**The Spirit Of Fasting In The Month Of Ramadan**

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Ramadan is indeed an exceptional month of fasting for Muslims around the world. It is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, during which Muslims fast (refrain from eating and drinking) from dawn until sunset. The fast is observed as a form of worship and is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

The blessed month of Ramazan started this year on March 23rd and ends on April 21st,2023. This month, the Quran, the holy book of Islam, was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)) in 610 AD. Muslims fast during the month of Ramzan. It is an act of worship that helps Muslims to feel closer to Allah and strengthens their faith. It also helps to resist temptation and avoid sinful behavior. They do this through fasting, praying, reciting the Quran, making their actions purposeful and selfless, and refraining from lying, gossiping, and fighting.

I remember that during my childhood, the excitement we experienced was sighting a new moon at the beginning of the month of fasting-Ramazan. Adults and children look forward to Ramazan for fasting, tarweeh prayers at night in Masjid, socialization with family and friends, and celebrating the major Eid festival at the end of the month of Ramadan.

God says in Quran,” O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, so that you may attain Taqwa.” (2:183) Taqwa simply means to protect oneself from the Anger of Allah (swt) and His Punishment. The Muttaqun are those who believe in Allah and are involved in the affairs of humanity and avoid God’s displeasure. Fasting prepares Muslims to transform spiritually, focusing on attachment to Allah and, by the consciousness of behavior, avoiding activities that are prohibited during fasting. This results in achieving peace and tranquility.

Islamic faith is composed of unique rituals to bring discipline to human life. Fasting is one of the five key rituals that Muslims around the world observe. The essence of fasting is to become humble, simple, and free from ill will, anger, meanness, and hatred.  Fasting is regarded as an annual training requires one to abstain from food, drink, and intimacy, but also avoid ill actions such as backbiting, and hurting the feelings of others from dawn to dusk, every day for a month.

Habits are a difficult thing to change, especially if they have been a part of your life for a very long time. During Ramadan, our experience of self-control gives us confidence that we can control ourselves and change our habits. If you can refrain from food, and negative and inappropriate thoughts, this will give you the strength and self-confidence to kick all your bad habits. If we do not discipline ourselves and control our bad habits we are not getting the benefits of fasting

True fasting is self-purification, which leads to the development of human values such as generosity, patience, kindness, forgiveness, mercy, justice, and empathy – that are necessary for the success of self and the community.

One of the purposes of religion is to develop the highest moral standards through the purification of self, beliefs, and behavior. Fasting gives us an opportunity to attain piety and purification of self. During the state of fasting, one experiences hunger and thirst. It teaches Muslims to be more empathetic towards those who are less fortunate and appreciate the blessings that they have in their lives, and develop a sense of mercy for those who are less fortunate. Ramzan is also a time to share one’s wealth with the needy- it is a charity called Zaka, the 4th pillar of Islam. It is a religious duty that very Muslim family takes out 2.5% of the value of their assets and passes it on to the needy people in community, deserving family members,deserving Muslims and non Muslims.

Muslims take advice from the Prophet, who said, “If one slanders you or aggresses against you, say I am fasting.” This is the best way to control your anger and negative emotions.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) once said:”There are so many of fasting people who do not get anything out of fasting except thirst and hunger. These are the people who fast but do not refrain from bad behavior

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said “God has no need for the hunger or thirst of someone who hurts others, violates their dignity or usurps their rights”

Fasting has been associated with several potential physical benefits. Fasting can lead to a reduction in calorie intake, which can lead to weight loss. Fasting has been found to improve insulin sensitivity, which can help with blood sugar control. Some studies have shown that fasting can help lower blood pressure, reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. Fasting has been associated with improved immunity, and a reduction in inflammation, which is linked to several chronic diseases such as arthritis, cancer, and heart disease. Some studies have suggested that fasting can improve cognitive function and may even reduce the risk of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s. It’s important to note that the physical benefits of fasting may vary depending on the individual and the type of fasting, and fasting should always be done under the guidance of a healthcare professional.

It must be emphasized that one must not fast just as a ritual. and consume excessive food at night for self-pleasure. God says in Quran “It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; but it is righteousness – to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend wealth, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for setting the slaves free; to establish prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient in tribulation and adversity, and in times of panic (or stress). Such are the people of truth and they are al-muttaqoon. (2:177)

In Ramadan, fasting brings Muslims together as a community, with shared experiences of fasting and breaking the fast together. It creates a sense of unity and brotherhood as Muslims come together to worship and share meals.

For fasting to be truly universal, its benefits of strengthening human relations must be extended  beyond the ties with  Muslims to people of all faiths. Fasting is meant to promote a sense of what it means to be truly human, and its universality is reflected by extending cordial relationship to Muslims of all sects and people of all faiths. That is indeed the wisdom expressed in Qur’aan, Al-Hujurat, Surah 49:13: “O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. The noblest of you, in sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Allah Knows and is Aware.”

Overall, fasting in Ramadan is an act of worship that offers spiritual benefits that go beyond just abstaining from food and drink. It is a time for self-reflection, purification, and spiritual growth that can have a profound impact on a Muslim’s faith and life.

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