

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مُحَمَّدٌ وَنُصَلِّيَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.)

RAMADZAN OR THE MONTH OF FASTING.

BY
AL-HAJJ KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN
FOUNDER OF
THE WOKING MUSLIM MISSION

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RAMADZAN

OR

THE MONTH OF FASTING

THE Holy Month of Ramadan is the name of 9th month of the Muslim lunar year. The exact date of the first of this month can, as a rule, be got from all calendars. It is held in veneration by the Muslims the world over, and on every day of it they observe fasting. But the observance of fasting is not peculiar to Muslims alone. Nearly all the great religions of the world have laid down this ordinance in one form or another; and in our own day there is a growing body of men who, although definitely uninterested in any religion, recognize the wisdom and advantage of the practice. The peculiarity of Islam lies in this, that whereas it always presents all such of its features as are common to it and other religions in a highly purified and correct form, it has also laid down rules and regulations for the observance of fasting which clearly distinguish it from a mere ordeal of fasting. These rules and regulations make it one of the most wonderful and ethical institutions as yet known to men. The commencement of the Holy Month introduces into the Muslim world a visible change in its daily life. So far as

rules about the hours of partaking food go, a Muslim—after the new moon has risen—should breakfast before the dawn¹ of the next morning, and would abstain from taking anything till sunset and this course should be followed so long as the lunar month lasts. This feature of Islamic fastings is seemingly common to the institution as observed in other religions, although there are some according to whom the abstention from, or the partaking of, certain foods alone constitutes the observance. The same indulge in fruits, their juice, and other similar refreshments. Islamic fasting, however, is an absolute and total abstention from taking anything to eat or drink. Islam, besides, prescribes injunctions which distinguish it from mere starvation. The Holy Preceptor of Islam has frequently said that mere abstention from food and drink does not unveil the real significance of Islamic fasting. The verses of Al-Qur-án which convey these injunctions are explicit and to the point in their statement, which make it an institution for the improvement of the moral and spiritual condition of man. We have given these verses and the commentary thereupon on pages 13-19.

In order to lay down the best course for escaping evil, Islam expects its follower to abstain even from those things, during the month of Ramadhan, the use of which would be permissible to him at other times ; and all this in the name of the God of Mercy and Greatness. This indirectly enables

¹ Usually the time of dawn can be found by subtracting 90 to 120 minutes (varying according to the latitude and longitude of the locality) from the time of sunrise which can be ascertained by referring to any almanac. If in doubt refer the matter to the local official observatory.

him to practise, in a very effective way, resistance to evil inclinations when he is capable of abstaining from all lawful indulgence during this month. During the time of fasting one has to give up all those connections which arise out of the matrimonial state, as well as to resist every expression of this carnal instinct in man or woman. So that Islamic fasting does not merely mean the fasting of one's food receiving organs, but also the fasting of eyes, ears, lips, etc. It constitutes strict non-indulgence in any physical gratifications. According to the ways of the Holy Prophet, an observer of it should not merely keep his organs of doing and feeling from unlawful indulgence, but should, on the other hand, employ them in meritorious acts. One who fasts and cannot keep his eyes from casting lustful looks is not observing the rule at all. Likewise one who hears foul language or speaks it, or one whose limbs and organs move in unholiness, commits wrong and violates the sanctity of fasting. Islam puts a ban on evil thoughts and reflections. Islam expects its followers to develop, to their fullest limit, all those faculties in them which are noble and good; that is why the Holy Prophet, besides his habitual benevolence of disposition, was even more generous during the days of the Ramadhan. He was foremost of all in giving with a free hand out of what he had. The Qur-án prescribes the same mode for the suppression of a passion like anger in man:—

“Wal kazimin alghaiz, wal afina aninnas, wallahò yuhibbul muhsinin.”

“The true believer is he who controls his anger and forgives people. Verily Allah loves those who are benefactors of their fellow-men.”

As a matter of fact, all our passions arise from our different natural appetites, and can never be killed; but, directed in the right channel, they will become assets of incalculable value to humanity. This is the reason why the Holy Book has enjoined upon every man not only to control his anger but also to exercise a little extra generosity towards the one who had been the cause of it; and to do so, particularly when a Muslim is fasting, constitutes part of his observance of the ordinance. He should, moreover, be bountiful in freely ministering out of his possessions to the wants of others. The exercise of all other noble qualities in the fasting month is especially recommended. A month thus spent in charity and abstemiousness would never fail to yield the best of results for the rest of the year. This fact holds good in regard to every other quality in man. Besides, if eagerness to do the opposite of bad to the highest degree can create a high order of morality, observance of a course of discipline like that of Muslim fasting, could never fail to build an enduring character in him for a whole life-time.

CHRISTIAN VIEW OF FASTING

Unfortunately, injunctions like fasting have always been regarded in the Christian world as systems of mortification and penance—a necessary part, as they think, of the Old Covenant. To them such institutions, therefore, seem to be just ordinances descending upon ordinary mortals in the form of religion from an all powerful autocrat, who takes delight in making His creatures suffer. And since, according to Church theology, man was incapable of bearing the

burden of this heavy task—"the law," the latter became a source of malediction to him and Jesus came to relieve humanity from its baneful effect. A supreme penalty was paid to the Task Master—to relieve us from all kinds of penances and mortifications. A new covenant was entered into and "the Blood" placed the seal of confirmation on it.

What a misnomer of theology and a puerile and trite conception of religion! The real function of religion is the reform of our morals, and if the observance of fasting, such as is laid down by Islam, can and does promote this reform, can any atonement or intercession absolve us from the necessity of observing it? Islamic fasting, happily, is neither a mortification nor a course of wicked starvation. It is far from being something over which an imperious tyrant gloats. It does not atone for any sin, nor has it anything to do with a painful incident. It is only a means, and a potent means, for the reform of our morals and the best ethical ideal for one to strive for. Does it not, as well all know, furnish the best weapon to combat lack of patience or perseverance? If we regard resolution of purpose as the highest moral quality in man, then it is the chief function of every correct system of religion, not only to uphold this quality in our esteem, but also to lay down the mode of its acquisition. Islam did not content itself with saying that humility and gentleness are the highest of virtues, but has laid down rules showing how these can be possessed and exercised. It has placed fasting among such rules. One of the sayings of the

Holy Prophet reads :—

“ Assaumo nisfus sabr,”

(Fasting is half-patience.)

How can one deny the value of fasting, even though its definition be reduced to mere abstention from food and drinks between certain hours? We are very well acquainted with the physical helplessness and total dependence on medical aid of those to whom the *summum bonum* of existence is eating and leading an easy life. To them a course of fasting would be what an elixir of life is to the dying. Besides, rich foods and drinks in a glutton give rise to all those base passions to which a man of abstemious habits would be a stranger. Evil deeds hardly fit well with a hungered body. If the above is undoubtedly true, is it any less true to say that during the month of fasting all doors are closed upon Satan, as the Noble Prophet remarked?

MUSLIMS' LIFE DURING RAMADZAN

As has already been pointed out, we have not only to shun evil during Ramadhan, but also to exercise our faculties of generosity and benevolence to their and our utmost capacity. That is why in Islamic countries ordinary business is a little less attended to during these days than in others. It is, therefore, a universal wish to save out of a year's earnings for use during this Holy Month. An unusual social and moral atmosphere is one of the visible features of

this month. Hearts move towards piety and goodness as if by instinct. After the usual night prayer there is another prayer known as the "Tarawih" prayer. This prayer is, in fact, the substitute for midnight prayer. "Tahajjud," or midnight prayer, is the sixth prayer, which is not obligatory, and is said between 1 a.m and early dawn by the pious. But during Ramadhan its observance becomes essential for all. After breaking their fasts, and having taken their suppers, the Muslims leave their houses and come to the mosques to pass most of the night in prayer, but as the place of worship becomes crowded with votaries one of them assumes the duties of Imam,¹ while others follow him in prayer. He recites the Qur-án in an audible tone and arranges to finish the whole of it within the month. This prayer of Tarawih consists of twenty Rak'at, which ordinarily take some three hours to finish. Then the worshippers go to their homes and retire to rest, but leave their beds again some two or three hours before the dawn. Some of the Muslims prefer to say their Tahajjud—midnight prayer—in place of Tarawih at this time. Then some breakfast is taken. This over, the morning prayer is said. A brief nap is taken by some after they have said their morning prayer, to make up for the want of rest which long hours of waking during the night might have caused. Normal business is resumed. All those for whom the suspension of their business in the month is possible—and Muslims mostly take care to save something in eleven months to enable them to dispense with their work during this month—generally resort during the day and the

¹One who leads the prayer.

night to devotional places ; there they read from the Qur-án, if by themselves, or busy themselves with prayer and religious exercises and study works on morals, ethics, and the like. The mosques are generally very crowded during these days, remaining open day and night with the exception of a few hours at night ; but what is most conspicuous is the fact that the spectre of the want of the daily necessities of life is banished from the land. This is due entirely to the fact that rich and poor are all eager to be helpful and sympathetic to those who need this kind of assistance and charity. Good fellowship, conscientiousness, and devotion become the order of the day. Even the most indigent in the society find plentiful help from the charity of their more blessed neighbours. Those in the West, who are beginning to recognize now that silence and contemplation too play no small part in the achievement of human progress, would do well to note the truth of the above in Islamic countries, especially during the month of Ramadan.

LAILA-TUL-QADR—THE MOST SACRED NIGHT OF THE YEAR.

It is one of the popular traditional beliefs amongst Muslims that one of the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan is the one for the fulfilment of human prayers and supplications. This particular night has not been very definitely distinguished from the other nine, but the experience of those who have been blessed with those most propitious moments, generally goes to fix it as one of the odd nights in the last ten nights of the month. Some regard the 27th or the 29th as the night, although the greater consensus of opinion is in favour of the 27th. Let it not be

supposed that this night is all a myth, but rather deem it a reality which is fully borne out by the experience of those who have had the supreme bliss of witnessing it. The writer of these pages is not unfamiliar with the inspiring effect of this experience. The Holy Qur-án designates the night as the "Laila-tul-Qadr,"—"the Grand Night," and its hours between midnight and the early dawn are those of Divine Grace. It is generally supposed that it is invariably a clear night, and the sacred moments are attended by a cool breeze and a fine drizzling which exhilarates the soul. The pious man, deep in his contemplation, finds a strange and indescribable emotion arising out of him. The universe all round him appears to have donned a robe of purity. All of his low desires and carnal passions are dead in him. He finds himself most eager to lay bare his heart, his bosom, before the Great Lord; and when he stands before Him in this attitude he finds himself entirely lost in Him—he feels crushed by a nameless weight which enthralls him, and he is in ecstasy. He is oblivious to the posture or the position in which he is, thus wrapped in contemplation. Whether he is standing up, bowing, sitting down, or in prostration, he is incapable of changing any of these postures. A stream of prayer bursts from him, as from a spring, and he feels a melting down all over him. When he is in this state a kind of liquid is emitted by his tongue which is refreshing and sweet. His bosom is unlocked, and there is a feeling of freshness all about him. Although there is no one near him, yet he finds himself overpowered by the assurance that he is in the presence of his God, who is encouraging him to approach Him with his prayer which will be fulfilled.

These few remarks describe but partially the most wonderful sensation that a true and devoted seeker experiences during the brief hours of bliss that occur. One would willingly give his whole life for these few moments of true Divine Beatitude which a Muslim, and only a Muslim, can achieve in that night.

I'TIKAF

To obtain this transcendental good fortune there is a religious usage, amongst Muslims, of contemplation, solitary and in silence. This is called "I'tikaf." All the larger mosques in Muslim lands have attached to them small cubicles as silence-chambers, for the purpose of "I'tikaf." Those who desire to go through this form of devotion during Ramadan leave their homes on the 21st night and take up their abodes in these cubicles, which they only leave for necessity. Their food, which never exceeds bare subsistence, is brought to them by their people. This meal is taken by them between sunset and dawn, and this routine is kept up for ten days between the 20th of Ramadan and the rising of the next crescent. "I'tikaf" consists of contemplation of the attributes of God and a searching inquiry into the votaries' own shortcomings. Their readings of the Qur-án are always done with a serious eye to finding the points of agreement and disagreement between their own ways and the teaching of the Holy Book. They then earnestly approach the Lord for the right and true guidance. The life of the Holy Prophet and the teachings of Al-Qur-án are set up by them as ideals, and they pray for courage to emulate them. The nightly hours are mostly spent in

prayers, meditation, and contemplation. To find the propitious moments of the said sacred night is not the chief aim of the worshipper in I'tikaf. He looks more to have his life in tune with the Universal Spirit, and in the dark hours of the chamber he tries to kindle the divine flame within himself and receive true illumination. The people of the worshippers receive a special request to minister alms to the poor on their behalf. All this may excite a sceptical smile in this materialistic world, but experience knows the enormous spiritual and moral value of these exercises. It is not a traditional belief, but a reality and an experience.

THE 27TH NIGHT OF THE RAMADZAN

It has been indicated that a special grace attaches to the "Laila-tul-Qadr" night in Muslim countries, which is generally taken to be the 27th of the month. Those who are not in I'tikaf celebrate it with special celebration: the mosques are decorated with taste for the occasion. When the time of breaking fast draws near, worshippers in their hundreds flock to the mosques. Well-to-do people bring light refreshments to the mosques. This is a matter of course on all other evenings of the Ramadhan, but the 27th night is observed in a special manner. All in the mosque share the light refreshments taken on the occasion of breaking the fast, and then offer their prayers together. It has been mentioned before that the special prayer which is said after the night prayers is called the "Tarawih" and a portion of Al-Qur-án is recited in it. At some places, however, it is arranged that the whole of the Qur-án should be recited by different Imams, and thus this night of 27th is spent. This briefly is a description of the month, which

ends with the rising of the crescent of 'Id, which literally means happiness, and is celebrated as a thanksgiving to God for the privilege of having enjoyed the blessings of the Ramadan, and not as an occasion which brought an end to starvation, as the calumniators of Islam in the person of Christian propagandists would suggest. Every Muslim looks forward to the month, and the last Friday of Ramadan is observed with a sense of mourning, as the very name *Jumm'a-tul-wida'* shows—the Friday of Farewell to Ramadan. The special feature of this Friday is that almost all the City Muslims prefer to say their Friday prayer together in one big mosque, and observe the day as a holiday. We do not know of any occasion in the Christian world corresponding to this month. Christmas is the happiest occasion to celebrate the advent of one of the most truthful men, who ushered the spirit of righteousness into the world. But the way in which it is celebrated suggests much more a species of Bacchic revels than the commemoration of the Righteous man as he was. It must be confessed that all Muslims do not observe fasting, but on the other hand it would be difficult to meet any such who would assume any attitude of irreverence towards it. One would never dare to publicly dishonour its tenets, but would always try to act in as upright a manner as possible. To tell a Muslim of his fasting or of the month being that of fasts, is the most potent reminder to him of virtue. To say that one is fasting is a sure guarantee of the truth of his speech. From all these statements it is apparent what a powerful institution fasting is for the balance of passions and the development of character.

WHEN FASTING IS NOT OBLIGATORY

Fasting need not be observed in illness or in travel. This remission, however, might be redeemed at other times. It would be rather difficult definitely to lay down rules to meet all kinds of individual cases. Every man is the best judge of his own conditions, and able to know when he is really ill. The easiest way to determine any doubt is to follow medical advice, which should clearly say that fasting would do harm. Women also with children at the breast, in pregnancy, or during those few days of the month peculiar to their sex, need not observe it.

Lastly, we give below those verses of Al-Qur-án which lay down the injunctions together with explanations of verses taken from the translation of Al-Qur-án by Maulvi Muhammad Ali. The footnotes with their store of supplementary information, will be found very useful.

SECTION 23.

Fasting.

183, 184, Fasting enjoined 185. The month of Ramadan to be observed as a month of fasting. 186. Acceptance of prayers. 187. The limits of fasts. 188. Rights of property to be respected.

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). ²²⁵

225 Fasting is a religious institution almost as universal as prayer, and in Islam it is one of the four fundamental practical ordinances, the other three being prayer, poor-rate, and pilgrimage. The words of the Qur-án show that fasting was enjoined on all nations by the prophets

184 For a certain number of days ; ^{225A} but whoever among you is sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days ; and those who are able to do

who passed before the Holy Prophet Muhammad. "Fasting has in all ages and among all nations been an exercise much in use in times of mourning, sorrow, and afflictions." (Cr. Bib. Con.) Fasting has also been in vogue among the Hindus. Even Christians, who think that they have no need of any religious exercise on account of Jesus' atonement, were commanded by that prophet to keep the fasts : "Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face" (Matt. 6 : 16, 17). Again, when the Pharisees objected to Jesus' disciples not keeping the fast as often as John's, his only answer was that when he will be taken away "then shall they fast in those days" (Luke 5 : 33-35).

But Islam has introduced quite a new meaning into the institution of fasting. Before Islam, fasting meant the suffering of some privation in times of mourning and sorrow ; in Islam, it becomes an institution for the improvement of the moral and spiritual condition of man. This is plainly stated in the concluding words : So *that you may guard against evil*. The object is that man may learn how he can shun evil, and hence fasting in Islam does not mean simply abstaining from food, but from every kind of evil. In fact, abstention from food is only a step to make a man realize that if he can, in obedience to Divine injunctions, abstain from that which is otherwise lawful, how much more necessary it is that he should abstain from the evil ways which are forbidden by God. All the institutions of Islam are, in fact, practical steps leading to perfect purification of the soul. But along with moral elevation, which is aimed at in fasting, another object seems to be hinted at. In fact, the twofold object is that Muslims may be able to guard themselves, (a) *morally* and *spiritually*, against evil, for one who is able to renounce the lawful satisfaction of his desires in obedience to Divine commandments certainly acquires the power to renounce their unlawful gratification ; and (b) *physically* against their opponents by habituating themselves to suffer tribulations which they must suffer in defence of Islam and Muslims.

NOTE—For 225A—See page 15.

it may effect a redemption by feeding a poor man ; ²²⁶ so whoever does good spontaneously it is better for him ; and that you fast is better for you if you know.

185 The month of Ramadan²²⁷ is that in which the Qur-án²²⁸ was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proof of the guidance and the distinction ;²²⁹ therefore whoever of

225A The number of days is definitely stated in the next verse as being the twenty-nine or thirty days of the month of Ramadan.

226 The word *fidyah* used in this verse is thus explained by Rgh : *That by means of which a man saves himself, being the wealth which he spends on account of some devotion in which he has fallen short.* The word also indicates *the giving away of property by which freedom of any kind is purchased.* By *those who are able to do it* are meant *those who are able to feed a poor man.* As regards those who cannot keep the fasts on account of constant or long illness, or who are too old or too weak (including in this class the woman who is with child or who gives suck), the practice has been to give away the measure of one man's food to a poor man every day during the whole month (Bkh. AD). Doing good to others is enjoined in addition to fasting in the month of Ramadan. We are told that the Holy Prophet, who was universally recognized for his abundant charity, was most charitable in the month of Ramadan (Bkh). In its mildest form the injunction is generally observed by giving away the measure of a poor man's feeding at the close of the month, which is called the *sadaqat-ul-fitr*, and which is obligatory on every male, female and child, master and servant (Bkh).

227 The revelation of the Holy Qur-án commenced in the month of *Ramadhan*, which is the ninth month of the Arabian year (Rz), hence the month of Ramadan is particularly spoken of as being the month in which the Holy Qur-án was revealed. The root meaning of *Ramadhan* is *excessiveness of heat* ; the month was so called because "when they changed the names of the months from the ancient language, they named them according to the seasons in which they fell, and this month agreed with the days of excessive heat" (LL. Bd). Some say that it is one of the names of Allah, for which, however, there is no reliable authority.

For 228 and 229 see page 16.

you is present in the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or upon a journey, then (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days ; Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire for you difficulty, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for His having guided you and that you may give thanks.

228 *Al Qur-an* is the name by which the Holy Book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad—peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him!—is known and by this name the Holy Book is frequently mentioned in the Divine revelation. The word is an infinitive noun from the root *qara-a*, which signifies primarily *he collected together the things* (LA.TA-LL). The secondary significance of the root-word is *reading* or *reciting* a book, the word being applied to reading or recitation because in reading letters and words are joined to each other in a certain order (Rgh). The name *Qur-an* really refers to both the root-meanings, for on the one hand it signifies *a book in which are gathered together* all the Divine Books, a distinction to which the *Qur-án* itself lays claim in 98 : 4 and elsewhere (Rgh) ; on the other it means *a book that is or should be read*, the Holy *Qur-án* being *the book* “ that has been truly described as the most widely read book in existence ” (*En, Br.*). The commentators have pointed out thirty-one different names under which the Holy *Qur-án* is spoken of in the revelation itself, the most important of these being *Al-Kitab*, or the *Book*, and *Az-Zikr*, or the *Reminder*.

229 There are three statements made here regarding the Holy *Qur-án* ; first, that it is a guidance for all men, and that therefore it contains teachings which are suitable for the various classes and grades of men in different countries and ages ; secondly, that it contains comprehensive arguments for the guidance, thus demonstrating the truth of what it asserts ; and thirdly, that in addition to the arguments it affords a clear distinction, separating the truth from the falsehood by making the faithful taste the fruits of faith and the rejectors the evil consequences of their rejection of truth. The battle of Badr, which is called *yaum-ul-furqan*; or *the day of distinction*, in 8 : 41, also took place in the month of Ramadan.

186 And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near ; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way²³⁰.

230 The connection of this verse with the previous and the following verses consists in the fact that fasting, which includes *shunning every sort of evil*, brings a man nearer to the fountainhead of purity, and the more a man is brought near to the Holy One, the more do his supplications find acceptance with his Master. Hence, it is related that in the month of Ramadzan the Holy Prophet exerted himself the greater in his prayers (Bkh), and induced his followers to do likewise. (Muslim).

That the prayer of a devout suppliant is accepted is plainly stated here, but two points must be noted in connection with this subject. In the first place, there is an impression that the efficacy of prayer in some way interferes with resorting to practical means to attain an object, so that if this impression has produced a class of men who totally deny the efficacy of prayer, it has also led others to think that by resorting to prayer a man may dispense with all external means for the attainment of his object. Both these views are wrong, and opposed to the true doctrine of the efficacy of prayer as taught in Islam. The fact is that there is an indissoluble connection between practical means and prayer. Any one who sets before himself the attainment of an object first looks for the practical means to achieve it, and endeavours to his utmost to find out the agencies by which he can possibly attain that end. In this search for means he has to apply all his faculties to the object before him, and to give his whole attention to the finding of those means which will secure his object. This deep reflection or will power may be called a prayer in a certain sense. For when we strive hard in search of what is hidden from us and unknown to us, we really seek for guidance from a Higher Power from whom nothing is hidden in a language which is expressed by our very condition. It cannot be doubted that when, in search of a thing, the soul stretches itself out in true zeal and ardour to the Giver of all gifts, and finding itself weak and unable to attain the end by itself, seeks for light from the Higher Source, it is plunged in a prayerful meditation, and its condition then is truly that of one who prays to God. The difference is only this, that the truly wise, the holy

187 It is made lawful to you to go in to your wives on the night of the fast ; they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them ;²³¹ Allah knew that you acted unfaithfully to yourselves,²³² so He has turned to you

men of God, pray with due respect to Him whom they recognize to be the Source of all blessing, and their supplications are based upon a clear knowledge ; while the prayer of those upon whose eyes a veil is cast is like wandering in darkness, and it takes the form of meditation and reflection. Thus those who neglect prayer in search of means and do not reflect well upon their course in a prayerful mood are as wrong as those who do not resort to practical means on account of their prayers.

Secondly, it should be borne in mind that the efficacy of prayer does not mean that every object for which a man prays to the Divine Being should be immediately attained. This is made clear by the Holy Qur-án itself : “ Him you will call upon, so He clears away that for which you pray if He pleases ”. (6 : 41) ; so that every object prayed for may not be attained. And again : “ And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits ” (v. 155) ; so that trials and hardships must be undergone even by the faithful, and they must be prepared to suffer every kind of loss. But just as the efficacy of a medicine cannot be denied because it does not prove efficacious in all cases, so the efficacy of prayer cannot be denied on this ground.

231 This description of the mutual relations of husband and wife, and mutual comfort they find in and the protection they afford to each other, is unsurpassed in beauty.

232 All that the reports narrated in connection with this verse show is that the Muslims at first thought that it was illegal to go in to their wives, even at night time, on the days during which they kept fasts, but this practice, which, according to AbM, was adopted from the Christians (Rz), was, at any rate, according to the unanimous opinion of all commentators, not based on any Quranic revelation, the only revelation on this point being the one given in this verse, which pointed out the error of the view and removed the rigour under which the Muslims had placed themselves.

(mercifully) and removed from you (this burden) ; so now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has ordained for you and eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn,²³³ then complete the fast till night, and have not contact with them while you keep to the mosques,²³⁴ these are the limits of Allah, so do not go near them. Thus does Allah make clear His communications for men that they may guard (against evil).

188 And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means, *neither* seek to gain access thereby to the judges, so that you may swallow up a part of the property of men wrongfully while you know.²³⁵

233 *Khait* originally means, *thread*, but is not limited to that use. The *Khait alraqbah* (lit. *the thread of the neck*) means *the spinal cord of the neck* (S. Q-LL). And *Khait Minassubh* is also said to signify a *tint of the dawn* (TA-LL). Hence you say, *Tabayyanal Khait minal Khait*, i.e. *The night became distinct from the day* (TA-LL). Hence *Alkhait alabyaz* signifies *the whiteness of the dawn* and *Alkhait alaswad*, *the blackness of the night* (LL) ; so here the break of the dawn is meant, after which no food or drink should be taken till sunset.

234 By this is meant those who cut themselves off from all worldly connections during the last ten days of the month of Ramadhan, passing day and night in the mosques. This practice is known as *I'tikaf*. But it is voluntary and not obligatory.

235 The injunction to abstain from illegally taking other men's property is a fitting sequel to the injunction relating to fasting, for by fasting a man abstains from using what he has a legal right to, simply in obedience to Divine commandments. Fasting, in fact, enables a man to control his passions, and once the passions are mastered, the greed for illegally acquiring what belongs to others will also vanish.

SELECTIONS FROM THE BUKHARI

THE following on the subject of fasting has been culled from Bukhari, the most reliable book of the Prophet's traditions :—

1. When the month is that of Ramadhan, the gates of Heaven are made wide open, and the Satan is bound in chains.
2. Commence fasting after seeing the new moon of Ramadhan, and cease fasting after seeing the new moon of Shawwal. If it is cloudy, fast for thirty days.
3. Says Abdullah bin Abbas : “ The Holy Prophet was foremost of all in doing good to others, but during this month his generosity was even greater.”
4. “ One who abandons not deception and telling lies, then Allah does not need his keeping himself from eating and drinking. Allah says : “ Every one does good deeds for himself, but he fasts for My (God's) sake, and I alone can reward him.”
5. Fasting shields from sin. When fasting, let no one speak foul words, nor let him be boisterous. If he hears any one speaking foully to him, or using force against him, let him content himself with saying, “ I am fasting.”

6. If there be one unmarried, and in fear of yielding to evil passion, let him fast.
7. Let none fast on the day or two days preceding the month of fasting. But let one fast who is in the habit of fasting on a certain day, which happens to come before the month of Ramadan.
8. In the Qur-án *Khait-alabyaz* means the light of dawn, and *Khait-alaswad* means the darkness of the night.
9. Let no one cease eating his early morning meal when he hears Bilal calling to prayer. *Hazrat Bilal, a companion of the Holy Prophet, used to call to prayer. Sometimes he gave the call for morning prayer before time, which induced some to begin their fast ; hence the saying.*
10. To partake of the early morning meal (before fasting) is *mustahab* (desirable), not *wájib* (obligatory).
11. If one fasting pours water in his nose which passes down the throat, and he cannot emit it, his fast is not broken.
12. A feeling like sea-sickness does not break the fast, as something is discharged, not taken in.
13. The fast is broken by that which is swallowed, not by that which is given out.

14. When the night turns its back on this side, *i.e.*, the east, and when day turns its back on that side, *i.e.* the west, and the sun sets, it is the time of breaking the fast.

FASTS OTHER THAN THOSE OF THE RAMADZAN.

1. Says Lady A'isha : " The Holy Prophet did not fast in any month more than in that of Sha'ban (besides Ramadan), and used to fast during the whole of this month. He used to say ; ' Do good to the extent of your ability only.' "
2. Says Abdullah bin 'Amr bin As : " The Holy Prophet addressed him, saying : ' Abdullah, I have heard you fast in the day, and spend the night standing in prayer. Do not do so to such an extent. Keep fasts, and give yourself relief from it as well. Say prayers, but sleep as well : for your body and your eyes have a claim (to be properly taken care of) on you, just as your wife and your guests have a claim on you. Fast not more than three days in one month, for every good deed is rewarded ten-fold.' The Prophet added : " Fast like the Prophet David, and do not excel him in this.' ' How did he fast ? ' I asked. ' He fasted on alternate days,' was his reply. "
3. Let none of you fast on Fridays, excepting when you are fasting on the two days, *viz.*, the one preceding and the other following it.

4. The Holy Prophet forbade fasting on 'Id-ul-Fitr and 'Id-ul-Azha days.

LAILA-TUL-QADR.

1. Seek for it in the odd nights of the last ten nights of the Ramadhan.
2. The Holy Prophet went into I'tikaf, during the last ten days of Ramadhan.
3. One may go into I'tikaf even for a night.
4. A wife may see her husband in I'tikaf (and no more).

