

FASTING

Sharia and Spirituality

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Translated
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English Translation of Urdu Book “*Haqeeqat-e-Roza*”



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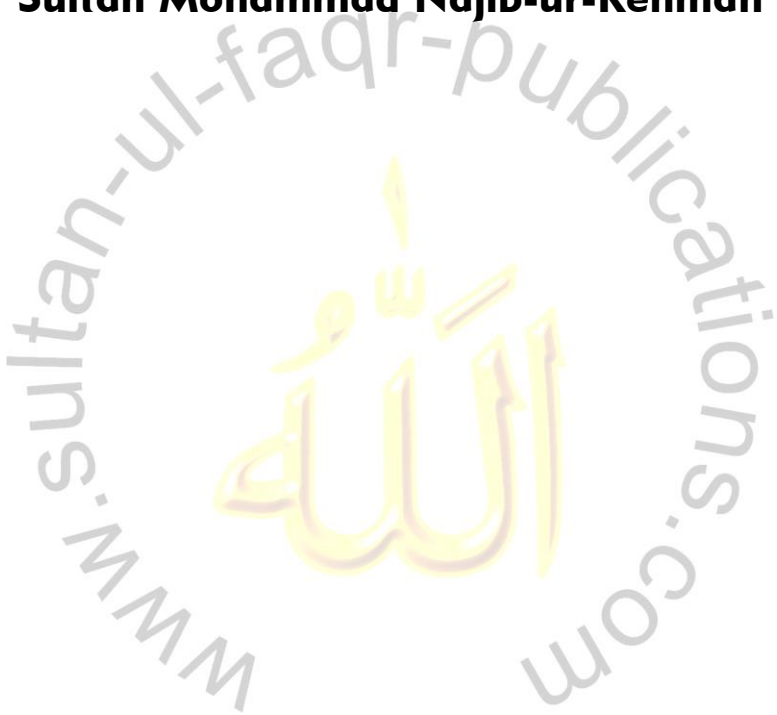
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Dedicated to my father,
my spiritual guide and my light

Sultan-ul-Ashiqeen

Sultan Mohammad Najib-ur-Rehman



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PREFACE

Sultan-ul-Ashiqeen's Urdu book *Haqeeqat-e-Roza* has been translated once before but on account of errors and quality, I was assigned with the task to translate it again. I personally believe that previous translation was soulless therefore with utmost humbleness, I am saying that I tried my best to put soul into this book because I have heard what is written from the heart touches the very heart of the reader too.

Translations are hard yet I have put my best effort to give the English reader a translation where the reader will not have to open any dictionary or google words that are bilingual or multilingual.

I am immensely grateful to my father, my spiritual guide Sultan-ul-Ashiqeen who explained to me difficult matters of the book in hand and guided me throughout with love and affection. He is simply the best.

I will not bother the readers by rewriting parts of the book in this preface. I hope that you will not only enjoy reading it once but again and again. This book will be a valuable addition to your library.

Thank you

Sahibzadi Fatima Najib Sarwari Qadri

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

ETYMOLOGY

Ramadan comes from the Arabic word *Ramd* (رمض) which means ‘to burn’ or ‘scorching heat’. This month is named Ramadan because it burns the sins of Muslims. The Arabic word for fast is *Saum* (صوم) and it means ‘to stop or refrain’. It is called *Saum* because Muslims do not eat or drink from the time of dawn (*Fajr*) salat till the sunset (*Maghrib*) salat.

INTRODUCTION

Salman the Persian relates that Prophet Mohammad *sall'Allahu alayhi wa'alihi wasallam* said on the last day of the Islamic month of *Shaban*:

- ❖ “O People! A holy month (Ramadan) approaches you that is full of blessings, in which fasting during the day has been made obligatory as well as the night worship has been made equal to the supererogatory prayers. In this month, a person who performs a supererogatory prayer earns the reward as much as a person earns while performing obligatory worship. A Muslim who offers a single obligatory prayer in the month of Ramadan earns the reward of seventy prayers offered in any other month. It is a month to observe patience and a person who does that is blessed with the heaven. Furthermore, it is the month of sympathy in which sustenance of the believers is increased. The sins of a person are forgiven who provides food to a fasting person to break the fast and the provider is freed from the hellfire.

Nevertheless, the reward of the fasting person is not in any way decreased.”

Salman the Persian requested along with other Companions that not all of them were (financially) capable to help people break the fast.

The Holy Prophet replied, “Allah also rewards the one who breaks someone's fast with a sip of milk or water or with a date, and withal Allah will also give water from pond of *al-Kawthar*¹ to the one who gives enough food to satiate a fasting person. The said person will not be thirsty ever again until he enters paradise. It is such a month in which first ten days are of mercy, second ten days are of forgiveness and third ten days are of seeking refuge from the hellfire. Allah will forbid hellfire on a person who reduces the burden of his servant.” (Mishkat al-Masabih 1965)

The Holy Prophet said:

- ❖ *Rajab* is the month of Allah Almighty, *Shaban* is my month and Ramadan is the month of my umma. (Kanz al-Ummal 35164)

WHEN WAS FASTING MADE OBLIGATORY?

Fasting was made obligatory in 2 AH² approximately fifteen days after the change of qiblah³ from Aqsa Mosque to Kaaba.

WHY WAS FASTING MADE OBLIGATORY?

There is an intention and an objective behind every kind of deed and worship. What is the objective of fasting? Let us see what the Quran has to say about it:

¹ A pond in heaven.

² Hijri: It denotes the Muslim calendar which started from the day when the Holy Prophet migrated from the city of Makkah to Madina.

³ It is the direction to which Muslims turn during salat.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُنْزُوا عَلَيْكُمْ الصِّيَامَ كَمَا كُنْتُمْ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢:١٨٣﴾ ◀

Meaning: O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for the people before you so that you may become pious. (2:183)

It establishes the fact that the purpose of fasting is to make Muslims pious so that they may become believers (*Momin*).

The Holy Prophet said:

- ❖ The best among you is the one who is the most pious. (Bukhari 4689; Muslim 6161; Mishkat al-Masabih 4893)

The question arises that what is piety?

- ❖ Once Prophet Mohammad was asked about piety, he pointed towards his chest and said, “Piety is here.” (Muslim 6541)

In reality, piety is a state of inward closeness to Allah. The more a person is close to Allah, the more he is pious. In short, being close to Allah is piety. Fasting does exactly that, as Allah says, “Fast is for Me and I am its reward.”⁴ This *Qudsi* Hadith implies Allah’s closeness.

According to the Holy Quran:

هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢:٢﴾ ◀

Meaning: (It is) a guide for those who are pious. (2:2)

This verse makes it obvious that only those who are pious attain guidance from the Holy Quran. There are many degrees of piety as explained:

1. The first degree of piety is to avoid the immoral behaviours that scholars and jurists have agreed upon and the common

⁴ Bukhari 7538; Muslim 2704, 2706, 2707, 2708; Nasai 2215, 2218; Ibn Majah 1638

Muslims are at this level of piety. It includes the rejection of polytheism and idolatry.

2. The second degree is to abstain from questionable things that are apparently declared halal⁵ but are still questionable. The righteous are at this level. It is also the degree of foregoing acts forbidden by sharia.
3. The third degree is to stay away from anything that even has the slight possibility of being haram.⁶ The virtuous people belong to this category. This is a special level of piety where apprehensions and distracting thoughts are reduced during worships (to make them purer).
4. The fourth degree is to stay away from anything that makes worship and devotion harder. This is the piety of the truthful (*Siddiqeen*). They stay engrossed in only Allah. They are free from apprehensions, self⁷ and Satan. They are the Mystics and beloveds of Allah.

As previously said, the main aim of fast is to become pious. When one attains piety only then he acquires guidance, Divine light and straight path from the Holy Quran. The levels of piety that one should strive for have been explained. As one tries to achieve elite lifestyle, higher designation and luxuries of the

⁵ Acceptable according to the Islamic law of sharia.

⁶ Forbidden according to the Islamic law of sharia.

⁷ Self is for the Quranic word *an-nafs* (النفس) and it has four layers or levels. Each layer annihilates and is elevated to the next level upon its purgation. The first layer incites man towards sin therefore it is called 'inciting self' (*an-nafs al-ammarah* النفس الامارة). On purification it elevates to the next layer which blames and repents on committing sin. It is called 'repenting self' (*an-nafs al-lawwamah* النفس الوامه). The third layer inspires before sin hence the name 'inspiring self' (*an-nafs al-mulhimah* النفس الملهمة). Whereas fourth layer is pure of sins and is at peace. It is called 'self at peace' (*an-nafs al-mutmainnah* النفس المطمئنة).

The self is an abode of worldly and heavenly desires and is a veil between Allah and His slave. The seeker is blessed with the vision of Allah only when this veil is removed on the purgation of self.

world, similarly one must strive his best to achieve higher degrees of piety, and Ramadan is the best opportunity. In this holy month, one must pray for the straight path and try to achieve higher levels of piety.

THE REWARD OF FASTING

It is stated in *Qudsi* Hadith:

- ❖ I reward ten to seven hundred times for every noble act but I am Myself the reward of fast since it is specially for Me. My slave has abstained from eating, drinking and intercourse for My sake therefore only I can bestow him with the just reward. **(Bukhari 1904; Muslim 2707; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 10547; Mishkat al-Masabih 1959; Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah 8987; Kanz al-Ummal 23622)**

The Prophet Mohammad *sall'Allahu alayhi wa'alihi wasallam* stated:

- ❖ Patience is half faith and fast is half patience.
- ❖ A fasting person's mouth odour is dearer to Allah than the scent of musk. **(Bukhari 5927; Muslim 2708; Tirmidhi 764; Bayhaqi 8109)**
- ❖ A fasting person's silence is glorification of Allah, his sleep is devotion, his prayers are answered and the reward of his (good) deeds is doubled. **(Kanz al-Ummal 23602, 23631)**
- ❖ On the first night of Ramadan, Satan and mischievous djinn are imprisoned. The doors of hell are closed and are not opened again (in the entire month). The doors of heaven are opened and none of them are closed (in the entire month). It is proclaimed, "O pious, step forward and stop O wrongdoers." **(Tirmidhi 682; Ibn Majah 1642; Mustadrak al-Hakim 1532; Mishkat al-Masabih 1960)**

RULES OF FASTING

- ❖ It is required to see the moon of Ramadan which is satisfied if the ruler of the state announces the sighting of the moon based on witnesses. ‘Ruet-e-Halal Committee’ serves this role in Pakistan. On behalf of the entire community, it announces the moon sighting.
- ❖ To derive maximum benefit, intentions are set straight before beginning a task. Likewise, it would not be considered a fast if a person does not intend beforehand and it will be the case even if the said person abides by all the norms of fasting. If someone intends to observe fast at night but then changes his mind, then the first intention is annulled and hence such a person should intend again. Hafsa bint Umar narrates that the Holy Prophet said, “A person who has no intention of keeping the fast before the set time of dawn (*Fajr*) salat then he has not fasted.”⁸ If someone chooses not to break the fast after intending, then such an intention has no effect on fasting.
- ❖ From the first glow of dawn until dusk, one must refrain from eating, engaging in sexual activity, taking anything that enters the stomach via any way (parenteral or enteral), causing one's own vomiting or doing anything that results in emission. All these requirements must be upheld to maintain the fast. If any of them is violated then the fast breaks and the atonement of breaking one fast is that a person must free a slave, fast for two consecutive months or provide food for sixty needy people. Fast is unaffected by forgetfully eating or by vomiting, if it is not self-inflicted. Furthermore, it is allowed to approach wives after the fast as Allah says:

◀ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ ط هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ ط

⁸ Tirmidhi 730; Abu Dawud 2454; Nasai 2338; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 26989

عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالآنَ
 بَاشِرُوهُمْ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ
 الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى الْيَلِّ وَلَا
 تَبَاشِرُوهُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرَبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ
 يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لِنَاسٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢:١٨٧﴾

Meaning: It is made lawful for you to approach your wives during the nights of the fasts. They are like clothes for you and you are like clothes for them. Allah knows that you broke the trust in the case of your own right. But He has shown mercy to you and has forgiven you. So, have sexual relations with them now (during the nights of the fasts without any inhibition) and seek what Allah has prescribed for you. And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you (separated) from the black thread (of night). Then complete the fast till dusk. And refrain from having sexual contact with your wives, whilst you are in retreat in the mosques. These are the bounds (set) by Allah. So do not draw near them (to step over). Thus, Allah explains His verses (clearly) for the people, so that they may embrace piety. (2:187)

EXEMPTIONS FROM FASTING

- ❖ Travellers and the sick are allowed to skip the fast. Allah says in the Quran:

◀ أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَاتٍ ۖ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ ۗ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢:١٨٤﴾

Meaning: (These are) a fixed number of days. So, whoever amongst you is ill or on a journey, then he shall complete fasting for the fixed number by (fasting on) other days. But those who are not able to fast, it is obligatory on them to provide food for a needy person in lieu of that. But whoever does (greater) good seeking pleasure, that is better for him. And your fasting is better for you if you understand. (2:184)

- ❖ Menstruating women are exempt from fasting, yet it is must for them to keep the fasts for the missed days after Ramadan.

FASTING ACCORDING TO SHARIA, TARIQA AND HAQIQA (REALITY)

Ghawth al-Azam Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani said:

- ❖ Fasting of sharia is to refrain from eating, drinking and intercourse from dawn till dusk. Whereas, the fasting of tariqa⁹ is for both the physical and spiritual selves as it indicates that a person should refrain physically and spiritually from all the things that are prohibited by sharia, as well as from all the esoteric evils such as pride, arrogance, greed, malice, rancor, narcissism etc. A person's fast of tariqa will break if he commits any of these sins. The fasting of sharia has a set time (from dawn till dusk in the month of Ramadan), however the fasting of tariqa is permanent and is for the entire life. The Holy Prophet said, "There are many people who experience nothing more than hunger and thirst during fasting."¹⁰ Therefore, it is said that many individuals appear to observe the fast but actually they do not. Similarly, many people appear to be not fasting but they truly are, because they refrain from actions that are prohibited by

⁹ Tariqa is a level of spiritual journey. All the four levels are: (i) sharia (ii) tariqa (iii) reality (iv) gnosis.

¹⁰ Ibn Majah 1690, Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 8843, Kanz al-Ummal 7491

sharia and also do not make fun of others. Allah says in a *Qudsi* Hadith, “Fast is for Me and I am its reward.”¹¹ The Holy Prophet said, “Those who observe fast will be awarded two blessings, one is of breaking the fast and second is Divine vision (*Liqa*¹²).”¹³ May Allah also bestow us with these blessings. The meaning of ‘breaking the fast’ according to the people of sharia is to eat food at sunset, and the meaning of ‘*Liqa*’ is to sight the moon of Eid. According to the people of tariqa ‘breaking the fast’ means entering the paradise and having the food (blessings) there while the meaning of ‘*Liqa*’ is to behold Allah with the spiritual insight. May Allah bestow us these blessings.

The fast of *haqiqah* (reality) means to cleanse one's inward of all the desires but the desire and love of Allah as well as it is to observe nothing other than the Divinity. A *Qudsi* Hadith states, “Man is My secret and I am his secret.” Secret (*sir'r*¹⁴) is from the light of Allah therefore it is not inclined towards anything except Allah. Such a person has no beloved, favourite or desired both in the world and the hereafter. If he loves anything or anyone other than Allah then his fast becomes null. Its atonement is to repent from love of others and return towards the love and vision of Allah. Then engross in it to such an extent that a person becomes reminiscent of the *Qudsi* Hadith, “Fast is for Me and I am its reward.” (**Sir'r al-Asrar**)

¹¹ Bukhari 7538; Muslim 2704, 2706, 2707, 2708; Nasai 2215, 2218; Ibn Majah 1638

¹² In Arabic language, words like *Liqa* (لقاء) or *Liqa-e-Elahi* (لقاءالهي) are used to describe Allah's vision and observation. The literal meanings of *Liqa* are vision, countenance and meeting. Scholars while translating use the meaning according to their discretion but for Mystics and Fakirs, *Liqa* means Divine vision.

¹³ Bukhari 1904; Muslim 2707; Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal 10547; Mishkat al-Masabih 1959; Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah 8987; Kanz al-Ummal 23622

¹⁴ Part of the esoteric being.

FASTING OF ORDINARY, SPECIAL AND REMARKABLE PEOPLE

Fasting has three grades according to al-Ghazali:

1. Fasting of ordinary people
2. Fasting of special people
3. Fasting of remarkable people

He says:

- ❖ The fasting of ordinary people is of the lowest level that includes not eating, drinking or having intercourse within the set time.

Whereas, fasting of remarkable people is of the highest level that includes loving only Allah and perfect submission to Him. It is to fast both spiritually and physically. This fast breaks when the seeker stops the invocation of Allah and engages in conversation about pointless worldly matters.

Though it is acceptable to reflect on and think about worldly problems but it breaks their fast. However, considering ideas that are beneficial to the religion is not a part of worldly issues. Religious scholars even believe that it is considered a sin if someone plans about food to break the fast since it shows that the person does not have faith that Allah will fulfil His promise to provide the food. The highest level of fasting can only be achieved by the Prophets and the truthful (*Siddiqeen*). It cannot be attained by everyone.

The special person's fast is to protect every body part from evil deeds in addition to not eating and having sexual activity. This fast is accomplished by six things. The Holy Prophet once said, "Sight is one of the poisonous arrows of Satan. The one who prevents himself from it out of the fear of Allah, He will honour him with such a faith that the

person will feel its sweetness in his inward.”¹⁵ Thus, the first thing is to prevent eyes from seeing anything that takes the inward away from Allah, especially to keep eyes from seeing things that provoke lust. According to a Hadith narrated by Anas ibn Malik, the fast is nulled by the following five factors:

1. Lying
2. Backbiting
3. Finding faults
4. Swearing falsely
5. Seeing someone with lust¹⁶

The second essential thing during the fast is to refrain from using slang and engaging in pointless talk. The best approach is to either be silent or occupy oneself by reading the Holy Quran or by invoking Allah. Foul conversation also includes arguments, conflicts and brawls. Some religious experts believe that lying and backbiting might even break the fast of common people. During the era of the Holy Prophet, two women were brought before him who were fasting and were on the verge of death due to thirst. The Prophet (seemed offended because he) was silent and turned his face away from them. The Prophet was again told about their condition. The Holy Prophet ordered to give them a bowl to vomit. They both vomited flesh, blood and pus such that the bowl was filled. This incident startled a lot of people. The Holy Prophet told that both the women although maintained their fast by not eating but broke it by engaging in backbiting which is forbidden. They vomited all that because backbiting about anyone is like eating that person's flesh.¹⁷

¹⁵ Mustadrak al-Hakim 7875

¹⁶ Kanz al-Ummal 23813, 23820

¹⁷ Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 24053

The third is to refrain from listening to foul conversation because whatever is forbidden to be spoken is also not allowed to be listened. One who listens to a lie or a backbite receives the same punishment as the one who does it.

The fourth requirement is to prevent the entire body from engaging in immoral acts. Someone who abstains from eating during the fast but continues to do evil is the same as the one who avoids becoming sick but consumes poison, as immoral act is like taking poison while taking food is lawful. The Holy Prophet said that there are many people who receive nothing but hunger and thirst from their fast.¹⁸

Fifthly, when it is time to break the fast one should refrain from eating anything that is prohibited or questionable. Additionally, eating halal in excess is also not the right way as eating too much at the time of breaking fast gives no benefit. The goal of fasting is to forego desires. Consuming excessive food at once increases desire, especially if foods are of various kinds. The inward cannot be sanctified unless the stomach is empty. Instead, it is a Sunna that one should sleep less throughout the day and stay awake so that he may experience hunger and weakness. If he eats less at night, he will be able to go to bed early and wake up for the night prayer (*Tahajud*). According to the Holy Prophet, “For Allah, the stomach of man is the worst filled vessel.”¹⁹

The sixth desirable thing after breaking the fast is that the inward should remain humble pondering whether the fast is accepted or not.

A community busy in celebrating Eid passed by Hasan of Basra. He said, “Allah has created the month of Ramadan as a plain where people may progress in their worships and

¹⁸ Ibn Majah 1690; Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal 8843; Kanz al-Ummal 7491

¹⁹ Tirmidhi 2380; Ibn Majah 3349; Mishkat al-Masabih 5192; Mustadrak al-Hakim 7945

servitude. One party achieved victory, leaving the others behind. I am astounded by those who are happy while not understanding the reality. I swear to God! If the reality is revealed, those whose worship is accepted, will engross in gratitude while those whose worship is rejected, will suffer sorrow and no one will involve in celebrations.”

The entire discussion indicates that a person's fast is soulless if it only serves to fulfil the requirement of skipping meals. The reality of fasting is that a person should be pure of desires like the angels. Animals are much more inferior to angels because they are dominated by lust. A person whose sensual desires take over him is therefore like an animal, whereas a person whose sensual desires have been tamed is like an angel possessing their attributes. He is close to Allah just like angels because of these attributes. When someone delays his evening salat after breaking the fast and keeps filling his stomach, his lust is increased. He is therefore deprived of the true spirit of fasting. **(Kimiya-e-Saadat)**

WORSHIPS IN RAMADAN

In the month of Ramadan, the passion for worships and the desire to turn towards Allah intensifies. A person finds peace in the invocation of Allah (invocation and contemplation of *Ism-e-Allah Zaat*), recitation of the Holy Quran, supererogatory prayers and salat. The desire to spend in the way of Allah also grows. The Islamic community upholds its moral code and becomes spiritually disciplined. The finest prayer during this month is asking for Allah's closeness. A person who succeeds in gaining closeness of Allah throughout this month accomplishes the goal for which Allah made fast mandatory and that is to become pious.

HADITHS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PRE-DAWN (SEHRI) AND SUNSET (IFTAR) MEALS

- ❖ Amr ibn al-As narrates that the Holy Prophet stated, “The thing that separates the fast of Muslims from Christians is that the Muslims have pre-dawn meal.” (Muslim 2550; Mishkat al-Masabih 1983)
- ❖ The Holy Prophet forbade fasting without having pre-dawn meal. A person once asked the Holy Prophet, “O Prophet of Allah! You fast consecutively without having a pre-dawn meal.” The Holy Prophet replied, “Who among you is comparable to me? I stay up all night and Allah provides me to eat and drink.” (Bukhari 1964; Muslim 2566; Tirmidhi 778; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 7162)
- ❖ Arbaz ibn Saariyyah narrates that the Holy Prophet invited him at the pre-dawn meal and said, “Come and have this blessed meal.” (Abu Dawud 2344; Nasai 2165; Mishkat al-Masabih 1997)
- ❖ Abu Hurairah narrates that the Holy Prophet said, “Dates are good for the believers during the pre-dawn meal.” (Mishkat al-Masabih 1998)
- ❖ The Holy Prophet said, “If a person listens to the call of dawn (*Fajr*) salat and if he has something in his hand to drink then instead of putting it down, he should drink to fulfil his need.” (Mishkat al-Masabih 1988)
- ❖ The Holy Prophet said, “Eating pre-dawn meal is a blessing. Do not quit it! Have a sip of water if there is nothing to eat since Allah rewards people who have pre-dawn meal and angels pray for them.” (Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 11416)
- ❖ Sahl narrates that the Holy Prophet said, “People will continue to be fortunate as long as they hurry in breaking the fast.” (Mishkat al-Masabih 1984)

- ❖ Abu Hurairah narrates that the Holy Prophet said, “The religion of Islam will remain dominant until Muslims hurry in breaking the fast because the Jews and the Christians prolong it.” (Abu Dawud 2353; Mustadrak al-Hakim 1573; Mishkat al-Masabih 1995)
- ❖ Zayd ibn Khalid narrates that the Holy Prophet said, “A person who helps another in breaking the fast or helps with the belongings of a Muslim soldier shall be awarded accordingly.” (Mishkat al-Masabih 1992)
- ❖ Abu Hurairah narrates that the Holy Prophet said, “Allah says, ‘The one who breaks his fast without any delay is special to Me’.” (Mishkat al-Masabih 1989)
- ❖ The Holy Prophet said, “None of the fasting person’s prayers are rejected at the time of breaking the fast.” (Kanz al-Ummal 23592, 23632)
- ❖ Salman ibn Amir narrates that the Holy Prophet said, “A fasting person should break the fast with a date as it is a blessing or he should break it with water in case dates are not available because Allah made water pure.” (Abu Dawud 2355; Ibn Majah 1699; Mustadrak al-Hakim 1575)
- ❖ Anas ibn Malik narrates that the Holy Prophet would break the fast with a few dates before offering the sunset (*Maghrib*) salat. If fresh dates were not available, he would have dry dates instead. If he had none of them, he took a few sips of water. (Abu Dawud 2356)

SALAT AT-TARAWIH: A SPECIAL SALAT OF RAMADAN

During Ramadan, salat *at-Tarawih* is a confirmed Sunna or *Sunna mu'akkadah*. This salat is unique to Ramadan and is offered after night (*Isha*) salat and before *Witr* salat which is performed in between night (*Isha*) and dawn (*Fajr*) salats. This

salat has twenty *rakahs*²⁰ and ten *salam*s²¹. After every two *rakahs* there is a *salam* and a break is taken after every fourth *rakah*. During this time period, it is preferable to glorify Allah. A portion of the Holy Quran is recited until it is completed by the end of Ramadan. Even if the Holy Quran is completed before the month ends, offering salat *at-Tarawih* for the rest of the month is desirable and a confirmed Sunna.

The Holy Prophet said, “Allah Almighty made fasting in the month of Ramadan obligatory. I made the waking up at night (to recite and listen to the Holy Quran in *Tarawih* prayer) for you (by the order of Allah) a Sunna. The person who fasts and stays awake at night throughout this blessed month of Ramadan in the hope of gaining reward will become pure of sins just like a newborn.” (Ibn Majah 1328; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 1660)

THE NIGHT OF DECREE (LAYLAT AL-QADR)

The ‘Night of Decree’ (*Laylat al-Qadar* ليلة القدر or *Shab-e-Qadr* شبِ قدر)²² means the night of importance and grandeur. Allah blessed Prophet Mohammad’s umma through this night in which the reward of a worship is greater than that of a thousand months of worships.

The Holy Prophet was informed about the age of previous nations who had lived for a very long time, he became concerned

²⁰ *Rakah* is a single set of prescribed movements and supplications performed by Muslims as part of the salat.

²¹ *Salam* is the concluding portion of salat in which one recites, “Peace and blessings of Allah be unto you,” once while turning his head to the right side and once to the left side.

²² The word for night in Arabic is ‘*Laylat* (ليلة)’ but the term for it in Persian is ‘*Shab* (شب)’. The word ‘*Qadr* (قدر)’ means importance, power, worth and destiny.

since his umma has been given shorter lives, how could their acts be equivalent to those of people of previous nations. Hence, Allah bestowed the Holy Prophet with the Night of Decree in which the reward of a single worship is greater than a thousand months of worships. (Shu'ab al-Iman 3667)

It is also related that a person was discussed in the Mohammadan Assembly who had fought for the cause of Allah for a thousand months. The Companions were surprised. Hence Allah granted the Holy Prophet with the Night of Decree. (Shu'ab al-Iman 3668)

In the Hadith collection *Mishkat al-Masabih*, it is written in the introduction of the chapter on the Night of Decree that the Holy Prophet once remarked when speaking about Prophet Job, Prophet Zechariah, Prophet Ezekiel and Prophet Joshua that for eighty years they worshipped Allah and never disobeyed Him even for a split second. The Companions were surprised. Angel Gabriel appeared in the Mohammadan Assembly and stated, “O beloved of Allah! Your Companions are amazed with regards to previous nations for their eighty years of worship. Your Lord has given you more than that.” He then recited sura *al-Qadr* to the Holy Prophet. His face lit up with joy. (Mishkat al-Masabih)

Ibn Umar relates that the Holy Prophet said, “The Night of Decree has only been bestowed to my umma by Allah, no other nation has received this blessing.” (Kanz al-Ummal 24493)

In sura *al-Qadr*, Allah blessed His Prophet's umma with the wonderful news that He has granted them the Night of Decree. Allah says in sura *al-Qadr*:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ۗ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ۗ لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ۗ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ
 أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ۗ تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ۗ سَلَامٌ هِيَ
 حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ﴿٩٥﴾ (٩٥:١٥)

Meaning: Surely, We sent down this (Holy Quran) during the Night of Decree. And what have you made out what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months (in merit, blessings, reward and recompense). The angels and the Spirit of Peace (Gabriel) descend by their Lord's command during this (night) with decrees concerning all matters (of blessings and bounties). This (night) is (absolute) peace and security till daybreak. (97:1-5)

Allah has given eminence to some Prophets over the other Prophets; some people over the other people; some stations over the other stations; some days over others and, some nights over the others. For example, a salat offered in Masjid al-Haram is equal to a hundred thousand salats; a salat offered in Masjid al-Nabawi is equal to a fifty-thousand salats, and one offered in Aqsa Mosque is rewarded twenty-five thousand times more than any other salat. Similarly, Allah has blessed the Night of Decree more than a thousand nights or eighty-three years and four months. Following are the reasons to bless this night more than any other:

- The Holy Quran was given to mankind as a gift by the Lord and serves as their guide. It was descended to the heaven on this night and its revelation to the Holy Prophet in the Cave of Hira also began on this blessed night.
- Allah's blessings manifest on this night from dusk till dawn and theophanies also descend upon His slaves.
- Feeling of delight and happiness in adorations prevail throughout this night. All the angels including Gabriel descend by the command of Allah to see His devoted men and kiss their feet. This is because man is the noblest creation and was prostrated by angels. The mercies and blessings of Allah remain till dawn.

THE GREAT REWARD OF THE NIGHT OF DECREE

Abu Hurairah narrates that the Holy Prophet stated:

- ❖ A person who establishes prayer on the fortunate Night of Decree with the goal of gaining reward, all his prior sins are pardoned. (Bukhari 35; Muslim 1181; Tirmidhi 683; Abu Dawud 1372; Nasai 2204; Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal 10121; Mishkat al-Masabih 1958)

Anas narrates that the Holy Prophet once stated during Ramadan:

- ❖ You have been blessed with a month that is graced with a single night that is greater than a thousand months. A person who has missed this night, has missed beneficence entirely.

All religious experts agree that the Night of Decree is concealed in the last ten odd nights of Ramadan. Due to geographical differences, the timings of odd nights change in different regions.

Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Ibn Abbas, Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, Imam Abu Hanifa and the majority of exegetes and experts agree that it is the 27th night of Ramadan.

- ❖ Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dehlvi states that the Night of Decree falls on the 27th of Ramadan. According to him, "There are nine alphabets in the Arabic word *Laylat al-Qadr* (ليلة القدر) which means the Night of Decree. In sura *al-Qadr*, this word is mentioned three times. The result of multiplying three by nine is twenty-seven. It is a clue that it falls on the 27th night of Ramadan.

There are thirty words in sura *al-Qadr*. The 27th word points towards the Night of Decree. Therefore, it is a clue from Allah to His wise men that Ramadan's 27th night is the Night of Decree. (Tafseer Azizi, pg 259)

The reasons for not disclosing the exact night are:

- ❖ People may not think that as they have worshipped in the Night of Decree which is equal to a thousand months hence Allah has pardoned them. Consequently, they may not develop the false notion that they have achieved higher ranks in Allah's court and have already been blessed with the heaven. This perception can make them abandon good deeds. They will give in to unrealistic expectations that would only lead to disaster.
- ❖ The reason for not disclosing the Night of Decree is the same as not disclosing the time of death. If a person knows it, he will continue committing sins under the false perception that he has enough time and can seek forgiveness near the time of death through devotions so that he will end up as a devout. Allah kept secret the time of death from people so they are always afraid of it and keep themselves occupied with good deeds and self-accountability. Therefore, when the time of death draws nearer, they would have probably become pious. In this way, they can enjoy the permissible delights of this world as well as be spared from the punishment in the afterlife.

SIGNS AND OBSERVATIONS OF THE NIGHT OF DECREE

According to a Hadith the important signs of this night are:

- It is sparkling and beautiful.
- The light of moon is clear and brighter.
- The night is deep and peaceful.
- Meteors do not shoot during this night until dawn.
- There is warmth and no heat under the sun in the morning after the Night of Decree. It shines without any harshness resembling a full moon.

- Allah has forbidden Satan from emerging with the dawn of this night unlike other days. **(Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal 23145)**

Another Hadith states, “The Night of Decree is mild, neither too hot nor cold. Neither there are clouds and rain nor wind blows hardly. Meteors do not shoot this night. The sign of its next day is that the sun rises without scorching heat. **(Kanz al-Ummal 24051)**

Other observations are:

- There is a lot of joy and peace particularly in the last quarter of the night.
- While looking at the sky, it appears as if the Divine light is descending on the earth.
- Worships provide peace to the inward of the believers and they are more drawn towards the acts of worships.
- Some ancestors tasted the sea water on this night and discovered it to be extremely sweet and delicious.
- According to certain Saints, everything falls into prostration during the Night of Decree. Surprisingly, the trees also prostrate on this blessed night and then come back to their position.
- In comparison to ordinary individuals, the people of insight have far more Divine observations on the Night of Decree.

Allah discloses the reality of this Divine night to those whom He chooses. Otherwise, one of the two individuals sitting next to one another is blessed with this night and the other remains deprived. How can the enchantments and joys of this Divine night be expressed merely in words? Experiencing beauty of this night is one thing and putting it into words is another which always fall short no matter what.

THE SPECIAL PRAYER ON THE NIGHT OF DECREE

Aisha bint Abi Bakr asked, “O Prophet of Allah! If I am blessed with the fortunate Night of Decree then what should I do in that night.” The Holy Prophet advised her to pray, “O My Almighty Allah, You are the One Who forgives. You love forgiveness, so please forgive me.” (Tirmidhi 3513; Ibn Majah 3850; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 25898; Mustadrak al-Hakim 1942)

AITKAF (SECLUSION IN RAMADAN)

Aitkaf is a devotion that involves seclusion for particular days (at least three) in a specific area in a mosque in order to obtain Allah's blessings and proximity. Women may practise seclusion in their houses.

The last ten days of Ramadan grant freedom from hellfire and to seclude in these days is considered a Sunna as well as an obligation which if performed by some, exempts others (*Fard al-Kifaya*). The reward of seclusion during the last ten days of Ramadan is equivalent to performing two hajjs and umras. (Kanz al-Ummal 24006, 24008)

- ❖ Angel Gabriel used to recite the Holy Quran with the Holy Prophet once a year. However, it was recited twice the year he passed away. Every year, the Holy Prophet would perform seclusion for ten days in Ramadan. However, during the year of his death, he performed it for twenty days. (Bukhari 4998; Mishkat al-Masabih 2099)
- ❖ Anas narrates that the Holy Prophet would perform seclusion during the last ten days of Ramadan. He did not perform it one year. When Ramadan came again the next year, he did it for twenty days. (Tirmidhi 803)
- ❖ Abdullah ibn Abbas narrates that the Holy Prophet said in favour of the individual who performs seclusion of Ramadan, “Due to seclusion, he is saved from sins and is

given the reward like the one who does all the pious deeds.”
(Ibn Majah 1781; Mishkat al-Masabih 2108)

According to a Hadith, when the last ten days of Ramadan approached, a place in the mosque was fixed for the Holy Prophet where a mat was placed and curtains were laid like a small camp.

BRILLIANCE OF FASTING

It is stated in *Qudsi* Hadith:

- ❖ I reward ten to seven hundred times for every noble act but I am Myself the reward of fast since it is specially for Me. My slave has abstained from eating, drinking and intercourse for My sake therefore only I can bestow him with the just reward. (Bukhari 1904; Muslim 2707; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 10547; Mishkat al-Masabih 1959; Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah 8987; Kanz al-Ummal 23622)
- ❖ Sahl ibn Sa'd narrates that the Holy Prophet said, "There are eight gates to heaven. The name of one of the gates is Rayan and only those individuals who fasted regularly may enter through that gate." (Bukhari 3257)
- ❖ The Holy Prophet said, "A fasting individual has two delightful moments, one is when he breaks the fast and the other is when he beholds Allah." (Muslim 2708)
- ❖ The Holy Prophet said, "Fast is like a barrier against the hellfire. While fasting, a person should not yell or use foul language and when someone mistreats him, he should not respond and must inform him that he is fasting." (Bukhari 1894, 1904)
- ❖ Abu Hurairah narrated that the Holy Prophet (pbuh) said, "A person who unintentionally breaks his fast by eating or

drinking forgetfully, should continue his fast as Allah has provided for him.” (Bukhari 1933, 6669; Muslim 2716)

SADQAH AL-FITR

During Ramadan, there is a compulsory contribution that must be made before Eid al-Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadan. This contribution is known as *Sadqah al-Fitr* or *Zakat al-Fitr*. It is obligatory upon every able Muslim so that the needy can celebrate the Eid.

- ❖ The Holy Prophet said, “A person's fast stays stuck between the earth and the heaven unless he pays *Sadqah al-Fitr*.” (Kanz al-Ummal 24129, 24130)

Sadqah al-Fitr is compulsory. If it was not paid in the previous year then it must be paid in the current year. There is no requirement of fasting for paying *Sadaqah al-Fitr*. Even if a person did not keep fasts throughout Ramadan, he should still pay it.

- ❖ Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As narrates that the Holy Prophet ordered a Muslim to go to Makkah's streets to proclaim that *Sadaqah al-Fitr* is mandatory for everyone, whether a man or a woman, free citizen or a slave, youngster or a grownup. It should be (approximately) two kilos of wheat or four kilos of any other grain or dates etc. (or equivalent amount) and it needs to be paid before the Eid prayer. (Mustadrak al-Hakim 1492; Mishkat al-Masabih 1819)

BIDDING FAREWELL TO RAMADAN

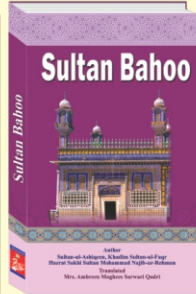
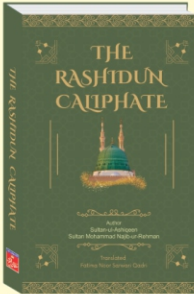
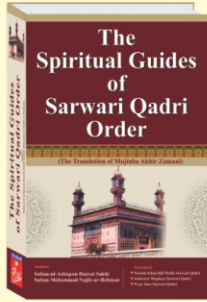
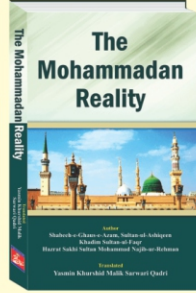
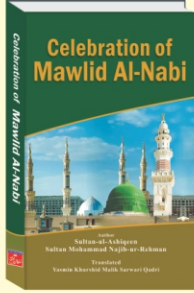
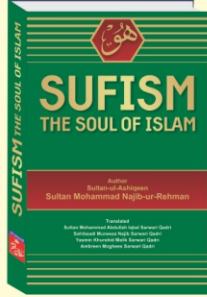
Abu Hurairah narrated that the Holy Prophet said, “My umma is pardoned on the last night of the month of Ramadan.” The Holy Prophet was asked, “O Prophet of Allah! Is that the Night of Decree?” The Holy Prophet replied, “No! When someone

completes the task properly, he receives the full reward for it.”
(Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 7904; Mishkat al-Masabih 1968)

May Allah bestow upon us His blessings and grant the wisdom to understand the significance of fast. May He give us the strength to observe the true fast. (*Ameen*)



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