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“FASTING: A GAP-ANALYSIS FUNCTION IN ISLAM”

This particular article has been written to clarify a certain point, which a few readers have asked for better clarity. Their point, for which they are seeking better clarity, is given within the box below, and the required explanation is now given widely to all readers, so that they all get equally the same meaning. Target audiences are both matured adults and children. For this reason, the title to this article is specifically as: “**Fasting: A Gap-Analysis Function in Islam.**”

This new article is recommended to be read in addition to and in conjunction with, the previous article, titled as: “**Identifying Shab-e-Barat in Our Scriptures.**”

Ramadan is that self-assessment and testing period for Muslims to go in their lives prescriptively correct, insofar as self-discipline, self-control, purity, charity and obedience to Allah matter. In a nutshell, if people can pass this testing period of a month, then people must continue with that same trend for the next 11 months towards perpetuity.

The obvious question which arises is what has gap-analysis got to do with fasting in Islam?

In business and economics, gap-analysis is a business tool that helps companies' measurements of actual performances against potential performances. In other words, in any major project or business administration, gap-analysis is a vital management tool in determining the differences of where the project or business needs to be, for remaining on expected preset targets, and where it is functioning in its current position. That difference is the gap. Of course the gap has to be bridged to help the company not performing below the production possibilities frontier. All companies which have failed to address gap-analysis have run into serious complications such as business winding up or even bankruptcy.

Before any bridging may be planned out, it is necessary for that administration to analyse all essential inter-working functions to bring about necessary corrections towards perfection.

In addition, the business administration must also have checks and balances system, such as inventory management and audit functions. In actual practice, audit functions are set at a certain short period and during this short period; the day to day business operations are given that periodic halt, so that full accountability is justified, visible and verifiable later on business records.

It is common practice, which employees will be challenged to explain the audit outcomes and after listening to their explanation, which employees may even get punished with dismissals.

The “spiritual-business management” of every Muslim goes through similar curves in life; and this requires spiritual gap-analysis of all Muslims, regardless of sectarian mainstreams.

That “spiritual gap-analysis” is Muslims’ fasting in the month of Ramadan. Gap-analysis of Muslims also involves an audit period, during a special halting of regular functions (i.e. the one month fasting in Ramadan is halting from regular life styles), which will identify to the person of his/her weaknesses, such as regular non-compliances, illegal or non-allowed activities, his/her poor personal life management resulting in wastages in life; and drifting away from the five compulsory obligations of every Muslim.

There is need to recollect the specific Ordinance in the Holy Qur’an, as “2:183 O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil.” Fasting is one of the five compulsory obligations expected of any Muslim of both genders. (The five compulsory obligations are: Belief in One God, Prayer, Charity, Fasting and Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)).

Fasting is a capsule of virtues, comprising fundamental compliance with the Ordinance in the Holy Qur’an (2:183) and strengthening both the spiritual values and the moral values in people who fast. This includes abstaining from certain activities from dawn to dusk, such as abstaining from food and drink and sexual intercourse, during the stipulated times under fast. In recorded history, all Israelite prophets fasted in some form according to the prescriptions valid during their ages. There is some uncertainty on other prophets who were not from the Israelite mainstream. This conclusion comes from the content of 2: 183 in the Holy Qur’an.

It is again reiterated that fasting is also a self-auditing continuous process in making a better person out of the wider general broadband of mankind. Once a person successfully completes a month of fasting and in full compliance to all prescribed requirements, then that person must analyse gaps, and review his/her past actions and struggle to extend compliance of virtues for the next eleven months. This period therefore becomes as “building bridges to close that gap.”

That, then brings a person full-circle back to where the full compliance started and it simply means that the person has now proven and compliance-audited track-record that he/she can easily become better person in full compliance and conformance.

What should not happen is for common people not to be incorrectly informed that they must accept fasting as a starvation exercise to test their will-power! In fact, people need to be given a subtle reminder, of what will happen to them in life after death, if they do not bridge the gap analysed with two verses from the Holy Qur’an:

2:21 “O men, serve your Lord Who created you and those before you, so that you may guard against evil,”

2:24 “But if you do (it) not — and you can never do (it) — then be on your guard against the fire whose fuel is men and stones; it is prepared for the disbelievers.”

Shouldn’t we all carry out our gap-analysis in the month of Ramadan in view of the above?

The answer resides with the readers – obviously!

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