

The Hijra

Al-Nida', 18 November 1947.

1 A simple word that the tongue utters without difficulty or effort, and a great meaning that minds fall short of grasping in its full majesty, and hearts fall short of encompassing in its full splendor, yet people nonetheless turn each year, as it comes round, to glorifying it and celebrating it. They imagine that they are rendering it its full due, or some part of its due, when in truth they render it nothing of its due at all, but only deceive themselves about this due, and swerve with it from the right path.

2 I do not know why Egyptian governments and Egyptian communities never attach themselves to anything great without debasing it utterly, and reducing it to a paltriness of worth and a lowliness of standing that does not suit it at all.

3 For the governments that imagine they are celebrating the Hijra when they close the government offices, give the officials a rest, and fire the cannons at set times on the first day of the Hijri year, do nothing more than toy with themselves and toy with the people, laugh at themselves and laugh at the people, and allow the people to laugh at them in turn; yet they are not toying with the meaning of the Hijra itself, for it lies above the triviality and the earnestness of governments alike, above their lowliness and their pride alike, above their estimation and their judgment alike.

4 And the communities that imagine they are celebrating the Hijra, when they gather in this place or that to listen to elaborately composed speeches and ornately phrased addresses and words that signify nothing, then to applaud whenever the occasion calls for applause, or whenever it does not, then to praise this speaker and belittle that one, then afterward to disperse as though they had witnessed nothing and heard nothing, having merely turned from one amusement to another, and shifted from one idle talk to another...

5 These communities do nothing more than deceive themselves with wishful fancies, and lead themselves astray with hopes, and respond to vanity exactly as children respond to it, then return to idle, vain amusement exactly as children return to it. And yet, in all this, they are not celebrating the Hijra at all; they add nothing to its majesty, nor do

they diminish anything of its worth by this play of theirs; for it stands too lofty in rank, too immense in significance, and too exalted in station for the play of the playful or the vanity of the vain ever to reach it.

6 For the Hijra was never mere speech, spoken now only to be forgotten after a while; nor was the Hijra ever a spectacle staged for onlookers to be entertained by whenever it was staged, only to be turned away from and forgotten afterward, whether sooner or later.

7 Rather, the Hijra was a momentous event, the like of which humanity had never witnessed before it occurred, and the like of which humanity is not expected to witness again after it occurred — a momentous event that man did not undertake of his own impulse, but that the Prophet, peace be upon him, undertook by the command of God and the revelation sent down from heaven.

8 A momentous event whose near and distant effects did not come to an end with its mere occurrence, nor with years, nor with tens of years, nor with hundreds of years after its occurrence, but will never come to an end until God inherits the earth and all who are upon it.

9 And is it not for this very reason impossible, and indeed improper, that its celebration should consist of words spoken and gestures displayed — words uttered by tongues and received by ears, and gestures performed by bodies and received by eyes? Rather, the true celebration of the Hijra is a faith that settles in hearts and fills them with light, a certainty that reaches the depths of consciences and fills them with purity, and a trust that takes possession of souls and lifts them above base and petty things — and none of this, none of it at all, has anything to do with words or gestures.

10 For when the Prophet emigrated, he did not speak, nor did he deliver long speeches or short ones, nor did he display before his companions and his enemies gestures to bewitch the eyes, dazzle the minds, or captivate the intellect; rather, he received his Lord's command to emigrate from that town whose people had wronged him, and he submitted to the command, and informed his companion of it and accepted his accompaniment, and ordered his cousin to sleep in his bed, wrapped in his cloak, then went out at the hour he was permitted to go out, passing by the watchmen stationed around his house, who were waiting for the dawn to break so that they might kill him. He passed by them without concealing himself from them, without taking precaution against them, without quieting his resolve, without lowering his voice,

without making himself small; rather, he went out as he was accustomed to go out, and passed by as he was accustomed to pass by, and set about reciting a verse of the Qur'an, and placing dust upon the heads of these watchmen, then went on to his destination. They did not see his person, they did not perceive his step, they did not hear his voice, and then they could not even manage to keep watch for him until the end of the night, for a deep, heavy sleep overcame them all, no less deep than their ignorance, nor less heavy than their folly; and when morning came, it became clear to them that they had schemed, but God had schemed too, and God is the best of schemers.

11 And Muhammad reached the home of his emigration after trials in which God kept watch over him by His own care, enveloped him in His own providence, kept him company in his solitude, and consoled him in his desolation; and when he reached Medina, he paid no heed to words spoken or to gestures displayed, but built the mosque, establishing upon the earth the first house dedicated purely to the new religion, and bound the Muslims together in brotherhood, the emigrants and the helpers alike, thereby establishing this state that spread across the earth the light of the new religion.

12 He endured the trial, and his companions endured it with him, for thirteen years before the Hijra, and then he took up work and construction (as we would say now), and his companions took up both together with him for ten years after the Hijra. And throughout this period, long yet short, he delivered the messages of his Lord, and spoke afterward only when speech was needed; and his companions received what reached them of their Lord's messages, and spoke afterward only when speech was needed.

13 Neither he nor his companions ever took speech as an end in itself toward which they strove, upon which they expended their efforts, and toward which they directed their attention; rather, he took speech, and he took his companions, as a means toward righteous action, exactly as God willed it to be.

14 Indeed, he and his companions did, in this period, long yet short, far more than they ever said; they established a state whose traces remain everlasting still, and shall remain everlasting until the end of time, with no way to number them except there be some way to number eternity itself. Deeds beyond counting, and sayings gathered into a few small volumes; then God chose him for His own nearness, and his

companions carried on according to his way, always working and speaking only seldom, and so the conquests came, and the religion of God spread across the earth, and humanity entered a new stage of its life's stages.

15 Until, when these present days came, among the last of times, it became clear that among people there are those who take speech as a means to action, and so fill hearts with mercy, minds with knowledge, the earth with justice, and the world with light; and that among people there are those who console themselves for inaction with speech, distract themselves from earnestness with frivolity, take speech as an end rather than a means, and neglect action utterly, and so fill hearts with harshness, minds with ignorance, the earth with injustice, and the world with darkness.

16 No, gentlemen — do not celebrate the Hijra in assemblies and gatherings before you celebrate the Hijra in your hearts, your consciences, and your minds. If you love God and His Messenger, and believe in what the Prophet called to before the Hijra and after it, then set up in your hearts, your consciences, and your minds sanctuaries where God is remembered when you retire for the evening and when you rise in the morning, when you sleep and when you wake, and in which the excellent example that the Messenger set before you, before he emigrated and after he emigrated, is embodied.

17 There you will find in your hearts a mercy that shields the wretched from wretchedness, and rescues the miserable from misery; and there you will find in your consciences a purity that raises them above petty and base things; and there you will find in your minds a light that makes clear to you that the market of justice, piety, and good conduct is the one that profits, whose traders are never exposed to ruin or stagnation. But as for what you are engaged in — words spoken only to be forgotten, gestures displayed only to be neglected, and vanity that pleases not God but only Satan — consider, then: do you wish to please God, or do you wish to please Satan?!