

F A S T I N G

A human being consists of two things, the body and the soul. Both are interdependent and without the combination of the two, life in this world is impossible. To keep this body of ours fit and efficiently functioning, we need to consume nutritious food, we need fresh air and need to rest. Similarly our soul needs exercise and attention to enable to keep it alive and to enable us to live a noble sublime life. In the same way as we study in schools to promote the progress of our material aspect of our life, we need to acquire the true knowledge of our Creator the One God and the duties He has imposed upon us through the sacred religion of Islam.

Among the various duties that Islam has prescribed for the upliftment of both material and spiritual aspects of our life, the one important is the fasting from dawn to night during the Holy Month of Ramazan. In these days, we often hear about the equality of human beings and the sharing of comforts of life. It is the fast of Ramazan which makes the rich appreciate the pang of hunger suffered by the poor and hungry and thus lead them towards the relief of poverty and support for the poor. We also hear more of the warning sound by doctors to exercise control over our weight if we are to avoid contracting heart disease. What could be more beneficial than the fast at least for a month in a year to control this and reduce the overweight. To face the ups and downs of life, we need to inculcate in our character the power of perseverance and patience and it is the abstinence from eating and drinking the fast of Ramazan which goes a long way in helping to build up these qualities.

The fast of Ramazan does not only consist of avoiding of food and drink for the day but the true fasting is for our

whole body. The fasting of eyes relates to non-seeing of any bad thing. The fasting of ears relates to non-hearing of any bad thing. The fasting of tongue relates to non-saying of any forbidden thing. The fasting of heart relates to non-thinking of any bad thing and the fasting of hands relates to abstain from doing of any evil deed. When a whole body truly fasts for one month, imagine how easy it becomes for the bad habits to die out and for one to get accustomed to do good and pious deeds.

The holy month of Ramazan therefore is a season for our spiritual upliftment and an opportunity given to us to revolutionize our life to build up strong good character. Let us therefore accord this holy month its full due respect by regular prayers and fasting, by abstaining from anything bad and undesirable and think of doing anything good we can to others, so that we learn to live a full noble and happy life in this world and qualify for salvation in the world hereafter.

Amen.

Fasting is to be found in the original teachings of almost all religions of the world. But Islam has stressed the importance by introducing a very balanced and beneficial system to counter-act any irregularities that may have crept into human system during the year.

Fasting is not mere abstaining from food and drink from dawn to dusk but has in it deep advantages, mental, spiritual as well as physical, some of which are as follows:-

TOLERANCE & FORTITUDE

Man daily needs food and water for his existence. In case he does not get these when needed, he is apt to obtain by unlawful means or even resort to serious crimes of robbery and murder. Fasting teaches one to overpower the urge of regular

eating and drinking thus promoting the qualities of tolerance in man.

INTELLECTUAL AND THINKING POWER

Constant eating and drinking makes man slack and slows down the functioning of mind. Thus a period of abstaining from them gives more strength to the thinking power of the mind and boostes up man's intellect.

WILL POWER & CONCENTRATION

In the course of eleven months of the year, we may have formed various eating and drinking habits, which can be overcome through the compulsory fasting for a month, thus promoting will-power. One has to concentrate on abstaining from food and other specified actions thus giving strength to power of concentration which is prerequisite to will-power.

SACRIFICE AND SYMPATHY FOR POOR

One who never experiences the pang of hunger and thirst cannot appreciate the agony of those who suffer. Thus it is fasting which creates feeling of sympathy for the hungry poor men and instils in man the sense of sacrifice extending the helping hand to the needy.

SPIRIT OF PRAYER & OBEDIENCE TO GOD

The empty belly by fasting gives impetus to the remembrance of God and realization of man's life duties, thus instilling the spirit of obedience and submission to the will of Allah.

PHYSICAL UPLIFTMENT

Many sicknesses are known to have been caused by indigestion and food habits, and medical advice is given for dieting.

Abstaining from eating for certain period is to be found in animals when feeling unwell. Hence fasting is the best remedy for various common maladies to put right the irregularities caused by eating habits.

Obesity and overweight is one of the common ailments today which often turns out to be the cause of heart trouble. Compared with all other ways of reducing weight, fasting as prescribed by Islam has proven to be a most ideal and humane treatment.

LONG HEALTHY LIFE

Mr. S.T. Baker writes in Good Health about the healthy Hunzas, the people residing in northern Kashmere, their country called Shangri La, synonymous with Paradise and Garden of Eden. He describes these people as healthy, happy, friendly, hardworking and intelligent people, most of them living more than 100 years, some even over 150 years. Among the various secrets of their happy long healthy life, one is fasting from time to time. They fast during late spring when their harvest has not yet come in and they are short of food. This fasting gives rest to their systems and their entire digestive tract is cleaned out thus giving a new lease on their life.

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