

HAJJ STORIES

THE VOICE OF THE SOUL

OCTOBER 2025

His room was immaculately clean. He shared it with a few others, as was customary in Azizyah, a suburb of Makkah. Hajj was about a week away. His roommates went to bed at unearthly hours very, very late at night. They probably had only two to three hours of peaceful slumber before he gently interrupted their well-deserved rest. They all were assisting the Hujjaaj, and most of their work took place at night. It did not bother him as the health and welfare of the pilgrims was paramount. The group had an unanticipated increase in the number of occupants in their building. The room that I was to use to provide daily medical services had to be allocated urgently to some stranded souls. This left me without a place to render assistance. Boeta Yusuf Fisher was adamant: the pilgrim comes first. He and his roommates would vacate their room exactly thirty minutes before the clinic started and have it perfectly ready.

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A colossus. There is no other way to describe a voice that transcended the airways and immersed into any conversation. Some swear that they were not only listening to him on radio, but they were also in fact chatting to him. When he guided his Caravan into the Night show, all knew that he would weather any storm threatening the ardent train trawling behind him. Sand aiming for unprotected eyes were diverted against by his reassuring shield. He journeyed to worlds yet untraveled to, yet ensured that there were stops at comforting oases. I know of many who had no worldly friends. There were others who had shared no common genes with any worldly soul. Yet they were never lonely nor felt unbonded by blood when the Cape's winter storms battered their window shutters. They had a friend, a family member, a sage, a brother, a father and a confidant, gently easing them into the night.

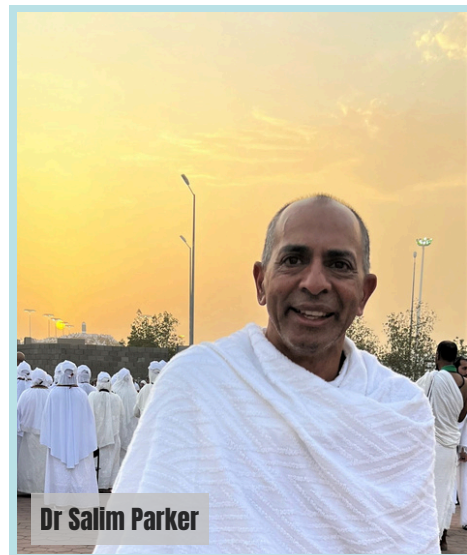
'A very high percentage of people perform their Hajj during their golden years,' he once remarked to me many, many years ago. He had noted the number of sick pilgrims visiting the clinic during the days preceding Hajj. 'Some do not have a choice, such as the rural Turks, who only get the opportunity when the exuberance of youth has been replaced by the ravages of age and disease,' I replied. 'It is your responsibility to prepare them medically and physically and hence enable them to perform their Hajj with spiritual and psychological comfort,' he advised. I never forgot those words. He could use any topic and have many layers of meaning seamlessly woven into his words. Superficially he was intimating that all four components were interlinked. More significantly, he mentioned that something could be done to improve the intention

of Hajj. And profoundly, he was clear that we all can contribute.

He had a programme known as the Golden Hour. For those who have reached their golden years. Except that his golden voice reached far beyond those with grey hair and those with in wheelchairs and in old age homes. I have been to an octogenarian's birthday party where all eagerly awaited Boeta Yusuf's congratulatory wishes, resulting in wild cheering and the official start of the celebrations. I sat at the bedside of a very ill great-grandparent when he made Duaa for a speedy recovery, resulting in a very grateful smile. During those times he was not broadcasting from a studio, he was present wherever he was heard. We could see his kind eyes reassuring the sick, him holding the shaking hand of a stroke sufferer who was cutting a birthday cake and feel the warmth of him embracing a pilgrim who was departing for Hajj. His voice, whilst cemented to one frequency, ranged across infinite amplitudes.

His skills were multifactorial. He conducted a workshop for a group of us who were to assist Hujjaaj. With his corporate background, he ran us through business parameters. He made it clear that corporate companies, no matter what flowery language they used to promote their humanitarian side, were driven by profit motives. It's the positive numbers that appeal to the directors and shareholders. Smaller businesses are run similarly but may have a bit more personal interactions and camaraderie. 'Hajj is different,' he said. His eyes brightened up. He initially intimated that Hajj should be considered as a business so that strict control is kept of the pilgrims' funds which were entrusted to the agents. 'Never betray a Hadjie's trust. You took on an Amanat, a trust you loyally pledge to safeguard.' These words, till this day, reverberate in my mind.

He explained that investors in a business hope for returns to build on a future project. The trust in the Hajj agent is for the fulfillment of a life-long dream, an obligation to our Creator and the commencement of a revitalized inner soul. 'You are not selling a product, you are going to initiate a life-changing experience for the Hadjie,' he said. 'Yes, they are entrusting their monies to you and want reassurance that the journey's logistics and spiritual guidance will be provided as promised. And of course, that the medical services will be excellent,' he wickedly added, smiling at me. 'But you as a Hajj worker have an even bigger investment to make. You, making the journey easier, resolving even the most irritating of queries with humility



Dr Salim Parker

and dignity, remaining calm under the most extremes of provocation, will receive the ultimate reward. You will be forever in the Duaas of the Hadjies. This is an investment with perpetual returns,' he concluded.

I was privileged to share many sessions in the studio with him. He was passionate about reaching out to the community with any message that could uplift our society and highlight where our resources could be directed to. Hajj was of course one of many seasonal topics and I cherish the many, many times that we realised that it was a topic that could never be exhausted. Every year there were new pilgrims to advise, new obstacles to overcome, and new regulations to navigate. It never mattered to him what the script for a particular show was. He could elucidate very easily the comfort of his studio guest and the relevance of a particular topic. On one occasion a listener called in, and asked me a particular question. As I answered, Boeta Yusuf gestured to me to elaborate. The listener responded and I saw Boeta Yusuf now making round circles with both his hands, meaning I must continue. This was followed by both arms executing windmill actions, prompting me to speak nearly half the programme on one particular question.

Boeta Yusuf instinctively knew what, where and how to steer a conversation. Many consider him a mentor in the media field. Many others were in awe of his master of ceremonies skills at various public platforms. We in the Hajj fraternity will always remember how he brought Hajj into its innate perspective. Serving the pilgrim is an honour and a sacred trust. Serve them with dignity and humility. The rewards are infinite. May Allah grant Boeta Yusuf the highest place in Janah.



The worldly sun may have set on him, but his voice will forever be heard.

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