

# HAJJ STORIES

## EQUALLY EQUAL

JULY 2025

'I cannot be what you want me to be! I am not as deeply spiritual or knowledgeable as you no matter how hard I try,' she cried. She and her husband were sitting in my makeshift consulting room in Makkah and her pent-up emotions needed to somehow be ventilated. They were my last patients for the session before midday and there was no one else around. My consulting room was in the basement of the hotel adjacent to a massive but completely empty ballroom. In fact, there was an eerie silence when she had to inhale between her sentences. I knew that outside the hotel hundreds of thousands were streaming to the Haram for the Thuhr prayers. We were completely cocooned from the outside activities and the two of them sat in a stony silence for a few moments. We were thousands of miles away from home and here she at last uttered what really bothered her.

### ***'Everyone is prince and pauper at once.'***

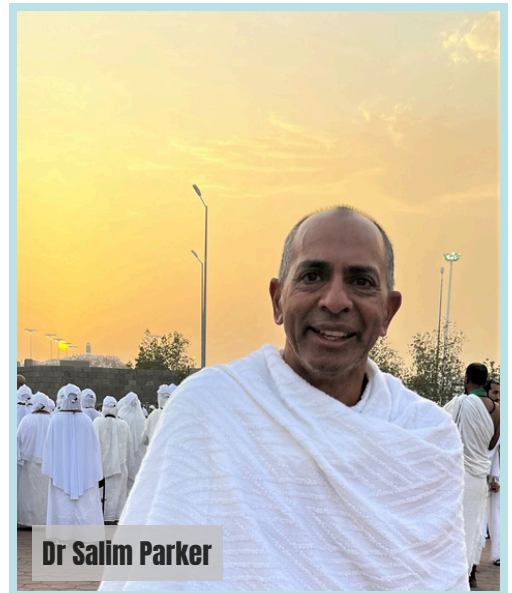
I had numerous interactions with her husband during our journey. We often sat at the same breakfast table, and it was evident that he was indeed very well versed in our Deen. He was continuously looking for deeper meaning when any topic was discussed. Whilst she was aware that seven circumambulations of the Kaaba were needed for a completed Tawaaf, he was examining the inner dimension of each and every step. He would often research as to what our beloved Prophet (SAW) was reported to have done and try to emulate His actions. 'Doc, I was taught that Hajj is compulsory and therefore I am following the mandatory obligations to the best of my ability. I am blessed to be here with my husband. I am really honoured to be in the Holy Lands but I do not get the spiritual highs that he gets. I am content after every waqt I spend in the Haram,' she said.

He looked dejected. 'This is a once in a lifetime journey,' he tried to explain. 'We can only come once and must attempt to firstly perform it as perfectly as possible and secondly derive the maximum benefit from it. I know we have to shop in order to take gifts home, but we should not indulge in frivolous activities,' he added. He explained that he has a number of daily sessions with different scholars in order to broaden his knowledge and spends most of his time in the Haram reciting. 'I attended one or two of the sessions but found it too daunting,' his wife sheepishly replied. 'I do find it rewarding sitting in the Haram and can do so for hours at a time,' she continued. 'He seemed irritated. 'But she recites only for a short while and then she starts chatting to the ladies around her,' he complained.

She tried to explain that it is immensely educational to learn about different nations. A number of her interactions were with pilgrims from Indonesia and Malaysia, and she fondly related how some Malayan words still being used in her Cape Town community triggered fascination from her South-East Asian sisters. Ladies from Turkey who could speak some English already educated her about how some of their customs differed from ours. Three Canadian pilgrims from Moroccan origin were in the same hotel as us, and they have bonded to the extent that they share a breakfast table daily. 'This is part of my build-up of my Hajj, Doc,' she explained. 'I learn so much about others and the more I learn about our cultural, social, language and personal differences, the more I realise that we are all the same. We all yearn to be on Arafat, all with the same Duaas,' she softly said.

We had to go for the Thuhr prayers and I asked them to attend one of the talks to be delivered later that evening by one of the group's clerics. The scholar that evening spoke extensively of the great leveler that Hajj is. He mentioned that everyone is prince and pauper at once. All are royals to be honoured to be on Hajj and all are servants in answering the instruction from their Creator. Pilgrims are all equal when they stand on Arafat, no matter what their status on this earth may be. The business magnate and the bathroom cleaner are reduced, or elevated, to exactly the same status on those vast plains. The mathematics genius and the illiterate are only measured by what is in their hearts. Those who connect deeply with their inner self still have to reach outwards and upwards to their Creator, which some, with seemingly no spirituality, can transcend with ease.

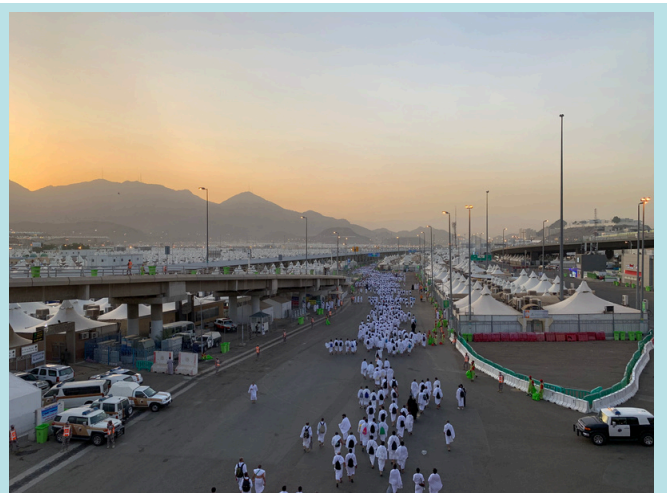
On the first day of Hajj, late in the evening, I was asked to attend to the husband on Mina. He had a raging fever and was even a bit disorientated. He had planned to walk to Arafat early the next morning but was clearly no physical state to do so and had to take the bus. There were occasions on Arafat when he was a bit delirious due to intermittent fever, but generally he was able to appreciate the kindness and camaraderie that surrounded him. His fellow pilgrims took care of all his needs and ensured his comfort. 'This is not how I envisaged my Hajj,' he told me when I checked up on him. 'I had planned to stand for hours at the time of Wuqoof but now I have barely enough energy to even sit up. I cannot even make Duaa for more than a few minutes before my mind starts fading,' he said sadly.



**Dr Salim Parker**

I replied with the old age adage that no matter how well we plan, Allah is the best of planners. 'You are on Arafat, you have your Hajj,' I gently assured him. 'But there is so much that I wanted to do and still want to do,' he lamented. 'With difficulty comes ease, and with difficulty comes appreciation that we are indeed blessed and honoured to be on these Holy grounds at this time,' I comforted him. It was the time of Wuqoof and a number of our pilgrims were outside with their hands raised to the heavens above. One of them was his wife. A fellow pilgrim propped him up in a wheelchair and found a place for him under one of the many shade providing trees where his wife joined him. She may not have been considered a spiritual person, but it was evident as she earnestly made Duaa, that she was able to communicate with our Creator.

He was still quite weak that evening and it was felt that he should be taken straight back to Azizyah by bus instead of Mina. One of the Imams assured him that one of us would pelt on his behalf. 'I am not even able to do that by myself, he said sadly. 'You will get the reward of doing it and the person pelting on your behalf will also be rewarded. It is a win-win situation,' the Imam said. He was silent. Three days later he was still too weak to perform his compulsory Tawaaf on his own and a few in the group willingly pushed him in a wheelchair. I happened to be with them. His wife was quite fit, and I heard him ask her to push the wheelchair for the last of the seven rounds which she willingly did. I saw tears in both their eyes. No one was less or more than anyone else, all were equal.



**He had a raging fever on the first day of Hajj**