

# Tourism and Islam: A Study of prominent Themes

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## Abstract

Quran, a verbatim word of God, depicts laws and regulations for the well-being of the life on earth. It holds divine comprehension of things. It is a guide for all concerns of life transcendence from geographical, socio-political and economic-cultural boundaries. Muslims have been promised to success in here and hereafter within the stipulation of the strict adherence of the Quran. Any disobedience to its laws will denigrate them physically and spiritually. The Quran holds numerous terms, themes and concepts that demonstrate the concept of travel which is generally known as tourism in the modern global context. These themes are though commonly known in terms of their meanings but are belittled in terms of their extensiveness and implicational perspective for the modern world. The current study, for that matter, deals with these specific themes of Quran in context of tourism which is now a day's confirmed as religious tourism. It will enumerate the place of tourism in Islam and also will provide a holistic conception of tourism vis-à-vis its scope in the contemporary world.

Key Words: *Hajj, Rihlah, Isra, Me'raj, Siyar*

## Introduction

In contrary to religion, Tourism is oft-named with degeneration, indecency, mere recreation and leisure. This specific implication but derogated form of the definition of tourism to which Rojek and Urry (1977, 2) called "the problematic nature of tourism as a theoretical category", means actually more than it is connoted. Such kind of limited but negative comprehension of tourism forms the common notion among the general populace. The considerable phenomenon of tourism is not about the recreation and leisure only but also implies too many other forms of travels not excluding the religious travels. For, to come out from the deception, scholars consider that "tourism is a term waiting to be deconstructed" (Rojek and Urry, 1997, 1).

In context of religion especially Islam, tourism is generally perceived as an alien and strange to Islam. It has been so derogatively considered that it forms a sort of innovation and as an agent of numerous religious contested laws. Muslims had been avid travelers throughout the history and still are involved highly in diverse touristic activities. But they have least bothered to induce the concept of tourism from the scriptural texts of Islam especially Quran which is highly impregnated with the concepts and terms that demonstrates the whole phenomenon of tourism within the context of Islam. In this regard, the present study is meant to identify and describe the concepts, terms and themes pertaining to modern day tourism, mentioned in Quran.

Further, to elucidate the terms in the light of the exegesis authored by eminent scholars. To evaluate all within the context of tourism for enumerating the place of tourism in Islam forms the main purpose behind this study which signifies its scope in the contemporary times.

### ***Hajj wa-'Ummrah***

*Hajj* in Islam is a pilgrimage activity performed at Makkah during the five days of last month of Islamic calendar called *Dhu'l Hijjah*. *Ummrah* is a lesser pilgrimage performed throughout the year. The former is an obligatory duty upon those who have the capacity to do so. The latter is the supplementary one, whosoever wishes can perform it. *Hajj* and *Ummrah* is basically an amalgam of many activities performed during the course at Makkah besides the circumambulation of Ka'bah.

*Hajj* forms the largest gathering in the whole world. It is estimated that from every corner of the world, every year, almost two million adherents used to come and perform the sacred duty of pilgrimage. The same number of pilgrimages visits the place every year.

Taking the *Hajj* and *umrah* in context of tourism, it can be aptly denote that it is the largest inter-continent migration throughout the conscious history of the world. People from every nook and corners of the world have made efforts to travel and reach Makkah and spend more than a month there to perform the necessary activities of *Hajj* and *umrah*.

It exhibits high significance in terms of tourism market. It enhances to earn foreign exchanges. Such a market holds the potential to promote economic prosperity more than any other market can produce. For the performance of the pilgrimage, certain basic amenities are prerequisite for every pilgrim besides the supplementary ones. After the pilgrimage, the souvenirs for the people at home are including friends, relatives' costs hundreds and thousands of worth.

### ***Siyar***

Quran uses the word *Siyar Sayahah* (Quran, 9: 2), *Sayarat*, *Muqween* (Quran, 56: 73), *Zarabat* (Quran, 3: 156; 4: 101; 5: 106; 73: 20) to denote tourism of various kinds. These verses depict not only the motivational aspect of tourism but also the purpose of it. Quran also demonstrates the ways, means and limitations of tourism.

The word *Ibn Sabeel* (Quran, 2: 177; 2: 215; 4: 36; 8: 41; 9: 60; 9: 112; 17: 26; 30: 38; 59: 7) has been frequently used to denote the traveler particularly in terms of the approach of the guest community which nowadays forms an idea of hospitality in tourism.

The most frequent word for tourism in Quran is the word (*Siyar fi al-Ard*) (Quran, 6: 11; 22: 46; 27: 69; 29: 20; 30:9; 30: 42; 34: 18; 35: 44; 40: 21; 40: 82; 47: 10) which denotes Travel in the land for multi-purposes. Here,

the main reason of tourism is to know about the consequences of past civilizations both the God-oriented and secular.

Tourism is a command repeatedly mentioned in textual scriptures of Islam. The same command is repeatedly used in Quran with the sole purpose of considerations and contemplations.

### ***Isrā'***

The Quranic word *Isrā'* usually refers to night journeys. The term is mostly implied to the nocturnal journey of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) which is popularly known in Islamic context as *Me'rāj* (Ascension of Prophet). But, generally it can be implied to night journeys. Quran mentions the term for the demonstration of the journey of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from *Masjid al-Harām* to *Masjid al-Aqsā* during the night time (Quran, 17: 1), on the other hand, the same is used to refer to the night journey of Prophet Musā (Quran, 20: 77; 26: 52) A keen examination results that both these verses reveals the essence of secret, the significance of night, the benefits of travel journeying during night including the God's signs shown specifically to His chosen Prophets. Further, it depicts the idea of invitation and hospitality which generates motivation, an essential component of the current tourism set-up.

### ***Rihlah***

Quranic usage of the term *Rihlah* (Quran, 106) is meant for tourism for trade and commerce which confirms the sole motive behind the tourism industry. Islam not only endorses tourism but directs towards for the promotion of economic prosperity. The term reveals the conception of seasonality—the summer and the winter, which is highly regarded in present day tourism.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has used the term *rihāl* for the visitation of Mosques. In the famous tradition, Prophet Muhammad Said; “Do not prepare yourself for a journey except to three Mosques: *Masjid al-Haram*, the Mosque of Aqsa (Jerusalem) and my Mosque” (Bukhari, 2:21: 288).

Thus, the terms *rihlah* and *rihāl* incorporates in itself tourism of both sacred-secular natures, encourages Mosque visitation on the one hand and the tourism for commerce on the other hand. Moreover, both kinds of tourism are appreciable but must be perform within the boundaries of Shari'ah.

### ***Ziyarah***

The word *ziyarah* in Arabic means to visit. It is generally implied to the visitation of a shrine, grave, mosque etc. Though, it can be used for other visitations as well. Generally, the term has been used by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) for the visitation of graves and graveyards. He himself used to practice it as is mentioned in traditions that ‘every year the Prophet (SAW) would visit the graves of the martyrs of the battle of *Uhud* and recite this prayer, “peace be on you because you were constant, how excellent, is then,

the issue of the abode”. Imam Baihaqi narrates that Messenger of Allah (SAW) used to visit the graveyard of the martyrs of *Uhud* annually. Imam Fakhruddin Razi writes in *Tafseer-e-Kabeer* that on such occasion all the four foremost companions used to do the same. Ibrahim bin Muhammad (R.A.) reported that Holy Prophet (SAW) used to visit the graves of martyrs of *Uhud* battle in the beginning of year and said: “Salaam on you! As a result of your patience, what a nice place you got in the hereafter!” (Musannaf Abdul Razzaq, 3: 573; Umdat-ul-Qari, 8: 70; Durr al-Manthur, 4: 6410)

Similarly Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) commands Muslims to do the *ziyarah* of graveyards. Ibn Buraida reported on the authority of his father that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: “I forbade you to visit graves but you may now visit them....” (Muslim, 977)

Broadly speaking, *Ziyarah* embeds all visits of Muslims performed at places of religious nature. Be it the Mosque, Shrine, Graveyards or the Saints. On the other hand, *Ziyarah* in other sect of Islam holds significance in terms of the visiting shrines, Mosques and mausoleums especially of the places associated with the Imams. *Ziyarah* tourism forms an important aspect of modern day pilgrimage tourism mostly in areas that are predominantly Shiites.

## Conclusion

Islam—considered by Muslims as the only accepted religion of God, is so comprehensive that encompasses all aspects of Muslim life. Sacred texts of Islam consists regulations for the wellbeing of humankind. The extensiveness of Islam is that it guides us in contemporary concerns. Tourism, in this regard, holds a place in Islam. Islamic texts are highly impregnated with the terms and themes that confirm what is now known as ‘religious tourism’. The terms like *Siyar*, *Ziyarah*, *Rihlah*, besides others are often mentioned in Quran that qualifies the current concept of religious and pilgrimage tourism. It is the high time to revisit the religious scriptures of Islam to base and formulate the boundaries of tourism in Islam.

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