

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

We are almost in the second week of Ramadan by Allah's Grace. By now the breaking of our normal routine of the first days should be gone and we all should find it more or less easy to fast for less than thirteen hours here in Mauritius. As you are all well aware, these days there are places where people fast for very long hours especially in the Nordic countries like Norway or Finland. There, the duration of the fast to which they adhere is between 18 and 20 hours. Compared to these people, our fast should be relatively less troublesome. We still have about three weeks to go. We should pray to Allah that He helps us complete the fast and that when it ends, we emerge from it being more righteous than we were when it started insha Allah.

Allah is very kind to all human beings whether they believe in Him or not. Once we become conscious that we are Muslims, Allah expects us to lead our life in a certain way and He sent the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) to teach us that way through his example after the teachings were revealed to him in the form of the Holy Quran. As Muslims, we are expected to follow the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) as best as we can. But these teachings are not easy to put into practice because we are surrounded by subtle satanic forces which incite us to do things that are contrary to these teachings. But Allah has not left us to pursue our fight alone. He has imposed upon us the five daily prayers in which we recite the Sura Al fatiha where we seek His Guidance and His Help to tread the right path. In other words, the path on which He wants us to tread. This is what we are expected to do everyday we live until we die. These daily prayers, properly done, will act as potent means for us to dominate the forces of evil that surround us and that are within us as well. As we progress in proper observance of the daily prayers, we will also observe a marked improvement in the way we are able to control the forces of evil that surround us and that are within us. Hence, we cannot do without these daily prayers. We should be very careful in their observance and they will prove to be a great help for us in all circumstances of life.

Prayer, as you are well aware, is one of the pillars of Islam. Another pillar is fasting (*siyam*) as I explained last Friday. This is prescribed for us for 29 or 30 days per year. Allah says it is "*ayyamam ma'doudaat*" meaning that it is for a "fixed number of days." Here we refrain from food drink and from dawn to dusk for one whole month. This is such an act of devotion that there is nothing like unto it. We read in Hadith book Nisai that the Holy Prophet (saw) said to someone who came to ask him for an advice that will benefit him. The Holy Prophet (saw) told him "*alaika bis siyaame laa misla lahou*" meaning "take to fasting, for there is nothing like it." (Vol. 3, Book 22, Hadith 2223). In other hadiths, we read as follows:

Abu Hurairah said:

"The Messenger of Allah said: Allah, the Mighty and sublime, said: Every deed of the son of Adam is for him, except fasting; it is for me and I shall reward for it. Fasting is a shield. If any one of you is observing a fast, let him not utter obscene talk or raise his voice in anger, and if anyone insults him or wants to fight, let him say: I am a person who is fasting. By the One in Whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the smell coming from the mouth of the fasting person is better before Allah than the fragrance of musk." (Sahih)

We can understand through these hadiths, and many more, how beneficial Rozā is for us. Allah has put so much blessings in fasting because it helps us achieve righteousness (*taqwa*) and Allah has told us in the Holy Quran that Allah appreciates someone who develops righteousness in himself/herself. He says:

“O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-knowing, All-Aware.” (49:14)

Hence, there are no other objective for fasting except to develop righteousness in each one of us. It is only Allah who knows each one's degree of righteousness. We should do our best to use our fast to develop within ourselves a large measure of piety, of *taqwa* as this is the wish of Allah for imposing Fasting (*siyam*) upon us.

I will now share with you some extracts from the writings of Hazrat Masih Maood (as) about *Taqwa*:

“It is important for the righteous to spend their lives in meekness and humbleness. This is a branch of righteousness through which we have to battle unwarranted anger. Many highly devout and truthful people find shunning anger the ultimate and most challenging stage. Arrogance and pride is generated from anger and at times anger itself is generated from arrogance and pride because one is angry when one gives preference to oneself over others. I do not want people of my jamaat to consider others higher or lesser than themselves. Or feel pride towards each other or look down on them. God alone knows who is honorable and who is lowly. This is a sort of derision based on contempt and there is danger in this contempt growing as a seed grows and causes ruin of an individual. Some people are most courteous when they meet those who are important and influential but in fact important is that person who listens to the meek with meekness, is gratifying to him, respects what he says and does not say something mocking to him which could be hurtful. Allah the Exalted states: '...Do not slander your own people, nor taunt each other with nicknames. It is bad indeed to earn foul reputation after *professing* the faith; and those who repent are not the wrongdoers.' (49:12) Do not call each other by taunting names, this is a practice of the wicked. One who taunts others

will not die until he himself suffers in a similar way. Do not be contemptuous of your brothers. You drink from the same fountain, who is to know in whose fate it is to drink more. No one attains respectability through worldly principles. In the eyes of God Almighty one who is righteous is the most honorable: '...Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-knowing, All-Aware.' (49:14) (Malfoozat, Vol. I, p. 36)

“Thus, our Jamaat should be intensely concerned and be more concerned than any other concern of the world, whether they have righteousness or not!” (Mafuzaat, Vol. I, p. 35)

“Thus my jamaat should understand that they have come to me so that they shall be exalted into a fruitful tree. Every one of you should analyze his/her inner and outer self. If God forbid our jamaat is also hypocrite then we shall not achieve a good ending. When Allah sees that a jamaat that doesn't have anything in their hearts but proclaims a lot through their words, Allah does not care as He is all sufficient. Although, Allah had prophesized the victory in battle of Badr but still, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) used to pray for the victory. When Hazrat Abu Bakar (may Allah be pleased with him)) inquired that when Allah has already promised us the victory then what is the need for prayer? In answer, Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said that Allah is all sufficient. It is possible that the promise made might have some hidden conditions.”

So, we should be very careful. Promises from Allah might be conditional. We should do our best and then leave the rest to Allah. The Promised Messiah says further:

ہمیں اُس یار سے تقویٰ عطا ہے نہ یہ ہم سے کہ احسانِ خدا ہے

We have the gift of God-fearing from that Beloved

Not by our self but simply through the grace of God.

کرو کوشش اگر صدق و صفا ہے کہ یہ حاصل ہو جو شرطِ رِقا ہے

Strive hard to gain, if you are true and pure

For this is the condition for seeing Him.

یہی آئینہ خالق نما ہے یہی اک جوہرِ سیف دُعا ہے

This is the mirror that displays the Creator

This is the reality behind the sword of prayer

ہر اک نیکی کی جڑ یہ اِثقا ہے اگر یہ جڑ رہی سب کچھ رہا ہے

The root of all virtues is fearing God

All is well if this root is preserved.

یہی اک فخر شان اولیاء ہے بجز تقویٰ زیادت ان میں کیا ہے

This is the pride and eminence of the saints

Except for fearing God, what else do they have?

ڈرو یارو کہ وہ مینا خدا ہے اگر سوچو، یہی دائر الجزاء ہے

Do fear, O friends, for He is a Watchful God

If you ponder, *this* is the place for recompense.

مجھے تقویٰ سے اُس نے یہ جزا دی

فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَخْزَى الْأَعَادِي

He has given this reward to me through God-fearing

Holy is He Who has confounded my foes. (Durre Sameen)

During these days of Ramadan, we will all be well advised to devote more time to reflect about God consciousness, about how far it is really permeating our life. If at times we are failing, there is a need to correct these failings in this very month because Allah is very lenient with us in these days and He forgives a lot. So, we should seek his forgiveness by allocating time to the recitation of *Astaghfaar*. Only those who recite it can really know how far it can help them. What others say is not that important. One has to make the experience by oneself. It is my humble opinion that besides seeking forgiveness from Allah in our daily prayers we should make it a habit to recite *Astaghfaar* daily. Just think about it: The Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) recited it more than 70 times during the day and yet Allah had promised him that He had forgiven all his sins. So just imagine how much we should recite it when we know that we are indeed more inclined to sin than he was.

May Allah help each one amongst us to make these days of Ramadan a moment when we devote more time to prayer to making *dua* for ourselves and our close ones and also for the world at large. May we all devote more time reading the Holy Quran with a view to knowing more of what Allah demands of us as human beings incha Allah. Under no circumstance should we neglect the Holy Quran. If we do so we will harm our own selves. May Allah help us, guard us and protect us all under all circumstances. Ameen.