

Write a comprehensive note on Hajj (the pilgrimage) and its spiritual, moral, and social impacts.

Introduction

The Hajj is an annual pilgrimage to Makkah and a mandatory religious duty for Muslims that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by all adult Muslims who are physically and financially capable of undertaking the journey, and can support their family during their absence. The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people, and their submission to God.

وَأَتُوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ

"And carry out the pilgrimage and the visit (to Kaaba) for the sake of God."

(Surah Al-Baqarah:196)

Meaning and concepts:

Literally, in Arabic, Hajj means 'an effort'. Contextually this term is translated as Pilgrimage.

It is obligatory on every (Muslim) adult, man or woman, to go once in his or her life time to Mecca in order to perform there the great effort for assimilating one's self with the will of God.

Concept and key aspects of Hajj.

1- Historical Background:

Hajj traces its origins to the Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) and his son Ishmael (Ismail). According to Islamic tradition, Allah commanded Abraham to leave his wife Hagar and son Ishmael in the desert, where Mecca now stands. God then instructed Abraham to build the Kaaba, the cubic structure at the center of the Grand Mosque (Masjid-al-Haram) in Mecca.

"God has made Ka'bah a foothold for mankind to stand upon."

(AL-QURAN)

2- Significance:

Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people and their submission to Allah. The pilgrimage is intended to be a spiritually and physically challenging experience, emphasizing humility and devotion.

3- Ceremonies:

There are certain ceremonies in Hajj. For example Ihram (a particular dress worn by 'Hajjis' on the occasion of Hajj),

Tawaf (going round the Holy House of Ka'aba), Hajar Aswad (Kissing of the black stone or Hajar Aswad).

Safa and Marwa (running between the hills of Safa and Marwa), Zamzam (sacred well - the water from which the pilgrims drink and bring with them), Arafat (Hill of Mercy, where main ceremony of Hajj is performed).

Sacrifice (Qurbanii) - at a place known as Mina commemoration of sacrifice of his son Hazrat Ismail by Hazrat Ibrahim.

Soon after putting on Ihram the words that the haji recites in a loud voice after every Salah at the time of ascending every height and descending therefrom, and while meeting every caravan and every morning on rising from bed, are as follows:

لَيْتَكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَيْتَكَ
لَيْتَكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ لَيْتَكَ
إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ
وَالْبِقَّةَ لَكَ وَالْمَلِكَ
لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

"Here I am present. my Allah! I am present. I am present. There is no partner unto Thee. I am present. Verily all Praise is due to Thee. Every boon is Thine and Thine is the entire Sovereignty. No one is Thine partner."

This is, in fact, an answer to that general proclamation which Hazrat Ibrahim had made four thousand five hundred years ago as commanded by Allah:

"O slaves of Allah! Come to the House of Allah. Come from every corner of the earth. either on foot or by transport."

Importance of Hajj in the light of Quran and sunnah:

Importance of Hajj in Quran:

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِلنَّاسِ

"Allah has made the Kaaba, the sacred house, the center for permanent stability of mankind."

Importance of Hajj in Hadith:

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said:

"When a man dies and he has not performed the pilgrimage, let him die, God willing, as a Jew or, God willing, as a Christian."

Impacts of Hajj

Hajj has many positive effects on the character of the individual pilgrim and on Muslim society as a whole.

In the Holy Quran where Allah Almighty has commanded Abraham to make a general proclamation of Hajj, the first reason given for this commandment is:

"That they may witness advantages for them and mention the name of Allah during stated days over what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds, then eat of them and feed the distressed one, the needy."
AL-Quran

Spiritual Impacts

The Hajj is a complete worship and signifies total submission before Allah. It is an effective ritual to get closer to God.

Hajj is a worship that strengthens one's belief and protect him from dis belief as the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"When a man dies and he has not performed the pilgrimage, let him die, God willing, as a Jew or, God willing, as a Christian."

Every Muslim who performs the hajj correctly and understands its meaning of its rituals returns greatly changed for the better in terms of his/her understanding and conduct and in interaction with other members of the society.

Moral Impacts:

1. Pilgrimage and commitment to a superior morality:

The Quranic explanation of this issue is decisive. God says: The "pilgrimage is (in) the well known months, and whoever is minded to perform the pilgrimage therein (let him remember that) there is (to be) no lewdness nor abuse nor angry conversation on the pilgrimage."

(Surah Al-Baqarah 2:197).

2. Pilgrimage Teaches self-sacrifice in the line of duty:

The pilgrimage combines both the physical difficulties of performing a religious obligation with the expenditure of money to that end. This serves to combat man's love of money and his inclination to seek comfort.

If he triumphs over this, makes up his mind to perform the hajj, formulates his intent, enters a state of ritual

consecration (ihram) and performs the pilgrimage rites, he has protected himself from avarice.

"And whose is saved from his own avarice such are they who are successful."

AL-Quran

3. Pilgrimage reconciles conflict between worship and work:

The pilgrimage (Hajj) combines worship and the blessings of this world in their various forms because the verse is of general import and absolute in meaning, rather than limited and restricted: "That they may witness things that are of benefit to them"

AL-Quran

Social Impacts:

1. Equality and effective organisation:

The pilgrims assemble at designated starting places (miqat) and then enter the state of ritual consecration (ihram). The Muslim also feels a sense of equality: when he sees everyone dressed in two white cloths representing the state of (ihram), he realizes the truth of the fact that we all descend from Adam and that Adam was created from the dust of the earth.

2- **Greatest Movement for Establishment of peace:** Islam has given to the world such an inviolable territory that it constitutes a city of peace till Doomsday in which even the hunting and shooting of an animal is strictly prohibited, where even the cutting of grass is not allowed, where not even a thorn can be culled nor can a fallen article be touched, let alone killing a human.

3- **Centre of Real Equality:**

The Position of the whole Area of Haram is almost similar to that of a mosque in that whosoever lodges himself in any part of a mosque that portion belongs to him. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whosoever first comes to this city and settles at a place, that place is his." It's not legal to charge rent for these houses.

Conclusion: From the above discussion it became clear that it is clearly evident that Hajj strengthens the faith in Islam as per injunction of Quran and Sunnah. Therefore, Hajj serves as a greater basis of equality in Islam and it strengthen the unity in Islam.