

FASTING IS SELF CONTROL DISCIPLINE

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Quranic Verses:

O ye believe fasting has been enjoined upon you and it was enjoined upon those before you so that you may learn to guard yourselves against evil. 183 Para-2. From the historical background, the believers have been illustrated that the fasting is not unnatural but it has got history for all the nations.

Fasting is a religious institution almost as universal as prayer, and in Islam it is one of the five fundamental practical ordinances, the other four being prayer, poor-rate, pilgrimage and jihad. Fasting has in all ages and among all nations been an exercise. Islam has introduced quite a new meaning into the institution of fasting. Before Islam, fasting meant the suffering of some privation in times of mourning and sorrow; in Islam, it becomes an institution for the improvement of the moral and spiritual condition of man. This is plainly stated in the concluding words, so that you may guard against evil. The object is that man may learn how he can shun evil, and hence fasting in Islam does not mean simply abstaining from food, but from every kind of evil. In fact, abstention from food is only a step to make a man realize that it he can, in obedience to Divine injunctions, abstain from that which is otherwise lawful, how much more necessary is it that he should abstain from the evil ways which are forbidden by God. All the institutions of Islam are, in fact, practical steps leading to perfect purification of the soul. But along with moral elevation, which is aimed at in fasting, another object seems to be hinted at, i.e. that the Muslims should habituate themselves to suffer tribulations and hardships physically as well.

Purpose of Fasting

Ramzan (fast) is a physiological need of the community and so is Taqwa. This is the fourth order of the principles of Islam. The Ramazan means to get away or burn, because you have to get away from the legitimate things i.e. eating, drinking and sexual mixing with legitimate wife for a certain period. Physiologically, the body needs rest in a year for about 30 days. Ramazan is made essential in the ninth month of Islamic year, in which fast is ordered to be observed from dawn to sun set every day. And all the legitimate things are allowed at night. Keeping the physiological need of those sick, infirm pregnant women, nursing mothers and those who have not attained the age of puberty and travellers on journey were given permission not to keep the fast till they are sufficient to bear the fasting. The pregnant and nursing mothers have got a special role to play because of the conditions prevailing to them. A pregnant mother needs to have more than 3300 calories in that to compensate the child. The religion of Islam is so natural, so beautiful that it has given frank permission to such mothers and lactating mothers so that the child should not suffer. Similar situation lies with the sick person, he and she, has to take the medicine and food for those who are on journey, the fast could be kept on other days because the holy Prophet Muhammad (SA) did not keep the fast during journey. It is

mentioned in the Hadiths that the Holy Prophet (SA) did not criticise each other for fasting or not fasting in journey. And once during the journey the fast was broken and the Prophet of Allah has observed not said anything.

From health point of view body needs rest in many functions of psychological nature. Thus during Ramazan intake of calories and too much of meal in between the meals is restricted and various body secretions gets some rest to be more effective and in order. This is one way of reducing weight of the body because if you reduce the calories intake and offer five-time prayer and make struggle this shall provide better change to body to get slim. Thus it is the best way to control over the body weight and in the same time Taqwa is achieved.

Self Control

Self-control is an instinct of psychology. Fasting is a kind of individual observation, observing the order of God. And at the intrinsic same time make him habitual, volunteer, to observe the fast. This characteristic is inculcated for spiritual craving and intrinsic yearning for eternity of Islam and he keeps away from those prohibited things as ordered by Allah and mode of action of Holy Prophet Muhammad (SA) and this is a big training which is now know internationally in electronic media and in the press media that Muslims observe Ramazan for one month as religious necessity element all over the globe. This practice of individual helps in achieving the blessings of Allah and his personality ultimately gets into practice for keeping a fast.

The verse contains four points:

- In the world there are believers, and there are non-believers.
- Fasting is prescribed for muslims.
- It was prescribed for nations before them also.
- Quranic fasting enables the man to avoid evil and vice and to attain virtue and piety.

Fast enables one to guard one's tongue, head, heart and soul from every sort of evil, sin and ugly pursuit. It makes the man righteous, sober, patient, preserving, honest and noble. It curbs lust and passions. Genuine fasting enables muslims to subdue baser human instincts.

Sayings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Once the prophet addressed his companions thus:

There came to you Ramadhan, a blessed month. Its fasting Allah made obligatory on you. The door of Heaven never opened up and mischievous devils are put in chain (Narrator Abu Hurairah, quoted by Ahmad and Nisai).

The meanings of the above quotations are clear. Ramadhan is full of blessings. Muslims do virtuous act, spend days in fasting, and spend a considerable part of nights in prayers and in reciting/listening the Quran. They avoid vices, sins, and ugly pursuits. The doors of paradise are opened and gates of Hell are closed. Their doing virtuous acts and avoiding sins cause frustration to devil.

Fasting: (Al-Saum)

The Holy Prophet (SA) is reported to have said that during the month of Ramzan the gates of paradise are open, and the gates of hell are shut, and the devils are chained by the leg, and only those who observe it will be permitted to enter at the gate of heaven called raiyan.

Quran:

Allah had already given you the victory at Badr, when ye were contemptible. So observe your duty to Allah in order that ye may be thankful. (Al Quran 111: 113).

Breaking the Fast:

Shaddadb. Aus said that when God's Messenger was walking hand in hand with him on the eighteenth of Ramadan he came across a man in al-Baqi who was being cupped and said, 'The one who cups and the one who is cupped have broken their fast'. Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah and Darimi transmitted it. The Shaikh and Imam Muhyi as sunna said that some of those who allow cupping have interpreted it as meaning that they exposed themselves to the danger of breaking the fast, the one who was cupped on account of weakness and the one who did the cupping because he could not guarantee that something would not get in to his stomach by sucking the flask.

Abu Huraira reported God's Messenger as saying, 'If any one breaks his fast one day in Ramadan without a concession or without being ill, a perpetual fast will not atone for it even if he observes it. Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Darimi and Bukhari in a chapter heading transmitted it.

Exemptions

Exemption is made in the case of a woman, who is pregnant or gives such to a child. The very old people, who are physically unable to observe fasts are also exempted. But such persons, if they can afford should arrange to provide food for their poor brethren in faith throughout the month. There are many well to do persons in Pakistan, who can provide food for the poor but they seldom do so. Charity in Ramadan, fetches seventy times more reward than in other days. The prophet was more benevolent in Ramadhan. Ramadhan in his words is a month of devotional worship, repentance, sympathy, philanthropy, expression of islamic fraternal love, favour to dependents, employees, labourers and workers.

Facilities and Concessions

Quran says: God does not want to put you to difficulties. He wants you to complete the prescribed period (2.184).

The aforesaid regulations, provisions and concessions clearly demonstrate that islamic fast is not meant for self torture. It is a healthy sort of self-control. It is a change of routine. In place of breakfast, there is Sehri. Temporary abstention from food and drink is particularly salutary to many who habitually eat and drink in excess. A temporary restraint from physical and biological requirements is of great importance. We must keep in view the ethical and spiritual significance of fasting without which it is like shell without the kernel, a body without spirit. It is a physical, moral and spiritual discipline of the highest order.

Aims of Fast

Quran says: O you believers fasting is prescribed for as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may learn self-restraint and attain piety: 2.183..

Fasting Prohibited

The Eid days and the second fortnight of the Shaa'ban is prohibited to fast. Compensatory fasting are observed to compensate for breach of minor religions obligations.

Explanatory Fasting

It is fasting as an atonement for a major sin. The atonement is fasting for two months.

Values of Fasting

- Fasting is an exercise in moral upliftment.
- It is an exercise in self-control and discipline
- It develops endurance and makes one hardy
- It subdues human passions stimulated by eating and drinking
- It is a spiritual exercise which brings man closer to God
- It is the training of the individual self to realise the Divine pleasures

Fasting is a discipline through which one can develop his will power. It is only when man exerts his will against animal instincts that he realises his higher nature. The full satisfaction of the senses dulls them. Through fasting, even the sexual enjoyments become heightened through denial. The experience of fasting makes one more appreciative of the gifts that God has bestowed.

Muftirat or the things that break the fast. There are :

- Entering into the body of any material substance in so far as it is done consciously and is preventable.
- Swallowing of food
- Smoking
- Sexual intercourse
- Menstruation
- Bleeding
- Vomiting
- Seminal emissions
- Intoxication

Things which do not break fast:

If at the time of tooth brush a little water is poured into the throat un-intentionally that would not disturb the fast. According to Ibn Abbas fast is broken by anything that goes into the body, and not by that which comes out. According to some jurists, kissing the wife does not break the fast. Fasting is prescribed in Ramadhan because in it Holy Quran was revealed.

Link of Ramadhan with Lunar Calendar

The month of fasting according to the lunar calendar comes ten days earlier every year as compared with the solar calendar. Thus rotating from month to month so that in every part of the world the Ramadhan fall in all seasons of the year by turn.

ABU SA'ID AL-KHUDRI REPORTED GOD'S MESSENGER AS SAYING, "IF ANYONE FASTS FOR A DAY WHILE ENGAGED IN JIHAD, GOD WILL REMOVE HIM SEVENTY YEARS' DISTANCE FROM HEL ." (BUKHARI AND MUSLIM)

ABDULLAH.B. 'AMR.B.AL-AS TOLD OF GOD'S MESSENGER SAYING TO HIM, "HAVE I NOT BEEN INFORMED, SAYING TO HIM, "HAVE I NOT BEEN INFORMED, "ABDULLAH, THAT YOU FAST DURING THE DAY AND GET UP AT NIGHT FOR PRAYERS" WHEN HE REPLIED THAT THAT WAS SO, HE SAID, "DO NOT DO IT. FAST AND BREAK YOUR FAST, GET UP FOR PRAYER AND SLEEP, FOR YOU HAVE A DUTY TO YOUR BODY, YOUR EYE, YOUR WIFE AND YOUR VISITORS. MAY HE WHO OBSERVES A PERPETUAL FAST NEVER FAST FASTING THREE DAYS EVERY MONTH IS EQUIVALENT TO A PERPETUAL FAST. FAST THREE DAYS EVERY MONTH AND RECITE THE QUR'AN EVERY MONTH". WHEN HE REPLIED THAT HE WAS ABLE TO DO MORE THAN THAT, HE SAID, "OBSERVE THE MOST EXCELLENT FAST, THAT OF DAVID, FASTING EVERY SECOND DAY, AND RECITE THE QUR'AN ONCE EVERY SEVEN NIGHTS, BUT DO NO MORE THAN THAT (BUKHARI AND MUSLIM).