

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

By Allah's Grace we, in Mauritius, have entered the 6th week of confinement and the number of cases of COVID-19 in the country has more or less plateaued. It does not, of course, mean that we are out of danger, but at least we have this to be thankful for that we are not witnessing a daily increase in the number of cases as we see on television elsewhere in the world. Unfortunately, there are a series of problems with which our country will have to deal with once we are out of confinement. Let us hope and pray that Allah guides our leaders to take wise decisions that will be, in the long term, in the best interests of all Mauritians insha Allah. Throughout the history of Mauritius, Mauritians have faced some tough times and by the Grace of Allah we were able to manage them. Insha Allah this time as well we will get out of this crisis on a firmer footing.

Astronomically speaking, we are already in the month of Ramadan of the lunar calendar of the year 1441AH even if the moon was not visible in Mauritius yesterday evening. According to reliable news, the new moon was sighted yesterday in Saudi Arabia and they start fasting with some other countries as from today. In Mauritius, we will most probably be sighting the moon tonight and hence tomorrow will be the 1st day of fasting. However, this will be a different type of Ramadan compared to what we have known up till now in our life. This is particularly because of the risk of Coronavirus infection – in most countries around the world, congregational prayers have been forbidden in mosques. Ramadan is the time when most Muslims shrug off their laziness and most men resort to the mosque for the five daily prayers as best as they can. But this will not be the case this year except in some rare places. Most learned men have issued instructions that prayers should be performed at home to help stop the spread of the disease that has already infected 2.7 million and killed about 191,000 people around the world. As a precautionary measure most mosques will be closed for congregational prayers. It is sad but it also offers an occasion for all of us to get closer to our Lord and to get that increase in righteousness which is the main objective of Fasting by developing our one-to-one relationship with our Lord .

As you are all well aware, Allah says in the Holy Quran:

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

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)

From Arabic dictionaries as quoted in the five volumes commentary published by Jamaat Ahmadiyya, we have the following explanation for the word الص (fasting):

امىالص (Fasting) is derived from صام meaning, he kept back or refrained from doing something; or he refrained from eating or drinking or talking or walking, etc. The Arabs say حىالر صامت i.e. the wind became calm or motionless. صائم فرس means, a horse from which food has been withheld, or a horse which is confined to its manger and not made to walk or race. Thus, امىص means: (1) keeping back or refraining from something; (2) refraining from eating and drinking, etc.; and (3) formally refraining from eating, drinking, going in unto wives, etc. i.e. fasting from dawn till sunset as ordained by Islam. صائم is one who so refrains from food, etc. i.e. one who keeps a fast (Aqrab & Mufradat)

With the revelation of this verse, Muslims started fasting. Today, throughout the world, all Muslims understand that they have to fast in the month of Ramadan every year provided they are not sick or travelling or do not find it too difficult to refrain from food and drink. The main reason why we fast is so that we might become like those people who have understood and fulfilled the obligations that Allah has imposed upon them and they give Allah a primary importance in the way they lead their lives. They understand that life is a gift from Allah and it is expected of them that they use whatever Allah has given them to spend it in the way of Allah. They understand that they have to bring, in their outlook, in their behaviour, a fundamental change so that they might have a better appreciation of who their Lord is and they strive to obey Him in all matters and they learn how to sacrifice the demands of their ego. Hazrat Masih Maood (as) has in several places in his different books spoken about why it is important for us to be pious as Allah wishes us to be. At one place he explained the reality of Islam thus:

“First of all, it is necessary to set out what is the reality of Islam, what are the means of arriving at that reality and what are the fruits of following that reality; for this knowledge is essential for the purpose of understanding many mysteries. It would be of great benefit for our opponents from among the Muslims that they should study these matters with attention, for many of the doubts which assail their minds are the result of their failure to reflect upon the complete and perfect reality of Islam, its sources and its fruits..... The opponents of religion also would benefit greatly by this study. They would understand what religion is and what are the signs of its truth.

In the idiom of Arabic, Islam means money paid as earnest to conclude a bargain, or to commit some affair to someone, or to seek peace, or to surrender a claim or point. The technical meaning of Islam is set out in the verse:

بَلِّغْ مَنْ آسَلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ يُلْقِهُ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ ۖ قُلْ لَّهٗ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ
وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ١١

This means that a Muslim is one who commits himself wholly to the cause of God Almighty; that is to say, one who devotes himself to God Almighty, to following His designs and to winning His pleasure, and then becomes steadfast in doing good for the sake of God Almighty and devotes all his faculties to that cause. In other words, he belongs entirely to God Almighty both doctrinally and in practice. Doctrinal belonging means that one should esteem one's being as something which has been created for the recognition of God Almighty and His obedience and the seeking of His love and pleasure. Practical belonging means to do all the good that is related to every one of one's faculties with such eagerness and attention as if one beholds the countenance of the True Beloved in the mirror of one's obedience. [A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 5, pp. 57-58]

Fasting helps us to become such a person. When we fast, we voluntarily choose to go without food and drink and sex and we do not indulge in any stupid talking and we do not sit watching all sorts of films and we strive not to backbite and we exercise a severe control on our eyes and we give more in charity and we try to avoid all sorts of quarrel. If we want to keep our fast, we do our best voluntarily under the benign supervision of Allah only to avoid doing anything that may displease Him. Through imposing such a discipline upon us, it gradually dawns upon us that we should voluntarily impose upon ourselves all the obligations that we owe to Allah and His creatures in order to become that man/woman who accepts to bear the obligations as explained in the above extract of Hazrat Masih Maood (AS). When we realize this, every year in the month of Ramazan, with great eagerness we diligently practice obeying Allah by refraining from food, drink and sex and thus He continues to be of greater importance to us in all aspects of our life and we eventually become more righteous.

Now, if we fail to have this objective in mind and while away our time in frivolous matters without a greater regard for Allah during this month, we would be failing to accomplish the main purpose for which we were born. Hence, we should busy ourselves in this month while we are fasting with an extensive reading of the Holy Quran, with spending longer time in our *rukus* and *sajdas* with tearful eyes and plenty of supplications. This is the time for us to ask forgiveness for all our sins and for capacity to keep away from sinning. If we have money to spend, we should spend more in charity and care for those who have lesser means than we have. We should as well spend our free time in remembering our Lord as much as we can in the morning and evening as we have been taught in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا
وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

Meaning:

O ye who believe! remember Allah with much remembrance

And glorify Him morning and evening. (HQ 33:42/43)

We should try to remember how we spent the previous Ramadan. Find out what we did well and what we did not do as well. Prepare an improvement plan and do not commit the same mistakes laboring under the illusion that there are still many days left and we would do what we need to do later on. Eventually you will see that Ramadan is gone and you did not fulfill your obligations as you could have done or you should have done and you will regret it.

This morning around 4am I was woken up with the following words:

Wa yaqoulouna mata hazal wa'do in kountoum swadeqeen

Qoul Innama ilmohou indallahe

Wa maa ana illa naziroum mobeen

The translation of these words are as follows:

“And they say when will this promise happen if you are indeed truthful

Tell them “its knowledge is with Allah”

And I am but a plain warner”

Immediately after, I received these verses from a poem of Hazrat Masih Maood (as):

اِسْمَعُوْا صَوْتَ السَّمَاءِ جَاءَ الْمَسِيْحُ جَاءَ الْمَسِيْحُ نِيْزُ بَشْنُوْ از زِيْشِ آءِ اَمَامِ كَامْگار

Its Translation is:

“Listen to heaven’s voice: The messiah has come; the messiah has come

And hear from the earth: ‘Here comes the triumphant Leader’”.

Then I received these words:

Laa Ghaliba illallah meaning “No one triumphs but Allah”.

We will not comment on these words for the time being. I will finish this sermon by reading an extract from Hazrat Masih Maood’s book **Kashf-ul-Ghita, Ruhani Khaza’in, Vol. 14, pp. 187-188:**

“The purport of my teaching is: Believe in God as One without associate, and have sympathy with God's creatures and be of good conduct and think no ill. Be such that no disorderliness or mischief should approach your heart. Utter no falsehood, invent no lies and cause no hurt to anyone whether by your tongue or your hands. Avoid all manner of sin and restrain your passions. Try to become pure hearted, without vice. It should be your principle to have sympathy for all human beings. Safeguard your hands, your tongues and your thoughts against all impure objects and disorderly ways and all kinds of deceit. Fear God and worship Him with pure hearts. Refrain from committing wrong, trespass, embezzlement, taking bribes or

unfair partisanship and keep away from evil companions. Safeguard your eyes against treachery and your ears against listening to backbiting. Entertain no ill designs against the members of any religion or any tribe or group. Be sincere counsellors for everyone. Let no mischief-maker or one given to bad behaviour ever be of your company. Shun every vice and try to acquire every virtue. Your hearts should be free from deceit, your hands should be innocent of wrong and your eyes should be free from impurity. Take no part in any evil or transgression. Put forth your utmost efforts to recognize God, finding Whom is salvation and meeting Whom is deliverance. He manifests Himself to him who seeks Him with love and sincerity of heart, and He reveals Himself to him who becomes truly His. Pure hearts are His thrones, and tongues that are free from falsehood, abuse and vain talk are the places of His revelation. He who loses himself in seeking His pleasure becomes a manifestation of His miraculous power.”

We are living in a period of the history of the world that is unprecedented. By Allah's Grace, we are not seeing the ravages that this virus is doing on human lives. Nonetheless, we will not be spared some of the pain that it has come to visit on mankind. Let us all turn in full sincerity and humility to Allah that He mitigates the ill effects of this disease for all mankind as soon as possible. We are fully convinced that He has power over everything and He does what He likes. May He protect each one among us from His Anger and His Punishment. Ameen. Ramadan Mubarak to us all. Let us ready ourselves for the great blessings of Ramadan, incha Allah.