

## **Pilgrimage Culture between its basics and its Application**

**Pilgrimage is an obligatory worship ordained by the Exalted Allah to be performed once in the believer's life. Because of its comprehensiveness, symbolism and its culture, it combines all the Ummah needs for its social, scientific, economic, and ethical building. When the believer cannot afford to go there (the local center of the pilgrimage worship), he is required to be acquainted with the minimum degree of pilgrimage culture. Moreover, the one who is unable to go there by his body is required to be present with the pilgrimage culture in his behavior, in his activity, and in the way of his thinking.**

**In the Holy Qur'an, there is a Surah called Al Haj (pilgrimage) . In some of the verses of this Surah, the Exalted Allah draws our attention to the great principles and wide lines of the pilgrimage culture. He said:**

- As to who have rejected {Allah}, and would keep back {men} from the way of Allah, and From the Sacred Mosque, which We have made {open} to {all} men Equal is the dweller there and the visitor from the country and any whose purpose therein Is profanity or wrong doing them will we cause to taste of a most grievous penalty.**
- Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the {sacred} house, {saying}: associate not anything {in worship} with me; and sanctify my House for those who compass it round, or stand up, or bow, or prostrate themselves {therein in prayer}.**
- And proclaim the pilgrimage among men; they will come to thee on foot and {mounted} On every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways.**
- That they may witness the benefits {provided} for them, and celebrate the name Of Allah, through the Days Appointed, over the cattle which he has provided for them {for sacrifice}; then eat ye Thereof and feed the distressed Ones in want.**
- Then let them complete The rites prescribed For them, perform their vows, And {again} let the be circumambulated around the Ancient House (Al Haj, 25-29).**

If the Muslim who goes by body to the Ancient House, or the one who reads the Qur'an and is unable to be bodily there, is acquainted with the pilgrimage culture, he will realize the reality of the Muslims that reflects their understanding of, or their remoteness from this culture. Consequently, the pilgrim who understands the purpose of pilgrimage lives the meaning of pilgrimage culture in body and soul. He will be living the pilgrimage culture, in soul, heart and mind for this culture wherever he is.

Thus, when we become acquainted with the fundamentals and the great wide outlines referred to by the Holy Qur'an concerning the pilgrimage culture, then we consider the reality of pilgrimage at the present time, and move on to the general reality of the Muslims, we can realize whether we really live the pilgrimage culture, or we understand pilgrimage to be mere practices and movements.

Let me talk today about some major wide lines that I summarize in the following ten outlines:

1-The Exalted Allah makes the sanctuary a great training space to be a sample of Islam, security and peace. In it, He, Exalted Allah, prohibited oppression. He rather prohibited in it the intention of oppression. He said: "any whose purpose therein Is profanity or wrong doing them". Even intention of oppression mentioned in this context is prohibited and prevented. The Exalted Allah does not consider man responsible for intention and will but in this space, because the one who enters this space, whether in body or in soul, lives the real example of the true Islamic life. In this verse, disbelief means getting astray from the straightway. So when one gets astray from the principles of Islam by being an oppressor, he will be punished: "will we cause to taste of a most grievous penalty." Moreover, animals have the favor of getting a great deal of peace and security in this space when hunting becomes forbidden in this space that is wide enough to contain a great number of people, a space that is about 10 or 13 km. far from the center of Mecca. It is a circle whose diameter is about 30 km. .

After the Exalted Allah prepares this universal human oasis in which there are peace and security, and after paving the way for peace, security and mercy, and refusal of aggression, the second issue is presented in the second outline that is:

Ethnic and regional equality in all rights is presented in this oasis. According to the Heavenly Law, the Arabic is equal in rights to the non-Arabic, so is the case with those who live in the North and those who live in the South, and those who have white complexion and those who have black complexion, and all people wherever they live all over the world. In this oasis, all people are equal in rights without any distinction. The Exalted Allah said:

As to who have rejected {Allah}, and would keep back {men} from the way of Allah, and From the Sacred Mosque, which We have made {open} to {all} men Equal is the dweller there and the visitor from the country.

Omar Bin Khattab (ABPWH) used to order the inhabitants of Mecca at the time of pilgrimage to pull out the doors of their houses so that pilgrims would be able to stay in whichever house they liked without any objection from anybody. Pavilions were set up in the houses of Mecca at the time of Omar Bin Khattab at pilgrimage time.

Consequently, the pilgrims could stay in their tents in Mecca during the period of pilgrimage without any obstacles.

After finding that there was disagreement among the three Imams (ABPWTH) concerning the possession of houses in Mecca, and after long diligent study, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (the last of the four assiduous Imams) decided the following juristic rule: (One can possess a house, and bequeath it to his heirs, but he cannot rent it) the houses in Mecca should not be rented whatsoever.

This was the decision Imam Ahmad issued after long study of the three doctrines of the religious scholars' statements, because he understood that in this space of Mecca, there was equality among all people, and that there should not be any exploitation or extortion whatsoever.

3-Inwardly, there should be turning to the Exalted Allah only, i.e., the aim should be satisfaction of the Exalted Allah only, and that obedience and submission in behavior should be to Him alone. The Exalted Allah said:

Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the {sacred} house, {saying}: associate not anything {in worship} with me; and sanctify my House for those who compass it round, or stand up, or bow, or prostrate themselves {therein in prayer}.

**4-Proselytizing should be directed to all people. Its title should be: "And proclaim the pilgrimage among men". The purpose of this culture should be a universal call that says: 'Oh, lost perplexed humanity, unite the Qublah by turning to the Exalted Allah alone, and by obeying Him only.**

**It is a call that should be directed to all the world. It says: 'Turn to Allah alone, instead of turning to whims and self-interests. Make your obedience, submission and your behavioral activities application of whatever He, Exalted He is, orders.**

**5-Be certain of the adoption of Islam by all people all over the world in the future, because after the Exalted Allah said: "And proclaim the pilgrimage among men", He said: "they will come to thee". He did not say: 'They will not respond'. He rather said: "they will come to thee on foot and {mounted} On every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways". The denotative meaning of this verse is that people will come to Mecca either walking or riding. But the connotative and symbolic meaning is that people will be interested in Islam and embrace it either slowly or hastily.**

**6-Material benefit is joined with abstract benefit in the pilgrimage culture in particular, and in the Islamic culture in general. When the Exalted Allah said: "That they may witness the benefits {provided} for them", He opens the door for economic exchange in which the pilgrim will not be only an exporter, but there will be universal economic exchange in which people exchange their arms and goods. They can buy and sell in addition to their enjoying abstract benefit. This can be achieved when this space becomes free and open for all kinds and sorts of exchange on the educational, abstract, cultural, cognitive, economic and social levels in knowledge and action, and when there is an opportunity for serious debate that produces benefit for all the Muslims.**

**7-Participation in nourishment in the name of Allah. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) praised Al Ash'ariyyin because when their nourishment ran out, they used to gather whatever food they had, and they all participated in consuming it. Consequently, concerning**

provision, the culture of selfishness as well as individuality became missing among them.

The Exalted Allah said: "and celebrate the name Of Allah, through the Days Appointed, over the cattle which he has provided for them {for sacrifice}". It is a common provision that they all share in the name of Allah. Consequently, the name of the Exalted Allah unites them in provision when they slaughter immolations and sacrifices, and when food becomes common.

Thus, the Qur'anic text makes common this idea saying: "then eat ye Thereof", i.e., all that are present in the pilgrimage area. "and feed the distressed Ones in want", i.e., so that this disciplined gathering (that is supposed to be disciplined) becomes an opportunity for feeding the hungry and needy people all over the world. Modern technology makes it possible to make immolation and sacrifices an opportunity for feeding the hungry people all over the world, for preserving superabundant food of the pilgrims can supply the needs of starvation and remove misery in many poor countries in the world.

8-The culture of clean civilization referred to by the Exalted Allah:

"Then let them complete Tafathahum (the dirty rites) prescribed For them". The Arabs used to say the word " Ma Atfathaka, i.e., 'How dirty you are!'

The original meaning of Tafath in Arabic is 'dirt'. The pilgrim might not care about his washing himself during certain days in the period of pilgrimage, but after finishing the ritualistic practices, he moves to a stage that represents the culture of Islam (i.e., cleanliness). The Prophet (PHUH): "Allah is clean, and He loves cleanliness".

"Then let them complete Tafathahum (the dirty rites) prescribed For them", so that they carry the culture of cleanliness with them to their cities and societies wherever they go. It is shameful to find the non-Islamic societies care about cleanliness more than the Islamic ones, a fact that contradicts the culture of pilgrimage.

9-Cleanliness of moral obligations.

After talking about the outward cleanliness in body and form, the Exalted Allah said: "perform their vows", so that the pilgrim returns to his country morally clean, and his conscience becomes void of any dirt, after he owes nobody any obligation.

10- Supplying oneself with the Ibrahimian meanings, frequently and repeatedly, because the Exalted Allah relates the House and the place of the House to Ibrahim. He said: "We gave the site, to Abraham, of the {sacred} house", i.e., we made Ibrahim stay in the area of the House. Consequently, this Holy Place becomes ascribed to Ibrahim. When the Exalted Allah said: "let them be circumambulated around The Ancient House", He wants the Muslim to supply himself with the meanings of the House. The Exalted Allah said: 'be circumambulated', and not 'circumambulate' to make the Muslim enter into the secret and meanings of the House, that is the site Ibrahim:

And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain Commands, which he fulfilled: he said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations." He pleaded: "And also {Imams} from my offspring!" He answered: "But my promise is not within the reach of evildoers" (Al Baqarah, 124).

We have to supply ourselves with these meanings because the Exalted Allah said:

Say: Allah speaketh the truth: follow the religion of Abraham, the sane in Faith; he was not of the pagans (Al Imran, 95).

After being acquainted with the above mentioned ten outlines, the Muslim, the educated, the meditating, and the mindful may ask himself the following question:

What is the status of the pilgrim in this education...?!

How far are those who claim to serve the pilgrims from this culture?!

How far is our Islamic world from this culture?

We are living great discrepancy. We are unaware that what remains from the real meaning of pilgrimage is nothing but stones, forms and images, except for very few people of good understanding. The reality of the Muslims represents the reality of the Ummah, and the reality of the Islamic Ummah is reflected in pilgrimage.

Political persecution, social dispersal, economic chaos, individualism and selfishness that we find nowadays in the reality of the Muslims, are all present in the reality of pilgrimage, and whatever we find in the reality of pilgrimage is found in the reality of the Muslims.

Oh the Ummah of Islam..., the days of pilgrimage we are living in

today make it incumbent on us to reconsider our behavior, our understanding, and the relationship of our hearts with Allah, because if our reality does not make the hearts cry, that are harder than stone, it rather makes the stones themselves cry.

Allahum..., guide us to You favorably, and make us from those who listen to wisdom and follow the best of it.

I say my words and ask Allah's forgiveness.

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- And proclaim the pilgrimage among men; they will come to thee on foot and {mounted} On every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways.

- That they may witness the benefits {provided} for them, and celebrate the name Of Allah, through the Days Appointed, over the cattle which he has provided for them {for sacrifice}; then eat ye Thereof and feed the distressed Ones in want.

- Then let them complete The rites prescribed For them, perform their vows, And {again} let the be circumambulated around the Ancient House (Al Haj, 25-29).

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