



EID AL-ADHAA

NOVEMBER 6 2011/ 11 DHUL UL HIJJA 1432

At the Khanaqah of Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid
Bedford Va.

**“RETURNING TO THE SOURCE AND THE CIRCLE OF EXISTENCE:
THE ESSENTIAL CALL TO RETURN”**



Fatihah

Takbir 9x

Alla Humma Ahlal Kibriyaa Wal Azamati
Wa Ahlal Joodi Wal Jabaroot
Wa Ahlal Afwi War Rahmati
Wa Ahlat Taqwaa Wal Maghfirah
As-Aluka Bihaqqi Haazal Yawmil Lazi
Ja-Altahu Lil Muslimeena Eidan
Wa Li Muhammadin Sallallaahu Alayhi Wa Aalihee
Zukhran Wa Sharafan Wa Karamatan Wa Mazeedaa
An Tu Salli Ala Muhammadin Wa Aali Muhammad
Wa An Tudkhilani Fee Kulli Khayrin
Adkhalta Feehi Muhammadan Wa Aali Muhammad
Wa An Tukhrijani Min Kulli Sooo-In

Akhrajta Minhu Muhammadan Wa Aali Muhammad
 Salawaatuka Alayhi Wa Alayhim
 Allaahumma Innee As-Aluka Khayra Maa Sa-Aluka
 Bihi Ibaadukas Saalihoon
 Wa A-Oozubeka Mimmas Ta-Aaza Minhu Ibaadukal Mukhlisoon

O Allah! The All-Great and All-Glorious, and the All-Glorious and All-Glorious;
 the All-Forgiving and All-Merciful; the All-Protecting and All-Pardoning!
 I ask you by the sanctity of this day, which You have made as an 'Eid for all the
 Muslims and as a day of great treasure, piety. Blessing for Muhammad, prayers of
 Allah be upon him and his family, and that You shower Your prayers upon
 Muhammad and family of Muhammad. Include us in all the goodness which you
 have included Muhammad and the family of Muhammad (to benefit from), and
 that You safeguard us from all those voices which you have kept away from
 Muhammad and the family of Muhammad. May Your prayers be upon him and
 all of them. O,Allah! I ask You for welfare and goodness – the same welfare that
 has been asked for by Your pious servants. I ask Your shelter from all of those
 things from which Your pious servants have sought shelter.

I remind you that sitting in this room is a woman who is a *sayyida* on both sides of
 her family. She is in the family of the Prophet (sal), so we just prayed for
 Granmda and we prayed for Mitra and the line of the family. What's most
 important is to understand that you know someone in that family.

**Wa azzin finnaasi bil Hajji ya'-tuuka rijaalanwwa alaa kuli
 Dhaamiriny-ya- tiina min-kulli fajjin `amiiq: Li-yash-haduu
 manaafi-a' lahum wa yadhkurus-mallaahi fiii `Ayyaamim-Ma
 luumaatin `alaa inaa radhaqahum-mim bahiimatil-'an- 'aam:
 fakuluu minhaa wa `at-imul- haaa-'I sal-faqiir.**

And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine that they may witness things that are of benefit to them. And mention the name of Allah (Subhanallah wa ta'ala) on appointed days over the beast of cattle that He hath bestowed upon them. Then eat thereof and feed therewith the poor and the unfortunate. (22:27-28)

SEEING AND ACTING IS BELIEVING

The topic of today's *khutbah* is the challenge of responding to the call of a true and real Islam. By this, I am referring to the strength and the courage it takes to not only see and hear, but to act upon the needs of our community of brothers and sisters. It is necessary to do more than see and more than hear, more than comment and more than opine over the state of the Muslims and non-Muslims in today's world. We live in a country, my dear brothers and sisters, of great wealth, comfort and luxury. This is something neither to be ashamed nor proud of; it is an example of potentiality and possibility within *dunya*. We live at a time when citizens of our country are tasting the bitter pill of economic and political failures, of myopic vision and greed, of either naïve or Machiavellian international politics.

Domestically, the people have become more and more insular while the global investors and corporate world have tried to live in the moment, without regard to the future of the citizens; seizing every opportunistic venue for personal wealth. We have been plunged for a decade plus into wars, which some knew were frivolous and economically unsustainable; placing burdens upon the chest of every citizen -- or shall I say the 99% -- while the 1% became and are becoming more and more wealthy. All around us there is an ocean of poverty and illness, disparity

and imbalance. We have all heard numerous times the comparisons of inner and outer poverty, inner and outer wealth, and inner and outer purity. Often, these comparisons imply that somehow in the midst of poverty and disease, lack of opportunity and inequity, one will find the greatest spirituality. But a spirituality born of crisis and fear is not sustainable. Even if it is sustained by faith, it will not create the harmony and balance that Allah (swt) enjoins. He says in Qur'an"

Thus, We have made you a nation or a community justly balanced. It is a testimony to umma salima that the community of Muslims should strive for and will attain a balance in all things, all aspects of life. (27:93)

Allah (swt) also says in Qur'an, Surah Nūh :

(You should observe the balance and harmony that is created when the Divine Laws are followed!) Do you not see how Allah the Almighty has created various celestial bodies in outer space and how they move in harmony and discipline? They remain firm in their orbits in spite of the tremendous speed with which they move. This is because they do not exist individually. The pull of one becomes a source of stability for the other, and in this way the entire celestial system can continue functioning without a clash. (71:15)

On the contrary, visualize your own life and see how your individual interests clash with each other.

Truly, the faithful are to one another like components of a building—each part supports the other. Muslim and Bukhari

These ayats of Qur'an and Hadith talk to us about balance between human beings and nature. Allah also says, **The one who has humiliated a follower of mine, it is as if he intends to declare war on me.**

The closest to disbelief a person can be is when he conceals the error of his brother in faith, intending to dishonor him and use it against him.

(Imam Ja'far al-Saadiq, book of Al-Usool from Al-Kaafi, vol. 2, page 355.)

The Prophet (sal) gave many messages that correspond to balance and harmony, between human nature, between how we speak to one another, and how we think of one another. I remember years ago walking the streets of Fez or sitting in the homes and *zāwiyas* in the *medina* having much the same as my experiences in Damascus, Quds, and Old Delhi. On our way to the homes, and other places on our way up the hill while looking at the heights of the city, to the followers of the tomb of saints and all of our great masters, we were greeted everywhere not only with Asalaam, but also with abject poverty.

For more than 35 years I have walked such streets, gaining the benefit of the wisdom of saints of past and present, feeling and sharing the *baraka* of the ceremonies, prayers, and discourses, and receiving from within myself a *kashf*, a seeing, and somewhat of an understanding. The history, the architecture, the tiles, the ceilings carved with such skill and knowledge of mathematics and design, the woodwork and inlay, even the water systems, construction, techniques and crafts all speak of the most highly sensitive, knowledgeable minds and hearts among humanity. We see them from China, to Persia, to the Middle East and North Africa, these great souls who have learned the mysteries of mathematics. The brotherhood and sisterhood among the *fuyara* attest again and again to the hospitality and the *adab*.

The commonality of *adab* or nobility of the heart and soul despite the poverty of the body, characterizes the essence of our tradition, our Islamic culture. Yet, my brothers and sisters, outer poverty is not a requirement for spirituality or faith; albeit, it is often the only resort to maintain a sane mind and open heart in the midst of such abject poverty. Poverty of the outer is not of our tradition. It is not of our culture. It is not the destiny of humankind. Whatever the outer reasons and explanations are (and from time to time we give them: colonialism, oppression, ignorance greed), whatever the circumstances of the past have been, such filth, such poverty, and such lack of opportunity are inexcusable and totally unacceptable today, as they should have been in the past.

The fact that it was acceptable in the past does not mean that it has formed a tradition that we must accept and allow to remain with us today. We understand why such circumstances would arise in certain periods of history and time. But there is no reason to understand it today, in a world of such technology, capacity, wealth, and capability; and in a world with institutions that try (and succeed, most of the time) to make and keep peace in the world. No, as we have seen since the stirrings in Iran two years ago, and in the Arab Spring, and now in the Occupy movement, inherent in the human soul and psyche is the affirmation of equity, equality, peace, harmony. It is the Median ideal born of the human spirit, filled with the light of Allah (swt) and the Prophet's.

To see children playing in dark alleys filled with waste and effluent, wandering in tattered clothes, kicking around old plastic bottles, walking barefoot or with shoes falling apart, picking up food here and there reminds us of our own children, who are healthy and well-fed. We have to ask, "Why?" Why are there children who can barely survive, let alone have any opportunity to advance in life? Why are there mothers who are so destitute that they are selling their clothing to pay for a

lamb for the Eid al Adhaa, which we celebrate today? Why, because in that society, even if you have absolutely nothing, you have at least your human dignity. So they sell the last they have and pray that Allah (swt) will give them something with which to go forward.

This has no place in the world of today. This has no context in Islam, which protects, provides, grants equity, and institutionalizes *zakat* (charity). But this is the world today, owing (as we are aware) to the corrupting influence of a materialistic world view. We see and hear and live in a world that is lacking much of what we find in Fez or Cairo, in Quds or Damascus: that sense of family, of brotherhood and sisterhood, of hospitality, love, tradition we find throughout Persia, and of knowledge of history we find from as far east as China.

The knowledge of history that these people have is incredible. They can tell you that this *shaykh* did such and such, and that *shaykh*'s follower was so and so; this person did this, and that person built that; this design came from here, from the tradition of that, and that was the teaching that that *shaykh* gave, and here is a letter that this saint wrote, here is the story they told at that time. Then they go into their rooms, into their aged and dusty back rooms, and pull out pieces of documents that they can read about how to be a Sufi and how to be a Muslim. It is incredible!

We are just building those traditions here (and I would add that we lack some of those wonderful characteristics, even of hospitality and love for one another, even in this community). It does not mean we should exalt, promote, turn our attention away from or even accept the conditions of physical poverty, illness, illiteracy, and lack of opportunity that permeates the lives of so many of those people who have so much in other than the material sense. Certainly, they shouldn't be

punished for their knowledge and their hospitality and their love. It makes no sense.

If we believe in the essence of the Qur'an and the Traditions and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet (sal), and in the traditions of the Prophets Adam, Musa, Daoud, and Isa; if we receive something from the practices; if we receive anything from our community life together; and if we look to those traditions in Fez, in Damascus, in Casablanca, New Delhi and Mashad, Tabriz and Baghdad for guidance in our own family structure, let it be the rich tradition of proud believers and humble seekers. The little children always running to their fathers and their grandfathers and the *sheikhs*, kissing their hands, bringing them things. No one asks them or tells them to go kiss the *sheikh's* hand, after a short period of time; kiss your fathers hand, help your mother; touch your mother's feet, massage your father's feet; make sure your mother has help in the kitchen. No one asks them to do it. They sit there with *tasbees* around their hands at 1am in the morning participating in the *dhikru-Llah* with 400 people. The little children are sitting there between the ages of 5 and 8 at 1:00 in the morning.

On one hand you think, they should be in bed; but on the other hand, why not? Listening to 400 people to *dhikr* who just had dinner in that house, and you worry about having 5 people over for dinner tomorrow night? You think maybe next month you will invite someone over for dinner? Every night there is dinner for 200, 300, 400 people happening in Casablanca and Fez and Marrakesh. It's true. They prepare for 500 and give 100 meals to the poor...we need an exact count when we invite someone for dinner. Six or 8 people? They make a hundred extra meals and give it to the people on the street. But we, oh, who's coming? Do we have enough rice? Shall we make a little more?

If we look for guidance for structure for our family; our interpersonal relationships, our friendships, and our understanding of the inner meanings of life, we will find it necessary to dive deeper and deeper into Qur'an and Hadith, the teachings, to find the answers to the impossible questions, decisions, before us. Some of the deepest teachings I have heard were in a tiny little *masjid* in the filthy Chandichoke of New Delhi. It didn't have to be filthy for that teaching to be there; that's a human frailty. Sacrifice according to tradition comes from the root of the word QRB which also means: *to draw near*. How did Sidna Ibrahim draw near to Allah (swt)? We don't know whether it was *ru'ya*/a dream, whether Allah (swt) actually came and talked to him. We don't know.

If you read the Qur'an carefully, you don't know. And it doesn't matter. Allah (swt) intervened. If he dreamed it on his own, Allah (swt) caused him to intervene. What happened? It caused him to draw nearer. **“I am near to answer the call of the caller.”** (2:186) **“Be equitable— that is nearer to Allah (swt)fearing ,”** (5:8) says Allah (swt) in the Holy Qur'an. **“Assuredly they are an offering for them.”** (9:99)

As a mediator, certainly the symbols, the acts and the meanings of Eid al-Adhaa are clearly relevant to the circumstances of today's world: to answer the call of those in need who are our brothers and sisters, to approach them, to come near to them, to give an offering, to act as a mediator, to encourage and to create equitable circumstances in their lives with kinship. These offer to us clear pointers to success.

However, we can make ourselves understand the depth and dimension of the challenge before us only if we commit to understanding. Our lives here in the West have been designed around looking in the other direction, looking through the filters of luxury and material wealth, symbols of ease. We are not to feel guilty; we have been given what we have been given so we can use it.

Our success depends not on our sense of social or political position or wealth, it doesn't depend on our guilt, it doesn't depend on the programs that we do in our organization, and certainly we shouldn't do them just to alleviate our sense of responsibility. It depends on our resolving in our hearts the apparent inequities in the world in which we live. It depends on our faith and on our success on changing the world. Change in the world depends on resolving the disparity in our interactions, our words and our intentions. It depends on us refining and clarifying and holding to the best means and forms of communication with one another. It depends on the clarification in our own hearts and minds of our personal goals and objectives within the context of our spiritual life and practices.

If we look toward New Science and complexity theory, like I do at times, to find an analogy or perhaps a natural law, we can say that the complex systems of today and the apparent irresolvable issues, such as those I have mentioned, can and will give rise to an emergent phenomena. We can influence what emerges as paradigms that will shift, and a new context for human development will begin to take place. That may be true, but what will make that phenomena emerge? There is no question that many of the problems we see in the world are the result of cultural imperialism, or cultural isolationism, unrestrained materialism and a dearth of values, or at least unclear demarcations and boundaries joined with ignorance, lack of knowledge or models for successful parenting, lack of models for family relations, for community values. Tyrants and abject materialism, what do we have? But it is not clear what can be done in the moment. None of us sitting in this room can say, “do this” and it will change except for one thing.

We must believe and understand that there are models; even in that poverty there are models. There is a ladder to climb out of the hole. As Mevlana says, when we were born a ladder was placed next to us. [It is] to surround oneself with those

who believe, to imbue one's language, one's heart, one's actions with a goodness, kindness, patience and forgiveness; to work with the zeal of a missionary, bringing not dogma but examples in your own life of the good life, the right and essential way. Certainly, the ancient cities and souks, the smells and the sounds all create the ambiance for such actions and thoughts. As you walk through the cities, you hear the clanging of the donkeys, and the men shouting to move you out of the way as they go going clackety-clack on the streets with piles of fruit, smells of the perfumes.

Certainly, the history gives us a sense of belonging and possibilities. It is not just a trip into the past; it is a trip into our own essence and our own souls through those winding alleys, with each alley like our own mind, turning in upon itself, taking us down mysterious corridors of light and dark. But these are only external signs; we need hands and tools to build the future. The hands of friendship and assistance, the tools of *dhikr*, *salawat*, prayer, fasting, Hajj, *zakat* and love.... fearless love... trust, commitment to the community of friends are all here. As we build our own cultural legacy in this community, with its balanced blend of East and West firmly rooted in Sufic Islam, we are building a better world for everyone. If you don't know it, know it. Learn it. Believe it. Show me another example.

So, how can we do anything but work as hard as we possibly can to do that? How can we look at today in terms of the sacrifice, when so many people are sacrificing themselves or being sacrificed in terms of poverty, inequity, opportunity, honor and human self respect? Not to mention those who have died in Iran, in Cairo, in Tunisia, in Libya. In the Qur'an, Allah Subhanallah wa ta'ala said:

And when (his son) was old enough to walk with him, Ibrahim (as) said: "O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you.

So look, what do you think? He said: O my father! Do that which you are commanded, Allah willing, you shall find me of the steadfast ...”

It is clarified in Surah 6:161

Qul innanee hadanee rabbee ila siratin mustaqeemin deenan qiyaman millata ibraheema haneefan wama kana mina almushrikeena

Say: Verily, my Lord had guided me to a way that is straight, a religion of right, the path (trod) by Abraham. The true in faith, and he certainly joined not Allah (swt) with Allah (swt). Say: Truly, my prayer, my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah (swt), the Cherisher of the worlds: No partner has He. This am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His will.

We can use this ‘*āyat* as a *niyyat* every day, reading it before al-Fatiha and add *al-tawajjuh* or *Du’ā Thana*.

As a sincere Muslim, I have directed my face to the One Who created the heavens and the earth; and I am not from the idol worshipers [meaning materialism]. Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are all to Allah, the Lord of the universe. There is no deity with Him. Hence, I am commanded and I am from those who submitted themselves to Allah.

If we look to the East and the circumstances I described, or to the West and the problems of our society, or to our own very blessed lives, it becomes obvious that there are many sacrifices buried in the symbols of today’s Eid. The sacrifices that can and should be made today may differ in subject, but not in character or commitment, sacrifices of effort, money and property, as well as time and

knowledge. We cannot look at the challenges today purely through altruistic eyes; rather, we must be realistic. At the same time, [we must] believe in the possibility, *inshā'a-llāh*, of the paradigm shifting, as we make every linear effort to do and increase our outer activities and work. All that is done for the love of Allah is blessed to succeed. [Regarding] doing things for yourself, do them for Allah and you will see how much you have done for yourself in a much better way than you could plan.

In Morocco many years ago, we met some wonderful people, old and young, rich and poor, men and women who exuded such love and kindness towards us; but each time we left the *sama* we saw the harsh reality of daily life. In a secular and capitalistic society like America, people work hard for money. Their sacrifices of time, effort, energy and knowledge are to the system of material wealth and that pattern. The results all too often are lies and cheating for the sake of material success. The result is that the rich become richer and the poor poorer. As human beings, especially we who live here and are educated in the West, have such advantages. We rarely make a foundation for inner peace, and rarely use as time for Allah (swt). We must realize the value of time and learn how to use it in a balanced way and share it with others. We are in need of money, of course, but we must also identify giving some of it away to those in more need. We love ourselves, but we need to love others in the same way and be able to turn that into love of Allah.

Remember the attitude and the faith and the friendship of people like Hazrat Ali Abiu Talib (ra) who slept in the bed of Rasūlullāh (sal) during the hejra; or of Abu Bakr (ra) and his children, who, during the *khilwa* in the cave, kept bringing food to him; or the story of the al-Muhajerīn and the al-Ansar in Medina. The al-Ansar cared for the Muhajerīn and they shared their properties, their wealth and their businesses. Today, are we ready to learn about Sufis and their way of life, a life of

sacrifice and learning, knowledge and service and success? Is the world ready for us? Are we ready to care for others for the love of Allah (swt)? Sufis feed the indigent, the orphans and the captive. **“We feed you for the sake of Allah (swt) alone: No reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.”** (Q 6:8-9)

You know in the sacrifice today, that one third is to be eaten, one third is to be given to the neighbor, and one third is to be given to the poor. But some people are so hungry that they cannot even do that. There is not enough to go around, even here in America. We must educate ourselves to what is balance and what is truth; we must see our projects grow and our efforts multiply, *inshā'a-Llāh*, we must share our knowledge and our talents in partnership with others of like minds and like hearts, who are Sufis and really good real Muslims, until we break the back of the demon of poverty and racism, ignorance, preventable disease, genocide and inequity.

We must remember, recite and affirm, “*A wa fi anfusikum afala tubsirun. Will you not look within your selves?*” because that is where we will find the doorway. Go out and help someone, and you will not help anyone until you say to yourself to look to yourself. We cannot escape the relationship between what we experience in the world and our state of mind, our thoughts and our desires. Hazrat Ali ibn Abu Talib said:

He who has an intelligent mind looks to his goal. He knows his low road as well as his high road. The caller has called. The shepherd has tended his flocks. So respond to the caller and follow the shepherd. Follow the Ahl ul Bayt (the descendants of the Prophet (sal)), for he who acts without knowledge is like one who treads without a path. Then his deviation from the path keeps him at a distance from his aim....And he who acts according to knowledge is like he who treads the clear path.... You should also know

that the outside of everything has a similar inside. Of whatever the outside is good, its inside too is good; and whatever the outside is bad, its inside too is bad.

So we must look and see and decide what is to be done in our lives and the lives of others. It is not the intention of Allah Subhanallah wa' tala that so much poverty and suffering exist in the East and so much fear, competition, jealousy, doubt, and selfishness exist in the West. **“Allah is Supremely Great, immensely so! And praise be to Allah, abundantly! And glory be to Allah, both early and late.”**

The Hajj and all its reality and symbolism truly characterize a global event, a movement that has recently become more manifest and more engaging in the past few months. It would be wrong of me to let this go in a *khutbah* on this subject. That is the collective will to return (*qalaba*), to turn back toward the collective will and the collective rights of people. The contrast between ideological mentalities and conscious values-based, equitable premises of life reflects also the technology of the day. More than just the fact of instantaneous communication, each person is potentially a ‘reporter, an observer and a force for change.’ YouTube has made millions of peoples personal lives into public stories ...but almost totally out of context and without any character development . Blogs and wikis are uncorroborated and without agreed-upon ethical standards that has tried to govern “The Free Press” for two centuries.

The equalizing factor of the e-technology has many implications, which I will address in another forum. Suffice it to say, a great deal of what is symbolized in the Hajj is being rapidly actualized today: the inclination to articulate and be held to values of equity and equality, the collective nature of social change, the capacity to view the human being, indeed all creation, as being part of a dynamic system, inter and intra-related, the cultural, gender social leveling and cooperative

intent (albeit, it is also at risk today), and the urge or *himmat* for collaboration and accommodation as we also saw at the time of the Prophet.

Today, the values-based initiatives addressed for their own sake and not for the sake of a Party or ideology are trying to gain traction in a very slippery world of corruption, self interest, and distraction. We (our souls) have pledged, and our bodies and minds need to fulfill that promise. The climate of study and inaction is giving way to action and collective will across the globe. We could safely say that the beginning of globalization came with the spread of cultures: Persian, Greek, Roman and religions; Christianity and Islam. But the dynamic of Hajj was more than a pilgrimage to a holy or historic site. It was and is always a dynamic aggregation of intention, energy and affirmation; the consequent recollection of Muslims annually in Mecca, saying, “We got here. We are here and now. ***Labaika Labaika, Allahumma Labaik.***” It is a statement in physical presence and word, a personal journey, and often sacrifice—a migration pattern ordained in the origin of time and human life, and intrinsic to human nature, as much so initially as the migration of birds or whales or salmon or the turning of seasons.

We can say with authority and safety that Islam, from its very beginnings with our patron Ibrahim (as) and his wives, as well as Nūh (as), Musa (as) and finally Prophet Muhammed (sal) (all coming from Hazrat Adam (as)) represent the beginnings of pluralism and the reuniting of diverse members of creation and clans under the banner of One Truth, One Allah (swt), One Purpose. Yet, Islam, at the same time maintains the characteristics of diversity that Allah (swt) wanted us to focus on when He revealed:

**Yaa'ayyuha-n-nasu 'Inna Khalaqanakum Min Dhakarinn-wa
Ja'alnakum Shu'ubanw-wa Qabaa'ila Li-ta'arafu; 'Inna**

**'Akramakum 'Inda-llahi 'Atqakum; 'Inna-llaha 'Alimun
Khabir.**

Had I desired I could have made you all one people but I created you different so that you could come to love one another. O mankind! We created you from a single male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (one who is) the most righteous of you. (al-Hujurat 49:13)

Now it is accepted in science (at least by many), technology and politics that we live in a global world economically and environmentally. It is not, however, only economic trade and transportation that make it global; it is the reality of instant communication that is accessible to virtually everyone for very little cost. E-World has merged with Me world. With it, equality of voice, of ideas, of values can be encouraged and directed at not only social issues (vis a vis Persian Spring/ Arab Spring/Occupy Wall Street), but also at individual commonality with values that all people, in their heart, possess. What is inherent in the schema of Hajj, as in all of Islam, is flexibility, tolerance, equity, equality, collective direction, *shura*, *ijma*, personal responsibility yet accountability (*ijtihad*), attraction (*jedhbh*) and *nisbat* (relatedness/ relationships) for the good of all and for the sake of Allah (*fī sabīli-Llāh*).

The question arises how much is hope and design, and how much is reality today, given that human beings have choice...even the choice to deny what was pledged by all of our souls at the moment before creation? Messages have been carried by noble people, prophets, messengers, guides and just good people; messages that laud the virtues of Allah (swt) and His believers. The message has always been the same: to trust in Allah (swt), to love each person with open hearts and minds

and to protect the essence of the truth from corruption and decay that is part of all physical entities—human, animal or even institutions decay.

However the message sent by Allah (swt) through His Messengers has been heard, but for the most part it has yet to be heeded as a unifying force. But the signs on the horizon (*a 'faqi*) and in the hearts (*anfusi*) transcend language and form and name. Even though it uses social/political issues as a foundation for articulating something much larger, much more universally founded—global love and concern, compassion and mercy with their consequent manifestations of peace and security—it has not yet been achieved, let alone sustained, even to the extent of co-existence and tolerance.

**Laqada 'Arsalna Rusulana Bi-l-bayyinati Wa 'Anzalna
Ma'amhu-l-kitaba Wa-l-mizana Liyaquma-n-nasu Bi-l-qista.**

**We have surely sent Our messengers with clear signs and sent
with them the Book and the Balance so that mankind may stand
by justice. (Hadīd 57:25)**

At this time of year, we are reminded by the story of Sidna Ibrahim (as) and Hagar and Ishmael, as well as the ever deepening understanding of the meaning and practices of Hajj. Life demands of us the very best effort and service, the very best we can offer of ourselves to Allah (swt). Most of the time, we think of what we need and how to get it; justifying that need, and at times moaning over the effort necessary to achieve it. This self-centered aspect of life is at least temporarily neutralized in the rarified air of Hajj. But we do live in a world so infected by selfishness that all of us carry this disease to some degree, and in the final accounting it is only the purification of the Mercy of Allah and the striving on our part that will bring a cure both individual and collective.

Tie the past with the present: Listen to the attitude, the essential guidance and consequent demeanor of the believer. Don't limit these quotes to Muslims or Islam; extend them to everyone seeking peace, inner or outer, people seeking knowledge, understanding, freedom from tyranny, trust in each other. Then review the events of the day. At Hajj, now and in the past, in the parks and squares across the world, in countries Muslim and non-Muslim, people of all backgrounds and cultures and races on the streets in major cities, camped on their Arafat, are throwing verbal stones at the Shaytans of greed and inequity, making *tawāf* around the stone cubes of industry, commerce; making pilgrimages to the shrines of inequity draped in the cloth of 'equity' and the litanies of false concern.

Are times changing? Is the inherent imprint of pilgrimages, manifest in all societies and religions, taking on a new expression (not only metaphorically but actually), or is this just another 'religious tribal gathering,' or is it a last gasp of human potential for good before the cataclysmic ills of society infect us, our environment, our societies? Guidance, even just from within that, originates in the essential *fitrah* of each human being who has qualities articulated and affirmed in Qur'an and Hadith, and form the core of right action, right behavior, right character...Islam.

Yes, Hajj has many realities today. It has a time and a place and a series of actions with a specific group of people who see a journey from life to death to life, and it has its universal manifestation, movement. See how even in English we call things like 'Occupy Wall Street' a movement! And if it is not based in Truth, in character, in humility and gratitude, then both Hajj and any movement will become corrupted. We wonder at the events at Hajj. Why are people killed by the crush of a stampeded crowd trying to stone the Shaytan? We have heard stories over the years of how, with arms locked together, bands of Hajjis walk 8-10

abreast pushing through the crowds, or how a small Turkish man and his elderly wife were saved by our brother Shaykh Nooruddeen Durkee from being crushed in the run between Safa and Marwa. He literally picked them up in his arms at the very last second before they were crushed. *Alhamdulillah-Llāh!*

Where is the love of humanity and the shame—or what should be shame? Of course, it is as it has been described, that this is a time of great excitement and mass crowds, symbolic of when we all rise from our graves and get our marching orders. We know it is a blessing to die on Hajj – unfortunately we know that too strongly here – but it does not relieve the pain of the loss of loved ones. Nonetheless, there is an *adab* of life and of death, of brother/sister hood, of sacrifice for the good of others in the Name of Allah (swt). The Names of Allah (swt) are : Truth, Justice, Peace, Protector, Friend, Fairness ... whether in Mecca, Medina, Arafat, Mina or Wall street, London, Cairo, Tunis, Tripoli. *Sulh* (reconciliation), peace, tolerance, cleansing oneself are all parts of Hajj.

**Innama-l-mu'minuna ikhwatun fa-aslihu bayna akhawaykum
wa-t-taqu-llaha la'allakum turhamun.**

**Surely the believers are brothers, so make reconciliation
between your brothers, and be conscious of Allah and ward off
evil [from within and without], that you may receive mercy.**

(49:10)

We cannot allow ourselves to look at the Hajj as a selfish act. It is an act of worship of Allah. Every guideline, every rule, every prescription and every prohibition that is written as to how a person is to worship Allah is to be observed there and then, more than any place in the world for the Hajji, but everywhere by everyone who is awake and alive and in submission to Allah (Truth) . The

sacrifice at the Hajj is not meant to be a sacrifice of human bodies. It is not even necessarily meant to be the sacrifice of a lamb, because we are told it is not the blood that makes the sacrifice, but it is our piety. The sacrifice in the Hajj takes us deep within ourselves, if we allow this to happen, to build a deeper faith and sense of our mortality and the life beyond. But it also should make us stronger in character, stronger in our (faith), and thus build a stronger infrastructure for our lives and the life of the Muslim Ummah, and in the life of our community here.

You'll take time to write the report, to do the investigation on Google, you'll take time to go to town to buy something you think you need, or something you don't even need. You'll take time to have a frivolous conversation. But who will take the time to go within themselves and just think about this? You question your own faith, but you don't give your faith any time to grow and develop. You are so wrapped up in your own self, you made yourself into Allah. How horrible is that to do! Then you feel guilty about it, but you keep doing it. Be quiet. Be silent. Go sit in the woods. Do it seven days in a row, and your life will change.

Certainly, the goal of life lies not only in *dunya*. But Allah (swt) has told us clearly – first by the name of the *dīn* itself (Islam), and by the foundation of Islam in justice and compassion – that there is much that can and must be achieved in *dunya* among the diverse peoples. The goal of Islam certainly could be described in terms of righteousness, piety, justice and fairness among and between all individuals and groups of communities. It certainly could be described in terms of care and protection in that. **“Wa ta 'anwanu 'ala-l-birri wa t-taqawa. Help one another in righteousness and piety.”** (Ma'idan 5:2) Do not crush one another! **“Yaa'ayyuha-l-ladhina 'amanu kunu qawwamina bi-l-qisti shuhadaa'a li-llahi. Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses for the sake of Allah.”** (An-Nisa 4:135)

But most of all, we wish to understand the clear direction of the Prophet (sal) for our purpose and life:

(O Muslims)! You will never enter Paradise unless you are believers. And you will never achieve genuine belief unless you love (and respect) each other. Shall I not tell you the way you can create love amongst yourselves? (That way lies in) frequently greeting each other with salaam. (Abu Hurairah / Muslim)

How hard is that? Brother and sisters, if we, who are Muslims, have not achieved even this, then what can we expect from the world? What can we hope for in our relationship with others?

The gathering together on Arafat, the sacrifice and the *tawāf*, the minions of believers dressed for the tomb, hopefully focusing on mortality and the limited gains in this world against the background of eternity – all should remind us of the harmony and well-being that needs to be achieved in our community, as well as in our world. Islam is geographically and demographically a global *dīn*; yet it remains encumbered and restricted by cultural ethnocentricity, linguistic and racial egocentricity, and political immaturity. Muslims or for that matter any religious group or leader should not defend the wrong actions of other Muslims when it goes against Sharia, Torah or Injīl. Everyone is accountable before Allah.

Innallaaha Aliimum-bithaatis-suudur...

Allah knows well all the secrets of your breasts.... (3:119)

The commonality , the unified purpose of Hajj, the response to the call from the soul that forges, hopefully (albeit unfortunately, not completely), a harmony and *adab* of returning to the source should be translatable, if it is *fī sabīli-Llāh*, to

higher and higher levels of social harmony and well being. Should there not be evolution in social well-being? Should there not be evolution in our own community? (*Inshā'a-Llāh*) That was not a very strong *inshā'a-Llāh*. (*Inshā'a-Llāh*). It still wasn't a strong *inshā'a-Llāh*, because it's not strong in your heart. You have to have me remind you. The universal experience of Hajj and the living circumstances during it reflect the demands of actual day-to-day life globally.

For example, on the Hajj, you have to sustaining your life, care for others, have *adab* toward the elderly, speak in ways others can understand, across language, cultural differences. Your demeanor, your patience and perseverance all are brought forward in this event. At the same time, it reflects the chaos and the frenzy of the Yawma Qiyama. It is a bridge between here and the Hereafter, and it is an example of the distance we must travel to bring harmony amongst ourselves for the sole purpose of worshiping Allah (swt), fulfilling His commandment to us to “die before you die” during the Hajj.

What is the peace of Hajj? What is the final test of one's willingness to place all else aside but the trust in Allah (swt)? In the outer behavior, we must shun impatience. We must be disciplined. We must turn away from all slander and scandal. We must set aside all quarrels, reconcile all differences, and even do so by the force of the community, if necessary. We should be fair, and just. There must be no more ridicule or baiting of others. We must be very careful with our suspicions. “...**suspicion and spying is unworthy of believers...**” Mutual respect and faith are great duties for each and every Muslim.

PART TWO OF EID KHUTBAH

November 6, 2011

So what is the peace of Hajj? What is the final test of one's willingness to place all else aside but the trust in Allah (swt)? In the outer behavior, we must shun impatience. We must be disciplined. We must turn away from all slander and scandal. We must set aside all quarrels, reconcile all differences, and even do so by the force of the community, if necessary. We should be fair and just. There must be no more ridicule or baiting of others, as I had told you. It brings us to a deeper question of what is Pilgrimage? What can it mean to us today? What is the world turning toward? Circling around? Idolatry (*ibadat al asnam*) or real worship (*ibadat*); (*gair mutarabi*) without discipline or with *adab*?

Pilgrimage is homecoming, quest. Pilgrimage may be understood as alternative genres of moving or journeying, but each implies a different symbolic kind of destination. Circumambulation however has deeper meaning in the religious space, connecting the pilgrim to the cosmos. Its significance also is seen in the close relationship between circulation and circumambulation. After all, the Ka'ba is reflected in us as our heart; the *tawāf* / circulation and *taskiyat* / purification lie in the discarding of the old and impure and the revivification of the new...breath upon breath, the cleansing of the blood.

The intention of the pilgrimage, its modern reality as a manifestation of the social/political and spiritual health/role of the Muslim community I have touched on, but it bears more emphasis. Was there an unfulfilled intention or plan for the Hajj, or was it only to be ritualistic in form? You remember, I began with the quotation, **“And proclaim unto mankind the pilgrimage.”** So many cultures mixing, every road and track converge on one location for one purpose only. Along the way, in encampments and oases and wadis, across fires under the stars, that social milieu becomes a mixture of intellectual exchanges, ideas and experiences. Unfortunately, it is lost for the most part to people who fly in on the airplanes and are moved like cattle on buses with their own individual groups, and

there is no cross-fertilization of cultures and ideas. Another very clever, shall I say, conspiracy among the modern conveners – keeping people apart, which is totally against the principle of this Hajj.

What was it that used to happen, and still does to a very small degree? Discourses centered around core beliefs, values, and the reality of personal effort, sacrifice. Khaled just came and told me tonight about one of the participants in the Kazakh program from 2004. This year he accomplished his goal: he walked from Kazakhstan to Mecca for Hajj, and is organizing another walk for the next year or two. You can keep that in mind.,

[There is] an affinity with our predecessor Ibrahim and Hagar and Ishmael; the brother / sisterhood of believers safe within each other's faith and promise and sacrifice – moving to Mecca and sacrificing all along the way.

A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, and a believer is one in whom people place their trust in regard to their life and wealth.” (Hadith)

Some speak a common language in those gatherings. Certainly, [they are] familiar with the language of the Qur'an that formed the basis of conversation and mutual agreement and understanding, the revelation that tied together those from the East and West, North and South, and compelled them to be drawn by the magnet of Allah (swt) toward each other. Indeed opposites do attract...the Central Asian with the Sudanese, the American with the Chinese, the Arab with the Persian, the wealthy and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, the healthy with the ill. [They are all] united by that which originally they all embraced: Islam and its ideas. Its form [was embraced], yes; but more than form, its essential goodness. How hard is it to see that movement is an integral cosmic condition: a means to

come toward Allah: Isra Miraj, *hadra*, whirling, movement in prayer, circles of transmissions? How difficult is it to see “a movement” to be an expression of the selfsame reality –like a social and political movement?

If one strives to live by principle, then the seeing is easy; if one chooses to see through the eyes of an ideologue, the [seeing is] virtually impossible, and filled with fear, paranoia, blame, hatred, racism and violence. Circulation seemed to have been a double edged sword. It was seen as “*a destructive force transforming traditional, regional equilibrium and stable genres de vie, but also a creative process promoting the diffusion of ideas, the emergence of real comparative advantages, allowing an emergence of a real comparative advantage, and the radiation of sociocultural influences from certain centers or nodes.*” Think ‘Occupy Movement’ when you try to understand this. “*Circulation not only develops, transforms, and specializes already existing ways of life, but it also encourages the formation of new ones.*”

Circulation has come to describe transportation and communication in all their manifestations; thus, it refers to movement in general: movement of goods, services, ideas, information, and people. [It is] analogous, as I said, to blood circulation in the human body. Geographic circulation connects localized ways of life to the outside world and vice versa, and brings in outside influences, but also exports local ones. The concept of "circulation" emphasizes continuous flows and movement, and assumes the systems to be dynamic, with energy input from external sources, just as in living systems. Spiritually, the *tawāf* intensifies, strengthens the core values, the spiritual light or progress (*afaqi*) of the *hajji*. For the rest of us, we must turn toward the heart, make our *tawāf*, around the house of Allah.

Allah says, **“You will find Me in the heart of the believer.”** Strive to be in the company of like minded/hearted individuals (*suhbat*), and eliminate all distinctions of class, station, title or label from our minds and hearts. One can connect with the outer as well as inner pilgrimage. In the cultural sense, circulation both diffuses shared beliefs, but also changes tradition. So, in a circulation system, tradition and change do not necessarily behave as opposing entities; but rather, they become complementary components of the cultural system, a dynamic dyad adding the realm of love of the Creator.

Pilgrim circulation or circumambulation around the Ka’ba, assumes the existence of a center (or centers), with spiritual magnetism toward which many pathways converge. This *jedhba* is the same force as love. It is unbounded, extensive with the qualities of power, awe, and mystery. They are meaningful only in relation to the persons who perceive them as such, and who have the sentiment which motivates them to undertake a sacred journey to such places. Sacred places are humanly constructed, not just in the physical sense, but more importantly, in terms of the very meaning they embody and convey to the pilgrims. The great scientist and Nobel laureate Priogene, who I had met at one time, observed this construction of meaning in relation to reality in general: *“Whatever we call reality, it is revealed to us only through the active construction in which we participate.”*

Hence, the command for Hajj and the opportunity for *umrah* in Mecca, like other spiritual venues, have a special attractive force, a magnetism. History plays an important role, of course, but also the generations upon generations of sincere pilgrims – their prayers, their *du’ā*, their faith – add to the force. We say that our feet turn toward such a place, toward the Prophet (sal), toward the tombs of the *shuyukh*, and to the fact that so many healings, so many miracles, so many awakenings take place at such venues. It is undeniable that there is a special power and a special force that exists there.

Certainly, sincere belief impels the *salik /salika* to move toward the event, toward the house of the Beloved, just as a lover cannot turn his/her feet away from the path to the Beloved. Perhaps, pilgrimage is a result of both magnetism of the place (the attribute of the place), and impelling sentiment of the pilgrim; but it is difficult to imagine anything other. I have suggested elsewhere that deep feelings and inherent yearning are what distinguish a pilgrimage from any other journey. Unless the visitor feels a sentimental attachment to the place of veneration, a journey to it will not constitute a pilgrimage. For example, a visit to the Vatican by a Hindu may not be considered a pilgrimage, even though the place is sacred for Christians who make pilgrimages there.

On the other hand, we can consider a journey to nationalistic shrines (for example the Martin Luther King Memorial or the Vietnam Memorial) a pilgrimage, because they are the repositories of our collective sentiment, especially, for someone who participated in the events they commemorate. They have almost a spiritual magnetism, and many visitors have deep sentiment for what these spots signify. Therefore, magnetism of the place and the sentiment of the pilgrim (religious or secular) are both inseparably part of the pilgrimage phenomenon. They are interdependent and complementary. This co-dependency seems to lie at the root of the self-organization of pilgrimage over long periods..

In that sense, pilgrim circulation seems to be a self organizing system in terms of the Chaos Theory, if you want to go there. I do, at times, as you know. The flow of the *hajjis* constantly ties the *hajji* field to the sacred center. Two concepts of chaos theories are ‘attractor’ and ‘the basin of attraction.’ An attractor can be a point, a path, a complex series of states, or in fact a ‘strange attractor.’ Pilgrimage circulation may be linked to Chaos Theory via the concept ‘basins of attraction’ for dynamic systems. The basin of attraction is in fact an area leading toward an

attractor. These basins of attraction may be the equivalent of pilgrim fields from which pilgrims originate and ultimately converge toward a center. So you can see that every encampment, every place along the way becomes a basis of attraction. It attracts people to the encampment, and that encampment is in a sense attracted toward its goal.

Just as the basins of attraction in the Chaos Theory are not static, so are pilgrim fields, based as they are on dynamic entities such as language, religion or other cultural distributions that define them. Since each one of these attributes of a pilgrim field is in a state of some flux, it behaves in a chaotic way. You don't know who's going to arrive at the camp, what language they are going to speak, but there is that common phenomenon that emerges from it. It's like a living system, like the cell within the nucleus, or the human body and its blood circulation – inherently dynamic.

The place of gathering; be it Jeddah or in past times, at oasis points, become living entities. Different individuals, from different locations, with different cultures and languages merge at certain points along the journey into a coherent unity; hence, there are many stories of strangers helping other strangers, caring for the ill as if he/she was part of their own family, recognizing the indefinable and inner bonds that unites. We know an example of this in our brother Daoud's moments.

Growth and change are coded in the pilgrimage process. Just as blood circulation in the living beings feeds, nourishes, purifies, and develops the body in a similar way, pilgrimage nourishes and purifies the pilgrim. Is there any doubt? I would like to say, *alahi ramo*, we had the living proof. Just as blood flows to the heart for purification, so that each cell of the entire human body receives nourishment, so pilgrims converge to sacred places and (hope to) come back with a renewed, purified body and soul. Just as blood circulation assumes, simultaneously, growth

and change in the human body itself, pilgrim circulation also assumes social and political changes in its ‘basins of attraction.’ One thing I think we can say for sure, what we have seen in the Arab Spring and previously in Iran and now in the streets today are tied to the same concept of gathering and pilgrimage.

Inward journeys are marked by the *latā'if* as centers of unique perception. And outer centers, such as tombs of the saints, are gathering places and nodes of *fiyd*; hence, they aggregate energy (i.e. intentions and prayers) and become energy centers for whoever needs to draw from that well-spring. Hence, certain places become sacred, healing, uplifting, mystical doorways. The concept of ‘basin of attraction’ of the Chaos Theory has interesting possibilities also in today’s changing social, economic and political landscapes. They are sensitive to even minor changes. This idea should be particularly applicable for examining the impact of religious fundamentalism, and for the political polarization of different communities.

Take for example the Salafi/Wahabi driven attacks by the Taliban and other groups on Sufi shrines in Pakistan and also now in Libya. Cultural diversity grounded in the nodal units within the system of Islamic faith and practice, heretofore, protected the Sufis and their shrines from attack; but after political change destabilized the system, forces within the system that were kept in check experienced a renewal of independent action outside of the collective and more balanced system, and gave or gives rise to ideological manipulative reasons. Thus, change in the political landscape of the basin of attraction can have a major cumulative effect on the geometry of a pilgrimage’s circulation system.

Pilgrimage is not just traversing distance, or earning merit by enduring hardship on a difficult path, it has a deeper cosmological symbolism. While purifying themselves in the process of pilgrimage, the pilgrims consecrate the very paths by

their footprints. We even say: "We are walking in the footsteps of the Prophet (sal) or Sidna Ibrahim (as). We are walking on sacred ground." These are statements we make even in English. Herein do we see the fusion of distinction between the sacred and the sanctified, the cause and the effect, the human and the Divine. This interplay between the form, the historical and the present time interfacing with our physical, psychological and emotional being creates a complex Cosmic Geometry, a complex system built over a lifetime of pilgrimages for the Sufi:

[One travels] from *mazar* to *mazar* (sacred spaces), *hadra* (weekly or more often), to Medina and Makkah, and the sacred places associated with them: Marwa/Safa, Mudalifa, Arafat, Ka'ba, and back again for the *umrah*. [One travels] from the personal transformation in the interface with the dynamics of the situation, the ritual, the historical, and the anticipated emotional response, to the idea, and the apparent reality of carrying the blessing back to others. How many of us think of the *hadra*, of the *muraqabah*, of the gathering or the *suhbat* here as such a kind of pilgrimage to carry the force back to each other? How many of us think that a simple trip to a holy place can bring back great blessings?

Priogene also said, quoting Bergson, "*The deeper we go into the nature of time, the more we understand that duration means invention, creation of forms, continuous elaboration of what is absolutely new.*" If you understand this view, it helps us to pursue the possibility that organization from chaos is an ever emergent cosmic condition. "*Order and disorder are intimately connected--one implies the other,*" he said. Think about how that might affect you. In Islamic as well as Hindu and Buddhist thought, both entropy and organization seem reconcilable as part of the cosmic condition. In the cosmic chaos, organization and entropy not only coexist, but are perhaps co-dependent.

[Remember] the story of the man making *tawaf* at great speed. When stopped, he was asked how long he had been making that *tawaf* at a speed where you could hardly see him. He said that he had been there since the beginning of creation, but not the beginning of the creation that we knew. Many, many times creations have been created. The concept of self organization in complex systems can help in understanding how the pilgrimage system has created a geometry of its own, always in the process of becoming, arising from lines of circulation. As hard as you think this is to understand, try to get an understanding that this attraction you would feel, and distraction, the complexity and the simplicity, the chaos and the order, all of them are there for our enlightenment and awakening to our potential, our consciousness. Well, I'll come down off the high horse of complexity theory for a minute.

As I look at the events of the past year, the new cycles of change and the circle of time, we can begin to understand the interface between the deep inner drive, yearning, and cosmic wondering within the human heart. Perhaps, we are getting a glimpse at the experience of the soul. Perhaps we have been 'there,' so to speak, experienced other dimensions, and all that is left of that memory is the yearning, the familiarity, the drive to move dynamically through life, seeking answers by learning how to ask the right questions. Perhaps, having been there before with Allah (swt) on the soul's pilgrimage, calling out to Allah where we received the assignment of life and the capacity of memory of other dimensions, where things were made and things were erased so that we would be active and truly take responsibility for this creation, so that we would care for it and others, perhaps we have remembered what Sidna Isa (as) said: "*Love thy brother as you love yourself.*"

Perhaps what is left for us is the reality of Hajj and Umrah, the structure and form of the ritual and the place [without], and the cleansing that takes place within,

when we stop and turn our attention to our heart, and allow the heart to be turned toward Allah. But it is also the interface with the physical world (the *‘ālam al-khalq*) that brings home the point of necessity for cultural delineation at times and other distinct entities to be established for outer order. The following analogy can be enlightening. In his book, *“Ihya’ Ulūm al-Deen. Revival of Religious Sciences,”* Imam Abu-Hamid al-Ghazālī offers the example or analogy to clarify his schema in classifying knowledge. *“It is understood that Hajj (pilgrimage) requires a group of soldiers to guard it, but Hajj is one thing and traveling the path to Hajj is another. And still, doing the actual guarding is a third thing. And knowing the tricks, tactics, and rules of guardianship is a fourth matter.”*

Writing in the ninth century, one of the aims of al-Ghazālī was to draw attention to the need of worldly knowledge in order to complement religious knowledge, worldly action in order to allow for spiritual action to take place. Twelve centuries later, however, writing an article on a blog, or giving lectures, engaging in *suhbat* (not exclusively on the subject of religion, but rather in aim) is to bring the essence of religion back in focus, and to humbly remind Muslim scholars and policy-makers of all religions that international relations, for example, and political movements are more than “knowing the tricks, tactics and rules of gamesmanship, but rather of guardianship in a global dynamic”...that we are all pilgrims—all of us.

What is quite useful in the analogy is the fact that the image of Hajj is frequently likened to standing before Allah (swt) on the Day of Awakening. In this light, traveling the path to Hajj can be likened to walking the path of return to consciousness and presence toward and in Allah (swt). It’s not “as if” we are walking the path to Allah (swt), but it’s the reality and purpose of our life, as made clear in the following *‘āyat*: **“O man! Verily, you are returning towards your**

Lord with your deeds and actions (good or bad), a sure returning.” (Quran: 84:6) There is no question that we are on this journey, that we are on this Hajj.

Muslim nations have been for centuries involved in the politicizing of Islam, and the absorption of the knowledge of worldly machinations for power and for supremacy, winding up (for the most part) bereft of the spiritual realities of Islam. The motivations of the pilgrim toward humility, equity, equality, freedom, mutual love and respect, inner peace as well as outer peace are lost to them. So the name remains, but the reality is barely breathing. The accoutrements are present, but even they are dwarfed beneath the material edifices of worldly wealth and power. While the people, wrapped in their *ihram*, act out the true poverty and simplicity of life before Allah's Creator, this human symbol of piety competes with the human conception of Divine Iconography.

How more obvious can it get before we all catch on to the hypocrisy and are humbled before our Lord Who sent the prophets of simplicity throughout the centuries to exemplify the meaning of pilgrim, *faqir*, *darvish*, *mu'min*? It's obviously not in the beard and not in the sheet that is wrapped around you. The label "Islamic" does not do the trick in practice or in theory; putting on *ihram* and harming everyone in the way including your fellow pilgrims in the name of guarding the path to Hajj, does not make the journey Islamic. Likewise, adopting the label "Islamic state," then acting in typical realistic fashion in the name of let's say, "guarding an Islamic identity," with no consideration for moral or ethical obligations to your fellow Muslims, or towards your countrymen and women, or to everyone else along the path does not make a state an Islamic state.

Quite the contrary; it just objectifies and demeans the essence of Islam, and indeed, all the other religious and spiritual entities created to remind us of our fallibility and transient sojourn, our pilgrimage in and through life. Instead of

most people striving hard to do good in this world, to try to fulfill the pledge, the vow to Allah (swt), most of us struggle to survive and not think of the return journeys available to us just through prayer, *muraqabah*, service, Hajj and the ultimate journey to the Akhirat. The issue here is that ethic and principle are part of Islamic ontology. That is, once you believe that the world is designed in a certain way, you act upon this belief. In our case, values and principles are part of our ontology. It's what link us to Allah (swt) in a chain of moral, ethical and behavioral accountability, at least in the chain of *tawbah* / repentance.

Walking the straight path (*al-Sirat al-Mustaqim*) involves, more than anything, experiencing and learning those higher values of justice, mercy and forgiveness. Yet, those are also the attributes of Allah (swt). Submission of one's action to those values, that is, adoption of spiritual action, is nothing but submission to Allah, which is the literal meaning of Islam. Then by definition, to be a Muslim in reality (not just name) is to be humble and strive to manifest the qualities and values. Again, we are all pilgrims. Who among us is striving and humble and grateful?

This is a long way from an Islamic state where the space for personal ethic becomes limited by the suspecting and paranoiac state, and dehumanizing tactics to rule. The Kuwaitis, Egyptians, Yemenis, Algerians, Malaysians, Tunisians, Iraqis, and, Iranians, among so many others, are all pilgrims supposedly walking the same path of returning to Allah (swt); yet, once we meet on the international area of self-centered interests, we seem to do everything possible to hinder our own progress, to imprison ourselves in repeated actions and errors, errors that elevate the worldly material forms and rituals to that of religious belief and fervor. They elevate them as eternal, and the determinant action, values, rules, and institutions, in effect, replace the true journey itself.

Yes, the actual Hajj remains; and without a doubt is life changing. But the collective will and tolerance and joy and humility are almost lost. When one reenters the world of nation, state, individuality, tribe, having left the essential collective, the message becomes lost. Walking the straight path to Allah (swt) in the twenty first century is different that traveling to Hajj in the ninth century. Regional and international relationships need not abrogate that we are all pilgrims. We have a bond with everyone else we meet along the path of life. In other words, what we are starting to see in the world today, coming out of the so called Muslim majority nations, first, should not be seen as a political, but as human and universal call.

The call for democracy is a call that is not predominantly political, but of freedom/values that (like Islam is supposed to do) transcend race, nationality, creed and color. We could be seeing the oft times blurred link between the path and the structure, the spiritual and the material on a global scale, and between the conditions of possibilities for moral action on one hand, and strategic planning for a peaceful world on the other. Through our journey we come across international organizations, regional integration processes, NGOs, etc. Whether evolving or designed, all these are man-made social products. What *will* make them sustainable has to be the values of the pilgrim in the heart, the creation of consensus, the rule of spiritual law, a reality that creates a container of social, moral and ethic capacity that can hold values, norms, and ideas that are of benefit to everyone.

The lesson of the story of Sidna Ibrahim and Ismael need not be related again; we all know it. But the meaning of that story is still being written in society today and in the hearts of human beings. I understand that this can be dismissed as very idealistic, but I prefer to view it as possible and practical. I believe that it is our duty to reflect upon the actual application of historical events as reminders of

where we are and are not; and where we could and should be, and why we are or are not at that point. Let's then review for the sake of renewal and revivifying our own pilgrimage in life.

These days of the year we commemorate and immortalize the meaning of Pilgrimage / Hajj. It is one pillar of Islam, an expression of a truthful concept that man has to perceive so that he may live its meaning. As we always say, all religious practices we are guided to observe are expressions of basic concepts related to man's issue of existence, and his/her relationship with the Unseen/ al Ghayb, on one hand, and the Manifest on the other. Rituals and religious practices are vehicles of communication where "the movement" expresses the truthful concepts to humanity. Practices of pilgrimage such as: the Circumambulation (going seven times around the Holy Ka'ba); the litany chanting Labbaik (a pilgrim's expression that he is responding with his whole existence to the Call of Allah (swt)); the Slaughtering (offering a sacrifice symbolizing our killing of our animal nature); the Stoning (stoning a symbolic body of Shaytan as an expression of our will to reject the evil in us and around us); and the State of pilgrim's Sanctity in Ihram (ceasing other normal daily activities, as a symbol that we are in a complete Divine). These are full of messages. Every practice in pilgrimage reflects an aspect of one's devotion to Allah (swt).

Pilgrimage starts by a pilgrim's intention to start out a journey to the Holy Home. The Qur'an states: **"The Eternal Holy Home (Bayt) was first made available for men that is at Bakka. It is ever full of Blessing and Guidance to all the worlds."** (Q 3: 96) The Holy Home is a symbol of Allah's (swt) Manifestation on earth. It is a symbol of the Direction that one should turn their face to when praying. It is a symbol of the Truth existing on earth, and that one has to come close to. It is a symbol of the meaning of Life that one has to know and make the focus of one's whole existence. It is a symbol of the everlasting existence of the

word of Allah (swt), the Messenger of Allah (swt), The Home of Allah (swt), the Spirit of Allah (swt), and the Light of Allah (swt) on earth.

Have we approached each practice this way? Have we absorbed it to the extent that we know the meaning of every practice that we do? When we don't read the meaning underlying the practice, we don't get out of it much of anything. If we read it truly, then our devotion to the Holy Home is reflected in developing our behavior in all aspects of life. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "**Verily never will Allah change human beings unless they have the will for changing themselves.**" (Q13: 112) We better contemplate deeply all the religious practices we are guided to do, be better servants, and strive to do our affirmation with sincerity, so that it provokes our hearts, minds and bodies to be guided to the Path of truth and real life.

We pray to Allah to support us achieve that goal, and help us be the kind of beings who deserve His Grace, Knowledge and Wisdom. Pilgrimage, one pillar of Islam, is rich with many messages. The Eternal Holy Names guide us. The Eternal Holy Home/*Bayt* was first made available in Mecca. "**It is ever full of Blessing and Guidance to all the worlds.**" (Q3: 96) This place is a symbol, and it is also a reality. If you look at this place today, you know exactly what kind of reality it is. The Holy Home is a symbol of the meaning where you direct your faces to in your prayer. It is a symbol of the meaning you are seeking when you start out on your journey. It's a symbol for the meaning we want to come closer to, the meaning of truth and the meaning of life. How many distractions there are today in Mecca, itself, at the Ka'ba, to distract us from its true meaning?

Perhaps we might say for the generation we are living in, the true Hajj is in one's own heart. At least no one can build a big clock tower over our heart. The Sufi says, "*If I miss my loyalty to the Messenger of Allah (swt) for a twinkling of an*

eye, I regard myself as no longer a true Muslim.” This is not about religion. It’s about attention, concentration. You would better to start for yourself. Take your whole existence a step forward by reading all Allah’s (swt) commandments said to us deeply, patiently and reasonably. Do not follow the example of those who handle things superficially, who reduce religion into a set of shapes and forms they perform by their bodies, but the practices do not touch their hearts, minds and souls. Such people have gone through a setback to the Pre Islamic era, to the Jāhālīya of ignorance, and idolization. Even though on the face value they keep all the practices of prayers, they have turned it into something other than Islam.

People are waking up. I would like you to understand that it is partially because of you, because of our community our work. Believe it. Our intention for so many years, unknown and unnamed – that is the way of the wave of these evolutions are and these revolutions are evolving. No one stands out. Everybody makes their contribution. We were ahead of the wave, and continue to be. I hope you believe that. Let’s hope and pray that the embers keep glowing, from Iran to America, Europe through Asia. It is a procession of people everyday, whether as the *bātin tawāf* around the heart, or in Mecca at the Ka’ba; regardless, it is before Allah (swt). If you don’t see Him, know that He sees you. *Asalaamu aleykum.*