

SAUM (FASTING)

Introduction

After Imaan, Salaah and Zakaah, the most important pillar of Islaam is Saum (Fasting) during the month of Ramadhaan (the 9th month of the Islaamic calendar). Fasting in the month of Ramadhaan is amongst the fundamentals of Islaam; one who denies its obligation goes out of the fold of Islaam. One who does not fast during this month is a faasiq (an immoral and flagrant transgressor) of the highest degree. Such a faasiq completely destroys his spirituality and morality.

"Saum" in Arabic, means to restrain and keep silence. The Holy Qur-aan defines "Saum" as "patience" too which means "self-control, perseverance and determination". Thus Saum stands, according to Islam, for guarding oneself against selfishness, sensual and carnal desires and protecting one's instinctive restraint and perseverance. Food, drink and sexual relation between man and woman play very important role in human life that usually destroys human values and merits if not checked. Regulating and keeping oneself away from such human needs for a certain period is Saum. But according to Shar'ee terminology "Saum" means conscious abstinence (of a Muslim) from food, drink and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk with the sole intention of worship. It is conditional for woman to be free from "Haiz-o-Nifaas" (menstruation and discharge of blood of the child-birth) for the observance of fast.

The fasts of Ramadaan were made compulsory in the 2nd year of Hijrat when the believers had become accustomed to the belief of "Tauheed" (monotheism), prayer and other Quranic injunctions. Ramadan is fasting is a pious activity which is not only fard on the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) but it was also compulsory before prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Allah Says in Quran: Surah Al-Baqarah Chapter#2 verse# 183

"O' ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you , As it was prescribed for those who preceded you, That you may be reverent. (2:183)

The month of Ramzan has been fixed for fasting-this month being the month of revelation of the Holy Quran. The word 'Ramzan' has been derived from "Ramz" meaning "to burn" (to burn selfish desires). There are also many other fastings in addition to fasting during Ramzan, but the Ramzan fasting is obligatory and is of the highest importance.

Allah Says in Quran Surah Al-Baqarah Chapter#02 Verse#185

Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (Between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.

Fasting means to abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset. It is fard (compulsory) on every Muslim who has reached puberty (i.e. has become baligh) to fast during the month of Ramadan. Allah has made fasting Fard on us in the month of Ramadan because it keeps us away from sins. Apart from many other advantages, fasting is extremely good for your health.

Significance of fasting

Fasting is an act of worship. Through it a person can learn a great deal and can discover many things about him or her and others. During fasting a person will remember Allah all through the fasting day. A fasting person will undergo a certain feeling inside; since abstaining from food and drink will make him or her continually aware that he or she is obeying Allah through an injunction, an Islamic duty. This subtle form of continuous remembrance of Allah is a manner of compliance to the order of Allah, a manner to remember obedience to Him. In itself, this awareness is a manner of worship. Through fasting a person develops a sense of peace and serenity inside, an assertive feeling of spirituality, and a positive feeling of spiritual elevation. Through fasting a person also develops a feeling of closeness to Allah.

Fasting also enables a person to develop his capacity of self-control and self-denial whereby he learns to master himself to a considerable extent. It is a form of self-denial whereby a person controls and masters many of his wishes and desires, not only of eating and drinking, but many others. By so doing, a person will discover many dormant powers within himself. He will discover that he does not have to be the slave of the dictates of self, that his will is mightier than his desires and wishes. His will, therefore, is the one in command.

Sahih Hadith

Narated By Abu Huraira : The Prophet said, "Whoever fasts in the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith, and hoping for a reward from Allah, then all his previous sins will be forgiven."

Volumn 003, Book 031, Hadith Number 125. Sahih Bukhari

Through fasting we willingly and obediently sacrifice ourselves, since during the daytime we forego eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual contact between the spouses. Fasting teaches us self-discipline, and in the process we become the masters of ourselves for the love of Allah and out of obedience to Him:

Therefore, we learn patience, we feel calm, good, and pure inside. Not only that but during Ramadan we become especially careful about our manners and conduct. We watch ourselves and try to reach the ideal of being good. Ramadan is a great teacher, it teaches us to be good and helpful, to act and behave very well, to be nice to people and not to talk behind their backs, to be accepting and not accusing, to be people of patience, and to be very considerate.

One of the imperative factors of fasting is to restrain yourself not only from the eating and drinking but from all the evil deed from minor to major.

There is a Sahih Hadith

Narated By Abu Huraira : The Prophet said, "Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting.)"

Volumn 003, Book 031, Hadith Number 127. Sahih Bukhari

Objective of Fasting in Quran

The Holy Qur-aan has expounded the aims and objectives of the fast in three brief sentences:

1. That the believers should praise His (Allah's) "Kibriyaa'i" (Magnificence, Grandeur) and "Azmat" (Greatness).
2. Be thankful to Him (Allah) on receiving Divine guidance that He lifted up the mankind to the height of "Rif at-o-'Izzat" (eminence and honour) from the depth of ignominy and disgrace.
3. That the believers may eschew evil deeds and "Taqvaa" (fear of Allah, piety) may develop in them.

Advantages of Fasting

Individual Advantages

(a) Sense of Worship

The first benefit of fasting is that acceptance and confession of Allah's sovereignty is ingrained in the conscience of man. Person during the fasting submit his will/desires to Allah Almighty and for him believing in GOD will not anymore metaphysical concept for him but it became the part of his life.

Allah Says in Quran in Surah Al-Baqrah Chapter # 02 Verse # 183

"O' ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, As it was prescribed for those who preceded you, That you may be reverent (gaining Taqwa-the fearness of God or the Righteousness of God).

Allah Says in Quran Surajh Al-Hujrat Chapter # 49 Verse # 13

"Verily, the most honorable of you with Allâh is that (believer) who has At-taqwa [i.e. he is one of the Muttaqûn. Verily, Allâh is All-Knowing, All-Aware."

From the above verse it is crystal clear that Allah will not judge the people by dress, by color or by race; it is just Taqwa which lead a believer very close to Allah Almighty. And fasting is one of the best religious act to get Tqawa and be closer to God.

(b) Obedience of Commands

Fasting in the month of Ramadan will lead the believer very close to Almighty Allah, as believer restraining his all desires and obeying the commandments of Allah. At whatever situation as u being hungry or thirsty, you keep yourself away from all the needs of time only for the sake of Allah.

Allah has clearly described in the Quran that the month of Ramadan is a very merciful month for all Muslims who obey the commands of Allah and keep fasting for the prescribed time, Fasting is not for make you in the difficulties. If we read the Quran in Surah Al-Baqrah Chapter # 02 verse # 185 Allah Says

"So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful."

(c) Character Building

The third benefit of fasting is character building of a person on ideal lines. As we have mentioned above that it has point out in Quran that fasting transport the whole life of man to the Fear of Allah—abstinence.

The basis of fasting is the feeling of subordination to Allah and a sense of responsibility. As we know that fasting does not only means to give-up eating or drinking, fasting in complete whole it means to restrain from all evil

deeds. Nevertheless this practice influence the person to carry on avoiding the evil deeds even after the month Ramadan that will really help us to improve in all sense morally, ethically and socially.

(d) Self Discipline

The system of Fasting has gained control over the most weaken desires of man like food and sex indulgence. Fasting will become the primary practice to groom internally by your soul and gained control upon your nafs.

Collective Benefits of fasting

(a) An Aura of Piety and Purity

The special benefit of fasting is the psychological state of mind of people which actually uplift the soul. It is very common that if a person is following the any norm in society being acknowledged that he is the only person subsequent to that particular action than but naturally will deprive for his action but in case whole society is performing the same action at the same time will uplift the moral of people and they start help each other. This is the same case with fasting, when whole society follows the same action fasting at the same time this support all the people morally, ethically and socially and the persons those are not fasting would also be attract to this noble act.

Month of Ramdhan is the month of virtue abstinence and purity in which virtue flourish and evil suppressed. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has said same thing in hadith

Narated By Abu Huraira : Allah's Apostle said, "When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of the heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained."

Volume 003, Book 031, Hadith Number 123. Sahih Bukhari

(b) Social Consciousness of Virtue

Second benefit of public ritual is that the natural and real unity is inculcated among the people, where differences of language, race, tribe, caste and country cease to exist. These are the difference which causes the homicide, war and roits are removed by universality of fasting. Fasting produce unity on the basis of basis which is the superior over the unity by langue, race or location. In the month of Ramadan all Muslim whether rich or porr, white or black they come together fast together, pray together Iftar together and naturally bounding themselves in a unity of faith which lead tem to the success in this world as well as in the hereafter.

(c) Mutual help

Love of Allah (swt) bound people to obey and fast in the month of Ramadan, as we have previously depicted that month of Ramadan is the month of virtue, mercy and purity that brings people closer to each other, by understanding the nature and basic problems of people around us.

It is mention in the Quran in Surah Al-Baqrah Chapter # 02 Verse # 184

"For those who can do it but with hardship, is a ransom, the feeding of the one that is in need; But he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better of him."

The gap stuck between rich and poor became fade, and to gain the mercy of Allah people spend in the way of Allah especially to feed the poor and help them financially and morally.