

Virtues of Ramadan

Revised translation of the Urdu book *Faz'il-e-Ramadhaan*

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HADITH No. 1

Salmaan (RA) reports, "On the last day of Sha-baan Rasulullah (SAW) addressed us and said, 'O people there comes over you now a great month, a most blessed month in which lies a night more greater in virtue than a thousand months. It is a month in which Allah has made Fasting compulsory by day. And has made sunnah the Taraaweeh by night. Whosoever intends drawing near to Allah by performing any virtuous deed, for such person shall be the reward like the one who had performed a fardh in any other time. And whoever performs a fardh, shall be blessed with the reward of seventy faraa-idh in any other time.

This is indeed the month of patience, and the reward for true patience is Jannah (paradise). It is the month of sympathy with one's fellowmen. It is the month wherein a true believer's rizq is increased. Whosoever feeds another who fasted, in order to break the fast at sunset, for the feeder there shall be forgiveness of sins and emancipation from the fire of Jahannam (hell), and for such feeder shall be the same reward as the one who Fasted (who he fed) without that persons reward being decreased in the least."

Thereupon we said, "O messenger of Allah, not all of us possess the means whereby we can give a fasting person to break his fast." Rasulullah (SAW) replied, "Allah grants the same reward to the one who gives a fasting person to break the fast a mere date, or a drink of water, or a sip of milk."

"This is a month, the first of which brings Allah's mercy, the middle of which brings His forgiveness and the last of which brings emancipation from the fire of Jahan-nam."

"Whosoever lessens the burden of his servants (bonds-men) in this month; Allah will forgive him and free him from the fire of Jahannam."

"And in this month four things you should continue to perform in great number, two of which shall be to please your Lord, while the other two shall be those without which you cannot do. Those which shall be to please your Lord, are that you should in great quantity bear witness that there is no deity to worship except Allah (i.e. recite the Kalimah Tayyibah Laa Ilaaha illallaah) and make much Istighfaar beg Allah's forgiveness with Astagirfirul-laah)." And as for those without which you cannot do, you should beg of Allah, entrance into paradise and ask refuge in Him from Jahannam."

"And whoever gave a person who fasted water to drink, Allah shall grant that giver to drink from my fountain, such a drink where after that person shall never again feel thirsty until he enters Jannah."

Reported by ibn Khuzaimah in his 'Saheeh.

COMMENTARY

All the points which this Hadith draws attention have been further emphasized in numerous other Ahaadith on the great virtues of Ramadan. Quite a number of important points are brought to our notice.

Firstly, it should be noted that Rasulullah (SAW) delivered this sermon at the end of the month of Sha-baan the obvious reason being that he intended to put into our minds the great importance of Ramadan so that we could remember and not allow one second of this month to go by without giving it the full importance it deserves. Thereafter attention is drawn to Laylatul Qadr, about which more is said later. Then attention is drawn to the fact that fasting has been made compulsory by Allah who also made Sunnah the Taraaweeh 'salaah by night.

From this Hadith it is noted that the command for Taraaweeh prayers too comes from Allah Himself. Besides this in all the Ahaadith wherein Rasulullah (SAW) says, "I have made it sunnah", is mainly to emphasize its

importance. All the authorities of the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah are agreed upon the fact that Taraaweeh is Sunnah. (Bur-haan mentions that only the Rawaafidh deny this.)

Maulana Shaah Abdulhaq Dehlawi wrote in his book: "Maa Thabata Bis sunnah" that should the people of any town fail to perform Taraaweeh prayers, the Muslim ruler should make them do so by force.

HADITH No. 2

Abu Hurayrah relates that Rasulullah (SAW) said, "My Ummah was given five things for Ramadan which was not given to anyone except them. For them, the smell from the mouth of a fasting person is more sweeter to Allah than the fragrant smell of musk. On their behalf the fish in the sea seek forgiveness for the fasting persons until they break their fast. Allah prepares and decorates a special garden in Jannah everyday and then says (to it), "The time is near when faithful servants shall cast aside the great trials of the world and come to you". In this month (for them) evil-minded Shaytaan is chained so as not to reach unto those evils to which they normally reach during other months besides Ramadan. On the last night of Ramadan they are forgiven".

The Sahaabah R.A. thereupon enquired, "O Messenger of Allah, is that last night Laylatul Qadr? Rasulullah (SAW) replied, "No. But it is only right that a servant should be given his reward on having completed his service".

Reported by Ahmad, Bazaar and Bayhaqi

HADITH No. 3

Kaab bin Ujra relates, "Rasulullah (SAW) said, "Come near to the mimbar". And we came near to the mimbar.

When he ascended the First step of the mimbar he said "Aameen". When he ascended the second step of the mimbar he said, "Aameen". When he ascended the third step he said, "Aameen".

When he descended we said, "O Rasul of Allah, we have heard from you today something which we never heard before". He said, When I ascended the first step) Jibra-eel A.S. appeared before me and said, "Woe to him who found the blessed month of Ramadan and let it pass by without gaining forgiveness", upon that I said, "Aameen". When I ascended the second step, he said "Woe to him before whom thy name is mentioned and then does not read Durood (salaat alan Nabi) on you". I replied "Aameen". When I ascended the third step he said, "Woe unto the person in whose presence both parents or one of them attain old age, and (through failure to serve them) is not allowed to enter Jannah" I said "Aameen".

Reported by Haakim.

HADITH NO. 4

Ubaadah bin Saamit (*Radhiallaahu Ánhu*) reports that Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) said one day when Ramadan had drawn near; "The month of Ramadan, the month of blessings has come to you, wherein Allah turns towards you and sends down to you His special Mercy, forgives your faults, accepts prayers, appreciates your competition for the greatest, good and boasts to the angels about you. So, show to Allah your righteousness; for verily, the most pitiable and unfortunate one is he who is deprived of Allah's Mercy in this month.

COMMENTARY

In this Hadith, we read about the spirit of competition among the believers, each one trying to do more good deeds than the other. In our own home, I am greatly pleased on seeing how even the womenfolk vie with each other, the one trying to recite more of the Qur'an than the others, so that, in spite of domestic responsibilities, fifteen to twenty 'juz' (Parts) of the Qur'an are read by each one daily. I mention this only out of a sense of gratitude to Allah, mentioning His favor, and not to boast of it. May Allah accept their deeds and ours, and increase us all in good deeds.

HADITH NO.5

Abu Saeed Khudri (Radhiallaahu anhu) relates that Rasulullah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: "During each day and night of Ramadan, Allah sets free a great number of souls from Hell. And for every Muslim, during each day and night, at least one prayer is certainly accepted."

COMMENTARY

Apart from this Hadith, there are many others stating that the 'Du'aa' of a fasting person is accepted (Mustajaab). In one Hadith, we read that the 'Du'aa' is accepted at the time of 'Iftaar', but we are generally so absorbed in eating that we neglect this opportunity. The well-known 'Du'aa' at 'Iftaar' is:

"O Allah for You have I fasted, in You do I believe, and on You do I rely, and now I break this fast with food coming from you."

Abdullah bin Amr (Radhiallaahu anhu) used to make the following 'Du'aa' at 'Iftaar':

O Allah I beg You, through Your infinite Mercy, which surrounds all things, to forgive me.'

In some books we read that Rasulullah (Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam) used to say:

"O You who are Great in Bounties, forgive me."

Many other prayers have been indicated for 'Iftaar', but no special 'Dua' is fixed. This time (at Iftaar) is one when 'Du'aa' is accepted; submit before Allah all your needs (and, if you remember, then make "Du'aa' for me too.)

HADITH NO. 6

Abu Hurayrah (Radhiallaahu anhu) reports: Rasulullah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: "There are three people whose 'Du'aa' is not rejected; the fasting person until he breaks the fast, the just ruler, and the oppressed person, whose 'Dua' Allah lifts above the clouds and opens unto it the doors of heaven, and Allah says: "I swear by My honor, verily I shall assist you, even though it may be after some time."

COMMENTARY

In 'Durr Manthur' it is reported from Aa'isha (Radhiallaahu anha) that, when Ramadan appeared, the color of Rasulullah's face used to change. He then used to increase his "Salaat", become even more humble in his "Duaas" and exhibit even more fear of Allah. According to another report, he hardly ever lay down in bed until Ramadan came to an end. Further, it is stated that the angels carrying the Throne are commanded in Ramadan to leave aside everything else and recite "Aameen" to the "Duaas" of those who fast. Numerous are the Ahaadith stating that the fasting person's 'Duaas' are answered. When Allah has so promised, and his truthful 'Nabi' (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) has informed us, there should be no doubt whatsoever about the truth of these reports. Yet it is strange that, in spite of this, we still find such people who apparently do not get what they pray for. They ask and do not receive; but this does not mean that their prayers have been rejected. One should at this point understand the significance of a 'Dua' being answered.

Rasulullah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) has informed us that, when a Muslim prays for anything from Allah, on the condition that he does not pray for breaking off from his near of kin or for anything sinful, he definitely receives one out of the following three things: he gets the exact thing which he asked. If that is not received, then Allah either removes from his path some great calamity in exchange for what he desired, or the reward for that thing for which he prayed is stored for him in the Hereafter. Another Hadith states that on the day of "Qiyaamah", Allah will call his servant, and say to him: "O my servant, I used to command you to ask of Me and promised to answer. Did

you beg of Me? The servant will answer: "Yes I did." Then Allah shall reply: "You did not put forth any prayer which has not been accepted. You prayed that a certain calamity should be removed, which I did for you in the worldly life. You prayed that a certain sorrow should be cast off you, but result of that prayer was not known to you. For that, I fixed for you such and such a reward in the Hereafter. Rasulallah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) says that the man shall again be reminded of each and every prayer and he shall be shown how it had been fulfilled in the world or else what reward had been stored for him in the Hereafter. On seeing that reward, he shall wish that not a single prayer of his had been answered on Earth, so that he could receive the full reward only in the Hereafter.

Yes, prayer is indeed very important, and to neglect it at any time is a matter of great loss. Even when the outward signs seem to indicate that our prayer is not answered, hope should not be lost. Even from the lengthy Hadith at the end of this booklet, it is clear that Allah in answering prayers considers first of all our own good and welfare. Should Allah find that granting us what we beseech from Him is in our welfare and interest, He grants it, otherwise not. Actually it is Allah's favor on us that we do not always get what we ask for because very often, due to our lack of understanding, we beg for things that are not beneficial at a particular time.

Here I must draw your attention to the fact that men as well as women suffer from a bad habit of cursing their children in their anger and affliction. Beware of this. As preordained by Allah, there are certain occasions when whatever prayer be made is immediately answered. So sometimes, due to our own stupidity, the child is cursed and when the effect of that same curse comes upon the child and lands him into a calamity, the parents go about crying and wailing. Rasulallah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) commanded us not to curse ourselves, our children, possessions, or servants. It is just possible that the curse is uttered at a time when all requests are granted, especially in Ramadan, which is replete with such special "Mustajaab" (accepted) moments. Hence, in this month, great care should be taken.

Ibn Masood (Radhi Allahu anhu) reports that on every night of Ramadan, a crier from the heavens calls out: "O you seeker of good, come near; O You seeker of evil, turn away (from evil) and open your eyes." Thereafter that angel calls out: "Is there any seeker of forgiveness, that he may be forgiven? Is there anyone with a prayer, that his prayer may be heard? Is there anyone wanting anything, so that his wish may be fulfilled?"

Lastly, it should be borne in mind that there are certain conditions under which prayers are accepted; in the absence of these, prayers may be often rejected. Among these is the use of 'Halaal' food: When 'Haraam' is consumed, the prayers are not accepted. Rasulallah said: "Many a greatly distressed person lifts up his hands to the heavens. praying and crying: 'O Allah, O Allah.' But the food he eats is "Haraam", what he drinks is "Haraam", his clothes are of "Haraam"; then in such cases how can his prayer be accepted?"

A story is related about a group of people in Kufa, whose prayers used to be always accepted. Whenever a (bad) ruler was placed over them, they used to pray for a curse upon him, which quickly came to destroy him. When Hajjaaj became ruler there, he invited these people amongst others, to a feast. After they had all eaten, he said: "I am no longer afraid of the curse upon me from these people, because "Haraam" food has now entered their stomachs." (At this stage, let us ponder over how much "Haraam" is being consumed in these times, when people are even trying to make permissible the taking of interest money. We find out people going so far as to think that bribery and what is obtained through it is permissible, while our merchants very often justify their deceiving people when trading with them.)

HADITH NO. 7

Ibn Umar (Radhi Allahu anhu) relates: Rasulallah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: 'Verily Allah and His Malaa'ikah send Mercy upon those who eat 'Sehri' (sower-Suhoor)."

COMMENTARY

How great is Allah's favor upon us that even the partaking of food before dawn for fasting is so greatly rewarded. There are many Ahaadith in which the virtues of "Sehri" are expounded and the rewards mentioned. Allaamah Ain - Commentator on Bukhari - has quoted the virtues of "Sehri" from seventeen different 'Sahaabah' and all the "Ulama" are agreed on its being "Mustahab" (desirable). Many people are deprived of this great reward because of their own laziness. Some even go so far as to finish 'Taraaweeh', eat (what they suppose to be "Sehri!") and go to bed. What great blessings do they lose! "Sehri" actually means partaking of food shortly before dawn. Some authorities say that the time for "Sehri" commences after half the night has passed (Mirquat). The author of Kash-shaff (Zamakhshari) divided the night into six portions, stating that the last one of these is the time of "Sehri"; so that, when the night (from sunset till dawn) extends over twelve hours, the last two hours would be the correct time for "Sehri". Then it must also be remembered that to eat at the latest possible time is better and greater in reward than eating earlier, subject to the condition that no doubt remains as to whether "Sehri" had been eaten before the time of dawn. The Ahaadith are full of virtues of "Sehri".

Rasulullah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) said: "The difference between our fasting and that of the Ahlul-Kitaab (Jews and Christians) lies in our partaking of food at "Sehri" which they do not." The Prophet has said, "Eat Sehri, because in it lie great blessings; and again." In three things, are the great blessings: in "Jamaa'ah" (company), in eating "Thareed" and in "Sehri". In this Hadith, the use of the word "Jama'ah" is general, wherefrom we deduce that it includes "Salaat" with "Jamaa'ah" and all those righteous deeds done in company, as thus Allah's help comes to them. "Thareed" is a tasty preparation, in which baked bread is cooked with meat. The third thing mentioned in this Hadith is "Sehri". When Rasulullah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) used to invite any of the companions to eat "Sehri" with him, he used to say: "Come and partake of blessed food with me." One Hadith says: "Eat 'Sehri' and strengthen yourself for the fast. And sleep in the afternoon (Siesta), so as to gain assistance in waking up in the latter portion of the night (for "Ibaadah")." Abdullah bin Haarith (Radhiallaahu Anhu) reports that one of the Sahaaba said: "I once visited Rasulullah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) at a time when he was busy in partaking of 'Sehri'. Rasulullah then said: "This is a thing full of blessings, which Allah has granted you. Do not give it up." Rasulullah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) in urging us repeatedly for 'Sehri' has said: "Even though there be no food, then one date should be eaten or a drink of water taken." Thus, when there are definitely great advantages and reward in 'Sehri', Muslims should endeavour to observe this practice as much as possible. However, in all things moderation is important, and going beyond the bounds of moderation is harmful: neither should so little be eaten that one feels weak throughout the period of fasting, nor should so much be eaten that it causes discomfort. Repeatedly, we have been prohibited from filling the stomach excessively.

In his commentary on "Sahih Bukhari", Ibne Hajar has mentioned various reasons for the blessedness of "Sehri":

- Because in it, the 'Sunnah' is followed.
- Through "Sehri", we differentiate ourselves from the ways of Ahlul-Kitaab, which we are at all times called upon to do.
- It provides strength for "Ibaadah"
- It promotes greater sincerity in "Ibaadah"
- It aids in elimination of bad temper, which normally comes about as result of hunger.
- 'Sehri' is the time when prayers are accepted.
- At the time of 'Sehri', one gets the opportunity to remember Allah, makes Dhikr and lifts up the hand to Him in prayer.

These are a few of the major reasons; there are many others as well. Some 'Sufis' are in doubt as to whether the eating of 'Sehri' conflicts with the object of fasting or not. They maintain that the object of fasting is to stay away

from food, drink and sexual desires, therefore 'Sehri' is against the object of fasting. In my opinion the amount to be eaten varies according to different persons and their activities. For example, for those students who are busy seeking knowledge of 'Deen', too little food at 'Sehri' as well as 'Iftaar' will be harmful; for them it is better not to have too little, because they seek 'Deeni' knowledge, which is very important (for the preservation and spread of Islam). Similar is the case of those who are busy with 'Dhikr' and other 'Deeni' activities. Other people who have no such hard work to do should eat little at 'Sehri'.

Once Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) announced to those proceeding for 'Jihaad': 'There is no virtue in fasting while travelling.' That was in the month of Ramadan, when some Sahaaba were fasting. Allamah Sha'raani mentions in Sharh Iqna: 'A covenant was made with us that we shall not fill our stomachs (completely) when eating, especially in the nights of Ramadan.' It is better that one should eat less in the nights of Ramadan than on other nights. After all, what is the utility of fasting after having filled oneself at 'Sehri' and 'Iftaar'? The religious divines have said, 'Whoever remains hungry in Ramadan shall remain safe from the evil of 'Shaytaan' throughout the year, until the next Ramadan.'

Sharah Ihya Ulumuddin mentions the experiences of some saints, such as Sahl bin Abdullah Tastari, who used to eat only once every fifteen days, while in Ramadan he ate only one morsel; but in order to follow the Sunnah, he used to have a drink of water daily for 'Sehri' and 'Iftaar'. Shaykh Junayd always used to fast throughout the year. However, when his noble friends would visit him occasionally, he used to break his fast and eat with them, saying, 'The virtue of breaking fast and eating with (such noble) friends is not less than that of 'Nafil' fasting.'

Similarly, we can mention the experiences of numerous saints who through eating less used to discipline their inner-selves, but let us bear in mind that it should not be carried to such extremes that the 'religious' activities and responsibilities are neglected, as a result of weakness of the body.

HADITH NO. 8

Abu Hurayra (*Radhiallaahu Ánhu*) relates that Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) said: "Many of those who fast obtain nothing through such fasting except hunger, and many a one performs "Salaat" by night but obtains nothing by it, except the discomfort of staying awake."

COMMENTARY

With regard to this Hadith, the "Ulama" have mentioned three different interpretations: First, this Hadith may refer to those who fast during the day and then for "Iftaar" eat food that is "Haraam"; all the reward for fasting is lost because of the greater sin of eating 'Haraam' and nothing is gained except remaining hungry. Secondly, it may mean those who fast duly but, during fasting, engage themselves in backbiting and slandering others (see later). Thirdly, the person referred to may be one who, while fasting, did not stay away from evil and sin. In this Hadith all such possibilities are included. Similar is the case of the person performing 'Salaat' all night voluntarily; because of backbiting or any other sinful act (e.g. missing, Fajr salaah or keeping Awake for show), his night of devotion goes unrewarded.

HADITH NO. 9

Abu Ubaidah (*Radhiallaahu Ánhu*) reports: "I have heard RasuluLlah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) saying: "Fasting is a protective Shield for Man, as long as he does not tear up that protection"

COMMENTARY

"Protective shield" here means just as a man protects himself with a shield, similarly fasting protects him from his well-known enemy - 'Shataan'. In other Ahaadith, we are told that fasting saves one from Allah's punishment and

Hellfire in the Hereafter. Once somebody inquired from Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*), "What causes the fast to be rent?" He replied: 'Telling lies and backbiting.'

This Hadith, when read in conjunction with so many others, actually tells us to avoid such actions which cause fasting to be wasted. In our times, we are fond of whiling away the time with unnecessary conversations. Some "Ulema" are of the opinion that lies, backbiting, slander, etc., actually undo the fast just like eating and drinking, but the great majority of "Ulama" believes that the fast is not totally undone, but loses its blessings. The "Ulama" of Islam have mentioned six things, about which care should be taken in fasting:- First, one should keep the eyes away from any place where one should not look; some go so far as to prohibit looking at one's own wife with desire, let alone another woman. Similarly, looking at any evil action or where evil is committed should be avoided. Rasulullah(*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) said: 'The glance is like an arrow from 'Shataan' Whosoever, out of fear for Allah, prevents himself from looking at evil, Allah shall grant him such light of faith, the taste and ecstasy of which he will feel in the heart.' The 'Sufis' interpret the above saying to mean that those sights which should be avoided include all such places and things that distract the mind from the remembrance of Allah.

Secondly, one should guard the tongue against lies, unnecessary conversation, backbiting, arguments, swearing, etc. In Bukhari, we read that fasting is a shield for the fasting person; for this reason, those who fast should avoid all useless talk, joking, argument, etc. Should anyone pick an argument, then say: "I am fasting." In other words, one should not start an argument and if someone else starts it, then too, one should avoid taking it up. When the person who starts an argument is not an understanding person, then at least one should remind oneself that: "I am fasting." During the time of our Nabi (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*), two women were fasting and suffered the pangs of hunger to such an extent that the fast became unbearable and both were on the point of death. The "Sahaaba" brought this to the notice of our Nabi (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*), who sent a bowl commanding them to vomit into it. When they both vomitted in the bowl, pieces of meat and fresh blood were found in it. The "Sahaaba" were greatly surprised, upon which our Nabi (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) said: "They fasted with 'Halaal' food from Allah, but partook of 'Haraam' food by backbiting other people." From the above, it also becomes clear that, by backbiting during fasting, the fast becomes so much more harder; for this reason, both women were near death. Similar is the case with other sinful acts, and experience shows that for the faithful, Godfearing persons, fasting is no hardship, whereas the sinful find it too hard to bear. One should therefore stay away from sins and especially from major sins, like backbiting and slander, which are often indulged in to while away the time. Allah says in the Qur'an that backbiting is tantamount to the (actual) eating of the flesh of one's dead brother. We find this also narrated in various Ahadith. Once the Prophet, (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*), on seeing some people, asked them to pick their teeth. They said that they had not tasted any meat that day, on which the Prophet (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) said, "So and so's flesh is sticking to your teeth." It transpired that they had been backbiting. May Allah keep us safe from this evil, because we are very neglectful of this warning. All are guilty of this; not to speak of the common man, even the people of importance indulge in it, even the religious people in their gatherings do not avoid backbiting. Worst of all is the fact that we do not even realize what backbiting is; even when we suspect ourselves of this, we try to cover it up as narration of some event. One of the 'Sahaaba' inquired from Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) "What is backbiting?" Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) replied: "To mention something about your brother behind his back, which he would resent." The 'Sahaabi' then said: "And is it still backbiting if the thing mentioned about him is really true?" Our Nabi (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) said: 'In that case (if that which was mentioned is really true) it is precisely backbiting; but if what is mentioned is false, then you have in fact slandered him.' Once our Nabi (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) passed by two graves. He said: "On both the inmates of these graves, punishment is being inflicted in the grave. One is being punished because of backbiting, the other because of not having taken precautions (to stay clean) when passing urine. Rasulullah ((*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) also said: "There are more than seventy degrees of evil in (Usury) interest. The lowest form of it is comparable to committing incest with own mother; and taking one 'Dirham' of interest is a worse evil than having fornicated thirty five times. The worst and most evil degree of taking interest is the slandering of a Muslim." In

various Ahaadith we are strongly warned against backbiting and slandering a Muslim. I very much wanted to write down here a number of such Ahaadith, because all our gatherings and conversations are generally filled with these evils (backbiting and slander). However I finally decided not to do so, because the topic under discussion here is something else - not actually backbiting. So I once again pray that Allah may keep us safe from this evil. And I beg of my friends and brothers to pray for me too; we are full of inner faults.

'What ailment is there O Allah that is not in me,
Heal me from every illness and grant me my needs
Verily I have a heart that is sick
Verily you are the Healer of the sick'

Thirdly, we should be careful that the ears are kept away from listening to anything undesirable (Makrooh). It is equally unlawful to listen to anything that should not be said. Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) has said, 'In backbiting, both the bickbiter and the one who listens to it are equal partners in sin.'

Fourthly, the rest of the body should be kept away from sin and unlawful things. Neither should the hands touch it, nor the feet walk towards it. With the stomach, special care should be taken, especially at the time of "Iftaar", that no such thing enters it about which there is any doubt of it being "Halaal". When a person fasts and, at "Iftaar" time, breaks his fast with "Haraam" food, he is like a sick person who takes medicine as a cure, but also adds a little poison, which destroys him.

Fifthly, after having fasted, it is not advisable to fill the stomach completely even with "Halaal" food at "Iftaar", because then the purpose of fasting is defeated. Fasting seeks to diminish one's carnal desires and increase one's faith and spiritual powers. For eleven months, we eat and drink freely enough, in Ramadan this should be cut down to a minimum. We have a bad habit of filling our bellies at "Iftaar" to make up for what was lost, and again at "Sahi" in preparation for the day, thus actually increasing our average consumption. Ramadan for such people gives an edge to their appetite. Many such items of food are eaten that we normally do not eat at other times. This type of eating habit is completely against the spirit of Ramadan and the true spirit of fasting.

Imaam Ghazaali asks the same question: "When the object of fasting is to conquer our carnal passions in opposition to 'Iblees' (Satan), how can this possibly be done by eating excessively at "Iftaar"? Actually in that case we have only altered the times of eating, and not really fasted. In fact by having various types of delicacies, we consume even more than in normal times. The result is that, instead of lessening the carnal desires, these are considerably increased. The real benefit of fasting comes as a result of actual hunger in the 'true sense. Our Nabi (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) said: 'Shataan' flows through the body of man like blood; so, close up his path by remaining hungry," i.e. when the body is hungry, the spirit receives strength.

Apart from hunger, fasting gives us an opportunity to appreciate the condition of the poor and destitute, and thus engenders sympathetic feelings towards them. This too can be attained by remaining hungry and not by filling the stomach with delicious foods at 'Sehri", so that one does not feel hungry until "Iftaar". Once a person went to Bishr Haafi, whom he found shivering in the cold, in spite of having warm clothes lying at his side. That person inquired: "Is this a time for taking off the clothes?" Bishr replied: "There are numerous poor and needy ones; I am unable to sympathise with them; the least I could do is to be in their condition." The 'Sufis' plead for the same attitude in fasting and so do the "Fuqahaa" (Jurists).

In Maraqiul Falaah, it is written. "Do not eat excessively at "Sehri", as this is a way to lose the object of fasting." Allama Tahtaawi writes: "When hunger is really felt, the reward for fasting becomes definitely more. Similarly, a

feeling is developed for the poor and hungry ones". Our Nabi (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) himself said: 'Allah does not dislike the filling of anything to the brim more than He dislikes the filling of the stomach. On another occasion, the Prophet ((*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*)) said, "A few morsels should suffice which can keep back straight." The best way for man is that one third should be filled with food, one third with drink while the other third remains empty." Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) himself used to fast for days on end, without eating in between.

I have seen my ustaaz (teacher) Maulana Khalil Ahmad eating only slightly more than one thin (hand-made) bread (roti) at 'Iftaar' and 'Sehri', during the whole month of Ramadan. When any of his near ones used to urge him to eat more, he would reply: "I am not hungry.

I merely sat down to eat because of my friends." About Maulana Shah Abdurraheem Rajpuri, I have heard that in Ramadan, for days on end, he used to fast, drinking at 'Iftaar' and 'Sehri' only a few cups of tea without milk and nothing else. Once his most trusted follower (and Khalifa) Maulana Shah Abdulqaadir remarked with anxiety: "Hazrat, you will become very weak if you do not eat anything." To this, Maulana Shah Rajpuri replied: "Praise be to Allah, I am experiencing something of the ecstasy of Jannah.'May Allah grant us all the ability to follow those Pious souls.Aameen'.

The sixth point is that, after fasting, one should always have some anxiety as to whether one's fast had been accepted by Allah or not. This should be the case with all forms of 'Ibaadah' (worship). One never knows whether some important part may have been left out, of which no notice was taken. One should always fear that Allah may reject one's deeds. Rasulullah (*Sallallaahu Álayhi Wasallam*) said: 'Many reciters of the Qur'an are being cursed by the Qur'an.' He also said: 'On the day of 'Qiyaamah', (judgement) one of those with whom Allah shall reckon first shall be a "Shaheed" (martyr in the path of Allah). Allah shall call him and remind him of all His favours to him, which he shall admit.

He shall then be asked: "What have you done by way of expressing gratitude for these favours?" The 'Shaheed' shall reply: 'I fought in Your cause till I became a 'Shaheed". Allah shall reply:"It is not so; you fought so that you can be called a brave man; and so it has been said" Thereafter, it shall be commanded that he be dragged face on the ground and cast into "Jahannam." Thereafter, an 'Aalim' (Scholar) shall be called. He too shall be reminded of Allah's favours and asked the same question. He shall reply: "O Lord! I sought to acquire knowledge, taught others and for Your sake recited the Qur'an." Allah shall say: "This is not true.

You did all that, merely so that, it may be said that you are learned; and so, it has been said.' Then it shall be commanded that he too be dragged, face on the ground, and cast into "Jahannam." Thereafter a rich man shall be called. After being reminded of Allah's favours, and admitting them, in reply to Allah's question as to what he did to express His gratitude, he shall reply: "There was no worthy cause wherein I did not spend in charity for Your sake." Allah's reply shall be: 'Not true. You did all that, so that it may be said that you are very generous. And so it has been said." Then it shall be commanded that he too be dragged, face on the ground, and cast into "Jahannam". Many such incidents are related in Ahaadith. So, a fasting person should not only be sincere but also hope that Allah will accept it.

These above mentioned six things are compulsory for all truly righteous persons. As for the exceptionally pious ones, a seventh point is added. That is, during fasting, the heart should not be turned towards anyone except Allah, so much so that during the course of the fast there should be no worry as to whether there shall be something to eat for 'Iftaar'.

Some Shaikhs even consider it a fault to think about food for 'Iftaar', or that one should endeavour to acquire something, because this shows lack of faith in Allah's promise of being responsible for the granting of "Rizq". In the commentary of 'Ihya Ulumid Deen, the author goes so far as to relate that, should something for "Iftaar" arrive from somewhere before the time of 'Iftaar', the "Mashaikh" would give it to somebody else, for fear that for the rest of that day the heart may be distracted from Allah by keeping it. This can of course, only be carried out by the exceptionally pious ones. We cannot even imagine having such strong faith. Should we try to follow without it, we may destroy ourselves.

The Qur'an commands: "Fasting has been prescribed for you." The commentators of the Qur'an say that from this verse it is deduced that fasting is made compulsory for every part of the body. Thus, fasting of the tongue means to avoid falsehood, etc. fasting of the ears means not listening to evil, fasting of the eyes means not to look at any form of evil and sirl. Similarly, fasting of the self means to be free from all carnal desires. Fasting of the heart means casting out from it the love of worldly things. Fasting of the mind means avoiding thoughts about anything other than Allah.

Our Faults in Ramadan

At this point we should ponder over our i'baadah. How much importance do we attach to it in Ramadan? How many nafl do we perform? As for fardh deeds, we observe how numerous people who after having eaten sah'ri get back into bed with the result that the Fajr 'salaah is neglected. Many perform it, but not with Jamaa'ah. It gives the impression that we give thanks to Allah for the food we had eaten for sah'ri by not performing the most important fardh or by not performing it with Jamaa'ah. Such a 'salaah has been termed defective. Rasulullah (SAW) said that, "There is no 'salaah for those near the masjid except in the masjid".

In the kitaab 'Mazhaahire Haq' we find that there is no reward for the 'salaah for persons who do not perform 'salaah with Jamaa'ah without any valid reason or excuse.

Similarly, in numerous cases at the time of if'taar (boeka) Maghrib 'salaah is missed, and many who do not come to the masjid miss the Takbeer at the beginning or miss the first raka'ah. Many people hasten to get over the Taraaweeh 'salaah early and even perform the 'ishaa' 'salaah before the time of 'Ishaa' commences. (Some do not pay any attention to 'salaah even in Ramadan.)

That is the way we look after our very important fardh 'salaah in Ramadan. Sometimes in the process of performing one fardh, three others are destroyed. How often do we see even the time of Zhuh-r 'salaah going by because we are asleep, while time of A'sr goes by because we are too busy buying, selling or cooking to prepare for if'taar.

If such is the case with the faraa'idh, then we can imagine how much less importance is given to the nafl actions. One finds that because of sleep, the time of 'salaatul Ishraaq (after sunrise) and 'salaatul Dhuhaa (before noon) go by.

Then what about 'salaat Awwaabeen (just after Maghrib)? Here we find ourselves busy with If'taar and when thinking about Taraaweeh after about an hour this 'salaah too is wasted. Further we find that for 'salaatul Ta-hajjud the time is the same as that for sah'ri with the result that this too goes by. One may make a thousand excuses for not finding time for these nawaafil. These are all excuses for not performing these 'salaah.

We see that there are many who do find the time to do all these 'ibaadahs during these precious moments. I personally had observed my ustaaz Maulana Khalil Ahmad during many a Ramadan. He was a weak sickly person

and of advanced age but in spite of these drawbacks he used to read one and a quarter juz of the Qur'an in nafl namaaz after Maghrib. Thereafter he used to have meals for about half an hour. After performing all other necessities in preparation for Taraaweeh 'salaah he used to stand in Taraaweeh for about two and a half hours when he was in India, and when he was in Madinah Munawwarah the duration was three hours.

Thereafter he used to sleep about two or three hours (according to the season). Then he used to again recite the Qur'an in Tahajjud 'salaah until about half an hour before Fajr. Then he ate sa'h'ri. From that time until Fajr he remained busy with reading the Qur'an or reciting of wazifas. With the greyness of dawn he performed Fajr 'salaah, thereafter he remained in meditation (muraa-qabah) until Ishraaq. Having performed Ishraaq he used to write his famous kitaab, 'Baziul Majhood', commentary on Abu Dawood. Then he normally attend to letters and dictating replies up to mid-day. Then he used to rest up to Zhuh-r 'salaah. Between Zhuh-r and A'sr he used to recite the Qur'an.

From A'sr Namaaz until Maghrib he used to be busy with tasbeeh and answering the queries of those who visited him. When he completed 'Baziul Majhood' then part of the morning used to be spent in tilaawah and studying some monumental religious works, especially Baziul Majhood and Wafa al Wafa. This was his daily programme for nafl 'ibaadah throughout the year.

In Ramadan however, he used to spend a bit more time in his i'baadah, making the rak'aats longer. For the ordinary person to observe the special programmes the other pious elders had for Ramadan would be difficult. Shaikhul Hind Maulana Mahmoo-dul Hasan (Rahmatullah alaihi) used to remain in nafl 'salaah from after Taraaweeh until Fajr, while also listening to the Qur'an recited by various huffaazh one after the other.

Maulana Shah Abdurraheem Raipuri (d 1963) remained busy with tilaawah (recitation) of the Qur'an day and night through Ramadan. There used to be no time for attending to correspondence or meeting visitors. Only his special ones were allowed to wait on him after Taraaweeh for a short period while he drank a cup of tea.

ADVICE FOR RAMADHAAN

The reason for mentioning the manner in which these saintly ones spent their Ramadan is not that we may just read without deriving any benefit or pass a casual remark. It is written with the object that we in our way may build up courage and to the best of our ability endeavor to copy and follow their noble examples. Every pious elders programme had its particular speciality.

How wonderful would it be if those who are not forced by worldly necessities try their utmost to mend their religious life in this one month after having allowed eleven months of the year go by to destroy themselves.

As for those who have to be in their offices and be present at eight, nine or ten in the morning, what difficulty will it be for them if they at least in Ramadan, spend the time from Fajr until their hours of employment in reciting the Qur'an. After all our worldly needs we do find time in spite of office hours.

For those engaged in farming, who normally are not bound to others nothing prevents them from reciting the Qur'an on their farm or adjusting their daily routine. Then come the businessmen, shopkeepers and merchants.

Nothing prevents them in Ramadan from reciting their Qur'an during their shop hours or cutting short trading time in order to make time for recitation thereof. After all there is very strong link between Ramadan and the Tilaa-wah of the Qur'an. Almost all Allah's great scriptures were revealed in this month. Similarly, in this month the Qur'an

was brought down from the Lowhul Mahfoozh to the Samaa'ud Dunyaa, from where it was revealed bit by bit to Rasulallah (SAW) in a span of twenty three years.

Nabi Ibrahim (A.S.) received his scriptures on the first and third of this sacred month. Nabi Dawood (A.S.) received the Zaboor on the twelfth or eighteenth. Nabi Moosa (A.S.) received his Towrah on the sixth. Nabi Essa (A.S.) received the Injeel on the twelfth or thirteenth. From this we note the great connection between the divine scriptures and the month of Ramadan.

For this reason, as much ti-laawah of the Qur'an as possible should be made during this month. Such was the habit of our saints. Jibraeel (A.S.) used to recite the whole Qur'an to our Nabi Muhammad (SAW) in the month of Ramadan. In some reports it is stated that Rasulallah (SAW) used to recite and he (Jibraeel) used to listen. From joining these reports the 'ulama have said that it is mustahab to read the Qur'an in such a manner that while one recites the other listens. Thereafter another recites while others listen. So recite the Qur'an as much as possible. Whatever time remains thereafter should not be wasted.

Rasulallah (SAW) drew our attention to four more things and advised that we should practice them as much as possible. They are the recitation of Kalimah 'Tayyibah, Istighfaar, begging for Jannah and seeking refuge from Jahannam. Therefore it must be regarded an honour to spend as much as available in these recitations. This will be the true appreciation of the teachings of Rasulallah (SAW). What is so difficult about keeping the tongue busy with the recitation of Durood ('salawaat) or Laa ilaaha illallaah while being engaged in our daily tasks?

In the same Hadith Rasulallah (SAW) said a few more things, Ramadan is the month of patience. Hence even if great difficulty is experienced in fasting one should bear it with patience. One should not complain as people are fond of doing during hot days.

If by chance sah-ri is missed then lamentations begin early in the day. Similarly, should difficulty be experienced at the same time of Taraaweeh, it too should be borne with patience. Do not consider it a great calamity or trial, otherwise these deeds may be void of blessings. When we turn our backs on worldly things, forsake our very eating and drinking, then in the face of Allah's pleasure what are these difficulties?

[Sympathy for the unfortunate](#)

Further, the Hadith states that it is the month of sympathy, especially for the poor and destitute. Sympathy should be of a practical nature. When ten things are placed before us for if'taar, at least two or four of them should be set aside for the poor and needy. In fact they should be treated preferentially, if not then at least equally.

They should certainly be remembered. In showing sympathy for the poor, as in all other matters, the Sahaabah R.A. were living examples, and in this, it is our duty to follow or at least try to follow them. In the matter of sacrifice and sympathy only the courageous can emulate the Sahaabah. There are numerous instances, if they are cited, will only leave one in astonishment.

Let us see the following example, Abu Jahm (RA) relates that: "During the battle of Yarmouk he went in search of his cousins, taking with him a water bag to give him to drink and also wash his wounds if he was found alive or wounded. He found him lying among the wounded. When I asked him whether he wanted some water, he indicated 'yes'.

At that moment someone near him moaned. My cousin pointed to that person indicating that I should first quench the thirst of the neighbour. I went to him and found that he too needed water, but just as I was about to give him water, a third person groaned near him.

The second one pointed to this third person meaning that I should give the third one to drink first.

I went to the third person but before he could drink, I found out that he had passed away, whereupon I returned to the second one only to find that he too had passed away. When I came to my cousin, he too had become a martyr".

Virtues of I'tikaf

I'TIKAAF - SECLUSION IN THE MASJID

The meaning of 'Tikaaf' is to seclude oneself in the Mosque, with the express intention (Niyyat) of 'Tikaaf'. According to the Hanafi school of thought, this may be of three different types:

a) Waajib I'tikaaf (Obligatory I'tikaaf)

I'tikaaf becomes compulsory when a person makes it obligatory upon himself. For example, when a person makes a vow to Allah that if Allah fulfils a certain wish of his, he shall perform so many days 'Tikaaf', in this case, the moment his wish is fulfilled, the I'tikaaf becomes compulsory. Or a person may just make an unconditional vow, whereby he makes I'tikaaf Waajib upon himself for a certain number of days; this becomes obligatory for him from that moment onwards.

b) Sunnat I'tikaaf

This was the general practice of the Holy Prophet (SAW). It means to seclude oneself in the Masjid for the last ten days of Ramadan.

c) Nafil I'tikaaf

For the third category i.e. Nafil I'tikaaf, no special time and no specific number of days are fixed. A person may make a Niyyah (intention) for any number of days at any time, even for his whole life.

While Imaam Abu Hanifa states that I'tikaaf must be for not less than a full day, Imaam Muhammad states that there is no limit as to the minimum period of time. The 'Fatwa' confirms this latter view. Therefore, it is desirable for anyone entering a Masjid to make the 'Niyyah' (intention) of I'tikaaf for the period that he will remain in the Masjid; so that, while he is in Ibaadah, he also earns the reward of I'tikaaf.

OBJECTS OF I'TIKAAF AND ITS ADVANTAGES

In view of the above, it is advisable that everyone entering the Masjid to join the congregational prayer should, on entering the Masjid, make the Niyyat for 'Tikaaf', in that case it means that as long as he remains busy with Salaat, Zikr, listening to lectures or sermons he also receives reward for the I'tikaaf. I always observed that my late father used to make 'Niyyat' for I'tikaaf whenever he entered the Masjid. Occasionally, by way of teaching and reminding his followers, he would raise his voice when reciting the words for 'Niyyah'. The reward for I'tikaaf is great as indicated by the fact that the Holy Prophet (SAW) always used to perform I'tikaaf. The example of him who resides in the Masjid in I'tikaaf is that of a person who, having gone to a certain place to appeal for something, remains there until it is granted. When someone comes begging at our door and then refuses to leave until he has been granted his request. I am sure that even the person with the hardest heart amongst us will eventually give in to his request. How much more Merciful is Allah, and when someone persistently sits at His door, what doubt can

there be in the fulfilment of his wishes. Allama ibn Qayyim, in explaining the significance of I'tikaaf writes that the actual aim is to divert the heart away from everything except Allah, and to make it come near to Allah, thereby forming a complete spiritual connection with the Creator. All worldly connections are thus cut off, for the sake of gaining Allah's attention and all thoughts, desires, love and devotion become centred around Him. As a result, an attachment with Allah is attained - a love and friendship that will be the only support in loneliness of the grave. One can possibly imagine the great ecstasy with which that time in the grave will be spent.

In Maraaiful Falaah, the author writes that I'tikaaf, when properly and sincerely performed, is among the most virtuous deeds. One cannot possibly enumerate all the great advantages and benefits in it. In actual fact, what takes place in I'tikaaf is that the heart is drawn away from everything else except the Creator, while the soul is actually laid at His door-step. All the time, one remains in a state of 'Ibaadah', even when one is asleep, one is still in His worship striving for nearness to Him. And Allah says (according to a Hadith): "Whoever draws near to Me (the length of) one hand, then I draw nearer to him (the length of) two hands, and whoever draws near to Me by walking, I draw nearer to him by running." Moreover, in I'tikaaf one seeks refuge in the house of Allah, and is safe therein from all enemies.

WHERE TO PERFORM I'TIKAAF

The best of places for I'tikaaf is the Masjidul Haram in Makkah.

The next best is the Masjidun-Nabawi in Madinah, and the next best is Baytul Muqaddas. Thereafter, comes the Jaama Masjid in one's own time, and last but not least, the Masjid nearest to one's home. Imaam Abu Hanifa stipulates that the Masjid should be one wherein the five daily Salaatare regularly performed, while Imaam Abu Yusuf and Imaam Muhammad agree that any Masjid acceptable to the Shari'ah can be entered for I'tikaaf.

The above applies to the males. As for the females, they should perform I'tikaaf in the prayer room (Masjid set aside in their homes). Where, however, no such demarcated place exists, any one room or part of the house should be set aside for this purpose. I'tikaaf is thus in fact an easier task for women. The domestic duties can be performed by daughters or servants under her supervision and the woman in I'tikaaf, while remaining in a section of her own house, is spiritually rewarded for it. It is so very unfortunate that, in spite of this relative ease, our womenfolk still remain deprived of the blessings of I'tikaaf.

Virtues of Laylatul Qadr (6&7)

HADITH NO. 6

Ubaadah bin Saamit (Radhiyallahu anhu) reports that he asked the Prophet (Sallallahu alaihi wasallam) about "Laylatul Qadr". He replied: "It is in Ramadan, during the last ten days, on the unevenly numbered nights, either the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th or the last night of Ramadan. Whosoever stands in "Ibaadah" on this night, with sincere faith and with genuine hopes of gaining reward, his previous sins will be forgiven. Among the signs of this night is that it is a serene, quiet, shining night, neither hot, nor cold but temperate as if a moon is shining clear, and no meteors are shot at the "Shayateen" on that night; it lasts until the break of the dawn. Another sign is that at morn, the Sun rises without any radiant beams of light, appearing rather like the moon in its fullness. On that day, Allah prohibits the "Shayateen" from rising up with the Sun."

COMMENTARY

Part of what has been mentioned in this Hadith has already been dealt with. Some signs are here mentioned about the actual night. These signs are clear and need no further elucidation. Apart from these, there are other signs too,

as mentioned in the Ahadith or in the experiences of those who had the good fortune to experience "Laylatul Qadr." The sign that is, however; most specific in the Hadith is the rising of the sun, 'without any radiant beams of light.' Other signs are not always there. One Sahaabi, Ab'da bin Abi Lubaaba (Radhi Allaho anhu) says: "On the evening of the 27th , I tasted the water of the sea and it was sweet." Ayub bin Khalid said: 'I once had to bathe myself with sea water, and on tasting it, found, it sweet. This was on the 23rd night." Some of the "Mashaaikh" (religious divines) wrote that, on the evening of "Laylatul Qadr", everything prostrates itself before Allah, so much so that trees fall flat on the ground, then return to their normal position; these are however spiritual phenomena not visible to the ordinary person.

HADITH NO. 7

Aaisha (RadhiAllaho anha) reports: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam), should I find myself the "Laylatul Qadr", hat shall I pray. The Prophet (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) replied: say, *Allaahumma innaka afuwwun tohibbu al'afwa fa'fu anna* "O Allah, Thou art the One who grants pardon for sins. Thou lovest to pardon, so O pardon me."

COMMENTARY

This is indeed such an all-inclusive prayer, wherein one begs that Allah in His infinite Grace should forgive his sins. If that has been obtained, the path to the Hereafter is secure. What more would one require? Imaam Sufyaan Thowry used to say that to keep oneself busy on this night with 'Du'aa' (invocations to Allah) is better than any other form of worship (Ibaadah). Ibne Rajab says that one should not only remain busy with 'Du'aa', but should also take part in all other form of 'Ibaadah', e.g. recitation of the Holy Qur'an, 'Salaat', contemplation, etc. This latter opinion is most correct and nearer to what Rasulullah (Sallallaahu alaihi wasallam) had said, as already mentioned in the previous Ahaadith.

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