

Fasting in Islam: Its Excellence, Benefits and Use for Sustainable Development of the Society

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to provide an analytical justification about how important the fasting is for the humankind. In fact, it is a theoretical paper which motivates regarding the issues of benefits that we can achieve from fasting. The results of the paper disclose some significant reasons that fasting can be considered as a well being program to acquire patience, strong will, righteousness, sincerity, good manners, discipline, better sense of prestige, better dieting habits, and many other physical and spiritual benefits of human being in order to establish peace, prosperity and sustainable development of the society. However, the limitation of the paper was it could not consider any numerical examples in favour of the main message of the study because of lack of data availability. Nevertheless, the paper shows its originality in substance and makes a unique contribution to the literature on one of the most important pillars of Islam.

Keywords: Islam, fasting, taqwa, charity, poor, Holy Qur'an, sunnah, development.

INTRODUCTION

Fasting is one of the five fundamental pillars in Islam. It is a universal institution because all other religions in the world also adopted fasting in some forms as the principal method of controlling and killing passions. The Celts, the Romans, the Babylonians and the Assyrians used to practise fasting. The philosophers, Skeptic, Stoic, Pythagorean or Neoplatonic advised for fasting. The followers of Hinduism, Jainism, Confucius and Zoroaster also practised it. The Jews observe an annual fast on the Day of Atonement in commemoration of the descent of Moses (A) from Sinai. The Prophet Moses (A) qualified himself to receive revelation from Allah (SWT) after forty days of fasting. The Prophet Issa (A) fasted for forty days in the desert and commanded his followers to fast (Matthew 4:16, 2008). Therefore, the institution of fasting is universal and existed in some forms. Few differences are found in methods, regularity and timing. There was fasting previously is supported by the following verse of the Holy Qur'an.

"Fasting was prescribed for those who were before you..." (2:183)

Fasting helps in gaining perfection in all activities of our worldly life. The injunction about fasting was revealed in the second Hijra of Islam in Madinah Al-Munawara. It introduced therein the method, regularity, and meaning which made it perfect and ever-living. Like prayer, the institution of fasting is kept alive as it is observed every year in the Islamic world and forms the regulating principle of their lives. Fasting was previously resorted to as a sign of

grief of mourning or for commemoration of a great event. The underlying idea was to propitiate an angry Allah (SWT). Islam abolished this pantheistic idea and introduced a highly developed significance. The Holy Qur'an says in this regard:

"The object is that you may guard against evil..."
(2:183)

In other words, the main objective of fasting is to generate power in human body and mind which can control unruly passion just as a beast is brought under control by keeping it occasionally hungry and then by giving it food. The same principle has been expressed by the following Hadith of the Prophet (SAW):

"Who is not able (to marry) keep fast, and verily it is (as it were) castration for him" (Nasai)

Thus fasting has been introduced as it kills the animal propensities in a person. Secondly, in Islamic fasting, there is nothing to be eaten or drunk from the early dawn till the setting of the sun. Thirdly, in order to put an effective check on passion, even intercourse with one's wife during the fasting hours has been prohibited. In other religions, this has not been so prohibited and therefore there has been no effective check on passions. Fourthly, fasting is methodical in Islam as in every month of Ramadan, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, all have to fast with the same spirit of common guidance of Allah (SWT) and universal brotherhood of human being; while in other religions, it is not so. Islam has not forgotten to reserve provisions for optional fasting at the choice of every Muslim. It has therefore kept the door of voluntary

fasting open to all. Because of the demand of any provision for compulsion, fasting in other religions is practically dead. Islam saved this institution by making it obligatory. This seasonal fasting is very natural as the world also undergoes such a fasting in particular season of the year. From May to August, most part of the World is dried up by Allah (SWT), but He gives it food after that period. Thus, the drying up of the body is also required for some particular time of the year. For these reasons, we can say that fasting provides perfection in many of our real-life activities. The main objective and interest of the paper is to see the impact of fasting in human character and how this fasting can be useful to develop a sustainable society. The organization of the paper is as follows. The section 2 discusses the excellence of fasting. Benefits of fasting are illustrated in section 3. How can sustainable development be achieved in a society by fasting is discussed in section 4. Some concluding remarks are given in the final section.

Excellence of Fasting

There are many traditions related to the virtues and merits that a man can achieve from Allah (SWT) by fasting during the month of Ramadan. In this month, the doors of mercy, forgiveness and kindness are specially opened and the doors of punishments are closed. Therefore, whosoever wishes to have these blessings will at once take up to fasting at the advent of this month. It is stated in the Hadith-e-Qudsee that Allah (SWT) says:

"It is for Me and I shall certainly compensate it." The Prophet (SAW) also stated, "The fragrance of the mouth of a fasting man is more pleasant to Allah (SWT) than the smell of musk". (Mishkat)

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAW) said: "When Ramadan comes, the doors of heaven are opened. (in another narration: the doors of paradise are opened), (in another narration: the doors of mercy are opened) and the doors of hell are shut up and the devils are put under chains ". (Bukhari & Muslim)

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAW) said: "Whosoever fasts in Ramadan out of faith and hopeful of reward, all his past sins will be forgiven; and whosoever stands up (in prayer) in Ramadan out of faith and hopeful of reward, all his past sins will be forgiven and whosoever stands up (in prayer) at the Blessed Night out of faith and hopeful of reward, all his past sins will be forgiven. (Bukhari & Muslim)

It is related on the authority of Sahl bin Saa'd (RA) that the Prophet (SAW) said: "There is a special Gate of Paradise, which is known as Rayyan (and) only those who observe fasting will be allowed to enter through it on the Day of Resurrection. On that day, it

will be called, 'Where are the bondsmen who used to fast for the sake of Allah (SWT) and endure the pangs of hunger and thirst?' Such of the bondsmen will respond to the call and save them, no one will be permitted to enter by this gate. When they have entered paradise through this gate, it will be shut, (and), after it, no one will be able to enter by it." (Mishkat)

It is related on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar (RA) that the Prophet (SAW) said: "The fast and the Holy Qur'an will both plead on behalf of the bondsman (who will keep fast in the day and recite or listen attentively to the recital of the Holy Qur'an in the night, standing in the presence of the Lord). The fast will say: 'My lord! I had held him back from food, drink and sexual satisfaction. Accept my intercession for him today (and treat him with mercy and forgiveness)'. And the Holy Qur'an will say: 'I had held him back from taking rest and sleeping in the night. O Allah (SWT)! Accept my intercession for him today (and treat him with mercy and forgiveness)'. The intercession of both, the fast and the Holy Qur'an will be accepted for the bondsman and he will be treated with exceptional kindness." (Baihaqi)

It is related by Hazrat Abu Hurairah (RA) that the Prophet (SAW) said: "The reward on every virtuous deed is increased from ten to seven hundred times (i.e., the general principle of Divine recompense on all the good deeds of the Muslims be ten times as compared to earlier communities, and, bondsmen will receive seven hundred times of reward on their virtuous acts), but the standing command of Allah (SWT) (about fasting) is that "... the fast is an exception. It is a special gift of the bondsman for Me and I shall reward him directly for it (as I please). The bondsman forgoes food and drink solely for My sake. (I shall, therefore, recompense him for the sacrifice according to My pleasure)."

"There are two moments of special joy for the man who fasts. One is when he breaks the fast, and this he experiences in his earthly existence, and the other will be in the Hereafter when he will be presented before the Lord; and I swear that the bad odour emanating from the mouth of a person who is fasting (which is generally due to an empty stomach) is more pleasant in the judgement of Allah (SWT) than the sweet smell of musk; and fast is a shield (for protection in this world against the assaults of the Devil, and, in the Hereafter, against the Fire of Hell; and when anyone of you keeps a fast, he must not utter a filthy or indecent word nor engage in a noisy scene, and were anyone to quarrel with him names he should simply say, 'I am keeping fast'." (Bukhari and Muslim)

The exhortation at the end of the tradition about abstaining from falsehood and backbiting and wrangling and uttering a foul or profane word makes it clear that the exclusive blessings of fasting are only for those who, in addition to shunning food and drink and staying away from sexual gratification, avoid all dirty and undesirable things. In other tradition, it is stated that Allah (SWT) has no need for him to be hungry and thirsty who fasts but does not refrain from evil-doing.

Abu Umama (RA) narrates that "(once) I said to the Prophet (SAW), 'Please command me to perform an act from which Allah (SWT) may give me profit?' 'Keep fast,' replied the Prophet. 'There is nothing like it'." (Nasai)

Though it is common to all virtuous deeds like regular worship, fasting, charity, Hajj and service to mankind that these are the means to the propitiation to Allah (SWT), they also possess some individual properties which distinguish them from each other. On the basis of it, it can be said about each of them that it is incomparable; no deed is like it. For instance, where the disciplining of the self is concerned it can be said that in respect of it nothing can equal fasting. Thus, the Prophet (SAW)'s remark about fasting that no deed is like it, perhaps shows that in Abu Umama (RA)'s own circumstances, fasting was the most beneficial.

Benefits of Fasting

In fact, benefits of fasting are endless. Few of them are listed below based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

- ❖ Fasting helps in gaining Taqwa (Fearness and love of Allah (SWT)). Allah (SWT) legislated fasting for gaining Taqwa through the following verse of the Holy Qur'an.
 - "O you who believe, fasting has been prescribed upon you as it has been prescribed upon those before you, so that you may attain Taqwa." (2:183)
 - Taqwa in this case means to make a shield between oneself and Allah (SWT)'s anger and hellfire. So we should ask ourselves, when we break our fasts, 'Has this fasting day made us fear and love Allah (SWT) more? Has it resulted that we want to protect ourselves from the hellfire or not?
- ❖ Fasting helps in drawing closer to Allah (SWT). This is achieved by reciting and reflecting on the Qur'an during night and day, attending the taraweeh prayers, remembering Allah (SWT), sitting in circles of knowledge and, for those who can, making 'Umrah. Also for those who can, making I'tikaaf (seclusion) in the last ten days of Ramadan, so as to leave all worldly

pursuits and seclude oneself in a Masjid just thinking of Allah (SWT) and His endless blessings, so as to bring oneself closer to Allah (SWT).

- ❖ Fasting helps in acquiring patience and strong will. Allah (SWT) has mentioned patience more than seventy times in the Holy Qur'an. So, when one fasts, and gives up one's food and drink, and one's marital sexual relations for fasting hours, one learns restraint and patience. This Ummah needs people with strong willed, who can stand upon the Qur'an and Sunnah and not waver in front of the enemies of Allah (SWT). We do not need emotional people, who just raise slogans and shout, but when the time comes to stand upon something firm, they cannot do so, they are wavers.
- ❖ Fasting helps in striving for Ihsaan (righteousness and sincerity) and staying away from riyaa' (showing off). Ihsaan means to worship Allah (SWT) as if one sees Him, and even though one does not see Him, He sees all. *Hasan al-Basree said*, "By Allah (SWT), in the last twenty years, I have not said a word or taken something with my hand or refrained to take something with my hand or stepped forth or stepped back, except that I have thought before I have done any action, 'Does Allah (SWT) love this action?' Is Allah (SWT) pleased with this action?' So, when one is fasting, one should gain this quality of watching oneself and also staying away from riyaa' (showing off). That is why Allah (SWT) said in a Hadith-e-Qudsee, "Fasting is for Me and I reward it." (Bukhari) Allah (SWT) singles out fasting from all other types of worship saying, "Fasting is for Me", because no one knows whether you are fasting or not, except Allah (SWT).
- ❖ Fasting helps in refinement of manners, especially those related to truthfulness and discharging trusts. The Prophet (SAW) said, "Whoever does not abandon falsehood in word and action, then Allah (SWT) does not need that he should leave his food and drink." (Bukhari) What we learn from this Hadith is that we must pay attention to the purification of our manners. So, we must check ourselves, are we really following the behaviour of the Prophet (SAW)? For example: Do we give salam to those we don't know and those we do know? Do we follow the manners of Islam, by telling the truth and only telling the truth? Are we responsible? Are we sincere and hard working? Are we merciful to the all creations, etc.?

- ❖ Fasting helps to be more charitable. Ibn Abaas (RA) said, "The Prophet (SAW) was the most charitable amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the Holy month of Ramadan (Bukhari). The Prophet (SAW) said, "He who gives food for a fasting person to break his fast, he will receive the same reward as him, without nothing being reduced from the fasting person's reward." (Tirmidhi)
- ❖ Fasting helps in sensing the unity of the Muslim Ummah. The Prophet (SAW) said, "Those of you who will live after me will see many differences. Then you must cling to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the rightly guided khalifahs. Hold fast to it and stick to it." (Abu Dawood). In this month, there is a possibility for unity, because we all fast together, we breakfast together, we worship Allah (SWT) together, we perform Umrah together, and we pray Salat-ul-Eid together. Therefore, it is possible for Muslims to be a single body, but this will only be achieved when obedience is only for Allah (SWT) and His Messenger.
- ❖ Fasting brings passion under control. Passion is the root of all evils, and this can be regulated by the method of fasting. In case of excessive food and drink, it rises its head and commits tremendous havoc in the spiritual world. It is a natural law that the more is the physical weakness of the body, the more is the weakness of passion. For example, a man having a strong urge of sexual passion is ordered to fast. Daily practice of such fast with a little quantity of food taken at regular intervals will completely annihilate the sexual urge. Similar is the case with other evil tendencies. The Almighty Allah (SWT) created man and his passion. He knows the best medicines for passions and therefore He has prescribed fasting.
- ❖ Fasting makes the soul shining. Fasting refreshes the soul and cheers up it from its lethargic state, while excessive eating makes it blind and dark just as excessive water destroys crops. Excessive eating makes a man dull and stupid and deprives a man from the power of thinking. A hungry belly is, however, a fountain of wisdom. This has been the experience of many pious divines.
- ❖ Fasting provides taste in prayer. By the practice of fasting, taste in prayer is enjoyed. A full belly can never taste sweetness of prayers and invocations. His prayer ends only in tongue and does not enter the heart, which is full of food.
- ❖ Fasting removes false sense of prestige and pride because a hungry man finds himself weak and naturally turns towards One who is strong. Hunger thus makes a man modest and turns the mind towards the Almighty for help.
- ❖ Fasting saves time and trouble as it reduces the period of sleep and thus a great deal of time is saved for work. Excessive eating keeps a man engaged very often in taking food and responding to the frequent calls of nature while this time can be saved by fasting.
- ❖ Fasting saves money as it saves expenditures on food and other unnecessary enjoyment and thus helps economy. This is not less useful to a worldly man having small means.
- ❖ Fasting greatly contributes to the preservation of health. The great American physician Dr. Dewey said: "Take the food away from a sick man's stomach, and then you have begun to starve not the sick man but the disease. The digestive organs are given some rest, later to work with redoubled energy and vigour. Just as a land, which was left without cultivation for one year, brings abundant crops in the year following, or just as a man can work with redoubled vigour after some rest. Spiritual progress depends on a healthy mind, which again depends on a healthy body. Therefore the value of fasting for preservation of health is very important.
- ❖ Fasting teaches equality of human being which is not even witnessed in prayer. A king may pray with a beggar in the mosque but at home he may lead quite a different life by taking foods at pleasure and having sexual relations with women. Fasting, however, places all men, rich and poor, on the same pitiful plight of hunger, and does not allow anybody to take food and drink or to have sexual relations in daytime.
- ❖ Fasting teaches sympathy for the hungry. Fasting is the only thing which gives a sense of pangs of a hungry man in the mind of the rich. Thus this sense creates a spirit of kindness to the poor and the distressed. It also gives rise to the thought of how the people will fare on the resurrection day when they will feel the greatest urge of hunger and thirst.
- ❖ Fasting teaches moral discipline. In fact, it is a training ground for the lesson that man, whatever is his rank and position, is prepared to suffer the greatest privation and the hardest trial. This lesson is learnt from day to day. This practice really contributes to the moral development of man. Fasting accustoms a man to face the hardships of life and increases his power of resistance.

- ❖ Fasting keeps faith in Allah (SWT) a living force. A fasting man can easily satisfy himself by taking food or drink in the inner recesses of his house. There is none to see him if he pours down some drops of water to his thirsty throat but he feels that Allah (SWT) is near him & always seeing him and so he restrains himself. Thus the existence of Allah (SWT) is felt closer. This is not for once or twice but regularly for a whole month. In this way, faith in Allah (SWT) is kept alive and a new consciousness of a higher life is awakened. See for example, Al-Timimi (2011) and Haffeejee (2011).

Sustainable Development of a Society and Fasting

The word *sustainable* is now a very popular and frequently used word for many reasons both developing and developed countries in the world. For example, we use sustainable development, sustainable agriculture, sustainable economy, sustainable industrial progress, and so on. The phrase *sustainable development* has been used more frequently and this concept was first introduced in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on Human Development. It was later popularized in 1987 with the release of the seminal report "Our Common Future" by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). Now the question is what do we really mean by sustainable development? Does it mean availability of high-rise buildings and construction, 4-lane based high way roads and streets, latest model vehicles and transportations, huge collections of machinery equipments for all kinds of work for a nation? Answer is simply no. A working definition for sustainable development is offered by Rees in 1989 as "sustainable development is a *positive change of the social systems* upon which communities and society are dependent". The prior requirements for sustainable development of a society are manifold; they range from physical development to moral development, from individual development to collective development, from worldly development to spiritual development. Many of them have already discussed in Section 6 of the paper. In addition to these, here we would like to highlight how fasting can be employed to remove hungry and poverty from the society, to strengthen family bonds, to increase interaction with relatives, to tighten the social integration, which are also very much important and essential ingredients for sustainable development of a society.

First of all, we discuss about how fasting is useful to remove hungry from the poor people. A fasting person experiences the plight that thousands of underprivileged people undergo around the world. In experiencing the pangs of hunger, one realizes the suffering of the poor and his heart opens up for

charity and feeding the hungry. One gets to realize the great bounties of Allah (SWT) in shielding him from want and hunger. Thus a fasting person develops a feeling of gratitude towards Allah. This feeling of gratitude motivates a person to value the blessings he has received and becomes more humble. He develops feeling of compassion towards the suffering of poor people and this training leads to a humane revolution within him. This training is intended to develop austerity and avoidance of extravagance among Muslims.

Secondly, we discuss about the usefulness of fasting for removing poverty from the society. We know that almost all Muslims in the world pay their zakat during the fasting month of Ramadan because every good deed that is done in this month will receive a multiple reward from Allah. Zakat is an obligation binding upon every wealthy Muslim. It is the minimum amount of charity that a person has to give. Apart for the obligatory zakat, Muslims have been urged to give as much sadaqah as possible. The reward of voluntary charity is much greater in fasting time. Thus the blessed month of Ramadan sees a flurry of charitable activities that provide much needed relief to the poor and provide an avenue to the rich for purifying their wealth. The act of giving such charity kills the miserliness within a person and reduces the poverty from the society which provides a death blow to the love of the comforts and luxuries of this world. In fact, zakat has a number of positive impacts on the society. First, it is for the welfare of the unprivileged people of the society. Second, it is the blessing of Allah (SWT) for the giver as well as for the receiver, as it improves the total economy of the nation. Third, it establishes a society on a humanitarian ground. Fourth, it removes the economic hardship for the poor and needy and reduces the inequality among different groups of people from the society. Fifth, it satisfies the recipient's needs and alleviates his financial as well as mental sufferings (Hossain, 2012). However, all of these benefits we receive from the fasting month of Ramadan.

Thirdly, we discuss about how fasting can help us to strengthen the family bonds. Today where familial relationships are strained because of working hours, fasting month of Ramadan comes across as a cementing force that binds people. In an atmosphere of pervading piety the entire family sits together for iftar and seher. This benefit of Ramadan has been more acutely observed by Muslim families particularly residing in western countries where it is rare to find all family members together at a meal. This fasting month becomes a source of education for the youngsters and adults alike in Islamic values and teachings. At the end of month, a family emerges stronger, more united, more God fearing, more

humble, more grateful for the blessings of Allah (SWT).

Fourthly, we discuss about how fasting to increase interaction with relatives. The Messenger of Allah (SWT) said: He who gives food for a fasting person to break his fast, he will receive the same reward as him, except that nothing will be reduced from the fasting persons reward." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maajah, Ibn Hibbaan). Because of this hadith, fasting month becomes a month of increased interaction with relatives. People invite each other for iftar and end up sharing the spirit of bonding. The neighbors are connected more often and the rights of neighbors are more strictly observed in this holy month. With most of the people praying five times in masjid, the Muslim community appears vibrant and united and reflects the living and vibrant religion of Islam.

Finally, we discuss about how fasting can be useful to tighten the social values and integration. In addition to the spiritual and moral values of fasting, it has also an important role to improve the social values and integration more effectively than that which is realised through prayer. Rich and poor, great and small, black and white, residents of the same area are brought together five times daily in the mosque in terms of perfect equality, and thus healthy social relations are established through prayer. But the commencement of the fasting month of Ramadan is a signal for a mass movement towards equality and social integration which is not limited to one area or even one country but affects the whole Muslim world. The rich and the poor may stand shoulder to shoulder in one row in the mosque, but in their homes they live in different environments. The rich sit down on tables laden with dainties and with these they load their stomachs three, four, or even five times daily; while the poor cannot find sufficient food with which to satisfy their hunger even twice a day. The poor often feel the pangs of hunger to which the rich are utter strangers; how can the one feel for the other and sympathise with him? A great social barrier thus exists between the two classes in their homes, and this barrier is removed only when the rich are made to feel the pangs of hunger like their poorer brethren and go without food throughout the day, and this experience has to be gone through, not for a day or two, but for a whole month. The rich and the poor are thus, throughout the Muslim world, brought on the same level in that they are both allowed only two meals a day, and though these meals may not be exactly the same, the rich have perforce to shorten their menu and to adopt a simpler fare and thus come closer to their poorer brethren. This course of action undoubtedly awakens sympathy for the poor in the hearts of the rich, and it is for this reason that the helping of the poor is specially enjoined in the fasting month of Ramadan. Moreover, after the obligation of fasting is done, all Muslims are required to pay

sadaqat ul fitr before the Eid prayer. The purpose of this special chairity is to ensure that the poor people join with the rich in the celebration of the Eid festival and that none should be left from celebrating from such a joyous occasion. It would have been an abominable situation if the rich of the community could indulge in extravagance and celebration while the poor descend into desperation for their basic needs. Thus through this charity after end of fasting, occasion of Eid brings equal joy to everyone, rich and poor alike. However, all these collective benefits of fasting can be obtained only if the true spirit of fasting is upheld. In that case the benefits of fasting will become manifest within the individuals as well as in the entire society which could bring its sustainable development too. If a society as a whole fails to understand the moral, spiritual and social benefits of fasting then the entire exercise becomes a mere ritual. See for a detailed discussion, (Ahmed, 2011).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some concluding remarks about fasting are given below.

First of all, we should treat Ramadan as a spiritual not as a ritual. We should not fast just because everyone else is fasting around us. It is a time to make dua, to purify our hearts and souls from all evil deeds. It is the proper time to ask forgiveness to our Lord, not just stay away from food and drinks. Second, we should not give much stress on food and drink during the month of Ramadan. Some people spend the whole day for planning, cooking, shopping and thinking about only food, instead of concentrating on Salaah, studying Qur'an and Hadith, giving charity to the poor and needy and other acts of worship. We should not turn Ramadan from month of fasting to month of feasting.

Third, we should not spend our entire day for cooking and preparing food. Some of our sisters spend a lot of time for cooking throughout the day and even at night, which makes them tired. As a result, they can't even perform Isha and Taraweeh prayers on time, or even read Qur'an. So, we should try to turn off our stove and turn on our Imaan during this Holy month of Ramadan.

Fourth, we should not eat too much just because we are fasting the whole day. It is not recommended to eat full stomach in Islam for any time and it is also quite unhealthy. Too much food makes one feel very lazy and therefore people don't want to perform worships.

Fifth, we should not sleep too much because by sleeping the whole day, one cannot understand or feel the purpose of fasting and therefore it becomes quite useless to fast. Sleeping all the day makes one person

lazy and it also wastes a lot of time which could be spent on reading the Holy Qur'an, helping people and other good activities.

Sixth, we should not waste our valuable time. The time is very precious during the month of Ramadan, because this month comes only once a year. Therefore, we should spend as much time as possible on doing good deeds, performing prayers, reading Qur'an and Hadith, making dua and zikr, helping other Muslim non-Muslim brothers and sisters, etc.

Seventh, we must give up all evil deeds. Fasting means we must refrain from all evil deeds so that it can make us a good person. If we cannot give up all the evil deeds, then there is no point of fasting.

Eighth, we must give up smoking as it is always very bad for health. For those who cannot give it up easily, Ramadan is a good opportunity to try it. By fasting, one person cannot smoke for a long time and therefore, if he keeps this practice and if he wants to give up it, he can easily quit smoking.

Ninth, we should not skip sahur because there is too much blessings in it. Moreover, we should not stop sahur much early than Imsak. This is not recommended in Islam rather it is best to do the opposite of it. One more important point is we must not refrain from fasting if we miss sahur.

Tenth, we should not spend a lot of time for eating during iftar so that Maghrib prayer will be missed. It is better to have some amount of food quickly before the prayer begins and later on, we can continue our meal. Another important point is we should not miss the opportunity to make dua during iftar time by being busy with Iftar preparations.

Eleventh, we must pray if we fast. If someone fasts but doesn't pray, it is totally a contradiction. In such case how can we expect that person's fasting will be accepted. Also, for women, it is strongly recommended to wear the Hijab if she is fasting, because there are rewards for it.

Twelveth, we should not mix up fasting with dieting. Fasting is an act of worship and hence it is not highly recommended to mix it up with the purpose of dieting. Fasting is for Allah only, while dieting is for his/her health purpose, although Islam has clearly prescribed about good health and dieting.

Thirteenth, we should pay more and more sadakah to the poor and needy around us and should present gifts to our relatives, neighbours and friends during this Holy month of Ramadan in order to tighten our social bonds.

Forteenth, we should not fight over the number of Rakaah for Taraweeh. There is no specific number of Rakaah for Taraweeh prayer rather it is permissible to do a little or a lot. Both 8 and 20 are okay.

Fifteenth, we should not pray only on the night of the 27th for Lailatul Qadr. In this regard the Prophet (SAW) said, "Seek Lailatul Qadr among the odd numbered nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan" (Bhukhari and Muslim). According to this Hadith, we should pray all other odd nights for Lailatul Qadr.

Last but not least, we should not waste the last part of Ramadan for Eid preparations and shopping. Last part of Ramadan is very important in terms of worship, more and more supplications for getting mercy and forgiveness from Allah SWT but many of us spend this valuable time on Eid preparations and shopping only. This practice should be stopped. Eid preparations and shopping can be done earlier. Furthermore, we should pay our Fitra to the poor and needy before going to Eid prayer.

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