

Islamic studies.

Assignment — (2)

Q:- ~~Is~~ Fasting.

1) Introduction:

Fasting is one of the pillars of Islam. Observing fast is obligatory on every muslim (mature) male and female. Fasting was made obligatory in 2 AH. In Surah Al-Baqarah it is said:

Believers! Fasting is enjoined upon you, as it was enjoined upon those before you, that you become God-fearing (2:183).

2) Literal meaning:

The technical term for fasting is (saum) or (sayam) which literally means to be at rest. It has been so named for the reason that while one is keeping fast (s)he abstains from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk.

3) Special significance of Fast.

The injunctions in regard to the fast given in Holy Quran reveal that it has numerous advantages

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and blessings. Some of these are of fundamental importance.

"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."

(Bukhari)

4) Fast: A Source of piety.

The first and foremost quality of the fast is that it creates piety and fear of Allah. The Quran, the tradition and the human reason provide ample evidence to this effect. A saying of the prophet (PBUH) signifies the same thing in the following words:

Fasting is a shield for you (as it saves you from sins in this world and would protect you from hell in the hereafter. (Muslim).

5) What piety really is!

Piousness (Taqwa) is the name of that profound care for saving ourselves from the displeasure of Allah. In other words it can be explained as to attain the obedience and pleasure of Allah. An individual can attain Allah's pleasure only when (s)he surrenders in front of Allah and leave all their activities and desires

on Allah. It is said in Quran:

But as for him who feared to stand before his lord and restrained his soul! From lust, Lo! The Garden will be his home. (79: 40-41)

6) Fast: An essential means of Acquiring a life of piety.

The great importance of fast lies in the fact that it is indispensable for acquiring the required standard of piety. Fast does not pave the way for piety but nevertheless it can not be attained without it. There are other virtues and good deeds which foster piety but the fast surpasses them all. The fact is revealed by the Quranic verse:

Even as it was prescribed for those before you. (2: 183)

7) Fast: The Index of the Islamic concept of piety.

Another importance of the fast is that in many respects it is the exponent of the real spirit of Islam. The concept of religion given in the Quran is reflected in the fast with all its important details. It means that the fast does not make a man pious in deeds but in thought and outlook also.

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Prophet (PBUH) said:

- (1) He who goes on fasting all his life, his fast becomes void (Bukhari)
- (2) You should strictly refrain from the fast extending continuously over two or more days. (Muslim)

8) Fast: While travelling.

In the course of a Journey the Prophet (PBUH) saw a crowd of men gathered around a person. Inquiry revealed that a traveller was keeping fast and men had collected about him. The prophet (PBUH) said:

It is no good to keep fast during a Journey, the hardship of which is beyond the strength of an ordinary man. (Bukhari)

9) Some Sayings of Holy prophet

Prophet sayings relevant to this subject are:

- (i) "Do take the meals at dawn before starting the fast. It has a great blessing!" (Muslim)
- (ii) "Divine religion shall dominate as long as people will make haste in breaking their fasts (at the stipulated time)" (Abu Dawud)
- (iii) "Allah says that my most beloved person is one who hastens to break fast (at the stipulated time)" (Tirmidhi)

10) Special Blessing of the Fast

After knowing that the fast invests a man with piety, nothing important remains to be discussed on this premise because one who attains piety would do what Allah and his prophet (PBUH) enjoin upon him.

(i) Fast strengthens one's Faith:

It strengthens faith in the sovereignty of Allah. It is dawn and time for the meals preceding the fast one is free to eat. Then withdrawal from food and other pleasures of life, despite their accessibility, will now continue till evening. As the sun sets the fast comes to an end.

As Narrated Abu Huraira (r.a): The Messenger of Allah said:

... "Whoever fasts during Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's reward, then all his past sins will be forgiven." (Bukhari)

(ii) Fast: A wave of sympathy:

Fasting creates a wave of sympathy. The rich are made to made experience the pangs of poverty for one month. These thirty days, they experience the hardship of starvation and hunger. In this way fasting develops in them the spirit

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of sympathy and spending in the way of Allah.

"When it was the month of Ramadan he (the holy prophet) emancipated every slave and gave charity to every one who asked for it" (Mishkat).

(iii) Fast: Strengthens equality.

During fast (month of Ramadan), all members of muslim society, the rich and the poor, the ruler and the ruled, are in a similar position. All share an equal level of obedience. Their faces reflect that they are the slaves of one master and subject to him in equal degree.

11) Conditions for the Attainment of the Objectives of Fast

Like every other act of worship the objectives of the fast can be attained if:

- (a) It is observed with all its requisite formalities and conditions
- (b) One must not rest contented with the obligatory fast only
- (c) One should also observe the non-obligatory fasts.
- (d) Fast should be observed in its first time from dawn to dusk (in stipulated time).

Conclusion:

Fasting is one of the pillars of Islam. It has advantages in this world as well as here after. During ^{the} month of Ramadan, there is opportunity to achieve/maximum deeds. Abu Umamah ^{lattan} reported: I came to the messenger of Allah and said: 'Order me to do a deed that will allow me to enter paradise'. He said: 'Stick to fasting, as there is no equivalent to it'.