

Hajj Stories

Reward for good deeds multiply

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‘I can’t walk Doc,’ he said. All it needed was a slight indentation in the road, barely visible in normal circumstances and definitely impossible to spot amongst the millions thronging every perceivable inch along the way. ‘It felt like the rest of my body was going forward but my foot remained stuck ever so slightly. I felt a slight discomfort but was able to continue walking with our group. However, within a few minutes the pain started intensifying. Now I cannot even put any pressure on the foot without experiencing excruciating pain,’ he said with a grimacing face. I looked at his ankle and it was evident that he sprained it. Some swelling was evident, and he was not happy when I examined it by testing the range of movements of the joint. I strapped the ankle and gave him some strong pain-killers. Deep down I knew that was not going to help much. What he needed was time. Time to rest and time for the injury to heal. Time that he did not have.

He was fine up till now. He stood on Wuqoof on Arafat and he was deeply appreciative that he was virtually assured of his

Hajj. After all Hajj is Arafat. He along with about two hundred other pilgrims travelling with our group elected to walk after sunset from Arafat to Musdalifah. The exclamation of ‘Labaik!’ echoed as small rivulets of believers trickled down



Crowds on Musdalifah and Mina makes the movement of vehicles impossible

the slopes of the Mount of Mercy and unto the vast plains that would lead them to Musdalifah, then Mina and finally to the Kaba’a in Makkah. We walked as a large group without any discomfort and only stopped for a brief period on two occasions before entering Musdalifah. It was literally as we entered there that he suffered the unfortunate

injury. It was just before nine in the evening

The plan was for the group to walk till the border of Musdalifah with Mina. There we would have combined our two evening prayers, picked up the required pebbles for the pelting that had to be done the next day and rested till midnight. This initial destination was still about three kilometers away. This may not sound far but for a relatively heavy man to be assisted by tired and disheveled Ihram clad fellow pilgrims was going to be a daunting task. It was clear that he was unable to walk or hobble along. There was not a wheelchair or crutches in sight. The group members were all excited to have reached

Musdalifah and it was evident that they wanted to move on. We spotted a medical clinic nearby and asked to rest of the group to rest a bit whilst we tried to get help there.

There was not much help to be obtained there. He was not an emergency case, his ankle was strapped already and he was given pain tablets. The clinic personnel, though helpful, indicated that their task was not to provide transport except to a hospital. Though there were a few wheelchairs around, they were to be used in emergency

with him. ‘We started as a group and we are going to finish together as a group,’ the group Imam said. ‘Let’s see what we can do.’ We thanked the clinic staff and left.

We started noticing a number of young fit men pushing wheelchairs. Yes they were quite prepared to push our patient to the border. Initially some of us thought that these were good Samaritans but it soon transpired that there was a cost involved when we approached the first one. The amount demanded made our jaws drop. ‘That is more than a luxury limousine would cost for the distance in-

“But this man was suffering just like my father suffers, so I shall treat him with the love that I have for my father”

volved!’ the Imam retorted. ‘Then get the limousine,’ the arrogant wheelchair owner sneered and walked off. There were no vehicles in sight and none were allowed amongst the massive crowds. We tried bargaining with a few others but it seemed that there was price fixing. They would rather wait for one person to agree to their price than dropping it by a third and doing three trips. Our patient was getting concerned about keeping the group back. He could not afford the ludicrous asking price and also was not someone to ask for a loan or monetary assistance. He was close to tears and was not aware that one of his fellow group members was in the meantime collecting small change from the others. We were two hundred strong after all.

One youngster with an empty wheelchair came up to me. He has been observing the scenario and noticed the patient grimacing with pain. ‘How much?’ I immediately asked. ‘You give me what you want,’ he said and allowed our injured pilgrim to seat himself on the wheelchair. The group started moving and I walked next to the wheelchair. I struck up a conversation and after a few niceties he explained to me that he rented the wheelchair at a price close to that of a new one. His outlay was enormous and that’s why the prices charged were so high. If any damage occurs to the wheelchair, he has to pay for it. ‘But

this man was suffering just like my father suffers, so I shall treat him with the love that I have for my father. He must make Duaa for me,’ he said. I looked at him and realized that he had an absolute sense of honesty about him.

When we reached the border, there were a number of run-down wheelchairs laying around. The youngster saw the large number of security forces around and indicated that he had to return and not be caught in what now was evidently an illegal activity. A few handy members of our group asked the officials permission to use the run down wheelchairs and quickly

made it roadworthy. The way to our tent on Mina was on a straight and tarred road from this point and we did not anticipate any problems with our antique set of wheels.

We thanked the youth. He hugged and greeted our patient and turned to return to Musdalifah. ‘You are fit and strong, lower your price and make a few more trips. You’ll get more reward as you’ll be helping more people in need,’ someone said as they put the collected money in his hand. He walked up to me. ‘I cannot take this, I can buy a new wheelchair with this money,’ he said. ‘You deserve every note and more,’ the Imam said. ‘Allah rewards those who sincerely helps those in distress,’ he added. ‘But you cannot pay me so much,’ the youth protested. ‘We are rewarding you, not paying you,’ I corrected him. He smiled. ‘I can buy my father a new wheelchair,’ he said, with tears clearly welling up in his eyes.

‘Keep me and my family in your duaas as your prayers are surely accepted,’ he pleaded and started his return journey. He was not in Ihram, he was not on Hajj but he surely had arrived. I am sure that in his heart he could say ‘Labaik! I am here!’ Hajj is a continuously learning experience. That year the essence of Hajj was on Arafat, the acquisition of inner spiritual awareness was on Musdalifah.

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