Ramazan: the Month of Forbearance and Brotherhood

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The Holy Prophetof Islam(S.A.W.):

"Ramazan is the month of forbearance and brotherhood."

When the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) used to sight the moon of the holy month of Ramazan, he stood facing the Qibla and with utmost humbliness in the presence of Allah asked success in this holy month by saying: "O' Allah! make its dawn on us in peace, conviction in faith, safety, submission, abundance of prosperity, immunity from sickness, recitation of Qur'an and assistance in prayers and fasting. O'Allah! keep us healthy in the month of Ramazan and keep us confident in our faith in it, and let it not last without being forgiven.

".The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said: "Certainly prayers in this month are accepted

Preface

O'belivers, prescribed for you is the Fast, even as it was prescribed for those that were before you happily you will be Godfearing - The Glorious Qur'an: II, 180

Ramazan, the month of fasting, is the 9th month of Arabic calendar. During the days of this holy month every adult Moslem, 16 aged men and 9 aged women, has to fast according to Islamic rules., The sick and invalids are, of course, an exception to this rule.

People can eat and drink (not any alcoholic drinks) from sunset until the sunrise. So during the day they fast and have no right to lie with their wives or husbands. Some people ask that why they have to fast and what they will have benefited by fasting. It must be said that fasting has .three significances

Moral Significance:

Fasting will remind man of the omnipotent and that everything is derived from Him and will come back to Him, and also of the days he has spent uselessly. It will wake up the human .feelings and will strengthen the faith and will power of man

Social Significance:

Statistics has proved that during this month, the quarrels and homicides have been reduced.

The perons who is in fast will feel the situation of being hungry, then he will be provoked to help the poor and the needy. So the classical differences would be decreased. In the world in which the hunger may be the most important problem, fasting could be one of the best way to diminish the space between the poor and the rich.

Health Importance:

It is obvious that the output of fats in the body bring many diseases. Fasting is, thus, a fair diet for body and the construction of the body can rest during a month.

The Holy Month

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) used to declare the approach of the holy month of Ramazan. According to the traditions and history, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) used to gather the people when the end of the month of Shaaban closed. He used to explain to them the approach of the month of Ramazan in different sermons and made them prepared to derive from it the advantages of this golden opportunity, to acquire human merits from its holy programmes so as to be obedient to the commandments of Allah in practice, to perform their duties and recognize their rights so that they may be able to defend them and be acquainted with the spiritually so that they should not be succumb to difficulty or unevenness, or be weak or humble to their superiors, or be proud or disappointed when defeated.

Therefore, the greatest school for perfecting man in performing his deeds which was the goal of the holy messengers and holy persons is this month which is interpreted as the month of Allah.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (A.S.) said that on the last Friday of the month of Shaaban the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) gathered all the people and addressed and explained to them the importance of this month.

First, he praised and glorified Allah and then by his vehement voice he said: O' people! the month of Ramazan has come with its mercies and blessings. In this month there is a Night of Power (Laylatul-Qadr). You have been enjoined to fast so as to keep yourselves from worldly desires and follow the commandments of Allah.

The purpose of it is to keep you nearer to Allah. Do not lose this opportunity lest shall be very unfortunate?"

On account of this reasons when the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) sighted the moon of the holy month of Ramazan, he used to raise his hands praying that Allah may bestow His blessings,

health, safety and peace under the protection of Faith, and the people should be able to continue their lives in prosperity and health and success in their works and overcome all diseases and difficulties and to bless those who recite the Holy Qur'an, say prayers and keep fasting with true spirit.

At the end of this sermon, he prayed Allah saying, "O Allah keep us safe in this month of Ramazan, and make it the month full of blessings and safety so that we may abide by what you have enjoined us, and by so doing you may forgive us."

Then the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) stressed the rewards of good deeds done in this month. He said that "whoever stays awake in the night and offers 2 "rakaats" (units) of "sunnah" (recommended) prayers is equal to a person who had stayed awake for 70 nights and offered "sunnah' prayers. Whoever accomplishes a good deed is tantamount to performing his obligations in other months of the year. And whoever performs his religious obligation once accordingly, he will be rewarded like a person who has performed 70 times in other months of the year.

Then the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) in brief words emphasized the reason and importance of this month by saying that in this month the school of Islamic instructions is opened and that whatsoever the Muslims learnt in other months, must practise and train themselves so as to attain the highest degree of religious morality. Hence, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said that Ramazan is the month of forbearance and patience, that means a man must forbear patiently the difficulties he will meet in fulfilling the commandments of Allah lest he fails to conform to them. On the other hand, he should fight against his desires lest he be the slave of his own desires and fall into the bad situation and lose his exalted position of humanity.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said, "I am afraid of two things about my people - to be the slave of their desires and aspiration". Surely, when a man goes astray by making his conscience the slave of his desires, poverty and abasement befall on him, and thus he does a thing without paying any heed and loose his morality.

But if you go against your desires and bear the difficulties patiently and abstain from what is forbidden by the "Sheriah" (Law), you will succeed in your intentions.

A man must be prepared from the beginning to fight courageously with his foes, because the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said that this is the month of forbearance and patience which makes a man follow and perform the commandments of Allah without asking the ways and the wherefores, and keep him away from the forbidden things even though his conscience desires. If a man in this month is able to take lessons, he overcomes his desires and worships his Lord devotedly by abiding by His orders, surely he has succeeded in his determination and has

known his God accordingly, and under such forbearance, this world becomes like a heaven to him which he will not agree to exchange in lieu of anything and finally the Heaven will be his abode.

After explaining the first part of attaining human perfection which is the relation between the Creature and the creator, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) said that the month of Ramazan makes a man know Allah, and by abiding the commandments and abstaining from the forbidden brings him closer to his Lord and makes this world a heaven for the faithfuls.

Then he indicated the attainment of this human perfection by explaining that Ramazan is the month of helping one another, cooperation and equality and in contrast it is adversity, helplessness and fighting; hence the weaks are humiliated by the strongs and the poors by the rich.

Inequality is the life of today. You see one man eats so much that he dies, also you see the other is so hungry to the point of death. But had there been equality in living, and all had been equal in hunger, thirst and materials of life, there would, have been no differences between the poor and the rich. All should fast so that they may be equal in abiding by the commandments and abstaining from the forbidden things. That a rich may not disobey the commandments of Allah because of his helplessness. Therefore, Allah has made them all equal under the commandments of religion. Rich, poor, black and white, are all equal under the commandments of Allah.

If an eminent Muslim of high position does an act contrary to the commandments, he will be blamed. Likewise, when a Muslim of low position does a good deed, he will be praised and respected.

Imam Ali Ameerul Mu'mineen (A.S.) has devoted his life in performing commandment of equality.

Once, he was summoned to the court. The judge respectfully addressed Imam Ali(A.S.) with his appellation.Imam Ali(A.S.) reproached him angrily and said, "Why don't you follow the law and show equality between I and my opponents?"

Well, the month of Ramazan teaches Muslims this lesson, enjoin them to be equal among themselves and strengthens them so that when they become strong, they should not oppress the weak and when they become weak they should not show their weakness. If we, after learning this lesson, abide ourselves by carrying out the commandments of the Holy Prophet of Islam(S.A.W.) so that every one has to give some assistance according to his ability to help his needy fellow, and to look after them, surely there will be no poverty or ignorance among the Muslims, and instead equality, love and fraternity will be firmly established among them. The

rich should not trample and molest the poor nor the poor and the weak should curse the rich and be pleased of his death in order to get his property.

Those who do not reflect may think that by participating the poor and the needy in the shares of the rich there will be a loss in the property, and the needy will be independent. Therefore, the Last Prophet said that in this month, Allah blesses the believers by increasing their sustenances and life, so that the Muslims may have better life because all affairs are disposed by Him, and Allah is able to give every creature thousands of successes. A Muslim must believe in all these blessings.

The Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) said, "If anybody amongst you invites a believer for an Iftar (food for ending a fast at sunset), Allah will give him the reward as if he has set free a slave, and he will forgive his minor sins."

Hearing this commandment, the companions of the Prophet asked that every body amongst them does not have the means of doing so, hence they will nor enjoy these rewards. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) replied them that it is not for Allah to burden those who have no means and deprive them of this reward, but if those people who aspire that "If I had the means, I would have done so". By this aspiration Allah will reward them and give them a high position in the Hereafter.

It is the law of Allah to command his servant according to his capacity. If a person arranges for Iftar to the one who fast by giving him even some milk mixed with water or few dates or some hot water, it will be acceptable to him. In short, everybody should do a virtuous action according to his capacity. Neither the poor should refrain from doing this good deed because of his poverty nor the rich deserve to do like poor but every one should do according to his capacity.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) also said that anybody who in this month of Ramazan helps his inferiors in any way and lessens his difficulties, Allah will reward him by making easy his deeds on the day of judgement for this good action.

Then, in short, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) divided the month of Ramazan into three parts. In the first part, Allah showers His mercies and blessings to his servants, so that they may acquire all their needs.

In the second part, the servants are purified in their past sins and ask for forgiveness. In the third part, Allah keeps them under His benevolence and kindness, accepts their aspiration and prayers and keeps them safe from the wrath in the Hereafter. Consequently, people like these whoe are pure and embellished with faith and who are under the Mercy of Allah by doing good deeds in this world, surely in the Hereafter they will dwell in the Paradise and enjoy the reward

of their efforts.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) in the last part of his sermon taught his people a sublime lesson in which is a systematic teaching for every Muslim to see, understand and practise. It is necessary to understand it and there isn't anybody who doesn't need it. Therefore, for every one to attain the prosperity in life, he must observe and follow these four qualities.

"The first and the foremost quality for man's happiness is to have faith in Allah who makes easy our difficulties, delights and give hopes to our hearts, and when he is happy and able, he doesn't become arrogant and independent of Allah. For this reason, he becomes a perfect man depending upon the help of Allah in perfecting his acts of humanity, embellishing his godly characters and increasing his virtues.

"The second quality which pleases Allah is my Prophethood through which a man can know Allah, learn to live a happy life according to Allah's commands and know the reality of this world.

"As for the third quality, you must ask Allah to bless you in this month that which you don't possess in your life. Ask Allah to give you your legitimate desires and happiness in this world and Hereafter. And in this blessed month, ask for your safety and health for yourself and all Muslims. And know that Allah can keep you safe from the Hell and bless you enter the Paradise, if you ask Him these things in this month of Ramazan."

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) concluded his sermon here and everybody can understand his words according to his capacity, derive benefits from his sermon and follow his commandments in order to accomplish his cause in obeying the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.).

It is imperative for every people in general and our beloved youths in particular, to know the truth, culture and moral teachings of Islam in this holy month so that they may practise the Islamic manners and earn sufficient rewards.

"Allaho Akbar" (Allah is great).

Five times in 24 hours the call comes from the minarets of the mosques: Allaho Akbar. It is Azan, meant to announce the time of prayers. Right at the call of Azan, Muslims are expected to gather in the mosque.

It is a matter of pride that we are called by God to his audience. It shows his love towards His creatures that he has provided us with an opportunity to communicate with Him. He has opened His house for us let us not be late or absent from His presence.

Azan begins with the phrase -Allaho Akbar - (Allah is great); it ends.

With the pharse - La Ilaha Illallah- (None is to be worshipped but Allah). It begins with the name of Allah; it ends on the name of Allah. We are reminded that Allah is the beginning; Allah

is the end. Between these two phrases the Muazzin bears witness to the unity of God; and to the apostleship of Muhammad(S.A.W.), the Holy Prophet. Then he exhorts the believers: Come for prayer; Come for the prosperity (in this world and in life hereafter); and thus it goes on till the end.

Azan is not just a symbol. It is a sermon in clear words. It not only calls a man for prayer; it also explains why should he pray, and to whom should he pray. It reminds the hearers about God; and about man's obligation towards Him. and after these explanations, it exhorts the believers to offer their humble prayers, with full knowledge and understanding, in the presence of God.

Allah is great! Nothing else matters. Allah is calling you. Leave aside your worldly affairs. Forget your business arrangements. Do nor miss this golden opporunity. Go and pray in the presence of God. He is great! Our problems, our worries, our joy, our achievement, our success - nothing actually matters. Allah only is great. Let us communicate with him. Only his benevolent love and care can bring us to prosperity in this world and in life-hereafter.

Real Fast

"O ye who believe' Fasting is prescribed to you ... that ye may (learn self-restraint ..." (The Holy Qur'an; chapter 2: verse 183). The Command for fasting in Ramadhan came in the first year of the Hijra. The Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) delivered a lecture on the last Friday of the preceding month, Sha'ban, in which he said:

"O people! You are now under the shadow of the month which has a night (Night of Qadr) which is better than thousand month. It is the month of Ramadhan in which fasting has been made compulsory by God. It is the month of patience; and the reward of patience is paradise. It is the month of mutual sympathy.

"Whoever feeds a fasting brother at the time of breaking the fast, God will be as much pleased with him as though he would have emancipated a slave, and it means that his sins of past would be forgiven."

Somebody pleaded that not everybody was affluent enough to feed others. The Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) said: "Allah is generous enough to be pleased with you even if you break the fast of a Muslim brother with a morsel of date or a cup of water if it is the only thing which you can offer." God does not see the wealth offered but it is the feeling of the heart only which counts. Then the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) proceeded to say: "Anybody who makes the burden of his servants lighter in this month Allah will make his sins lighter for him on the Day of Judgement."

The word "Ramadhan" is derived from the root "R-M-Dh", which indicates "Heat" and "Restlessness". It is said that the name of the month indicates the hardships which accompany a fast, like thirst and a comparative restlessness.

But the best explanation was given by the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) himself, who was the final authority on every thing. He said: "Ramadhan burns the sins and faults as fire burns the wood."

Imam Muhammad al-Baquir (A.S.) told one of his companions: "O Jabir! Whoever, during Ramadhan, fasts in days, stands for prayers in parts of nights, controls his sexual desires and emotions, puts rein on his tongue, keeps his eyes down, and does not injure the feelings of others, will become as free from sin as he was the day he was born." Jabir said: "How tough are these conditions!"

Have you courage enough to try to fulfil these "tough"conditions in this Ramadhan and be freed from the chain of past sins?

Fruit of Fasting

"The month of Ramadhan is the month of God, (bringing) His blessing, mercy and forgiveness." (Holy Prophet).

The month of Ramadhan gives us a chance to start life afresh. Muslims should make resolutions during this month, to act upon during the year. This is the month when emotions remain under the control of reason. Thoughts, in this month are not wild, feelings not hard. Forgiveness, generosity and love of God through the love of His creatures are infused in our soul. Naturally, it is the best time to decide how are we going to live in the coming year. We should know what do we want to achieve and how.

Why not start making your programme just now? And when you have completed the list of your ambitions, here is a simple test to see how much have you benefitted from fasts of Ramadhan. Do your resolutions include such items as helping the needy (not by just handing out a few shillings, but. by helping him to stand on his own legs)? Have you thought of showing more respect to the elders, loving more tenderly those who are younger? Is there anything concerning your neighbours and friends? Have you any inclination to forgive your enemies? Have you resolved to live more honestly and more sincerely? And above all, is there any room for God and His Prophet in your thoughts and programmes?

If the answer is "Yes", accept my congratulations; you are a real Muslim; you know the meaning ot the fast of Ramadhan.

If on the other hand, the answer is in negative, there is some need of improvement in your faith. And if you really want your faith to be more perfect time is never lost. Though the month of

Ramadhan is coming to its end very soon, you may still take its advantage. There is no need to feel sorry for yourself.

If you really want the love of God it is yours for asking. It is the easiest goal to reach and the most difficult. It all depends, not so much on the path, as on the traveller. If your heart is pure, it is the easiest thing in the world, if you want to put the love of God in a corrupted heart, it is just impossible.

As is clear from the tradition of the Holy Prophet quoted above, this month is the month of blessing, month of mercy and month of forgiveness. If anybody wants these benefits, he should strive for it, with more zeal and more sincerity in the remaining few days of this holy month. If we spend our time in remembering God,praying for His love, repenting for our sins, we can be sure that God will bless us with His love and His mercy.

Spirit of Fast

"O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed to you... that ye may (learn) self-restraint... (The Holy Qur'an, 2:183).

Fast like living things, has a body and a soul. The required abstinence from food, water, sexual relations etc. is the body of the fast: "piety" is its soul. If we are not striving to refine our character by fast, our fast will be a body without soul. Fast cleans our body from impurities. Likewise, it must purify our hearts and minds from all impure thoughts, improper desires and undisciplied sensations.

The Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) saw a woman, who was fasting on that day (not in Ramadhan), abusing her girl-servant. The Prophet admonished her and told her to break her fast. The woman protested: "But i am fasting today." The Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) said: "but was not your fast broken by the abuses you were hurling upon that poor girl?"

Imam Ja'far-d-Sadiq(S.A.W.) has said: "Your fast day should not be like other ordinary days. When you fast, all your senses - eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet - must fast with you." How? Eyes: Keep your eyes off unlawful things and objects; spend this most precious gift of God in good cause and pious acts and read Qur'an and Do'as. Ears: Abstain from hearing unlawful gossip, lies, false statements, music and obscene topics. Pay your attention towards sermons and topics of learning etc.

Tongue; Do not tell lies or useless tales; do not spread rumours or, damaging gossips about other persons; keep aloof from falsity. Use the power of speech in spreading the word of God; in creating good-will in the society.

Hand: Do not inflict injury upon others by your actions; instead strive to help them as far as you

can.

Feet:Do not go towards forbidden places, like bars and cinemas. Do not run between people creating a strife. Go towards those places where God is remembered; and your movements should be to bring people together.

And above all, your heart and mind must be with you in fasting. Because fast, in its real sense, will not be complete unless your thoughts, your emotions, your actions -in short, all aspects of .our life - become pure, clean and free from blemish

Code of Conduct

"Verily, the religion before God is Islam" (The Holy Qur'an, 3:19)

Islam has given mankind a perfect code of conduct. Men from every walk of life have been clearly instructed how to perform their duties, how to behave. Islamic law is based on Justice, Islamic ethics, on love and grace.

The most strict rules have been laid down for those who enter the public life, like judges, governors etc. The Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) once sent a man as a Qadhi to Southern Arabia. When he came back, he brought many gifts given to him during his stay there. When the Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) came to know about it, he demanded that all the gifts be brought to him to be distributed among poor.The ex-judge protested that it was his personal property, as it was given as gifts. The Holy Prophet(S.A.W.) said: "Had you gone there in your private capacity without any official credential, these gifts would have been your private. But as long as you were my Qadhi, the things presented to you were not "gift"; it was "bribe" to please you so that they might benefit from you." The man had to return all his "gifts".

This clear cut rule is worth following by all public leaders. Then they would not have to worry how much a Member of Parliament may accept from his "clients"; or how much "expenses" can be spent on pleasure trips.

Imam Ali(A.S.) was informed of a dinner attended by the Governor of Basra. He at once wrote him a long letter, some sentences of which are sufficient to show Islam expects its officers to behave.

"I have been told that a young man of Basra invited you to a dinner and you hurried to it. Fine dishes were brought out for you; luxurious plates were served. I never thought that you would accept a dinner to which only rich were invited, and from which poor were excluded... See that I, your Imam, am satisfied from this world with two old clothes and two daily bread. I know that you cannot do as I am doing, but at least you should try to help me with your efforts, your fear of God and your behaviour; because, by God, I did not collect from this world of yours any gold,

nor did I amass any riches...

"Should I remain content that people call me "Amir-ul-Mumineen" (Leader of the faithful) without sharing with them their hardships, without setting for them a model to be followed...". Many of his letters to governors and officers show this trend when he exhorts them to live as ordinary men, without erecting barriers between them and the people; to behave in such a way "that big people cannot use you to oppress poor ones, and poor are not discouraged from obtaining justice even against the richest and biggest man."

Sincere Repentance

"O ye who believe, turn to Allah with sincere repentance, in the hope that your Lord will remove from you your sins and admit you to the Heavens...(The Holy Qur'an, 66:8)

This holy month of Ramadhan is generally referred to as the month of "Tauba" (repentance). Repentance is the best way to the Grace of Allah for a person who has sinned. Allah in His infinite grace, forgives sins if the sinner repents sincerely. The operative word is "sincerely." To describe "sincere repentance". Imam Ja'far Sadiq(A.S.) said: "Repenting and never committing that sin again."

According to the Islamic belief, a repentance uttered by tongue, without a change of heart, is no repentance at all. Repentance must produce change in habit, honesty in dealings, fear and love of Allah in prayers, improvement in character, generosity in behaviour and humility in nature. Amir-ul-Mumineen Ali(A.S.) described the characteristics of repentance in the following word: "repentance has six elements: A repentant must be really sorry for what he had done; he must have firm determinaion not to do it again; he must make amends for whatever wrongs he did to others; he must fulfil all the obligations of religion which he had neglected previously; he should fast long enough to melt away the flesh grown from unclean and unlawful food; and he should feel the taste of obedience to God, as he was previously enjoying the taste of sin."

When a man repents sincerely Allah makes him as clean as he as on the day he was born. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W..) has said: "One who repents from sin is like the one who never committed any sin".