

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

*Alhamdo lillah*, all praise belongs to Allah who out of His Bounty has granted to all Muslims another month of Ramadhan. As you might all be aware almost throughout the world it was possible for all Muslims to start fasting yesterday. It was impossible for the new moon to be visible on Tuesday night because it was born around 18h00. Hence it could be visible after twenty hours on Wednesday and that is why we started fasting yesterday. As usual the arrival of Ramadan brings a great joy in the heart of the Muslim whether he is a practicing one or not. All types of Muslims feel an elation in the heart and they understand that they are entering a month that is unique in the spiritual and material blessings that it brings along. By Allah's Grace many amongst us whether women or men have seen many months of Ramadhan and we are indeed happy that we are seeing another one. So from the depth of our heart we thank Allah for giving us another opportunity to get all our sins forgiven and effaced, for planting into our heart an enthusiasm for His worship and Devotion, for reciting the Holy Quran and studying its deeper meanings and for doing many other deeds that would win His Pleasure. Now it will be foolish on our part if we let these auspicious days and nights pass by in negligence and do not make a good use of them as we have been advised by our beloved prophet Mohammad (saw).

From the Holy Quran we learn that Allah has prescribed fasting for us so that we may cultivate God Consciousness (*taqwa*) in us. Allah says "O ye who believe Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those people before you so that you might become righteous."(2:183) As you all know the main features of our fasting is that we should refrain from food and drink and sex from dawn to dusk for a limited number of days (either 29 or 30). For us in Mauritius the daily fast will be for a period not exceeding twelve hours and fifteen minutes in the beginning up to twelve hours and about thirty minutes by the end. However we know that in other places around the world there will be Muslims who would be fasting for almost seventeen to eighteen hours. Compared to them our fasts will be quite easy. So we should be determined to make the most of our fasts by being more aware of Allah. We should all pause and reflect about what we should get out of our fasts. We should see to it that our God fearingness at the end of our fasts should be more than what it was when we started fasting. However this is not something that we can measure ourselves. We are called upon to make the efforts but the result will be in the sight of Allah only. In His Wisdom Allah who has created us knows that to temporarily suppress the demands of our body will help us to increase our awareness of Himself and that is why He has said "Fasting is good for you if only you knew" (2:184). In other words there are many benefits in fasting. These benefits might be physical and spiritual as well but you as human beings you are not fully aware of all its benefits. Allah is well

aware of them and that is why He has prescribed it for us. So even if at times we feel that fasting is tough we should persevere and do our best to keep it because it is to our benefit although we might be thinking otherwise. Allah knows best always. We should rely on His wisdom and not on our limited knowledge nor on our feelings. If it were in our power most of us would not have fasted at all. We would have considered it a burden that should not be borne voluntarily. Yet there are many servants of Allah who fast voluntarily with an aim to come closer to Allah. Such servants of Allah do not content themselves to fast only in the month of Ramadan but they keep additional fasts as well because they know in the heart of heart about its benefits.

Since the main objective of fasting is to cultivate God awareness or God consciousness (*taqwa*) in us let us say a few words about it. The word *tattaqoune* used in the Holy Quran is derived from *ittaq*. It means “he was on his guard against or he guarded himself against. When the Arabs say “*ittaq behi*” they mean “he took it or him as a shield for himself”. In religious parlance it means “to guard oneself against sins or harmful things or to take God as a shield for protection against sins.” I have taken these explanations from Volume 2 of Five-Volumes commentaries published by the Jamaat. A distinguished companion of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (saw) has explained the word “*taqwa*” by likening the *Muttaqi* as a man who walks through thorny bushes, taking every possible precaution that his clothes are not caught in or torn by the branches (Kathir). Similarly in the literature we read of an Arab poet has said:

“Avoid all sins both small and great- that is *taqwa*.

And act like one who walks through a land full of thorny bushes cautious of all things one sees.

Do not think lightly of small things for even mountain are made up of tiny pebbles.”

Similarly we learn that Hazrat Masih Maood (as) wrote a poem and among other things he said “*Har eik neki ki jar yeh ittaqa hay*” and it was revealed to him “*Agar yeh jar rahi sab kuch raha hay*” meaning “the source of all virtue is this *ittiq*” if this root is present all is there”.

From these explanations we gather how important that thing that we will get by fasting is. Allah wants us to be conscious of Him and so He has prescribed fasting for us. Now if we fast but at the same time we indulge in all sorts of sins we will defeat the purpose of the fast. Hence we fast to avoid everything that may displease Allah. We need to bear this in mind. We should all be aware of what sins are and we should do our best to avoid them whilst we are fasting in order to avoid them thoroughly in our life. That is most probably why such a great emphasis have been laid on the reading of the Holy Quran during this particular month. Even if we read without understanding we will definitely reap some benefits from Allah. But as good Muslims we should all aim at reading with

understanding because it is only through understanding that we will know exactly what is expected of us and we will know how to tread the path that will lead us to Allah.

We should all be aware that Satan is our open enemy and we should treat it as such as we have been told by Allah in the Holy Quran in several places. Satan is not happy at all when it sees us obeying Allah. It does its best to make us fall even when we are fasting. It does its best to distract us. But as true man and woman of Allah we also we should do our best to triumph over it by the Grace of Allah of course. We all know that while we are fasting we think twice before yielding to any kind of temptation whether it is on the streets or at home. The fact that we are fasting really protects us if we have understood its objective. Satan is deprived of the mercy of Allah and it does not want human beings to receive that mercy and that is why it does its best to make them go astray. But we as true servants of Allah should prove to Satan that we are true to Allah and will prove His words when he said "*Inna Ebaadi laysa laka alayhim be soultaan*". Among humans many will follow you and yield to your temptations but "those who are my true servants you will have no power at all over them." Why because these are those who have taken refuge in Me and I will protect them. Such a protection is developed when we fast and it stays with us when we are not fasting also. Thus Satan plans will always fail on Allah's true servants.

Recently I read about another allegorical incident of the failure of Satan. Sometime back I told you about that person who failed to read Fajr prayer in time and how he was rewarded by Allah. This incident also concerns namaz Fajr. It is reported that

"A man woke up early in order to pray the Fajr prayer in the masjid. He got dressed, made his ablution and was on his way to the masjid. On his way to the masjid, the man fell and his clothes got dirty. He got up, brushed himself off, and headed home. At home, he changed his clothes, made his ablution, and was, again, on his way to the masjid. On his way to the masjid, he fell again and at the same spot! He, again, got up, brushed himself off and headed home. At home he, once again, changed his clothes, made his ablution and was on his way to the masjid. On his way to the masjid, he met a man holding a lamp. He asked the man of his identity and the man replied 'I saw you fall twice on your way to the masjid, so I brought a lamp so I can light your way.' The first man thanked him profusely and the two were on their way to the masjid.

Once at the masjid, the first man asked the man with the lamp to come in and pray Fajr with him. The second man refused. The first man asked him a couple more times and, again, the answer was the same. The first man asked him why he did not wish to come in and pray.

The man replied 'I am Satan.' The man was shocked at this reply. Satan went on to explain, 'I saw you on your way to the masjid and it was I who made you fall. When you went home, cleaned yourself and went back on your way to the masjid, Allah forgave all of your sins. I made you fall a second time, and even that did not encourage you to stay

home, but rather, you went back on your way to the masjid. Because of that, Allah forgave all the sins of the people of your household. I was afraid if I made you fall one more time, then Allah will forgive the sins of the people of your village, so I made sure that you reached the masjid safely.

So do not let Satan benefit from his actions. Do not put off a good that you intended to do as you never know how much reward you might receive from the hardships you encounter while trying to achieve that good.”

I have taken this from an article on the net. I have presented it only to say that we should all as true servants of Allah fight Satan even during the month of Ramadan because despite being shackled it still tries to entice the servants of Allah from the path of Allah. We all should be determined to fight it and to triumph over it. I think if we are able to do this we would have accomplished a lot by Allah’s Grace.

In the end I would like to remind you all about what our beloved prophet Mohammad (saw) taught us in one important hadith. He said that we should engage ourselves in four things. The first is to ask forgiveness for our sins by reciting *astaghfiroullah*. Secondly we should recite profusely “*Laa ilaha illallah*”. Thirdly we should ask Allah to grant us Paradise and fourthly we should ask Him to protect us from Hell. So let us all find the time necessary to engage ourselves in these Zikrs and prayers throughout the whole month of Ramadhan. May Allah give us the opportunity to fast in a way that He will accept it from us. May He accept all our prayers and may we all be counted among His True servants. Ameen.