

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

By Allah's Grace, by now already four or five days of the blessed month of Ramadan are already gone and a majority of adult Muslims is fasting around the world. According to published information for last year, the longest fasting period during the day was in the Nordic countries and the shortest ones were in South America. Anyhow the range of fasting hours are between 11.5 hours and 19 hours. *Alhamdo lilla* for us here in Mauritius we are quite fortunate to fast for only about 12.5 hours and when we fast in summer it rarely goes beyond 15 hours. However, it's not the number of hours of fasting that makes the difference for the quality of the fast. Allah tells us emphatically in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ
الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٨٤﴾

Translation:

“O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous.” (2:184)

As you might all be aware by now, this is the first verse of the 23rd *Ruku* of *Sura Al Baqara* of the Holy Quran where Allah speaks about fasting in the month of Ramadan. So, we learn that fasting has been prescribed for Muslims as it was prescribed to people who received guidance from Allah before the arrival of Islam. We also learn that the main objective of this fasting is that Muslims should cultivate God-consciousness (*Taqwa*) within themselves because it is the basis of all good deeds. The Promised Messiah (as) said that once he was writing some verses about righteousness. He wrote *Har eik neki ki jar yeh ittiqa hay* (the root of all good is this fear of Allah) and Allah revealed to him “*Agar yeh jar rahi sab kouch raha*) meaning “the preservation of this root will preserve everything else”. It will not be an exaggeration to say that this concept of righteousness (*taqwa*) pervades the whole Quran almost from

beginning till the end. If we read the Holy Quran, we will find many verses where Allah motivates us to become righteous by specifying its advantages and by showing us how we should lead our daily lives. I will share with you some more interesting thoughts of the Promised Messiah (as) on the subject of righteousness with the hope that we will reflect on these writings and make the best of them especially during this blessed month of Ramadan.

The Promised Messiah (as) said:

“I am contemplating to separate truly righteous people, those who give precedence to faith over the world and those who have devoted themselves to Allah from among my Jamaat and entrust them with some form of religious duties. Following that, I will be the least concerned about those people who are continuously engulfed in worldly matters and problems and those who spend their days and nights in search for the futile world.’

This clearly tells us that the Promised Messiah (as) knew quite well the people who formed part of his Jamaat. Some were really sincere and they gave more importance to their religion than to any other worldly considerations. This is what we should all aim for and not let the world delude us especially about our Lord. Now just imagine if that was the situation of the people in the presence of the Promised Messiah(as) what would it be today despite all that we hear. Allah knows best. The Promised Messiah(as) said further:

“If a person desires for his prayers to be accepted, whilst he is in (a state of) ignorance and misguidance, will he not then be (considered to be) reckless and ignorant? Therefore, it is essential for every member of our Jamaat to tread on the path of *taqwa* as much as possible so that they may experience the pleasure of the acceptance of prayers and so that they may increase in faith.”

I think everyone amongst us wish that our prayers be accepted by Allah. Then it would be mere foolishness on our part if we are negligent in treading the path of righteousness and just live our life as others are doing. The teachings of Islam seek to bring a transformation within the individual and at the same time we are expected to develop a consciousness of the Creator of this universe and its Sustainer to such an extent that we are thoroughly overwhelmed with His Grandeur and Power and humble ourselves in front of Him even if we have not seen Him. Our daily prayers should therefore not just be a formality. They are there to help us to develop a love for our Lord and to establish a strong bond

with Him so that we might succeed in the true aim of our life. The Promised Messiah (as) said further:

“A condition for those who wish to be counted amongst the righteous is that they should lead a life of humility and meekness. This is one of the branches of *taqwa* (God-fearing righteousness) through which we are to overcome unlawful anger. To refrain from anger is the ultimate and most arduous stage for many wise men and pious individuals. Arrogance and pride are borne out of anger. One only becomes angry when he considers himself to be superior to the other. I do not wish for the members of my community to consider others to be superior or inferior, or to look upon others with conceit and disdain.”

To develop the feeling that we are all equal and that we should not treat any one with disdain is not an easy matter. Unless and until Allah illumines us to understand that we have no superiority on anyone despite what we eat or wear or where we live or which car we drive or which university we have attended, we will not easily get rid of this ugly characteristic. Continuing, the Promised Messiah said:

“Always remember this principle that it is the duty of a believer that he feels humbled and instead praises God Almighty when He is granted any kind of success. In other words, he attributes that success to God Almighty and praises Him for bestowing His grace upon him. In this way he progresses further and remains steadfast in the face of every trial and attains faith.”

“Upon earning success if one demonstrates courage and resolve, one is granted a new lease of life, from which one ought to derive benefit from. One should progress in attaining the cognizance of God Almighty. If one achieves success or one’s prayers are accepted, then this should increase one in one’s understanding of the nature of God Almighty, because the greatest accomplishment which will be of benefit is the cognizance of God Almighty. This can only develop by pondering over the Grace and Blessings of God Almighty. Nobody can inhibit the Blessing of God Almighty. One can only gain the nearness of God and come under His Protection when one adopts true *taqwa* (God-fearingness) and also carries out virtuous deeds.”

Now I will tell you about a hadith which shows that some good deeds done with full sincerity are accepted by Allah and might even be of help when one finds oneself in a difficult situation.

‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Umar reported that the Messenger (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

Three men of a people before you, were on a journey when they were overtaken by a storm and therefore they took shelter in a cave. A rock slipped down from the mountain and blocked the exit from cave. One of them said: "The only way for deliverance left is to beseech Allah in the name of some virtuous deed." Thereupon one of them supplicated:

"O Lord, my parents were very old, and I used to offer them their nightly drink of milk before my children and the other members of the family. One day I went astray far away in search of green trees and could return only after my parents had gone to sleep. When I had milked the animals and brought their nightly drink to them, they were fast asleep, but I did not like to disturb them, nor would give any part of the milk to my children and other members of the family till after my parents had had their drink. Thus, with the vessel in hand, I awaited their awakening till the flush of dawn, while the children cried out of hunger at my feet. When they woke up, they had their drink. O Lord, if I did this thing seeking only your pleasure, then do relieve us of the distress wrought upon us by this rock."

Thereupon, the rock moved a little but not enough to let them pass out. Then the second man supplicated:

"O Lord, I had a cousin that I loved more passionately than any man could love a woman. I tried to seduce her but she would refuse, till in a season of great hardship due to famine, she approached me (for help) and I gave her one hundred and twenty Dinars on the condition that she would have sexual intercourse with me. She agreed, and when we got together and I was just going to have intercourse with her, she pleaded, 'Fear Allah, and do not break the seal unlawfully', whereupon I moved away from her, despite the fact that I desired her most passionately; and I let her keep the money I had given her. O Lord, if I did this thing seeking only your pleasure, then do move the distress in which we find ourselves."

Again, the rock moved a little but not enough to let them pass out. Then the third supplicated:

"O Lord, I hired some labourers and paid them their dues, but one of them left leaving behind what was due to him. I invested it in business and the business prospered greatly. After a while, the labourer came back and said: 'O servant of Allah, hand over to me my wages.' I said to him: 'All that you see here is yours; camels, cattle, goats and slaves.' He said: 'Don't play joke with me, O servant of Allah.' I assured him: 'I am not joking.' So, he took all of it sparing nothing. O Lord, if I did this seeking only for your pleasure, do relieve us of our distress."

The rock then moved away, and all the three came out of the cave safe and sound.

This is a case where they acted with *taqwa*. We should all aim to develop such *taqwa* within ourselves by making full use of the month of Ramadan that has been freely given to us by Allah. Instead of idling away our time in idle talk or vain pursuits we should rather aim at reading more of the Holy Quran so that we might know more about what is expected from us. We should read *nawafil* prayers to seek forgiveness for our past deeds and hope for Allah's Mercy especially during the first 10 days of Ramadan because we have been told that this is the period when Allah manifests His mercy. An interesting prayer that will be quite appropriate is "*Yaa Hayyiyo yaa Qayyumo berahmateka astaghees*" meaning "O Living and Eternal One with Thy Mercy I seek Thy Help". Try it and see what effects it has on you. Please do not forget about the prayers I spoke about in my sermon of 26th April 2019.

May Allah grant each one amongst us more opportunities to show our sincerity towards Him and may we all emerge from this Ramadan as transformed human beings who understand the importance of Allah in our life *incha* Allah and who are truly on the path of cultivating righteousness within ourselves. Ameen.