

HAJJ STORIES

COMPLETING HALF OF OUR DEEN

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‘Why do you not marry her and take her with you to perform Hajj?’ he was asked ad nauseum. She was well known to his family. She was a revert and for years everyone expected him to pop the question. Somehow it just never happened. So, as he was preparing to leave the shores of our southernmost African country, he was inevitably peppered by the question as to why he does not want to settle down. He was already in his fifties and had a permanent and secure job. She was the only lady that he had ever shown an interest in, but it never went any further than social interactions. His family was extremely fond of her and were silently waiting to formally welcome her into the wider family structure. She did not have Muslim relatives and most of her religious activities were with those in his social circles.

‘When a person gets married, he has completed half of his religion,’

He lived in a city on our east coast, and I did not have the opportunity to greet him prior to his departure from our shores. I visited him whenever I was in his part of the world, and I knew where he was going to be staying during his trip to the Holy Saudi Arabian cities. Once I reached over there, I tried on a number of occasions to meet him but somehow it never happened. About a week before the first day of Hajj I met him in Azizyah. He was totally at ease and solely focused on his journey. As a very sociable person, he easily assimilated into the group dynamics and offered to assist whenever it was needed. Azizyah normally has shared rooms, with about four in a room. I wanted to ask him how many of the four males in his room were single and how different the dynamics were between the married and unmarried pilgrims. I did not, however, get an answer.

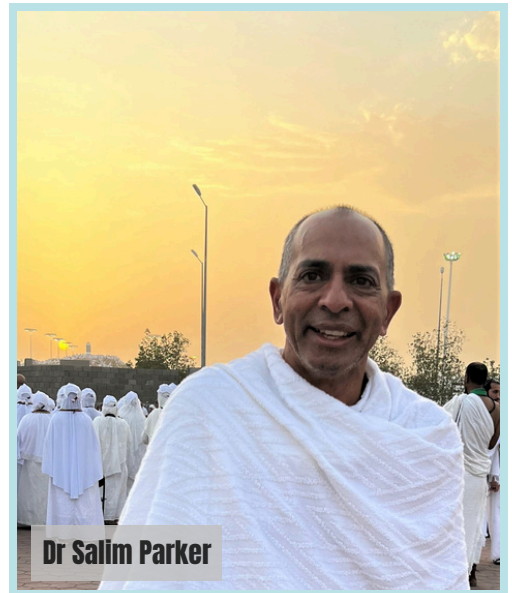
I was aware of what transpired before his departure and could not resist teasing him. ‘Hajj is completing part of half of your religion, so you need to complete the other half by getting married,’ I said, putting a slight twist on the well-known Hadith which states: ‘When a person gets married, he has completed half of his religion, so let him fear Allah with regard to the other half.’ He simply ignored my comments, and we went on to talk about a number of other issues. It was clear that he did not have marriage on his mind at all and that his Hajj took complete precedence over any other aspect. Hajj started a few days later and I recall as I stood on Arafat how we compartmentalized our lives as children, teenagers, married adults and then finally golden oldies. This is in contrast with the holistic Islamic viewpoint that points to a complete way of life with a continuum from birth to being recalled by our Creator.

After Hajj we all returned to the southernmost country on the African continent. Time flew. Six years in fact. His sixtieth year on this earth arrived and his family wanted to celebrate it in style. In our communities it means feasting at a family member’s place. His mother, aunts and cousins organized a function at one of the aunts’ houses. He was not someone for fancy events and arrived dressed in a T-shirt and jeans. As is customary, an Imam was invited to make a Duaa. She was of course also invited. There was the usual excitement of family members meeting each other, the formalities of who was to bring what treat, and the men gathering and discussing the latest earth-shattering sporting event. He was seated next to the Imam when he suddenly had an illuminating moment.

‘Why do we not make so?’ he asked the Imam. The latter knew exactly what he was alluding to. ‘Did you ask her?’ the Imam replied. He replied in the negative. ‘You have to ask,’ the Imam smiled. He got up and approached her. She was also attired relatively casually. ‘Shall we?’ he asked. She was confused. ‘What do you mean?’ she replied. ‘Shall we make so?’ he explained. The penny dropped. She started gasping and the question took her breath away. Literally. She had an asthma attack and frantically reached for her inhaler. ‘So, what do you say?’ he repeated. ‘Yes!’ was her barely audible reply between her wheezing exhalations. He went back to the Imam and told him that the answer was in the affirmative. ‘So, when shall we have the Nikah?’ the Imam asked. ‘Now,’ was his immediate response.

There was initial stunned disbelief amongst all present. This was followed by all accepting that only he was capable of springing such a surprise on them. It was really a case that if he did not plan to pop the question, how was everyone else supposed to have anticipated it. There was a sudden flurry of activities. His wedding had to be celebrated in style!

His aunt had a look in her cupboards and found three wedding dresses in there that were still in pristine condition. Our bride-to-be was asked to try each one and one fitted perfectly. Our bride was ready. He wanted to stay in his very casual clothes, but his mother and family were having none of it. A thoub was found for him somehow and they were ready for one of the most important moments of their lives. He took it as an important milestone, she as the most important occasion of her life.



Dr Salim Parker

It was amazing how quickly the news spread. Mobile connectivity ensured that the immediate family not living in his city were aware of the wedding ceremony as it happened. There was a double celebration, and those who wished him earlier for his birthday now had additional words of wisdom, blessings, encouragement, support and shock to convey! I know that the dowry was very quickly agreed upon, but I never enquired as to how her side of the family was informed and involved and how the Mahram issue was decided. I do know that the Imam involved made sure that all the fiqh issues were properly adhered to. Finally the whole city was relieved, -he was officially a married man and has completed the half of his religion that would pave the way for the union of two hearts and minds.

He was in our part of the world a few weeks later and the couple came to visit. We reflected on the year we were on Hajj and how time had sped by. He then recounted his birthday/wedding day as if it is an everyday type of occurrence. At the back of my mind, I recalled our exclaiming: ‘Labaik! Oh my Creator, I have arrived,’ when we donned our Ihrams and recited our intention to perform Hajj years ago. That arrival is at a fixed place, at a fixed time in our lives. Other major significances are much more variable, such as marriage even as late as the age of sixty. Allahu-Akbar! God is Great!



Only Allah knows when Duaas made on Arafat will be accepted.