

Post-fasting period

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Introduction

Today is September 4, 2011. The month of Ramzaan ended four days ago and now we are in the post-fasting period.

Islam does not subscribe to rituals. Ramzaan therefore is neither a month of practicing an annual ritual nor is it the provider of mysterious benefits on account of abstaining from food and water. It is in reality, the month of training, one which would help man all round the year.

What is Ramzaan?

Ramzaan is not about forsaking food (*tark-e-ta'am*) but about minimizing food (*taqleeq-e-ta'am*). Man has two aspects of his personality, his body (physical aspect) and his soul (spiritual aspect). As per the law of nature, *if you feed one aspect more, the other one will have to starve*. In other words, Ramzaan seeks to train man in being contented with limited material provisions and inculcate in him an understanding of this principle of nature.

Differently put, there are two ways of leading life. One is to adopt the principle: *simple living, high thinking*, which advocates simplicity in material life and leads to intellectual, spiritual development. Contrary to this is the principle: *luxurious living, base thinking*, which symbolizes how leading a vile life renders one intellectually incapable. Ramzaan is the process of opting for one of these two courses of leading life. If you adopt the luxurious living lifestyle, you become an intellectual dwarf. While if you lead a need-based life on material front, it allows you time to think, study, observe and contemplate on the deeper meaning of life.

What is post-fasting period?

The post-fasting period signifies that the training received by man during the period of Ramzaan, will be cascaded during the remaining months of the year. That is, in material life, he would agree on *less* so that it allows him time for contemplation. Unfortunately, the present-day Muslims train themselves in extravagance during the month of Ramzaan and it is for this reason that they have become intellectual dwarfs. Quran is a Book of contemplation can be understood by the following verse:

Believers, fasting has been prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard yourselves against evil. (2:183)

It must be noted that “guidance” is an *intellectual* virtue. Now question arises about how a physical action (abstinence from food) can lead to intellectual development? In other words, man cannot become intellectually aware only by staying hungry or thirsty. There are many poor people who do not have adequate meal provisions but it does not lead to their intellectual development. What then is the use of abstaining from food and water? The utility is very practical - doing so “saves time” and allows man to contemplate, free of material worries.

Another verse in the Quran reads,

So that they may be rightly guided (2:183)

Similar question arises here about how staying hungry contributes to man being rightly guided? Being rightly guided is determined by our thinking process and as such spending less time on material requirements, allows us time to deliberate over and fathom deeper issues of life.

Lack of wisdom

The actions of the present-day Muslims are devoid of wisdom. This is because the hatred residing within their hearts has killed the way to their intellectual development. Let me explain this phenomenon with an example.

An Arab magazine published an article on “minorities.” To my mind, the term “minority” reflects preposterous thinking. There is only *nationhood*, there is nothing like minority. The magazine wrote that Muslim minorities are under the scare of assimilation. This is absurd thinking as it is against the law of nature. Muslims do not analyse their actions and words in the context of the Quran, which says

Many a small group, by God’s command has prevailed against a large group. (2:249)

All Muslim thinkers raise a lot of hue and cry on the topic of “minority” whereas the Quran is against this thinking. According to the Quran, minority can be in an advantageous position as compared to the majority, only if they abide by the law of nature.

However, instead of making their mindset basis the teachings of the Quran and Hadith, the present-day Muslims let media determine their thought process. Media is an industry of sensationalizing negative news; media propagated ideas should therefore not lead to the formation of a mindset.

Minority is in an advantageous position

I understood the above Quranic verse through Arnold Toynbee's explanation. In his book, Toynbee has explained that in a society where minority and majority exist, there exists constant challenge. The process of challenge makes minority a *creative minority* because a *challenge-response mechanism* is activated within them. The constant struggle to outperform allows them to unleash their untapped potential. For example, iron does not exist in nature as is; its ore does. It is man who extracts the ore and processes it to make iron. Similarly, man is an ore himself, and the process of pressure and challenge, awakens his thinking process. This verse of the Quran is a source of a big hope for man but those who lead extravagant lives and do not devote time for intellectual development cannot understand this lesson. So, while media propagates despair and negative thinking, Quran propagates hope and positive thinking.

Ramzaan therefore presents a complete philosophy of life and teaches that while leading an excessively material life leads to animalization of man; leading a simple life makes man a super-man.

Present day Muslims and western civilization

All the present-day Muslims consider western civilization as their enemy. Such thinking is highly absurd. Western civilization has certain cultural aspects like nudity etc but another aspect is its *technological advancement*; Muslims have failed to differentiate between the two. Differentiating these two aspects allows one to realize that *communication* for example - a technology provided to us by the advancement of the Western civilization - is a boon, which has led to global dawah work. Doing dawah work at a global scale was a mere dream but today it is reality. Such positive thinking emerges when man understands the wisdom of Ramzaan in the true sense. That while it seeks abstinence from food, sleep and water – the basic needs of man – doing so allows him time to delve over deeper realities of life.

According to a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad said

He succeeds, who *found* Islam, *received* need-based provisions and he *agreed* upon it

**[Woh shaqs kamyaaab ho gaya, jis ne Islaam ko qabool kiya aur usko rizq mila baqadr-e zarurat
aur who us par raazi ho gaya] (Abu Dawud)**

This is a very important Hadith. Let me explain its meaning in detail. Finding Islam is not ritualistic, it is a process. It means that one *thinks*, becomes a *seeker* and *discovers* the religion of God. As a result of discovering the divine truth, he becomes so thrilled that he no longer seeks material comforts. He leads a simple, need-based life and yearns for greater spiritual development.

I am reminded of an instance here. A person said to me, '*Jab Allah ne paisa diya hai toh kyun araam araish ki zindagi naa guzarein*, "When God has bestowed all provisions upon us, why must we refrain from leading a luxurious life?" I said to him, '*Has God given you money so that you become an intellectual dwarf?*' He did not have an answer. The following Arabic couplet aptly describes the situation of such people

Razina qismat-al jabbar-e fina, Lana ilm-un wa-lil juh-ha'ali ma'lu (Ima'am Shafai)

Hum allah ki is taqseem par raazi ho gaye, ki us ne hum ko ilm diya aur jaahilon ko maal

[We accept this division of God that he gave knowledge to us and luxury to the fools]

In other words, those leading a luxurious life, immerse them in many indulgences and as such get not time to lead a thoughtful and simple life.

Creation Plan of God

The creator of the present-world is God and therefore man must understand the Creation Plan of God. God granted freedom to man in this world and gave him the right to use and misuse his freedom. This is a challenge that presents itself before man because no one can lead an ideal and defect-free life; man must abide by the law of nature. Unwillingness to agree to the Divine Plan warrants that man may create another world for himself. Comfortable lives have made people intellectually dwarf. The unrest in the Arab countries or the in-fighting in Palestine is a result of their absurd policies and lack of due planning. According to the Quran

Prepare any strength you can muster against them, and any cavalry with which you can overawe God's enemy and your own enemy as well. (8:60)

This strength is referred to in the Quran as, **quwwat-e-murhiba'a**. In other words, defence is justified only if the defending party assesses its strength vis-à-vis its opponents and evaluates its positive result; otherwise a unilateral compromise is the only solution. This is an important teaching of the Quran but the entire Muslim world is bereft of its understanding.

It means that if you have developed complaint against someone, do not react at the spur of the moment. Such situations demand a thorough analysis, which must begin by a gauging an understanding of strength on both sides. Defence is allowed only if you are in a position to produce a positive result and overcome your enemy. For example, through the example of Queen of Sheba, the Quran tells man to learn to assess his own strength and then decide the course of action. Knowing well that she cannot wage a war against King Solomon, Queen of Sheba reconciled with him and ensured harmony in her region.

She said, ‘Surely, when mighty kings invade a country, they despoil it and humiliate its noblest inhabitants – these men will do the same – but I shall send them a present and see with what reply my envoys will return (Quran, 27:34)

Conclusion

My analysis of the present-day Muslims has led me to understand that they are a case of intellectual dwarfism. The basis of their mindset is media and not the Quran. During the post-fasting period therefore, man must re-assess and revisit his thinking process; undertaking an objective assessment will allow him to re-plan. I recall an example here.

A Muslim publication published, “Humari policy ehtajaaj (protest) ki policy hai” [*Our policy is that of protest*). This is an absurd policy and inculcates Satanic behavior because Satan was the first one to protest before God! When God asked angels and jinns to bow before man, Satan refused to accept what was ordained citing that he is superior to man

Satan replied, ‘I am better than he is; You created me from fire, while You created him from clay.’ (7:12)

The life of the Prophet Muhammad is a clear example of patient behavior. When the Prophet was in Mecca, there existed over three hundred and sixty idols inside the *Kaaba* but no protest was undertaken to remove them. Muslims on the contrary, follow a path of impulsiveness and reaction because they do not know the art of analysis.

Fasting aims to enhance man’s intellect and reduce his material requirements. According to a Hadith

**It is not possible to lead a luxurious life and become a high thinker
(Allah ke bande, luxurious life nahin jeete) (Musnad Ahmad)**

In other words, if man seeks to increase his intellect, he must lessen his material needs. In the present world, when man seeks to make his house a departmental store, the month of Ramzaan teaches man to “minimise” his material needs so that he is able to cast his energies for enhancing his intellect.

According to a Hadith

Shopping centre is the worst place on Earth (Muslim)

This Hadith strongly discourages spending time at shopping centres because they distract man’s attention to material allurements and depart his thinking away from deeper realities.

It is a common observation that while falling from a mountain water paves its way through the topography it passes; water does not think before flowing down. But this is not the case of man; his situation alone does not decide his way. Man must think and formulate his opinion basis the result; result is the ultimate criterion. This is a difficult exercise as it seeks man to be bias-free. Unfortunately, the present-day Muslims no longer have this mindset. They follow emotions instead.

Aetakaaf – an act of thinking about Quran and Hadith in a detached manner, which is practiced in the last few days of Ramzaan marks the culmination of the month of fasting. Such thinking can be practiced at home as well. I have undertaken *aetakaaf*, my whole life by detaching from the situation and think - to think about God, hell and paradise, and the life to come.

Man must strive to develop his mind and embark upon thinking process. This is the only criterion of leading a correct life. All those who are listening to me, must strive to inculcate wisdom (*baseerat*) – the most precious thing that man can acquire. Wisdom can be attained through contemplation and thinking only; which requires man to decrease his material indulgences. This is the teaching imparted by the month of Ramzaan - *to seek material contentment and spiritual idealism*. This is the way of Islam and this is the law of nature for successful living.

May God give us the wisdom to follow this path and inculcate the spirit of Ramzaan within us.