

RAMADHAN
MONTH OF PURIFICATION
Commenced Tuesday September 2, 2008



O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil. (Holy Qur'an 2:184)

The world's Muslims, the followers of the religion of Islam, warmly greet the arrival of the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar and the holy month of fasting (saum), known as Ramadhan. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) addressing his followers on the day before the beginning of the month of Ramadhan said:

"A Oh people! A great month has come over you; a blessed month; a month in which a night better than a thousand months; a month in which Allah has made it compulsory upon you to fast during the day, and to voluntarily pray during the night. Whoever draws nearer (to Allah) by performing any of the (optional) good deeds in (this month) shall receive the same reward as performing an obligatory deed at any other time (of the year), and whoever discharges an obligatory deed in (this month) shall receive the reward of performing seventy obligations at any other

time (of the year). It is the month of patience, and the reward of patience is Heaven. It is the month of charity, and the month in which a believer's sustenance is increased..." (Sahih Ibn Khuzaymah)

The practice of fasting precedes the religion of Islam as it is found in all the major religions of the world. The Holy Qur'an, the holiest scripture of Islam, states as follows:

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil. (Holy Qur'an 2:184).

Ramadhan is the month within which the prophets, including Jesus, Moses and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them all) received their first revelations from Allah. Indeed, over the course of 21 years, the first and last revelations to the Holy

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were both received during Ramadhan. In addition, after the completion of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, it was re-revealed in its entirety to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) during two successive months of Ramadhan. Therefore, fasting during Ramadhan is to not only achieve greater attention to prayer, but also to the recitation and study of the Holy Qur'an. In this regard, (late) Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (may Allah grant him His mercy), the 4th Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community stated as follows:

"Fasting in Islam begins everywhere at the first appearance of dawn, and ends with sunset. During this period one is expected to abstain from all food and drink completely. It is not just physical hunger and thirst that constitute the Muslim fast, but the nights prior to the beginning of the fast acquire a far more important character and play a central role in the institution of fasting. The Muslims wake up many hours before dawn for individual prayer and the remembrance of God. Also the Holy Qur'an is recited in every Muslim house much more than in ordinary days. A greater part of the night is thus spent in spiritual exercises that make up the very essence of fasting". (An Elementary Study of Islam)

The purpose of Ramadhan, as articulated by (late) Hadhrat Sir Zafrullah Khan, is as follows:

The true purpose of Ramadhan, as of all forms of Islamic worship is to draw people closer to Allah. Though normal pursuits and occupations are carried on as usual, the emphasis on moral and spiritual values and concentration on them are intensified, and everything is subordinated to the main

purpose. The hearing, the sight, the tongue, the mind are all under stricter control. For instance, not only vain talk, but much talk is also eschewed, so that there should be greater concentration on remembrance of Allah and reflection upon His attributes. The Holy Prophet said: 'He who abstains from food and drink during the period of the fast but does not restrain himself from uttering a falsehood starves himself to no purpose'. (Review of Religions, March 1994)

In addition to a greater devotion to prayer, both obligatory and voluntary (during the day and throughout the night) and the study of the Holy Qur'an, during Ramadhan, Muslims also place great emphasis on charity and the giving of alms to the poor. While the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught that working towards the welfare of the poor should occur on a daily basis, likening such work to a breeze which never ceases to bring comfort and solace to the needy, during Ramadhan, this breeze should pick up and blow like a strong wind.

Practicing abstention and self-denial from things which are otherwise permissible serves to refine one's character and enhance one's spirituality. Indeed, a Muslim practices abstention for one purpose and one purpose only, namely, to please Allah and attain His nearness. For example, in the following revelation to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Allah stated:

"All acts done by the sons of Adam are meant for him, except fasting. [Fasting] is exclusively done for Me, and I (alone) will reward him for it." (Bukhari and Muslim)

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