

The Form And Spirit Of Ramadan

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Ramadan is the ninth month of the Hijri calendar. Muslims are enjoined to observe fasting from daybreak to sunset during this month. Fasting is an annual worship in the Islamic faith and one of the five spiritual pillars of Islam.

What is the purpose of this annual practice? The answer can be had from the Quran. "The month of Ramadan is the month when the Quran was sent down as guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and the criterion by which to distinguish right from wrong" (2:185).

The Arabic word for fasting is 'sawm' meaning abstinence, restraint from desires. That is, saving oneself from all kinds of distraction, including basic needs, for a temporary period of time. The main purpose of fasting is going through the Quran with complete focus and dedication. This is a very serious study. So, believers are required to keep away from all other activities, and concentrate their minds totally on the study of the Quran.

In terms of form, the month of Ramadan is the month of fasting. But, in terms of spirit, the month of Ramadan is a month of self-training. Muslims are required to observe the month of Ramadan as a month of introspection in the light of Quranic teachings. The Quran is a divine criterion; it helps us examine our deeds and differentiate the right from the wrong. The Quran is like a divine mirror, in which Muslims can see their true face. They can identify the mistakes they have made in the past in order that they may mend their ways.

This annual practice enables Muslims to reassess and re-examine their past. And, by knowing this they can plan for their future on

better times. To illustrate this point, I would like to give some examples from the Quran.

A believer prepares himself and starts reading the Quran with an open mind. Then he reaches this Quranic verse: "Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own doing" (42:30). If the reader is sincere and reads this verse with an open mind, he will apply it to his own life and to the life of the Muslim ummah. By doing so he will discover that anything which Muslims have suffered in the past was not due to anti-Muslim forces, rather it was entirely Muslims' own mistakes. This discovery will produce brainstorming in his mind and he will decide with complete determination to convey this fact to the entire Muslim ummah.



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Then during the study of the Quran, the believer reaches this verse: "God alters not what is with a people, until they alter what is within them" (13:11). If the believer is sincere in the true sense of the word, this Quranic verse is bound to make a deep impression on his mind. He will find the proper line of action for the future. He will decide that we have to completely abandon the language of complaint and protest against others because, according to the divine law, that will not work. We will have to bring about reform in our own lives. This is the precondition enshrined in the Quran. If we fulfil this condition, we will be able to receive divine help, and divine help is guarantee of all kinds of success.

This is the main purpose of fasting. Fasting in the month of Ramadan is like a spiritual rehearsal for every Muslim. If this annual practice is done in the true spirit, it is bound to revolutionise the condition of Muslims, both individually and collectively. *Follow the Maulana at speakingtree.in. Post your comments on the website.*