The Glory of the Month of Ramadan

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It was reserved for Islam to prescribe and perfect a formula for spirutual purification for every one of its followers, notwithstanding the state of society he may belong to, and which can be followed without interfering with his normal avocations and callings in every day life. Whatever calling or vocation a Muslim may be engaged in, it does not hinder him from obeying this divine commandment which is one of the five fundamental tenets of Islam.

The Muslim fast means a complete abstinence from eating or drinking between daybreak and sunset. The sighting of the thin sickle of the new moon of Ramazan heralds for the Muslim the beginning of a month of glory and of spiritual elevation, when, at Allah's command he voluntarily and of his own free will, denies himself between daybreak and sunset the blessings of food and drink for a whole month and surrenders himself wholly to Allah, exercising at the same time complete conrtol over his thoughts, speech and actions.

This month, for the Muslims, means the triumph of the spiritual and the pure in his nature over all the gross and carnal desires which are an inevitable component of our human make-up.

The proper observance of the fast is beautifully explained by the Holy Prophet of Islam(S.A.W.) in the following words:

"One who, while fasting, does not guard his tongue from telling lies, does not refrain from doing bad deeds, is not respecting his fast and Allah does not approve of mere abstention from food."

"When you are fasting you should not speak ill of anybody, nor should you be boisterous and noisy. If anybody speaks ill of you or tries to pick a quarrel With you, return him not, but say unto him that you are fasting."

Ramazan, however, has another special significance for the Muslims, for it was in this month that the Holy Quran was revealed to the Holy Prophet. This month therefore is dear to the heart of every Muslim. During this month the Muslim applies himself more assiduously to the reading of the Holy Book, which shall remain for all time as the standing miracle of Holy Prophet Muhammad(S.A.W.).Throughout this month is heard, in every Muslim home, during the day and night, the pleasant and beautiful cadences of the Quranic recitation.

The fact that great spiritual benefit is derived from the reading of the Holy Quran in this month can be seen from the following saying of the Holy Prophet of Islam(S.A.W.):

"A man gets the same reward by reading in this month one verse of the Quran as others do by

reading the whole of the Holy Quran in other months." In this Holy month of Ramazan it should therefore be the duty of every Muslim to read and try to understand the meaning of the Holy Quran and thereby gain an insight into the divine secrets enshrined therein. Its brings peace and illumination to the mind, imparts purity to the soul and removes many a curtain hanging between man and God.

Only constant reading can produce the tremendous amount of joy and pleasure one experiences in reading the Holy Quran.

Ramazan is the month of fasting and intensive prayer, a month of sacrifice and divine worship. In this month a devout Muslim spends hours every night in prayer and meditation, realising all the time the presence of allah who is all pervading. Along with the prayers,he fasts during the day for a whole month in the true sense of the word, i.e. not merely denying himself food and water, but also, as the Holy Prophet of Islam(S.A.W.) explained, exercising strict control over his tongue, his eyes, his ears, his mind, his thoughts and his deeds and canalising every activity of his towards and for the love of God.

Living such a life is immense spiritual discipline and the devotee soon rises to the spiritual peak and realises the joy and happiness experienced by livine a life which is in tune with the Infinite.These joys and these pleasures can be earned by any Muslim who devotes himself to prayer and fasting in the manner taught by the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.).

The Holy Quran says:

"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace" Sura 13 verse 28.

When a man fasts and prays in this holy month as taught and practised by the Holy Prophet, he can truly say, as stated in the Holy Quran, "Say, lo! my worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for ALlah, Lord of the worlds" Sura 6 verse 162, and when a good Muslim reaches this stagem he gets into divine circuits and he can exclaim along with the holy men of Islam as follows:

"We take our colour from Allah and who is better than Allah at colouring.We are His worshippers" Sura 2 verse 138.

Ramadan:

"O ye who believe! fasting is ordained to you as it was ordained to those before you, that you may (learn) self-restraint" S.2.183. The Holy Quran.

The Holy Quran Says:

"Ramazan is the month in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, with 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 any one is ill, or on a

journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by an equal number of days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you: So that perchance ye shall be grateful." S 2.185.

The Night of Power: (Lailat-ul-Qadr):

(I begin) In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. "We have revealed it (the Quran) During the Night of Power. And what will convey to you the meaning of the Night of Power? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Spirit by the permission of their Lord, With every decree. All is peace till the break of dawn." S97.1-5.

This night is full of blessings beacause the Glorious Quran descended in it. The Quran distinguishes between good and evil and shows the path of eternal peace and bliss to all mankind forver. This being so, the night on which the divine message was first revealed is worthy which the divine message was first revealed is worhty of great esteem. During this night, as explained in the verse quoted above, the Angels and the Heavenly Spirit[Hazrat Jibreel(A.S.)] descend by God's command to fulfil His decrees and to bless His obedient servants. Their presence on earth casts a spriritual lustre on the hearts and souls of the believers. Therefore those who pass this night in prayer, experience an unimaginable bliss, a deep feeling of great exultation as a result of heavenly blessings being showered on them. The believers must therefore recite the Quran, acknowledge in their hearts the sins they have committed, truly repent, seek Allah's forgiveness and pray for His mercy.

The Month of Glory

Shaikh Sadooq relates from an authentic source that Hazrat Imam Reza(A.S.) related from his ancestors, who related it from Hazrat Ameerul Momeneen Ali ibn Abi Talib (A.S.) that one day, the Messenger of Allah delivered the following sermon to them:

"O people! The month (Ramazan) of Allah has come with His mercies and blessings. This is the month, that is the best of all months in the estimation of Allah. Its days are best among the days. Its nights are best among the nights. Its hours are best among the hours. This is a month in which you have been invited by Him (to fast and to pray).

You have been given the opportunity in this month to receive the honours from Allah, the Merciful. In this Holy month if you truly fast as ordained, then every breath that you take has the sawab of "Tasbih" (The praise of Allah on the rosary beads), and your sleep has the sawab

of worship. Your good deeds are rewarded more than is usual and your invocations are accepted. Therefore, you must invoke your Lord in right earnest with hearts that are free from sin and evil, and pray that Allah may bless you to keep fasts, and to recite the Holy Quran. Verily! The person, who in this month does not receive the mercy and benevolence of Allah, is very unfortunate. While fasting remember the hunger and thirst of tomorrow in Qiyamat (Day of Judgment).

Give alms to the poor and needy. Pay respect to your elders. Have sympathy for your youngsters and be kind towards your relatives and kinsmen. Guard your tongue against unworthy words, and your eyes from scenes that are not worth seeing (forbidden) and your ears from sounds that should not be heard."

"Be kind to orphans so that when your children become orphans they will also be treated with kindness. Do invoke that Allah may forgive your sins. Do raise your hands at the time of Namaz (Prayers) as it is the best time for asking for His mercy. When we invoke at such times, we are answered by Him. When we call Him, He responds, and when we ask for anything the prayer is accepted by him.

"O people! you have made your conscience the slave of your desires. Make it free, by invoking Him for forgiveness. Your back is breaking under the heavy load of your sins, so prostrate yourself before Him for long intervals and make it lighter."

"Do understand fully well that Allah has promised in the name of His majesty and Honour that He will not take to task such people who fast and offer Namaz in this month, and perform "sajda" (prostration), and that He will guard their bodies against the fire of hell on the day of judgment." "O people! If anybody amongst you arranges for the "Iftar" (food for ending of fast at sunset)of any believers, then Allah will give him the reward as if he has set free a slave. He will forgive his minor sins."

Then the companions of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) submitted: - "But everybody amongst us does not have the means to do so." The Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) told them:

"Keep yourself away from the fire of hell by inviting a believer for "Iftar", though it may consist of only half a date or simply with water if you have nothing else."

"O people! anybody who in this month may cultivate good manners, will walk over the "Siraat" (bridge) in Qiyamat though his feet may be shaking." "Anybody who in this month may take light work from his servants (male or female), Allah will make easy his accounting on the day of judgment. Anybody who does not annoy others in this month, Allah will keep him safe from His wrath in Qiyamat. Anybody who respects and treats an orphan with kindness in this month, Allah shall look at him with kindness in Qiyamat.

"Anybody who treats well his kinsmen in this month, Allah will bestow His Mercy on him in Qiyamat, while anybody who maltreats his kinsmen in this month, Allah will keep him away from His Mercy."

"Whoever offers "Sunnat" (recommended) prayers in this month, Allah will save him from hell. Whoever, in this month, offers one "Wajib" Namaaz, for him the angels will write the rewards of 70 such prayers, that were offered by him in any other month."

"Whoever recites repeatedly "Salaat-o-Salaam" on me, Allah will keep the scales of his deeds heavy, when in Qiyamat the scales of others will be tending to lightness. Whosoever recites in this month, only one "Ayat" (verse of the Holy Quran), he will be rewarded in a manner as if he had recited the full Quran in other months."

"O people the gates of paradise remain open in this month. Do pray that the gates may not be closed on you. While the gates of hell are closed, do pray to Allah that these gates may never be opened."

The Du'a after the New Moon is Sighted:

When the crescent moon is sighted, raise your hands towards the sky and pray as under:-

"O crescent moon! My Lord and thy Lord is Allah, who is the Lord of the worlds". "O Allah! bless me in this month with peace, safety and tranquillity. O Allah! Make this month full of blessings for me. Bestow on me goodness and help me in this month, and turn away from me wickedness and all things unworthy."

Imam Zainul Abedin used to invoke the following Du'a at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan:

Prayer No. 44, Sahifa-i Kamilah.

"All praise is due to God who guided us to praise Him and made us worthy in order that we may be grateful for his goodness, and that He may thereupon, confer on us the reward of the righteous."

"And all praise be to God, who showed us the path of Islam in order that, through His Grace we may walk along the right road to win His approbation and earn His good pleasure."

"And praise be to God who ordained this month, the month of Ramazan, the month of fasts, the month of Islam, the month of purity, the month of purification and the month of intense prayers. In this month the Quran was made to descend, as a guidance to mankind and contains clear instructions and distinctions (between right and wrong)."

"And He gave this month superiority over all the other months by allotting to it abundant

honour and dignity; therefore, He prohibited in it what He had allowed in other months in order to exalt it; and forbade in it food and drink, in order to honour it."

"He gave excellence to one of its nights and declared it to be better than a thousand months and named it "Lailatul-Qadr" the night of Qadr (Power), wherin descend the angels and the spirit by permission of their Lord, with every decree; peace and everlasting blessing till the dawn of the morning to His deserving servants."

"O Lord bless Muhammad(S.A.W.) and his Aal (progeny) and inspire us to know this month's excellence, and to honour its dignity, and to abstain from whatever Thou hast forbidden in it; and help us to observe its fast, by restraining our limbs from disobeying Thee and by employing them in that which would please Thee,

so that we may not lend our ears to any vain speech and may not direct our eyes, hands and feet towards anything forbidden, and so that nothing may fill our bellies but what thou hast made lawful and our tongues may not utter anything save what Thou hast permitted; and we may cease to exert ourselves except in that which would bring us nearer to thy reward, and may stop doing everything save that which would protect us from Thy torment.

"O Lord, free us from ostentation and notoriety desired by seekers of fame and O Lord, let our worship be of Thee alone."

"O Lord, bless Muhammad(S.A.W.) and his Aal (progeny), and give us grace to perform timely the five prayers with due regard to their limits which Thou hast enjoined, and the rites which Thou hast prescribed, and in this respect raise us to the rank of those who performed them (i.e. the five daily prayers) with success, who duly observe their essential points, who always performed them at (proper) times, in most perfect and complete purity and most evident and touching humility (according to the rules laid down by Thy servant and Thy apostle, Thy favours be on him and his Aal (progeny)."

"And O Lord, give us grace, in this month to show favour to our relations and do good to them, and to take care of our neighbours with kindness and benevolence, and to purge our property of obligations, and purify it by giving the legal alms, and to call back those who have left us, and be just to those who were unjust to us, and make peace with those who were hostile to us- far be it from us to reconcile those who are abhorred on account of Thee and for Thy sake; for, verily, Thy enemies shall ever be our enemies."

"And give us grace in this month to approach Thee by means of pure deeds, whereby Thou mayest purify us of our sins,"

"And guard us from relapsing into blemishes, so that none of Thy angels may have occasion to report unto Thee except such conduct as would fall under the heads of obedience to Thee and

the means of approaching Thee."

"O Lord, I beg of Thee for the sake of this month, and for thesake of him who adored Thee in it, from its beginning to the time of its closing, whether he belonged to the class of the angels whom Thou hast permitted to be near Thee, or of prophets whom Thou hast sent, or of pious servants whom Thou hast raised in rank,

to bless Muhammad(S.A.W.) and his Aal (progeny) and to make us, in this month, worthy of that which Thou hast promised to Thy friends out of Thy bounty; and make us worthy to be of that which thou hast promised to confer on those who are most diligent in Thy service; and place us in the class of those who are high and exalted by Thy mercy."

"O Lord, bless Muhammad(S.A.W.) and his Aal (progeny) and restrain us from disbelief in Thy unity and insufficiency in glorifying Thee, and entertaining doubt in the religion sent by Thee, and being blind to Thy path, and neglecting to honour Thee, and being deceived by Satan, Thy enemy, the outcast."

"O Lord, bless Muhammad(S.A.W.) and his Aal (progeny) and since, in every night of this month, there are men whom Thy pardon doth liberate, or whom Thy forbearance doth forgive therefore, let us be of these men; and let us be in this month amongst the best."

"O Lord, bless Muhammad(S.A.W.) and his Aal (progeny) and obliterate our sins along with the disappearance of this month's crescent, and free us from our penalties with the expiration of its days; so that the month may pass from us, while Thou hast cleansed us of our guilts, and freed us of our sins."

"O Lord, fill this month with our worship of Thee alone, and adorn its moments with our service to Thee; and help us in the day-time to observe fast, and at night to pray and beseech Thee, and help humble (ourselves) before Thee, and abase (ourselves) in Thy presence; so that neither its day nor its night may bear witness against us of negligence or default."

"O Lord, and let us be like this in all the months and days, as long as Thou keepest us alive; and let us be of Thy righteous servants, who will inherit paradise, wherein they shall live forever; and who do give what they give for the love of Thee, for verily, they shall return to Thee! and let us be of those who are prompt in charity and excel therein."

"O Lord confer belssings on Muhammad(S.A.W.) and his Aal (progeny), in every time and every moment, and in every condition, greater in number to the blessings Thou didst confer on whomsoever Thou didst bless: Verily, Thou art the doer of what Thou willeth."

On whom The Fast is Wajib (Compulsory):

It is incumbent upon every adult person of sane mind to fast every day throughout the month of Ramazan, provided that:

1. He or she is not travelling:

2. He or she is not suffering from any illness on account of which the fast may be injurious to his or her health. NOTE: Travelling means going from one's place of residence to any place situated at least 8 farsakhs away (about 27/5 miles), with the intention of staying for less than ten days.

If a person starts on a journey after the time of Zohar prayer, he should continue to fast for the rest of the day. If a person arrives home or at a place where he intends to stop for ten days or longer before mid-day, then, provided he has not had anything to eat or drink or done anything which breaks the fast from the time or "Sahar," he may make the Niyyat (intention of fasting) and keep fast on that day.

If during the month of Ramazan the devotee is disabled from fasting on any day or on a number of days for any valid reason (e.g. travelling or illness) it is wajib (compulsory) for him to observe the same number of fasts after the month of Ramazan as soon as the disability has been removed. Women must omit the fasts during the monthly period and at the time of child-birth (discharge during the period after child-birth.As soon as the period ends, they must take the bath (ghusl) and resume the fasts.

If a woman is feeding (suckling) an infant, and it is reasonably apprehended that the infant would be deprived of its due nourishment, then she must not fast.

.Fasts not observed due to any of the above causes should be made up later

Abstention: During the period of the fast the devotee is required to abstain from:

Eating and drinking

Smoking

Sexual gratification

Immersing the head in water.

Taking an enema.

Taking an injection.

The fast becomes void by any of the above mentioned acts.

If a person deliberately does any of the acts by which a fast is broken, then not only must the person osberve the "qaza" (i.e. make up for the broken fast) but also fast for sixty days as kaffara (penalty), or feed sixty poor persons.

Before beginning the fast the devotee must eat or drink something. It is not permissible to continue fasting day and night so as to join one fast with another without partaking of food.

In case of doubt and difficulties arising out of the broad principles of fasting, it is advisable to take the advice of the Mujtahid under whose guidance the person is.

Important Events In the month of Ramadan

Hazrat Imam Hasan Mujtaba(A.S.)the Second Holy Imam of the Shi'ites in the world was born on the 15th of Ramazan.

Hazrat Amirul Momineen Ali ibne Abi Talib was stabbed on the 19th Ramazan in the Kufa Mosque when he was leading the morning prayer. Imam Ali(A.S.) was martyred on the 21st day of the month of Ramazan.