

What is Hajj?

The literal meaning of "Hajj" is to intend or plan for and according to Shar'ee terminology it means to halt at 'Arafaat (the vast expanse near Makkah where major Hajj rite is performed on 9th Zilhij after having adopted "Ehraam"(unstitched cloths) and to perform circumambulation of "Ka'bah" (the House of Allah). Performance of some rites, ceremonies and worships at various sacred sites in Makkah also come under Hajj. A particular time is fixed for the observance and performance of these rites and worships. If done on time, the Hajj is valid otherwise not.

When was Hajj made compulsory and how many times it is due in whole life?

A. Hajj was declared compulsory in 9 A.H. It is an absolutely mandatory obligation. Whoever denies its obligatory nature is out of Islamic fold. Hajj is compulsory only once in a lifetime.

What is the significance of Hajj in Islaam?

The importance and significance of Hajj (the holy pilgrimage) can be gauged from the facts that: 1. It is the fifth pillar of Islaam. 2. It erases the past sins of the pilgrim. 3. It is a "Jehaad" (holy crusade, supreme effort) of the weak and women. 4. It removes poverty as the blacksmith's furnace separates dross from iron. 5. The reward of Hajj (accepted by Allah Almighty) is nothing but paradise. 6. Allah Almighty forgives "Haaji" (the pilgrim) and those too for whom he prays. 7. Haaji will intercede for four hundred of his family members on the Day of Judgement. 8. "Haajis" (the pilgrims) are delegates, guests of Allah. Allah summoned them and they presented themselves to His service. They supplicated Him and He granted them. 9. There is peace for Haaji in this world and absolute in the hereafter. 10. The one who leaves his home for Hajj and dies in the way will keep gaining the reward of every year's Hajj till the Doomsday. He will not be made to account for his doings on the Judgement Day and will be entered into heavens without reckoning. 11. Haaji (whether he performs Hajj or 'Umrah [lesser Hajj]) is in the security of Allah. If he dies in the process, he will be entered into paradise and if returns home after completion of Hajj or 'Umrah as the case may be then he will carry with him forgiveness and divine favours. In addition to these above-mentioned significances and excellences, the Hajj: 12. is the best means to strengthen religious communication and coordination among the Muslims of the whole world hailing from different countries with their separate nationality, race, language and colour and to collect them on a single platform thereby making them rally round the banner of "Kalimah Tauheed" (the Code of Oneness of Allah) which is the pivot of Islaam. 13. The simple unstitched white clothing which Prophet Adam wore, is proposed for Haajis so that the Muslims who all believe in One Allah, one Messenger, one Book and one Ka'bah look alike sans any social ranking and status thereby to demonstrate outward religious harmony and cohesion too. 14. It envisages projection of the glory and truthfulness of Islaam besides earning believers the benefits and gains of the air, land and sea travels. 15. It also embraces the aims and objectives which kings and rulers achieve by holding grand courts, an association or organisation achieve by holding annual meetings and chamber of commerce achieve by holding international fairs. 16. Hajj also satisfies the inquisition of anthropologists, archeologists, geologists, historians and geographers. 17. Most of Hajj's sites are either prominent symbols of Allah or have attachment with the Messengers and Prophets which refresh the memory of the sacred traditions and remind of the events of Divine blessings and mercy attached with these signs. In short, the Divine Law which the Holy Prophet brought with him is so comprehensive and practical that it covers all temporal and spiritual affairs. Its each and every word abounds with wisdom and

reasons which is evident from the fact that the worldly and spiritual benefits and objectives of Islamic commands and worships are before the whole world and will continue coming to the fore until the Doomsday. There is in a Hadees (Prophetic saying) that the one who performs Hajj for the sake of Allah avoiding carnal desires and sins, becomes as free from sins as on the day when his mother gave birth to him. Briefly, the Haaji embarks on a new phase of his life which carries temporal as well as spiritual gains and successes. So Hajj is not only a pillar of Islamic faith but it also influences every aspect and sector of moral, social, economic, political and national life of the Muslims besides being a towering symbol of the position they enjoy in the comity of nations.

What are the moral benefits of Hajj?

The Muslims who gather round the "Baitul Laah" (the House of Allah) reaching there from the four corners of the earth facing and braving the toils of journey and vagaries of the seasons meet with and become aware of one another's condition and problems. This grand assembly not only infuses in them a spirit of joint cooperation and unity but also characterises them as the members of one nation, one race and one family. The Haaji is required to be the quintessence of virtue, peace, self-control and self-sacrifice during the Hajj days. He must eschew quarrelling with and troubling others and even killing a louse (if it happens to find its way on one's person or Ehraam) and ant. Even games of the land are unlawful for him. The Holy Qur-aan says: "Falaafafasa walaa Fusooqa walaa jidalaaf Fil-Hajj" (there should be no expression of carnal desires before women nor any sin nor quarrelling with anyone during Hajj days). How explicit and clear-cut this command is that there should be no expression of carnal desires directly or metaphorically. In the state of "Ehraam" lawful hobbies like games of the land are forbidden let alone sins and disobedience. Argument, altercation and scuffle that generally take place on such occasions are also forbidden even rebuking one's own servant. This standard of inward and outward purification set by Islaam for worship is so lofty that it has not only impressed and won over the hearts of the believers but also the disbelievers.