



Abrahamic Hajj and the Material and Spiritual Heritage of the Islamic Civilization

By: Special Correspondent

Hajj is one of the major acts of divine worship, the commandment for the observation of which was conveyed to believers through Prophet Ibrahim (AS).

The Holy Qur'an says: "And (told Ibrahim to) proclaim the Hajj to all the people: they will come to you on foot and on lean camels, coming from distant places" (Su-

rah Al-Hajj, Verse 27). Hajj is one of God's eternal treasures, the center of Islamic teachings, and an exceptional duty comprising a set of Islamic values that cannot

be found in any other religious obligations. A civilizational approach to Hajj can project a new face and manifestation of it in the eyes of Muslims and increase its role and influence on the Islamic Ummah.

Various definitions have been given for “civilization”. Some people consider civilization to be the outcome of the set of achievements of a nation resulting in growth, development, and prosperity, and is crystallized in various fields of individual and social life and in global interactions. On the other hand, some other people have defined civilization as a set of material and spiritual achievements of humans in a certain region, country, or era, or an advanced and organized intellectual and cultural state that results in progress and the emergence of social and political institutions in society.

What can be perceived from these definitions is that civilization consists of two types of elements. In other words, when we talk of civilization we can either speak of its material achievements or discuss its spiritual achievement. This is also applicable to Islamic civilization. Among Islamic teachings, Hajj has had an undeniable role in this regard. Thus, the role of Hajj in Islamic civilization can be examined in two areas:

1. Hajj and the material heritage of Islamic civilization

The material heritage of Hajj for Islamic civilization can be seen in different areas and we are going to throw light on two of the most important ones.

A- Sacred and holy places relat-

ed to Hajj. A glance at the sacred places related to Hajj and the land of divine revelation can give a good perspective of Islamic civilization. Despite the extensive acts of destructions that have taken place in both Mecca and Medina, there are still certain buildings and places where one can see the color of Islamic civilization in the structure of these place and this is in spite of the fact that efforts have been made to use such Islamic arts as calligraphy, etc.

B- The fields of knowledge related to the land of Revelation and the growth and spread of some sciences in the Islamic world have a close connection with Masjid al-Haram and the Land of Revelation. The knowledge of architecture and arts such as calligraphy is related to the construction of Masjid al-Haram and other mosques and holy places in Mecca and Medina. The science of geography has greatly contributed to catering to the needs of Hajj pilgrims to know the geographical loca-

tion of the Land of Revelation and its natural atmosphere. We also know that the Ka’ba is the Qibla of Muslims. The need for identifying the direction of Qibla from different places has led Muslims to the development and expansion of the science of astronomy.

2. Hajj and the spiritual heritage of Islamic civilization

Hajj is a great act of worship and, therefore, its spiritual aspect and its spiritual effects on individuals and Islamic society are very extensive. The role and influence of Hajj in the spiritual heritage of Islamic civilization can be listed as follows:

A- Expansion of religious teachings at the level of Islamic societies

The promotion of religious teachings is considered very vital for societies. Hajj also has a special role in spreading the teachings of Islam in an Islamic society. During the time of Hajj, there is a good opportunity for Islamic teachings to be presented widely so that these teachings can further be spread through pilgrims in their Islamic communities.

While explaining the philosophy of Hajj Imam Reza (AS) pointed out that “during the Hajj pilgrimage, people get religiously trained and the pilgrims take the news and teachings of the Household of the Prophet (PBUH) to their people in different parts of the world.

B- Strengthening Muslim social connections

Hajj is one of the clear manifestations of interaction between people in Islam. Hajj makes it possible for Muslims to get to know

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each other and to strengthen the bond of their friendship and brotherhood. Imam Ja'far Sadiq (AS) has been quoted saying that "God Almighty ordained the Hajj congregation so that Muslims from East and West of the world would get to know each other and be aware of each other's situation (See Sheikh Saduq, Vol. 2, P. 405).

C- Unity and solidarity of Muslims at the global level

Hajj calls on the people of the society to form social cohesion, more than any other act of worship. The foundation of social bonds in Hajj is faith and belief. It is in the light of faith that the Islamic Ummah can be freed from any form of conflict and division. This is because a society that relies on heartfelt compassion will go beyond personal and group desires and ideals. It is, thus, possible to claim that social cohesion, in its various aspects, can be observed during

the Hajj pilgrimage. All pilgrims have a single goal and ideal and the direction of their movement is also based on a single principle. All pilgrims, black and white, small, and big, learned and uneducated, rich and poor, etc., wear the same type of clothing, move around the same axis, face the same Qibla, and perform "Sa'y and Wuquf" in the same place; all of which created and strengthen the sense of unity and cohesion among Muslims.

D- Strengthening shared values

Hajj strengthens spiritual values for humans. In fact, Hajj is a character-building university where social values such as brotherhood, equality, security, order, simplicity, understanding, interaction, chastity, freedom, and dozens of other social values are practiced. Teachings that, on the one hand, give a person understanding and insight, and character and ensure eternal salvation and, on the oth-

er hand, prepares him for being an asset (and not a liability) to his society.

E- Increasing the awareness of Muslims

Hajj is the arena of public awareness about the sufferings and capabilities of Muslims and provides the basis for the collective participation of people in solving problems. Hajj is a source of public awareness about the conspiracies plotted and rumors made by the enemies of Islam and causes the disappearance of spatial, linguistic, and conceptual distances. Awareness about belonging to one religion and faith, together with shared beliefs and values, and history, will change the historical, social, and political situation of Islamic societies. And finally, by benefitting from the capacities of Hajj, Muslims can achieve the status they truly deserve in this world.