

Hajj Stories

August 2016

Endearing Endurance

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'You strike a woman and you strike a rock!' the keynote speaker at a gathering defiantly proclaimed. One of the attendees listened attentively and must have felt out of her league amongst all the vocal ladies rightly demonising the unjustifiable oppression they suffer. Male dominance, patriarchy, wife abuse and neglect and the commodification of the female form were all mentioned and strongly denounced by one religious leader after another. She admired the courage and resilience of the women who spoke about unshackling their hardships imposed by the greed and heartlessness of men and many of the women present there must have felt that their roles were insignificant when compared to the bastions of the women's struggle. But a woman's heart and courage is not merely measured by resistance to injustice, but also by her gentle and innate ability to be giving and adaptable. For she surely was a rock that weathered all the storms the elements tested her with.

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She felt that she lived a good life in one of the ordinary working class suburbs, and had a job as a machinist that paid the bills and had a little left thereafter. This little seemed meagre but she diligently saved. Very little every month but the sum grew slowly with each month, year and decade. The Prophet Ebrahim was instructed by Allah thousands of years ago to invite all to perform the Hajj. When he questioned how his voice in a far flung desert was going to reach all of mankind, his Creator mentioned to him that he all he had to do was call the people and it was up to Allah to transmit the message. The invitation was sent out by Nabi Ebrahim, and she accepted the invitation at a young age already. She was saving in order for her to perform Hajj. Her life revolved around her religion, her family, her society, and her determined ambition to perform the ultimate journey in the life of any Muslim.

Sometimes the best of plans are however severely tested. Her brother never smoked, and when he started coughing and losing weight it was assumed that he had tuberculosis, a disease rife in her community and eminently curable. He underwent a battery of tests and this ruled out most of the common maladies. The doctors had the difficult task of conveying the completely unexpected diagnosis of advanced lung cancer. This completely shattered her brother, his wife and of course his sister. There was not much that medical intervention could do except alleviate his symptoms and relieve his pain. His days left on this temporary abode was limited but the doctors, within limitations, could estimate how long he had before he breathed his last breath. There was not enough time to realise many of their aims and dreams. I am not certain whether there were dreams of children getting married and grandchildren being anticipated. But what was certain was that the determined dream of Hajj was not

going to be interrupted. There was still time to perform the fifth pillar of Islam.

She saved diligently over the years for her Hajj but now her brother's quest to undertake this journey took precedence. There was no question about where her saved money was going to go to: her brother and his wife were going to step out unto the plains of Arafat that year. Of course she would have wanted to go with but her funds did not stretch that far. She was still relatively young with many years ahead of her if her good health was maintained. The rest of the family also

Very emotional scenes played itself off back home when the news reached them about his demise. This increased her determination to perform her Hajj. It took a few more years for her to save enough for it but Allah blesses those who put the needs of others before their own. She reached Makkah and went to the Kabr of her brother. Emotions overcame her when she reached him. She was sad that he was no longer part of their family but also happy that he could complete his wishes and be buried in the Holy Land. When she reached Arafat, her journey had by now completed a



Sometimes the endurance of some can let the sunset of a person's life feel like a new sunrise

rallied to ensure that all the brother's needs were taken care of. He had always expressed the wish to perform his Hajj, and now that his time on this earth was coming to an end, this desire intensified immensely. The doctors felt that he should not travel and it is often difficult for us mere medically minded to comprehend the inner strength and resoluteness that the faithful somehow draw on to complete one last mission. Nothing was going to stop him.

The day her brother left the front door of his house, the Athaan was sounded as is customary when leaving for a journey. The call to prayer, the call to success is prayed in the right ear of all Muslim newborns and some scholars allude to it as a reminder of our short time on this earth. He left the shores of our country and departed in more than one way. Most of our Hujjaaj return from their hajj as sinless as newborn babies and with the affirmation of the Athaan about the Greatness of Allah and that our Beloved Prophet (SAW) is His Messenger ringing in our ears and hearts. Her brother completed his Wuqoof, his standing on Arafat and not much later the call to his Janazah salaah was sounded in Makkah.

full circle as she stood at the time of Wuqoof and could say 'Labaik! I am here!' Her journey was delayed by a few years but this delay allowed another to fulfil an ultimate dream.

When she performed her Sa'ee, the walking between Safa and Marwa, she was following in the footsteps of a slave who searched for sustenance for her thirsty baby. Men, whether king or labourer, clad in two pieces of cloth that humbly elevates all to the same status in front of their Creator follow in the same footsteps of a desperate but utterly obedient and believing lady of Islam. A woman was responsible for one of the rites of Hajj. Women throughout the ages, in different ways, empower others to fulfil their desires by in small ways contributing to the realisation of large dreams.

She was rewarded multiple times and was able to visit the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madinah on a few occasions after that. She was no orator, not one to be thrown into the limelight. She was simply a humble lady with mere dreams of performing Hajj who rose to great heights by giving, and in return receiving. Our Creator rewards, and rewards abundantly.

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