

Secrets of the Hajj

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The entire journey of Hajj is a spirituality excursion that covers three stages:

The First Stage: Cutting off affinity from all things with the exception of Allah in order to reach to Allah.

The Second Stage: Continuing towards Allah and strengthening the alliance (with Him), until one reaches to Allah and (the true) essence of worship.

The Third Stage: Once a person has reached to the level of perfection and has arrived at the stage of (true) worship, he then returns (to the people) to guide the creations of Allah towards Him

The First Stage of the Hajj

In the first stage, above all other things, that which is the most important is repentance (tawbah) and to be vigilant. The meaning of repentance is to shun all devils and all forms of despotism, and turn back towards Allah. It means to disregard one's wishes, low desires and the lower soul (al Nafs al Ammarah) and proceed towards spirituality and the (higher) qualities (of a human being).

Completing all that was performed in the past such that there is no responsibility or obligation between Allah and His creations on the person's shoulders, the person leaves his city in such a state that not a single person is upset with him except of course the Devil (Shaitan).

The meaning of being vigilant is that one focuses his attention on the grandeur and majesty of the House of Allah.

He focuses on the fact that it is the Creator and Maintainer of the Universe that has given him this opportunity (to perform the Hajj). He focuses on the fact that on this journey, he must not allow anyone or anything to aggravate him. He focuses on the fact that if he performs a Hajj that is accepted, then without doubt, he has reached to that level which mankind was created to reach to (the level of meeting Allah and the level of true worship). He focuses on the importance of performing all those things, which are obligatory to perform, such as the Salat, etc...

A woman performing the Hajj safeguards her modesty and her Islamic attire (hijab). She focuses on the importance of refraining from all sins, and she knows and understands that

Allah does not accept the deeds of those who commit sins. The acceptance of all actions is connected to one's piety (taqwa). Thus, Allah does not accept the HaJJ from those people who commit sins: "Verily Allah only accepts from those who guard (against evil). "

The person must keep in mind the importance of performing the recommended (mustahab) acts, most importantly of which is serving the creations of Allah, which is one of the ways that the obligatory (wajib) acts are accepted.

The person must keep in mind that especially during this journey, wherever he may be and in whatever state he is, he is constantly in the presence of Allah , the Noble Prophet (s) and the Pure A'immah (as) (such as we are told in the Qur'an): "Say Work! Allah will see your work and (so will) His Messenger and the believers... "

The person must keep in mind that using any forbidden (haram) wealth or property on this trip rather in any act of worship, will not lead to anything except the accumulation of sins, transgression and misfortune in this world and in the next life.

After repentance and being vigilant, the person must also reach to a stage of emptiness and annihilation, such that if he can not reach to the level where he is able to remove all the detestable characteristics such as jealousy, miserliness, pride, greatness, worship of the world, etc... then he should at least try to acquire the praiseworthy characteristics such as mercy, generosity, humility, asceticism, and freeing the soul from all that it is attached to within himself.

A person should try to at least control those detestable attributes that he possesses and not allow them to take power over him.

Similarly, one must try to allow justice, equity and the fear of Allah to rule over himself such that unknowingly and on its own, the soul gains control in a way that all the obligatory (wajib) actions are performed and all sins are refrained from. This should be accomplished at least to the extent that these (positive traits) take control over one's al Nafs al Ammarah and over one's own wishes and desires, and do not drag the person towards sin.

Once this has been accomplished, then one, through the pleasures of the religion (Salat, fasting, recitation of Qur'an, supplication, humility and humbleness while in the presence of Allah , pleasing the creations of Allah , etc ...) and through seeking help by way of Tawassul to the Ahl al Bait (as) (it is better to go to Madinah after performing the Hajj, if one is able to), especially seeking help from Imam Wali al Asr (may Allah hasten his noble return and may my soul and the souls of all of those of the universe be sacrificed for the dirt under his feet) and by the continuous recitation of Ziyarat Jami`ah al Kabirah which is one of the best forms of Tawassul to the 12th Imam, one will reach to the level of glory and praise meaning that our

soul will become illuminated by the light (Nur) of Allah.

‘And we placed for him, a light (Nur) by which he walks amongst the people...’

In this blessed journey, while in the security of the Truth, one should be able to reach to a level of true servitude, where one can distinguish between good and bad, friend and enemy, and what Allah (swt) wants, from what one's own evil soul wants...

"If you are careful of (your duty to) Allah, then He will grant you a distinction. "

What is more important than which has been mentioned is at this stage, one must attain sincerity (khulus). This means that in one's heart and thoughts during this journey, nothing should remain except Allah and the performance of the Hajj exactly as the way Prophet Ibrahim (as) performed it.

"Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists. "

The person should not perform Hajj simply for people to congratulate him; or, may Allah protect us, to make other people work hard and go through troubles, meaning his Hajj is not simply to use other people. In fact, his Hajj should not even be for Allah to bestow upon him, both in this world and in the next, blessings and bounties. Rather, all of his attention and focus on this journey must be for Allah, the goal of reaching to Him and to the true worship, such that no one else or anything will be in his sight except the pleasure of Allah.

‘And no one has with him any blessing for which he should be rewarded, except the seeking of the pleasure of his Lord, the Most High.’

In summary, at this stage, one's intention must be sincere and there must not be anything of the worldly pleasure, in fact not even the pleasures of the next life should be in his sight. Just as the Qur'an mentions, the best colour is the colour of Allah

"(Receive) the colour of Allah, and who is better than Allah in colouring? "

The worst of colours is the colour of conceit, and it is clear that if Allah forbid, through one's actions, speech, or if in one's heart or soul this trait is already there, then he has reached to the stage of disbelief (kufr): "So woe to the praying ones, those who are unmindful of their prayers, ".Who do (good) to be seen, And withhold the necessities of life

The Second Stage of the Hajj

In this level, the first action consists of wearing the Ihram at the Miqat (the station where the Ihram must be worn).

The Ihram of the Hajj is similar to the Takbiratul Ihram for Salat, such that when a person says the Takbiratul Ihram to start the Salat, one must leave behind all other things and focus one's

entire attention on Allah. From the beginning of the Salat until its completion, nothing else must distract the person.

Such is the Ihram for Hajj meaning that once it is worn, the person must leave aside all things related to the world. In its place, one must turn towards Allah and (that which is) His pleasure.

At the time of donning the Ihram, one must fulfill the commandments of Allah . One should remember the time of death and the wearing of the burial shroud (kafan), being placed in the grave, and the fact that one day, in this same attire, one will rise up to meet Allah. At the time of saying the talbiyyah (sentences said after the wearing of the Ihram and making of the intention), one must pay attention to the fact that Allah has invited him/her. By saying this phrase (talbiyyah), one is in fact replying to Allah's call, and with an inner excitement, and while wavering between the two states of fear and hope, cries out, Labbaik (here I am)!

In the narrations, we read that at the time of reciting the talbiyyah, the Ahl al Bait (as) faced such an inner turbulence, trembling body, and change in colour of their skin, such that they did not have the power or ability to read the talbiyyah!

In fact in some instances, they would fall into a state of almost passing-out and when asked why they were not reciting the talbiyyah while in this state, they would reply that we are afraid that the reply (from Allah) may come that: "You are not accepted and you are not welcome. "

Second Action: The Tawaf is the second act. The Tawaf resembles the continuous act of the Angels circumambulating the Throne of Allah .

"And you shall see the Angels going round about the Throne glorifying the praise of their Lord. " Just as the Tawaf of the Angels around the blessed Throne of Allah is a sign of their love for Him, the Tawaf of the servants of Allah around the House of Allah as well is a sign of their love for Him.

By him performing the Tawaf, he is in fact proclaiming that his self, his wealth, his wife and children and whatever else he has in this world are all sacrificed for Allah (swt) and that he is ready to give everything he has in the way of Allah and only for His pleasure.

"And from the people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah. "

By the repetition of the Tawaf and arriving to the state of complete submission and servitude, the veils (between the servant and Allah) are one by one, torn away.

The veils of self conceit and selfishness, pride and anger, lust and greed, jealousy and miserliness are removed; and in their place are embellished the covering of humbleness and indigence in the presence of The Truth, humility and forbearance in the presence of The Creator, and asceticism, generosity and contentment in the presence of the world (the level of

emptiness and annihilation).

Only in this state, will the light (Nur) of Allah enter into the hearts (the level of glorification) and the person will experience the path towards peace and tranquility one after the other.

All forms of evil and darkness (these are negative attributes such as the darkness of the evil soul, the following or obeying of all despots from amongst the human and jinn, the darkness of one's own wishes and desires, the darkness of grief, anger and anxiety) will be covered with the pure light (Nur) and a special recognition by Allah.

Willingly or unwillingly, one will reach to the level of closeness with Allah and of complete annihilation in Him it is at this point that one has reached to the Straight Path (Sirat al Mustaqim).

"Indeed Our Messenger has come to you making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book and passing over much; indeed, there has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah. With it Allah guides him who follows His pleasure into the ways of safety, and brings them out of utter darkness into the light by His will and guides them to the right path "

Third Action: The third act is the Salat of Tawaf. The person who has just performed the Tawaf a performance that has raised one to the level of complete servitude, must perform a prayer of thanks.

Since one has reached to the level of slavery, the ascension (me'raj) has become obligatory on him, and the ascension of a believer is the Salat.

The Salat is comparable to a conversation between the servant and Allah (swt). The recitation of Surah al Fatiha and the other Surah are in actuality, a mode of speaking with Allah through the words of the Creator to the Creator. All that which is read in the Salat including the various remembrances (adhkar) and glorification (tasbihat) is actually the servant speaking to Allah. Since Tawassul and asking for help from the Ahl al Bait (as) in every one of our actions is necessary, thus, when the tashahhud and salam are read, it is actually a discussion going on between the servant and the Ahl al Bait (as). This too is actually another form of Tawassul between the servant and Allah (swt).

Therefore, the Salat is the best thing for a servant and is the action which brings about the most pleasure. In Islam, it has been mentioned that after cognition (ma'rifah) of Allah , the Salat is the best act: "The best of actions after cognition (ma`rifah) (of Allah) is the Salat. "

Fourth Action: The fourth act is Sa'i between the mountains of al Safa and al Marwah. The Sa'i between these two mountains is a re creation of the beautiful historical event which was performed by one of the best creations of Allah after the Ahl al Bait 09, who, The Maintainer of the Universe has mentioned and acknowledged (that sincere action of this servant) in the

Qur'an: "And Allah took Ibrahim as a friend. "

It was truly a beautiful event in which a man submitted his complete entity to the Maintainer of the Universe and which He Himself personally endorsed: `And when his Lord said to him,

`Submit!', he said, I have submitted to the Lord of all the Worlds. "

It was a magnificent event in which a man only for the pleasure of Allah constructed the House of Allah (swt) a place where people would inhabit. He then left his only son whom Allah granted to him when he was in old age, along with the mother of this child with the words of Allah (swt): `For you Allah and with hope in You, I am leaving my wife and my child and departing in a deserted area without water, food or any guardian': "O' our Lord! Surely I have

settled a part of my offspring in a valley unproductive of fruit. "

The Sa'i between the two mountains of al Safa' and al Marwah bring to mind the beautiful event in which a woman all alone without water, food or protection for the pleasure of Allah, was left in the valley and went on a desperate search to secure water for her only child. In a state of inner confusion, she ran from al Safa to al Marwah and then from al Marwah back to al Safaa.

In other words, from truthfulness and honesty to compassion, humanity and courage; and from courage towards truthfulness she ran back and forth. Finally, through her sincerity, from a physical point of view she found the water of Zamzam; and from a spiritual point she found the spring of life. Through her patience and forbearance, struggle and steadfastness, she was able to make the House of Allah an inhabited place and raise the esteem and respect of her offspring.

Although it was a very bitter event from the beginning until the end, it was also very sweet.

Bitterness mixed with sweetness and sweetness mixed with bitterness but what must one do? Rejoicing is one of the levels or stages of love, and even though it is painful, it is also pleasing. Although the heart of the lover feels pleasure in it, however, from the head to toe of the lover, just like a candle, one burns in the love.

Between the mountains of al Safa and al Marwah, we must take the lessons of self sacrifice and total dedication that Prophet Ibrahim (as) and his companions showed us leaving away all things for Allah and sacrificing our lives and properties for the religion of Allah.

"Indeed, there is for you a good example in Ibrahim and those with him. "

Therefore, the person who performs the Sa'i between al Safa and al--Marwah and still has the spirit of egotism and vanity, or the spirit of self admiration, has in actually not performed the Sa'i.

Fifth Action: The fifth act is the taqdir. The taqdir is (the act of) focusing the attention from the

spiritual realm to the earthly world; looking from the spiritual pleasures towards the physical pleasures; looking from the oneness to the multitude, which is the characteristic of Islam. While mankind must be in the constant thought and remembrance of Allah and the Last Day, at the same time, they must also be in remembrance of this world and the needs of this world: `And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world. "

In the narrations of the Ahl al Bait (as) it is been mentioned that one who sacrifices the next world for this world, or one who sacrifices this world for the next world is not a true Shi'a (follower of the Ahl al-Bait).

Thus, if someone says that the performance of the taqsir is to permit things which were previously forbidden meaning that the things before Ihram which were forbidden for the muhrim (the person wearing the Ihram), by wearing the Ihram, performing the Tawaf, Salat, Sa'i between al Safa and al Marwah and the taqsir, have now become permitted for him; and the light of Allah has now entered into his heart which before putting on the Ihram was not permitted for him, but after performing the actions (Tawaf, Salat, the Sa'i between al Safa and al Marwah and taqsir) have now become permitted for him; seeing deep into the spiritual worlds; attaining to the higher levels of certainty (yaqin); the eyes of deep insight which were previously forbidden, by way of the Tawaf, Salat, Sa'i between al Safa and al Marwah and the taqsir have now become permitted, then one has not been extravagant in one's speech. "Verily, had not the Shaitans hovered around the hearts of the offspring of Adam, they would have been able to see towards the higher realms of the heavens and the earth. "

Sixth Action: Going to (and staying for a fixed period) in 'Arafat is the next action of the Hajj. Once a person has seen and been mindful of his one's soul and desires, then once again, with another allure and with another Ihram, one turns the attention towards Allah at a place where the entire spiritual realm has turned towards with complete affinity. Travelling for that lure just as a stallion goes forward towards hay for nourishment; just as the True Entity goes towards the simulated being; an attraction that a lover has with the one he loves. In more passionate terms, it is the attraction between a servant and Allah and what an attraction it is!

"Congratulations to the possessors of the Garden of Na'im for their prosperity." `Arafah means to gain a deep understanding (ma`rifah). A cognition of the beginning (of creation) and the end of all creation; a cognition of Prophethood (Nubuwah) and Mastership (Wilayah); cognition of the vista of the horizons and of the souls; cognition of all of these things and their relation with Allah (relation of an event (Hadith) with the Eternal Being (Qadim)); cognition of the guardianship of the Truth, and the absolute destitution of the

creation. In summary, attaining the cognition that: "There is no one in the building except for
it's owner."

'Arafat is that place where a person is able to focus all of one's concentration on supplication, invocation and Tawassul especially to Wali al Asr (as) where one is in the presence of our 12th Imam. It is that place where one is able to reach the highest pinnacles of certainty (from IIm al Yaqin to 'Ain al Yaqin and from 'Ain al Yaqin to Haqq al Yaqin).

A person who goes to 'Arafat but is not successful in reaching the level of ma`rifah that has been mentioned even in a small amount, in reality, has not gone to 'Arafat.

A person who does not attain that closeness to Allah , Nubuwwah and Wilayah, which is what encompasses the entire land of 'Arafat, in reality has done nothing more than put himself through difficulties and troubles in the land of 'Arafat.

Seventh Action: The seventh act is to proceed to Mash`ar. The land of Mash`ar holds a special place in the sight of Allah, the Most High, such that in the Qur'an it is been given the attribute of being a sanctuary and a place that demands respect: "So when you hasten on from Arafat, then remember Allah near the al- Mash`ar al Haram. "

In the event that one is present in Mash`ar at the time when one should be there (between the time of Fajr and sunrise), which is the best time during a 24 hour period in the sight of Allah and if that which Allah has requested in the Qur'an to be performed which is the remembrance of Allah in this holy place and at this holy time – then by this remembrance, one will attain intelligence, sagacity, reason and insight.

Faith will be transmitted from one's heart into all parts of the body. The land of Mash'ar speaks to us and says, "That which you attained while in 'Arafat must be transported to your heart by the remembrance of Allah; and from the heart, it must be transported to your eyes, ears, tongue and all other parts of the body until your complete presence is given another life."

That which the soul had achieved in 'Arafat must be seized and controlled. It is here that the World of the Unseen (Alam al Ghaib) becomes the World of the Witnessed (Alam al Shuhud):

"Those who believe in the Unseen. "

That which once was hidden, now becomes apparent; that which others can not hear, will be heard; that which others can not do, one will be able to perform and that which others can not see, one will be able to visualize. With the eyes of the heart, one will be able to see the power of Allah , the Nubuwwat and the Wilayat in its true essence. In addition to this, one will also be able to see the Day of Judgement: "My servant, obey Me, I shall make you like Me. When I say 'Be!, it is you (too) shall say Be!', and it shall become. "

Eighth Action: The eighth act in the Hajj is to proceed on towards Mina. Mina is in the meaning

of 'returning' what a beautiful name! It is said that an aura of light (nur) surrounds this area what a place! A spiritual person's entire existence is surrounded by the light of Allah (swt). Mina is a place of hopes and aspirations, mercy and forgiveness, nobility and grace. It is a place where one's pleas and supplications are answered, and a place where the good of this world and that of the next world are granted, and why should it not be such? What does the lover want from his Beloved, once he has attained that proximity to Him? Attention, benevolence, benignity, continuation...

After the servant of Allah has passed through 'Arafat and Mash'ar and has reached to the stage of proximity (to Allah), what more can he want from his Master (Mawla)? Nobility, mercy, forgiveness, pardon, benignity, the continuation of success until he dies, and to be permitted into the presence of Allah in the next world. For the true lover of Allah , there can be nothing more sensual and pleasing than this.

Thus, it can be said that the most sensual feeling in the Hajj, is the feeling of hope on the part of the servant of Allah U. towards Allah Nit in the land of Mind. It may be because of this that out of all the acts of devotion performed during the Hajj, the time spent in Mina is the most, since there is a longing and desire on the part of the servant towards Allah and this is the foremost form of worship (7badah) and the highest position one can reach.

Ninth Action: The ninth act in the Hajj is to stone the Jamarah. The servant who has reached to the stage of closeness to Allah , has arrived to the station of fear, and rightfully so, he must fear!

He has arrived at a place that he must always be fighting against; a place that he must always be aware of, and that is the place of falsehood and despotism, the internal despot the al Nafs al Amarah, and the external despot Shaitan from amongst the Jinn and Mankind.

It is on account of this that the last Surah of the Qur'an has commanded us to seek refuge with Allah from these despots and from their evil whisperings: "Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men, The King of men, The God of men, From the evil of the whisperings of the slinking (Shaitdn), Who whispers into the hearts of men, From among the jinn and the men. "

From the Holy Qur'an, we clearly see that the internal despot (the al-Nafs al-Amarah-: is the most dangerous of all enemies: Most surely (man's) self (Nafs al Amarah) is habituated to command (him to do) evil, except such as my Lord has mercy upon. "

Thus, once we have entered into Mina, the very first act that we must perform is the Rami of the Jamarah al `Uqbah (the final pillar) which may be a manifestation of the largest despot the al Nafs al Amarah.

The stoning of the Jamarah al `Uqbah represents the rejecting or repudiating of the al Nafs al

Amarah; it represents the act of rubbing of one's low desires and wishes in the dirt. If one is able to crush the al Nafs al Amarah during the stoning of the Jamarah al `Uqbah, then one has taken the next step in attaining closeness to Allah , and since between the servant and Allah there is no more than the distance of one step, if one has been able to take this step and make it past one's own low desires and wishes, then that which follows is the level of closeness to Allah.

During those two or three days after the Eid that one is in Mina, one must stone the three Jamarat, meaning that one must trample upon his internal despot (al Nafs al Amarah), the external despot of the Shaitan from the Jinn (Iblis and those like him), and the Shaitan from among the Humans (the enemies of religion and of humanity).

The stoning of the three Jamarat is in essence, the trampling upon the despots and waging war against all of them. When one focuses on them and the hatred for them, then one automatically focuses with complete attention upon one's self and rightfully so while stoning the Jamarat, one must focus entirely upon one's self.

During these two or three days, if one is not able to push away the Shaitan within oneself, then one has done nothing more than put the body through hardships, and in reality, one can not say that the Jamarat in Mina were stoned.

Tenth Action: The tenth act is the Qurbani or the sacrifice. The slaughtering of an animal was and still is a tradition among all nations of people, and an act that all religions acknowledge and accept.

In the Qur'an it has been mentioned that Habil and Qabil (the sons of Adam) had offered a sacrifice, and since one of these sons was a Muttaqi (a pious person), his sacrifice was accepted (by Allah).

"When they both offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other. "

The secret of the Qurbani is that one forgets everything and sacrifices (all) in the way of the Loved such that one sacrifices one's own life, property and children. The sacrifice is a symbol of love and commitment; it is a symbol of the acceptance of the personality and the respect one has for one's Beloved: What is it to sacrifice at the feet of the beloved, one's soul, It is something that everything, little or big, possesses!

The slaughtering of the animal, just like the Tawaf, has a secret behind it, which is kept between the servant and the Master (Mawla). It is one in which the servant and all that one possesses is from Him: "The servant and that which is in his possession is (all) for his Master." However, more important than this is that the performance of the slaughtering in Mina enlivens

that great event between Prophet Ibrahim and Isma'il (as). The command came from the Beloved that you must slaughter your young child in Mina. Prophet Ibrahim (as) took his young son Isma'il (as) and explained to him what his Beloved had commanded him to do. The young boy entirely, and with full devotion, accepted: "O' my father! Carry out that which you have been commanded to do!"

Both of them, with a sense of complete enthusiasm and love, obeyed the command, and at the moment that the knife was on the throat about to slaughter (the young Isma'il (as)), a call was heard from the Beloved that you have successfully completed your test: "You have indeed shown the truth of the vision. "

`And we ransomed him with a great sacrifice. "

Without doubt, it was a great sacrifice in the way of Allah in which a person had gone to the extreme of almost dying for Allah , but in the end, successfully came out with high marks in the test that Allah had put him through.

What a sweet ending, but what a bitter way to learn! What a trial that the Beloved has mentioned as something great!

"Verily this was a manifest trial. "

What was more important than this was the reward that the Beloved blessed them with and that was of being counted as true servants: "Verily he was of Our believing servants. "

Therefore, the sacrifice (of an animal) is really a lesson in love; it is a lesson in devotion; a lesson for giving in the way of Allah even so much as one's own life, property and children. It is a lesson in the power of intention during tests and difficulties. It is a lesson in complete submission and true worship to Allah O.

Perhaps it is because of this that it can be said that the sacrifice of the animal that is offered in Hajj is the best of acts or at least one of the best acts.

Eleventh Action: The eleventh act is the Halq (shaving off the hair on the head) or the Taqir (trimming the hair or nails).

Shaving the hair on the head or trimming the hair of the head or beard, symbolizes the removing of all that remains (in the soul); removal of the bad traits; purifying the heart of all traces of vanity or egotism; and the removal of love for seeking a high status (in society).

Whatever a person does to try and build one's self and ethics, one must know that the roots of the negative attributes are centered deep down in the heart of a person: "The last thing that will come out of the hearts of the truthful (people) is the love of status. "

Thus, shaving the head or cutting a bit of the hair on the head or face has its foundations in removing the negative attributes of a person.

If a person performing the Hajj has not reached the level in which one has expelled everything from the heart, then one should know that one has scored a zero in this test from Allah even though having gone through difficulties and troubles!

An accepted Hajj is a Hajj in which after shaving the head or trimming the hair of the head or face, one also shaves one's heart of hardness and corrects one's conduct.

Although the acts of Hajj in their apparent form are all great forms of worship in Islam and denying them leads one to the state of disbelief (Kufr), however in reality, they are all teachers of etiquette (Akhlaq).

These are acts which train the person performing the Hajj how to build one's self and aid one in travelling from the darkness of negative attributes, the darkness of the al Nafs al Amarah, from those of one's vain and lower desires, and the darkness of sadness, anger and anxiety of the heart into an ocean of pure light (al Nur al Mutlaq).

They are acts that take the person by the hand and guide one from the station of repentance and vigilance to the station of expelling (all from the heart).

One goes from this stage to the level of reaching close to Allah , and this last act (of the Halq or Taqsir) also makes certain things permitted (halal) after they were made prohibited (haram).

Although its apparent meaning is that those things which were forbidden are now permitted; however, for the spiritual person, its meaning is that those things which were previously not worthy of being committed, are now worthy of performing. (The manifestation of the Nur of Allah in the heart and the power over possession in creations (are two of the outcomes of the twelfth act of the Hajj) however, more important than these two is the power of choice in the tests that one is put through by Allah.)

Twelfth Action: The twelfth act is the Tawaf an Nisa. After performing the Halq or Taqsir, many things which were forbidden for the one performing Hajj now become permitted except for the use of perfume and all pleasures one derives from the opposite sex.

The only way that these two are made permissible is that after Mina, one returns to the House of Allah and performs the Tawaf, Salat of the Tawaf, Sa'i between the mountains of al Safa and al Marwah, and then performs the final Tawaf known as Tawaf an Nisa, such that then perfume and all sexual relations become permissible for one.

Perhaps one of the secrets behind this is that no matter what level a human reaches to in witnessing the manifestation of the greatness of Allah , however, in order to gain authority over one's sexual instincts, one is still in need of reaching to an even higher station and is in need of more assistance.

`And certainly she made for him, and he would have made for her were it not that he had seen

the manifest evidence of his Lord. "

In all the examinations that Yusuf the Truthful went through one after the other, he came out with passing marks, even when the group of women with their apparent beauty, which in reality was their lack of modesty, tried to seduce him. He replied: `O' Allah! The prison is better for me than what these women say!'

"My Lord! The prison is dearer to me, than that to which they invite me. "

However, it was this same Yusuf (as) that even though the status that he was at and while scoring high marks in his examinations (from Allah), but when put face to face with his sexual instincts, he showed his weakness or inability. He said that it was Allah who saved him, not himself, and that if He were not there, he would have failed the exam: `And if Thou turn not away their device from me, I will yearn towards them and become (one) of the ignorant. "

Therefore, in reality there is a great lesson for all of us especially the youth in the Tawaf an Nisa. If we want to remain guarded from the evils of our sexual instincts, then in addition to controlling them through the power of intention that we possess and by satisfying them through the sound and approved Islamic methods, we must also ask for assistance from Allah and seek help through the religious acts of pleasure such as Tawaf an Nisa.

Thirteenth Action: The thirteenth and final act of the Hajj is going to the city of Madinatul Munawwarah and performing the visitation rites (Ziyarat) of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (s), Fatimah az Zahra (sa) and the A'immah (as) that are buried in the graveyard known as Jannatul Baqi. The performance of the Hajj is incomplete without the Ziyarat of these noble personalities and can be compared to one holding firm to the Holy Qur'an, but not having belief in the Wilayah.

It has been mentioned in the narrations from the Ahl al Bait (as) that the performance of Ziyarat in Madinatul Munawwarah is the actual completion of the Hajj. As well, in the Holy Qur'an, Tawassul or seeking help from the Ahl al Bait (as) has been made compulsory on us: "O' you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and seek a means of nearness (intermediary) to Him. "

The best form of seeking help or Tawassul, is the recitation of supplications (Dua) and seeking forgiveness for one's sins while inside the holy sanctuaries of these personalities and this in reality, is supplicating and asking forgiveness as though in their presence.

The Creator and Maintainer of the Universe will only accept the supplications and asking of forgiveness with the condition that it be done in the presence of these holy personalities (the Noble Prophet of Islam (s) and his Ahl al Bait (as))

"And had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you (Muhammad) and asked

forgiveness of Allah, and had the Messenger (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft- returning (to mercy), Merciful. "

Bearing this in mind, we see from the ahadith of the Ahl al Bait (as) that visitation to the graves of the members of the Ahl al Bait (as) has been emphatically recommended.

Fatimah az Zahra (as) had said: "Paradise will become incumbent upon the person who performs the Ziyarat of Rasulullah (s)."

In many other ahadith we read that the Ziyarat of Prophet Muhammad (s) is equal to the Ziyarat of Allah Himself!

In one hadith, it has been mentioned that the Noble Prophet Muhammad (s) told Amir al Mo'minin 'Ali (as) that: "The graves of the Ahl al Bait are gardens from Paradise. Allah (as) the Maintainer of the Universe, has placed the love and yearning to visit these graves in the hearts of a select group of His servants and on the Day of Judgement, they will be at the Fountain head of Kawthar, enjoying my special intercession. In Paradise, they will be my neighbours.

The reward of performing seventy recommended (mustahab) Hajj is written for such a person, and after the Ziyarat, one's sins are completely washed away like one who was just born from one's mother.

In Paradise, there is a station for these people such that no one else will be able to grasp the greatness of it. However, there are insignificant people who make fun of our visitors, and these ones are the worst people of my nation. They will never attain my intercession nor will they meet me at the Fountain of Kawthar!"

There are a few things that must be observed by that person who has been graced with the extraordinary honour of visiting the graves of the Prophet or his Ahl al Bait (as):

1. They must be aware of whose presence they are in, and know that their speech, actions, thoughts and even intentions are all presented to these holy personalities: "Say: Work: so Allah will see your work and (so will) His Messenger and the believers. "

Thus, one must enter the sacred sanctuary with a pure heart, sincere intention and observe the proper etiquette of speaking and acting. It may be possible that reciting the salutations (Ziyarat) in a loud voice may not be appropriate, nor would speaking with others: "Do not raise your voices over the voice of the Prophet! "

The etiquette related to sitting and standing must also be observed while in this place just as one, during the lifetime of these holy personalities would sit (and stand). Of course pressing one's body against the blessed enclosure (dharih), kissing it and the walls of the rooms and the sanctuary is an outward show of love that each lover must perform.

Majnun has said that the door and walls of the city that Laila lives in are kissed by the dog that

guards the alley where Laila is and says that (he does this because) Laila is present in this city.

2. One must prepare to enter the Sanctuary (Haram) in order to attain the spiritual blessings, in other words, to connect oneself spiritually (with the holy personality).

How beautifully `Allamah Majlisi has said it! He relates, `I went to Najaf al Ashraf and since I did not have spiritual desire to go inside the Haram for a few days, I spent my nights in the sacred courtyard, and spent my days in the graveyard of Wadi as Salam near the Maqam (Station) of al Qa'im (as). I practiced religious self discipline until I reached the level of attaining divine inspiration and enlightenment (and then entered the Haram).'

3. Paying attention to the fact that sins, especially those which are referred to as Haqq al Nas the sins which are related to other people cause agony to the hearts of the Ahl al Bait (as). In many narrations we read that the A'immah (as) had said that oppression to our Shi'a is equivalent to oppressing us.

Thus, if we want to please the Ahl al Bait (as), then we must make a firm resolve that we will never turn away from helping and aiding other Shi'a. We must also make a firm resolve that we will not oppress or ridicule any of their friends. After making this resolution and asking forgiveness, we enter their sanctuary.

4. One's motivation must be high, and he must not limit himself to simply asking for things of this world and the next. Rather, these requests should be left to them (to decide for us): "Their knowledge of our condition suffices us from our asking (them) "

Further, one's request and desire must be that their light (nur) should be graced upon us. One must rely upon the leadership of the physical world (Wilayah Takwini) that they possess so that we can be elevated (in status).

One is able to reach the level of meeting with Allah and complete annihilation with a few things: Buraq for use in ascending; provisions and supplies for the road; a guide so as to not get lost and reach the appropriate place; and light (Nur) to act as a torch while passing through the levels of darkness.

For a person, the Buraq (steed) on this trip is one's human presence, which is the body. In order to increase the power of this Buraq, the Qur'an has recommended us that: "And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world. " One's provisions and supplies for this trip are piety (taqwa) and a soul that truly fears Allah , which according to the Qur'an are the best supplies for a trip: `And make provision, for surely the best provision is the guarding of oneself.`

The light (Nur) which a person must take on this trip, so as to save himself from darkness is the Qur'an: `Indeed, there has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah. "

The guides to this light (Nur) are the Ahl al Bait (as). Without them, there is not a single creature that can ever reach to perfection, nor can they reach to the level of connection (with Allah).

Any person who does not take guidance from them while engaging on the path of sair wa suluk (Spiritual travel & journey towards Allah), instead of reaching to a level of connection (with Allah), will actually cut off the connection (with Allah), and in place of guidance, will fall into darkness and misguidance.

From the point of view of the Qur'an, those responsible for guidance towards this path are the Ahl al Bait (as). During our present time, the axis of the world of possibility (al Alam al Imkan), the pivot of the world of creation, and the intermediary between the unseen and witnessed (ghaib wa shuhud) is Imam Wali al `Asr (as).

`And We made them Imams who guided (people) by Our command. "

Therefore, Tawassul is one of the necessities, and the best form of Tawassul is to visit the sacred graves (Ziyarat) of them (the Ahl al Bait (as)); and further, if one is fortunate enough, then to be at the service of Imam Wali al `Asr' (as).

Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al Rida (as) has said that every Imam has an oath or pledge binding on the neck of every Shi'a and true lover, and the best way of showing one's loyalty to this pledge or oath is to visit their graves.

Any of the Shi'a that perform the ziyarat of them (the Ahl al Bait (as)) will receive their intercession on the Day of Judgement; and visiting their graves will guide one in this world as .well as in the next life