

Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, December 15, 2000  
 Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah  
 Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim

Once again, by the Grace of God, I have the pleasure to share some thoughts on the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar calendar. It ushers in the Divinely ordained institution of fasting for the benefit of believers. The Arabic word for fasting is *Saum* and not *Roza* or *Roja* as we are apt to say. *Saum* is from the root word *Sama* that means *to abstain*. *Saum* means the act of abstinence from food, drink and sexual activity from dawn to sunset. It is a great and blessed month in which God has made obligatory for us to fast during the day. This is indeed a month of patience and the reward for those who have true patience during Ramadan is Paradise. 2:183 “O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation.”

Fasting is the third so called pillar of Islam enjoined for the purification of the body and the soul. It is a virtuous ordeal to which a believer subjects himself in order to achieve that splendid, that unique and that worthy goal of all humanity – “ Communion with Almighty God “ – breathing a vital power into a craving spirit.

To the Believers, Ramadan is essentially a time of absolute and unqualified resignation to the Will of the Creator and for strengthening our relationship with Him – so essential for the sound foundation of the spiritual structure. Fasting is no dogma as many non-Muslims are led to think. It is a submission on the part of the servant to the Will of his Master – and a kind Master indeed, with an untiring zeal and a determined heart, brimful of the pure joy that naturally accompanies the accomplishment of one’s duty.

Ramadan is a valuable institution of self-discipline. No one can deny its great rectifying value. It prepares a way for training tumultuous emotion whereby sentiments give place to calm currents of thought. It creates a concordant state of mind, a retrospective reverie wherein one may justly weigh one’s personal doing and minister a powerful incentive to flee from sin and associate with piety (taqwa). It brings home that vital truth, wherein evanescent pleasures are forsaken for the larger good and worldly joys are sacrificed for the one supreme joy in the Hereafter – thus paving a way for the attainment of a harmonious whole.

God created us and has bestowed on us vast and diverse bounties and benevolence for submission to His Will. He has made subservient to us all that is on earth and in space to observe, study, ponder, reflect and to use the forces of nature around us.

In 51: 56 He says – I did not create the jinns and the humans except to worship Me alone. The way to do so is by performing the duties like Salat, Zakat, Fasting and Haj. The greatest gift He has given us is the revelation of the Quran in this month that brought bright rays of knowledge and enlightenment.

This beautiful month may be termed as a repository for the benedictions and blessings of God, the All Knowing and All Hearing for the whole of mankind. A true believer may expect boundless mercy, forgiveness and at the same time compassion from the Creator whose gates are always wide open for every sincere human being. As the Fountainhead for all Sources of Knowledge, Munificence and Benevolence, He is the Samad - the Absolute God and His blessing flows endlessly and restlessly to each and every corner of the Universe.

The injunction of fasting has an age-long testimony of history as the most successful and exceedingly portentous means of elevating the moral and spiritual standards of man and of focussing upon his heart the objective realities of life.

Fasting could be broken up into two parts – the basic fast of refraining from eating, drinking and sexual activity and the second of higher quality that includes mental and spiritual control. Such people only meditate on God and concentrate on noble actions. They turn their eye on mundane attractions that may divert attention from God. There are actions which degrade and contaminate fasting – falsehood, backbiting, slander, defamation, perjury, reckless talk, abusive speech, obscenity, hypocrisy and animosity. We have to use our tongue to pray, meditate and study the Quran rather.

Mere hunger and thirst do not constitute a fast. During fasting, one should abstain from all evil deeds, our five senses should be on guard from sin. It is a positive step to open our eyes to the realization and comprehension that when a faster is willing to and actually does submit, in resignation to Divine Injunction, and refrains from that which is otherwise lawful to for him, how much the act regenerates the spirit to fight off all evils. As we check our tongue from tasting food and drink, we must refrain from telling lies, nonsensical and idle talk. So as we cease eating and drinking, we cease evil speaking, evil listening, evil hearing, evil thinking and evil doing. We create a sense of honesty, righteousness and compassion for the community. As we observe a fast we have to apply to every word and syllable the principles of morality, the principles of honesty, the principles of righteousness, the principles of compassion for persons not so fortunate. As food and drink cannot approach our throat, so can evil not approach our mind.

It is a month of barakat and endurance. Fasting is an act of worship like salat. It is also a means of attaining taqwa (Godfearingness) and spiritual perfection. Fasting is also called sabr in the Quran. 2:153 O you who believe, seek help through steadfastness (sabr) and the C.P. (Salat). God is with those who steadfastly persevere.

Sabr is a comprehensive term. It means sticking to one's duty and mission in the face of great hardships, in other words, steadfastness, firmness of purpose, patience, perseverance, the power to bear difficulties and sorrows with a strong will and most importantly unwavering faith.

The advent of Ramadan is a great blessing for the Believing Ummah. It renews and fortifies the faith advancing the believers by degrees of nearness to God. It purifies the spiritual and inner personality of those who observe it in the true spirit and in submission to the Will of Allah.

In the month of Ramadan comes the Night of Destiny. This is just a thought, please correct me after the Qhutbah if necessary – we may wonder that people now live shorter than say people did in the time of Noah who lived great spans of time. If we wish to compete with the people of those generations, it would be impossible for us to emulate or surpass them in righteousness because of our shorter lives. Hence the Quran says that the Night of Destiny is better than a 1,000 months (83 years and 4 months). So this Night would help us to, Insha Allah, catch up. It is a Night of great virtue with many folded blessings, bounties and rewards. God Willing, we eagerly await this glorious Night.

The practical verification and self-experience of this vital pillar of Islam imparts in invaluable. That is why the Quran states in 2:184 “But fasting is the best for you, if you only knew.” Imagine the beauty and knowledge presented in this simple statement.

In Islam, fasting is the only obligatory act that teaches us complete control over physical needs and carnal desires. The reward for fasting cannot be measured, it is only for God and He will surely repay the one who fasts. All those men and women who devote their time during this month in prayer and self surrender will God Willing, receive their munificence and blessing from God for their well being in this world and success in the Hereafter.