

Search of Truth, Series-3

RAMADAN

Spiritual Training

Period



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In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Beneficent

Ramadan : Opportunity for Spiritual Progress

Motivated by devotion for God, people have been practising self restraint and keeping fast since dawn of history to express submission to Him. This is why it is found in all religions. Fasting implies keeping from food and water for some time, thus man engages himself in devotion. This tradition is present in all religions.

When God sent down the Qur'an through His Last Messenger Muhammad (peace be to him) as His Guidance for all human beings, He did acquaint the Muslims with the fact that fasting was obligatory for earlier peoples also.

“Believers! Fasting is enjoined upon you, as it was enjoined upon those before you, that you become God-fearing and pious.” (Surah Baqarah : 183)

Purpose of Obligation

The purpose of making fasting obligatory is to create a sense of taqwa (piety). Taqwa means abstaining from evils. Those who, having accepted monotheism, want to submit to the One All-Powerful God are expected to keep from evils and also try their level best to root evils out of society, however hard the society may opposes such efforts.

Ramadan A Training Opportunity

This change in the thought and action of people was not that simple; therefore, God deemed it necessary to subject them to one whole month training every year to create the desired effect. On the basis

of His Omnipresent Knowledge, He chose for the training the month in which the Qur'an was revealed and that was the month of Ramadan.

“During the month of Ramadan the Qur'an was sent down as a guidance to the people with Clear Signs of the true guidance and as the Criterion (between right and wrong). So those of you who live to see that month should fast this whole month....” (Surah Baqarah : 185)

Components of Training

For this sacred month, God has formulated a month-long programme, in the fulfilment of which a person has to make significant efforts :

(1) Waking up much before dawn and getting pre-dawn meal every day of the month.

(2) Abstaining from food and drink and controlling one's senses from dawn to sunset every day. The use of water, fruit, grains and every kind of edibles and indulgence in sexual activities are prohibited during this period. In Islam, this is called Saum (Fasting).

(3) Presenting oneself before God before the sunrise, performing prayers (Salat) in congregation according to His Commands and Prophetic Tradition.

(4) Performing one's all daily chores in this state of Fasting. It is not the teaching of Islam that the Service to God is possible only by sacrificing social and family responsibilities. According to Islam, trying one's level best to fulfil these responsibilities is part of the Service to God.

(5) At the sunset, when the daylong fasting comes to an end, breaking fast congregationally. Not to break one's fast even after the period of fasting is completed will be indiscipline.

(6) Then, soon after it, having presenting Oneself before God, devoting oneself to the performance of Salat, which is called Maghrib Salat.

(7) Only a few hours later, presenting oneself once again for the night prayer (Isha Salat). After the Isha Prayer one performs the Traweeh Prayer. In it the Holy Qur'an is recited sequentially every day in a manner to complete the whole of this sacred Book in the entire month.

(8) Then there is permission to sleep in the night. But the Messenger of God, Hazrat Muhammad (peace be to him) has enthused us to wake up at midnight or a bit later to stand all alone before God for the Tahajjud Prayer to express our submission to Him.

(9) Amidst this ultra-busy schedule one has to perform five times prayers on time, and if possible read the Qur'an once in the whole month.

(10) This ultra-busy and fairly rigorous schedule includes Zakat (obligatory charity) payment on the yearly income and total wealth. God Himself has specified its quantity.

In this month of Ramadan God expects from us to follow the laws revealed by Him and try our level best to keep from their violation. And, if in due course of time this condition gets weakened, the next Ramadan will instil new strength in us and settle us again onto the path of Taqwa (piety).

Social Importance of Ramadan

Ramadan is not only a month of Ibadah (Service to God) but a powerful source of social reform as well.

(1) Taqwa : With the failure of all efforts to contain corruption and crime prevalent in society, it has become evident that evils cannot be wiped out of

society on the mere basis of police action and laws. There is only one way to wipe them out and that is Taqwa, viz. awakening of the sense in minds and hearts of people that they are accountable to God and this is why they have to keep from all evils. Ramadan is the month of awakening this very sense.

(2) Relationship with God : By breaking the relationship with God, society falls into the ebb of moral deterioration, as can be seen in the present society. Ramadan is a powerful source of establishing living relationship with God. Therefore, Ramadan protects society from moral decay, and thus proves helpful in the advancement of society.

(3) Discipline : Indiscipline is the greatest obstacle in the progress of society. Ramadan creates in people the quality of discipline and makes them good human beings.

(4) Integrity : Society survives on integrity of people. The more the sense of integrity is strong and staunch, the more society is stable. Individualism and selfishness is rather detrimental to it. In Ramadan the quality of integrity gets strengthened.

(5) Human Love : Ramadan is the month of human love. Submission to God creates mutual love and amity and an inclination of doing good to others.

(6) Tolerance and Restraint : Abstaining willingly from Halal (lawful) things for some time in Ramadan just to follow the commandment of God creates the quality of self control and restraint that are very necessary to make society strong and stable.

(7) Poverty Alleviation : Poverty is a curse of society. Routine programmes to alleviate it have usually gone in vain. Zakat is an effective way of poverty alleviation. This is a system, inspired by Divine guidance. The rich give out willingly a part of their wealth to the poor and do not expect any reward

from the recipients. If this Divine system is implemented collectively in a well-planned manner, it has the capacity to effect total alleviation of poverty from society. History bears witness that it actually happened in the past.

Ramadan and the Qur'an

Ramadan is the month in which commenced the revelation of the Qur'an, which God sent down for the guidance of whole mankind and about which God taught us that the Qur'an is more important than all other things in the world :

“Tell them, (O Prophet): ‘Let them rejoice in Allah’s Grace and Mercy through which this (Book) has come to you. It is better than all the riches that they accumulate’.” (Surah Yunus : 58)

Thus Ramadan is in a way the anniversary of the revelation of the Qur'an, whereby our practical relationship with the Qur'an is rekindled every year, and thus our relationship with the Divine Guidance does not get diluted.

The festival of Eid, which is celebrated just after Ramadan, is in fact an occasion to celebrate the revelation of the Qur'an and to express our gratitude to God.

Ramadan refreshes the idea that the Qur'an is not the scripture for a particular group. Rather, this is for the whole of mankind and has been sent down to enlighten the entire world; and this is the duty of the Muslims to convey it to every nook and corner of the world, otherwise they will be ignoring the duty assigned to them, by their creator.

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