

# Prayer and Self-Improvement After Hajj

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**Abstract**— The Muslim's belief in the fulfillment of prayers that were offered in the holy land, the temple, and the great Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad became one of the factors that motivates Muslims to carry out the pilgrimage. This study aims to show the realization of the power of prayer for Muslims after the hajj. This qualitative study interviewed two pilgrims in 2018 who were motivated to perform the pilgrimage in addition to worship and also to fulfill their life expectation. Secondary data was used to complete the information needed in this study. The results showed that there were two realizations of prayer that were carried out during the hajj, firstly, the direct prayer which was answered quickly as desired and secondly, the unanswered prayers that characterized by uncertainty in what time the prayer will be answered by God. Although there were differences in the realization of prayer, but there were similarities in terms of faith, devotion, and sincerity that is improved after the pilgrimage. Quality of life is a positive impact after Hajj.

**Keywords**—*pray, hajj, realization, improvement, pilgrimage*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The high level of education and the rapid advancement of technology have an impact on increasing the welfare of the community. But it seems that welfare is not enough, because people need to provide life in the world spiritually and in the hereafter [1]. Therefore, religion becomes an essential requirement in society. Religion however will be needed by human's despite of the level of culture they have and is a medium that connects humans with supernatural powers beyond themselves [2]. Religion is a symbolic system whose role is to strengthen motivation and moods that are strong, felt, and present everywhere and it is eternal within a person by formulating a conception of order, existence and wrapping that conception with a radiant factuality where mood and motivation typically look realistic [3].

Hajj is one of the teachings of Islam which is about a connection between mood and motivation, as well as between emotional and beliefs when facing various social changes in daily basis. Hajj, which is an obligation for every Muslims and can be done once in a lifetime, is a human evolution towards God [4]. Hajj is defined as a visit to Mecca at the appointed time in the month of *Dhul-Hijjah*. This worship can be said as a ritual of the Prophet Ibrahim in the form of the final expression of

monotheism, namely Islam. While the essence of the hajj meaning is that humans are holy again like a newborn baby.

Carrying out the hajj means visiting the holy land, the temple, and the great mosque of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Those places are perceived by Muslims as the place for prayer. Therefore, every year the number of hajj pilgrim from Indonesia is quite high, as in 2018 the number of haj pilgrims was 203,351 people, in 2019 the number of pilgrims was 4.34 million people, even in 2020 the number of pilgrims reached 5.24 million people [5]. The high interest of Muslims in this holy place is responded by the government and the private sector in this case the travel agency every year. The visit to the shrine every year is always programmed by the government through the hajj program and *umroh* travel agencies with a very organized management. This study discusses the pilgrimage trips managed by the Indonesian government under the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

In Indonesia context, Muslims who want to perform hajj should meet several requirements namely capable economically and most importantly capable to fulfill the administrative requirements. As a matter of fact, the administrative conditions which produced a long waiting list, brought benefit for the prospective pilgrims. They can prepare physical, spiritual, and mental health before the departure and performing hajj. In addition, the process of practicing Hajj rituals carried out both at the district and district levels is well followed by prospective pilgrims. All requirements are followed by prospective pilgrims to be able to carry out the Hajj, because the Hajj is considered as a process where certain period of life has ends and the new phase begins [6].

There were many previous studies on hajj done by many scholars and researchers around the world. In Bangladesh society, the implementation of hajj has an impact on economic development because various travel agencies were established rapidly in accordance with the interests of the hajj community. In addition, the pilgrimage has an impact on the high level of obedience and piety, respect for women, and also strengthen brotherhood and unity with the people of

Bangladesh in general and also Muslim communities throughout the world [7]. As for the people of Pakistan after the hajj, they no longer believe in superstitious things such as using amulets, but they more obedience in carrying out worship, particularly prayer and fasting. In addition, respect for women is also improved, particularly in terms of giving freedom to women to continue their education to a higher level and get a job. These social changes were obtained because there were interactions with Muslims around the world when performing hajj in the city of Mecca and Medina [8]

Many scientists put attention and concern on the increase of hajj pilgrims. In West Africa, prospective pilgrims experienced a rapid increase during the middle of the twentieth century. Such conditions have an impact on the difficulties faced by Saudi Arabia to accept the prospective pilgrimage. This study focused on the causes and consequences of failed British and Saudi efforts to channel, regulate and control the flow of pilgrims crossing the Red Sea. This failure resulted in the entry of illegal hajj [9]. While in Northern Nigeria, residents assumed that the hajj is a process of homogenization in all aspects of life because Muslims have the same status. In fact, in their country that was not the case. Citizens who were high educated and have economic power becomes a benchmark for determining class positions in society [10].

In addition, studies on hajj in Indonesia were also executed by many scientist and researcher, because Indonesia has most of the Muslim population. Studies on hajj, such as themes on the perception of Madurese people that performing hajj requires a large cost, but these costs are not a problem because after the hajj, the pilgrim will get abundant fortune [11]. Similarly, the perception of Malang citizens that the hajj will make the pilgrims richer than before, thus so that there is no doubt about the costs incurred because they will get a much greater compensation [12]. The study of Muslims pilgrims' motivation is not merely a tour and shows the status of a person, but a journey of worship based on the Al-Quran and Al-Hadith. Therefore, Muslims feel a different spiritual experience from the experience of performing prayers and fasting [13]. While the power of Hajj is not only spiritual power but also has emotional strength, so when people have returned to their homeland, there is a desire to return [14]. Meanwhile people in South Jakarta has specific interpretation about the hajj pilgrimage. Upon the arrival from the holy land, they believe that pilgrims will be followed by angels up to 40 days.

The studies above are still limited to the themes of hajj perception, motivation for hajj, benefits gained after hajj in the economic, social and cultural, religious experience, and religious tourism. While the study of how the realization of a prayer delivered during the pilgrimage was still limited. This study focused on the realization of prayers performed during the hajj in places that are considered sacred by Muslims.

This study is important since it will give clarity about the motive of the pilgrims to worshiping God, also to know the realization of prayer, and to strengthen their faith that there are no unanswered prayer in the name of God, the issue here is the time for prayers to be answered is uncertain. Therefore, this study will provide an overview of the realization of prayer when performing the pilgrimage.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study used qualitative methodology with in-depth interview technique. The participant of this study was two Muslim women who were chosen by appointment [16]. These two Muslim women were chosen because they performed the pilgrimage to offer prayers for the problems of life they were facing. Both are members of a pilgrimage group under the ministry of religion in Sleman regency who departed for the pilgrimage in 2018. One Muslim woman had already performed hajj twice while another participant had only performed hajj once. From the two informants, the experience of prayer and realization were reached upon arrival in the country. Besides that, secondary data as such as report documents from the ministry of religion and journals were used to strengthen the primary data. The collected data was analyzed and presented in the form of narration.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. *Pray: The Cases of Two Pilgrims*

Prayer is a practice carried out by the Prophets and their followers to ask for protection from God whether in a happy or difficult situation. It has been mentioned that prayer will be answered by God which is directly or postponed. Therefore, Muslims are motivated to go to places that are considered sacred by performing hajj, as the informant below does.

Informant A is a congregation whose profession is a doctor who has been married for 5 years. She married at the age of 23 years old with a man who was 25 years old. Their marriage is based on mutual love. Five years of marriage, there were no signs they will get offspring. In the first and second years of marriage she has not been declared pregnant, they had no concern about it. Moreover, on the second and third years of their marriage, although not yet pregnant she still doing daily routine and work as doctor calmly. However, in the fourth and fifth year of marriage, the couple has started to get anxious because the insistence of parents, parents in-law and siblings which made them more worried about the condition of the womb. Since then, they began to visit obstetricians routinely to assess the condition and the result was the couple is in a good health condition.

The level of anxiety in this couple can be minimized because both partners get certainty to perform the pilgrimage in 2018. The main purpose of

performing the pilgrimage is to worship and to pray in order to obtain offspring. They prayed starting at Nabawi Mosque and they went to *Raudhah* and always ends with *Dhuha* prayer. After 10 days in Medina, then the pilgrimage journey continues to the city of Mecca where the Al Harom Mosque is located. In this mosque they performed religious rituals including performing prayer and hoping they will be blessed with offspring. Together with thousands of other pilgrims, they carried out tawaf in the giving time, even at night they performed penance at the Haram Mosque.

Meanwhile to the experience of hajj experienced by a Muslim woman who has run the pilgrimage two times will be discussed in more detail here. Informant B performed her first hajj in 1996 without her husband, she said that they were not ready at that time. In 2018, Informant B returned to the hajj for the second time and was not accompanied by her husband because her husband had died. She performed hajj alone (by herself), Informant B had no difficulty during the Hajj rituals because she had experience.

In this second hajj pilgrimage, Informant B aimed to perform the hajj not only to worship but also to wish for having a husband again. Being a widow in old age was a big problem for her. Even though the material has been fulfilled, namely she has a large house and savings from the legacy of her husband as her capital to continue her life activities, but it seems that the material has not made her safe, because loneliness are often experienced by Informant B, moreover her children have also live separated as they are already married. The purpose of her wish to marriage again, is not to obtain offspring because from the age perspective, Informant B is already old and she was aware of it. But she wants to have a life partner in her elderly period. The prayers she had the wish for having a husband who becomes her priest in the world and in the hereafter. Even in the prayer, Informant B revealed specifically some of the criteria needed for the prospective male life companion.

During the Hajj process, Informant B was very active to build friendship with fellow pilgrims. She interacted with fellow pilgrims both inside the group and also with members of other groups, even with food services in Saudi Arabia. At that time, the pilgrims did not get food for three days after returning from Mina, so Informant B facilitated the situation by connecting the food vendors who prepared food for pilgrims from Indonesia. Therefore Indonesian worshipers were greatly helped by the existence of a caterer who provides services in the form of food and worshipers remain focused on their worship. Various facilities to obtain food successfully served due to the ability of Informant B to interact not only with fellow pilgrims from Indonesia but also with Muslims in Saudi Arabia.

### *B. Self Improvement after the Pilgrimage*

The power of prayer for individual who has performed pilgrimage was very visible, starting from personal maturity and also positive thoughts that were

reflected in daily behaviors. The effort to maintain the pilgrim's motivation and prayer are the main goal in everyday life for Muslims. Expecting blessing from God throughout the life is also the main hope. It will be proven that the power of God is absolute by understanding the case of these two Muslim women and their prayers.

Psychological improvement after the hajj has long been explained in the study [10] which concluded that after succeeding there was a strength to get closer to God the creator of this universe. The feeling itself was implemented when they returned to the homeland, by through performing prayer congregation and sharing self-emotion. The self-improvement was not only because the prayers that have been answered as is the case experienced by the two informants below.

The case of a young couple who has not been blessed with offspring for five years for carrying out the pilgrimage to worship and pray for offspring. Prayers performed in holy places (in the city of Mecca and Medina) which were carried out day and night, seemed to be truly answered. Upon arrival in the homeland, the wife of this young couple was declared pregnant. The mandate was received with high gratitude. The power of prayer also motivated them to establish further friendship and communication that is conducted every three months with fellow Hajj groups. They also always maintain their communication with other friends to have social activities together [17].

However, it is different from Informant B who prayed to get a life partner. It has been already 2 years after she arrived in the homeland, but the presence of a prospective husband as desired by Informant B was still no signs. Even though Informant B did not limit herself in her activities and connection for instance she always presents at every hajj meeting. In addition, Informant B also joined social media networks that allowed her to connect with people. Even so, Informant B did not stop hoping and to pray after the obligatory prayers and sunnah prayers. The hope to get a husband who is able to become her priest in the world and the hereafter is the greatest hope for informant B who does not know when her prayer will be granted by God. She always put her best efforts and do not gives up on all God's decisions she receives.

From the two Muslim women cases, it is very apparent that the power of prayer is a spiritual force for adherents. The understanding about the realization of prayer is there is two ways for God to answer prayers, firstly prayers will be answered at the expected time not so long after individuals performing their prayers, and secondly prayers will be answered but postponed first, and prayers will be answered later in future. We can learn from this young couple case. They immediately got a child after returning from the pilgrimage. However, the case of Informant B who has not yet gotten a life partner showed that God will grant by delaying in advance whose time cannot be ascertained when it will be granted.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The belief of Muslims to pray in places that are considered sacred has motivated them to carry out the pilgrimage. Praying during the hajj is perceived as the right way to articulate a prayer so that all wishes are granted in a short time period. Based on the two informant cases in this study, it showed that praying while on the pilgrimage and its realization showed a difference, some were immediately granted and there were also prayers that had not been answered. The realization showed that the perception of prayer that was carried out during the hajj will soon be fulfilled as expected, but it is not always the case, because prayer is a dialogue with the creator. Therefore, the creator knows when the most appropriate prayer is given to his people. Although there are differences in the realization of prayer, but there are similarities for fellow pilgrims at the level of faith, devotion, and sincerity which are far better than before they performed the hajj. This similarity which then made them forming a meeting groups to strengthen solidarity and also to maintain the pilgrimage collision. Because faith, devotion, and sincerity are the quality of life obtained from hajj.

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