

# A course in self-control

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

**In the chapter entitled** Al-Baqarah (The Heifer) of the Quran, believers are enjoined to fast during the month of Ramadan, fasting being one of the five pillars of the religion of Islam. The translation of the relevant verse is as follows: Believers, fasting have been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil. (2:183)

What is meant by fasting? In this context, it is to abstain from eating and drinking for one month. The period of fasting begins from sunrise and ends at sunset. Throughout this month, believers can eat and drink during the night, but not in the daytime. According to Islamic teaching, fasting is not simply about experiencing hunger and thirst. In fact, hunger and thirst are symbolic of purifying one's soul and training oneself to control one's desires. The Prophet of Islam has said to

this effect that one who fails to abstain from using abusive language and persists in his evil habits, will not have his abstinence from eating and drinking accepted by God.

The fact is that everyone has enormous desires, everyone has an ego and there are so many negative thoughts hidden in the human heart. To live the life of a true believer, one is required to control one's desires and to try to live a life of self-constraint. By giving up eating and drinking in the month of Ramadan, one tries to train oneself for a greater form of fasting, that is, refraining from all kinds of evil habits.

Psychological studies show that if someone forms a habit over a period of a whole month, this habit becomes a part of his second nature. In one sense, fasting in the month of Ramadan is based on this human psychology, which is used to bring about moral training.

*www.cpsglobal.org*