

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Today, by Allah's Grace, Eidul Adha is being celebrated in Saudi Arabia, almost all countries of the Middle East and Europe and the States as well. Most countries around the world just follow the decision of the Saudis in this matter. Even the third caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat once said in a sermon that he was also inclined to do the same. Unfortunately, here in Mauritius, Muslims are not ready to abandon entrenched practices and they stick to their traditional ways. In my humble opinion, we should have followed Saudi Arabia on this matter without any hesitation. Unfortunately, we are not the ones to decide these matters. Anyhow *incha* Allah we will read *Namaz Eid* tomorrow here in *Baitul Rahma* at 9:30 AM. We expect all brothers and sisters to be here on time.

As you might well be aware the Hajj ceremonies started on Wednesday 30th August and will continue till Sunday 4rd September. The day of Arafat was yesterday when around 2 million pilgrims assembled at Arafat for prayers from noon to dusk. From there they proceeded to *Muzdalifa* where they picked up stones to throw at the *Jamaraat* in the following three days. Then they will complete the farewell circumambulation of Mecca and their Hajj will end and about 50% among them will then proceed to visit Medina, the town of the Prophet (saw).

Hajj is a pillar of Islam as you are all aware. Any Muslim who has means should try to go there for the performance of these rituals at least once in their lifetime. The relevant verses of the Holy Quran concerning Hajj are as follows:

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَةٌ ۖ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ
 فِيهَا الْحَجَّ فَلَارْفَتْ وَلَا فُسُوقٌ وَلَا
 جِدَالٌ فِي الْحَجِّ ۖ وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
 يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ ۖ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ
 التَّقْوَىٰ ۗ وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٨﴾

“The months of the **Hajj** are well known; so, whoever determines to perform the Pilgrimage in these months, *should remember that there is to be no foul talk, nor any transgression, nor any quarrelling during the Pilgrimage. And whatever good you do, Allah knows it. And furnish yourselves with necessary provisions, and surely, the best provision is righteousness. And fear Me alone, O men of understanding.*” (2:198)

There are a few other verses as well but we are going to leave them for the time being. However, remember this well that Allah says here that *Taqwa* is the best provision that any pilgrim can carry with him or her as he or she proceeds for Hajj. So, people who understand life’s purpose should do their best to develop that fear and love of Allah in themselves whether they are participating in Hajj or not. *Taqwa* is a characteristic that defines the true Muslim who believes in Allah and who tries to follow the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw). May Allah help each one amongst us to maintain a high degree of *Taqwa* in all circumstances of life.

As I have just said Hajj is a pillar of Islam and there exists no other gathering that can equal it. It is unique. Its rites were established in the last year of the life of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) when he accomplished hajj for the first time in 632 AD although he had performed Umra a few times

previously. It is recorded that about 100,000 Muslims from all over Arabia joined the Holy Prophet in this farewell Hajj. Of course, in those days no statistics as we know them today were kept but that is what historians have written.

In our time, a record number of people are going for Hajj. To date, 2013 holds the record with 3 million Hajjis. Since then the Saudis have brought it down due to construction works that were going on in the Grand Mosque. Local Saudis are given permission to attend hajj every 5 years where as the quota for foreign countries is 1000 pilgrims for 100,000 Muslims.

To manage so many people there is an elaborate setup that has been put in place and they have not stopped improving it. To begin with, they can now accommodate 2 million people praying in the grand mosque of Mecca at once. They distribute more than 20 million liters of *Zamzam* water during the Hajj days. 18000 Civil defense and emergency personnel are visible throughout the pilgrimage sites. Their job is to direct the flow of pilgrims, assure their safety, and assist those who are lost or in need of medical assistance. Pilgrims come from around the world (188 countries), of all ages, with varying levels of education, material resources, and health needs. Saudi officials interact with pilgrims who speak dozens of different languages. Pilgrim health needs are met by 25 hospitals and 155 medical centers at the holy sites, in addition to 100 small ambulances working as mobile intensive-care units, which are capable of reaching crowded areas to attend to the injured. Emergency patients are immediately cared for and transported, if needed, by ambulance to one of the several nearby hospitals. In addition, 286 special rooms are available to receive cases of heat stress and sunstroke, while medial teams carry out free-of-charge operations including open heart procedures, cardiac catheterization, dialysis and other medical services. The

Ministry of Health stores 16,000 units of blood to treat patients. The high-tech command center for Hajj security monitors 5000 security cameras throughout the holy sites, including 1,200 at the Grand Mosque itself.

The cloth on the Kaaba is changed once every year. It is embroidered in silk, along with 120 kilograms of silver and gold thread, are used to make the black covering of the *Ka'aba*, called the *Kiswa*. The *Kiswa* is hand-made in a Makkah factory by 240 workers, at a cost of 22 million SAR (USD \$5.87 million) each year. The retired *Kiswa* is cut into pieces to be given as gifts to guests, dignitaries, and museums.

According to official statements, more than 400,000 people have been denied entrance for lacking Hajj permits. In addition, a total of 208,236 cars driven by those without the correct permits were turned away, while another 3,296 vehicles were seized at the entrances to Makkah. Transport facilities included 19,500 buses transporting pilgrims from Madinah to Makkah while another 38,000 buses transported pilgrims from other areas. Pilgrims will later be transported to Mina by 9,000 buses. With such figures, one can easily understand the traffic jam that follows. Furthermore, on a lighter note, 1,841 pilgrims are facing penal action and they were handed to the Public Prosecution or other concerned agencies to take necessary procedures against them.

At the end of Hajj, pilgrims celebrate *Eid Al-Adha* (the Feast of Sacrifice). Sheep, goats, and even cows and camels are slaughtered, and the meat distributed to the poor. To reduce wastage, the Islamic Development Bank organizes the slaughter for Hajj pilgrims, and packages the meat for distribution to poor Islamic nations around the world.

Mina, located 12 kilometers outside Makkah, is known as the Hajj tent city. The tents house pilgrims for a few days of the pilgrimage; at other times of the year they lay bare and abandoned. They are neatly arranged in rows and grouped into areas labeled with numbers and colors according to nationality. Pilgrims each have badges with their assigned number and color to help find the way back if they get lost. To resist fire, the tents are constructed of fiberglass coated with Teflon, and are fitted with sprinklers and fire extinguishers. The tents are air-conditioned and carpeted, with a hall of 12 bathroom stalls for every 100 pilgrims. With such figures, one can easily understand the traffic jam that follows.

I have tried to give our members who are forbidden to go for Hajj a glimpse of the elaborate preparation for this great event that takes place every year. Now if you take some time and watch the events on YouTube you will learn more and you will enjoy the atmosphere that prevails over there.

From the *hadith*, we learn that the Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said: "Whoever performs the Hajj for the pleasure of Allah, and utters no evil words and commits no evil deeds during it, shall return from it as free from sin as the day on which his mother gave birth to him." Similarly, he said "When you meet a *hajji* (on his way home) then greet him, shake hands with him and ask him to beg forgiveness of Allah on your behalf before he enters his home. His prayer for forgiveness is accepted, as he is forgiven by Allah for his sins."

I will end the *Jumma* sermon here. We will talk more *incha* Allah when we meet tomorrow morning. Do not forget the Takbirs that should be recited after each *Farz* Prayer which should have started after Fajr Prayer on Thursday and which will go up to *Asr* on Monday 4th September. May Allah grant us the opportunity to sing His Praise to His satisfaction *Incha* Allah.