life throughout the rest of their lives.

It is unfortunate that the Khutba delivered to the mankind through the people gathered at Arafat is merely calls for purification of individuals and is usually silent on the current state of the social, economic, political and moral state of world affairs. I know there can be differences of opinion regarding political issues and the Khutba delivered at Makkah cannot be expected to say anything that differs with the policies of Saudi government, still there are issues that can be raised without inviting the ire of the authorities. The Khutba must include the following:

1. A call to mankind to unite for establishing peace. It must be told that peace is not mere absence of conflicts but comprises peace at the individual, family, social, national and international levels in this world and peace in the Hereafter;

2. Protest against the glorification and commercialisation of evils like alcohol, gambling, promiscuity, prostitution, pornography, smoking and drugs and call to declare them as "Fundamental Prohibitions" for the whole world;

3. Show of concern towards the rise in crimes all over the world particularly murders and rapes;

4. Show of concern on the disintegration of family system;

5. Special attention to the killing of human foetuses in the name of freedom of choice;

6. Show of extraordinary concern towards the increasing economic disparity and the plight of the poor especially in African, South American and Asian countries; and the need to revise the whole economic model;

7. Protest against the killing of the innocent whether by terrorists or in the name of "fight against terrorism".

8. Last but not the least, it should bring home the Islamic philosophy of the unity of mankind. It should also stress the need of all the religions and like minded groups in the efforts to unite for common aims.

A committee can alternatively be formed which can discuss in advance the contents of a written Khutba.

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