

Fasting is a fundamental worship in Islam that provides a great platform to gain self-control, piety, humbleness, sympathy to poor, sincerity to Allah and success in Hereafter. Fasting enable us to fight evil traits such as passion, lust, greed, arrogance and jealousy.

The month of Ramadan is specifically mentioned in authentic Islamic traditions to be the Month of Allah in which fasting is obliged to all Muslims and this is the month in which Holy Book, Qur'an was revealed.

According to 'Lantern of the Path' written by Imam Ja'far Sadqi (A): "The Holy Prophet (S) said, 'Fasting is a protection from the calamities of this world, and a veil from punishment of the next.' When you fast, intend thereby to restrain yourself from fleshly appetites and to cut off those worldly desires arising from the ideas of Satan and his kind. Put yourself in the position of a sick person who desires neither food nor drink; expect recovery at any moment from the sickness of wrong actions. Purify your inner being of every lie, spiritual impurity, heedlessness and darkness, which might cut you off from being sincere for the sake of Allah.

Somebody said to one of the Companions, 'You are already weak; fasting will weaken you further.' He said 'I am preparing that fast for the evil of a long day,'. 'Patience in obeying Allah is easier than patience in His punishment.' And the Messenger of Allah once quoted Allah's words, 'Fasting is mine, and I do reward it.'

Fasting kills the desire of the self and the appetite of greed, and from it comes purity of the heart, purification of the limbs, cultivation of the inner and the outer being, thankfulness for blessings, charity to the poor, increase of humble supplication, humility, weeping and most of the ways of seeking refuge in Allah; and it is the cause for the breaking of worldly desires, the reducing of evil things, and the redoubling of good deeds. It contains benefits which cannot be counted. It is enough that we mention some of them to the person who understands and is given success in making use of fasting, if Allah wills."

Imam Ali said in Nahjul Balagha, for everything that you possess there is purification (Zakat), and purity (Zakat) of your-self is fasting. Further, it is written in Nahjul Balagha that fast in the month of Ramadan for it is the shield against chastisement. Allah has protected His believers by means of prayers, and alms-giving, and suffering of the hardships of fasting in the days in which it has been made obligatory, in order to give their limbs peacefulness, to cast fear in their eyes, to make their spirits humble, to give their hearts humility and to remove haughtiness from them.

A brief secret of Fasting

One of the training effects of Fasting on a person is that it discontinues the rule of habit and desires and frees the person from the slavery of sensual desires. The worst rule and most dangerous is the rule of bad habit and the slavery of desires because usually the simple habit of tobacco gives a big loss to the honor of a person and then what to say about other habits?

That person is free who is not a slave to any habit and who with his firm intentions has control over all of them. This type of freedom and spiritual perfection gives strength and necessitates the firm steps, which originate from fasting.

Fasting awakens emotions and sentiments. Wealthy and well to do people, who eat different varieties of food the whole year are unaware of people who are hungry. The person, who fasts,

remembers the hunger of the poor and becomes aware of their sufferings and as a result emotions and sentiments are awakened in them, and this reduces the gap between various classes of people and reminds them to fulfill the needs of the poor.

What would be a greater benefit of fasting that the upper class and happy people taste hunger and thirst due to the thinking about the needy, who if remain in their existing state only, will increase the anger of their fire, which will burn down each and everything and destroy all.

Fasting in the Holy month of Ramadan shows equality and unity because in this month the happy and poor people remain away from desires and lead similar life.

Allah loves those who observe fasting and bestows on them a good reward. Observing fasting means abstaining from eating drinking, and some other things. In the month of Ramadan, Muslims observe fasting every day from the morning until the sunset, when they eat again. After the fasting each day, the first meal that we eat in the evening is called Iftar. When observing fasting, we must first of all have intention (niyyah). This means that we decide to observe fasting in obedience to the command of Allah.

Allah has made observing the fasting an obligatory (wajib) act for Muslims so that we remember Allah. We know ourselves better. We become more able to control our desires. We remember the Hereafter. We get ready to do good deeds. We store righteous acts for our future life. We gain experience of hunger and thirst, and so remember the poor, and sympathize with them,

and help them. We become healthier. We may move ahead towards our desired goal of perfection

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (AS) has said: **"***A person who merely abstains from eating and drinking will not always be counted as one who is observing fast.*

"

This means that when you observe fasting, your ears, eyes, tongue, etc. must also be observing fasting and must not perform any unlawful actions. Your hands, feet, and all the parts of your body must also be observing fasting and must commit no sin. Only then will your fasting be accepted by the Almighty Allah.

When you are observing fasting, you must behave better than on other days. You must keep your tongue from idle and useless speech. Don't tell lies. Don't make fun of anyone. Don't quarrel and argue. Don't give way to jealousy. Abstain from speaking ill of others and from fault-finding. Be more kind than usual to people and make their life comfortable

For young men and women who have reached adolescence (baligh), it is obligatory to observe fasting during the month of Ramadan, unless it is medically harmful for them.

Children under age eat a little with their families shortly before the fasting begins, and then don't eat anything until noon, or until as long as they can. In this way they share in the rewards of the fasting with the rest of their family-members.

People who eat when they are supposed to observe fasting, commit a sin. They must observe the fasting for the number of days they have not observed the fasting without any proper Islamic reason. Further, they must also observe fasting for 60 days or feed 60 poor people for each day on which they broke their fast.

Entertaining a guest for the Iftar is one of the best deeds to perform in the month of Ramadan. The Prophet (SA) has told us: **"***Whoever invites a person observing fasting for Iftar, his sins will be forgiven and the Almighty Allah would bestow on him goodness and blessings***."**

Some of the Prophet's (SA) Companions used to say: *"*O Messenger of Allah, we all are not able to do this" and the Prophet (S.A) would reply: **"***If not, then feed a person observing fasting even half a date, or offer him a glass of water***."**

From the social point of view, it induces people to show practical sympathy to the deprived and starving. Further, from the point of view of health and hygiene, its curative and preventive value cannot be denied. It cleans the body system internally and shakes off the unconsumed food which usually takes the form of surplus fat and overweight, and becomes the cause of many diseases and discomforts.

Relation between fast and strengthening of willpower

We already know that it is obligatory on all adult and sane Muslims., men and women, provided they are not traveling, ill, too old or infirm, to keep fast during the month of Ramadan. In other words, it is to abstain from eating, drinking, coition, plunging head into water, swallowing thick airborne dust and all other acts invalidating fast.

This holding out against passions, enduring hunger and thirst and resisting carnal desire awaken and arouse the dormant and secret inner force, provide an exercise in self-control and enable man to resist and not to succumb easily to the base desires like the outburst of lust, anger and selfishness.

Man is always subject to being overwhelmed by a number of misleading desires such as acquiring wealth by unlawful means, indulgence in illicit erotic contacts, licentiousness, succumbing to temptations etc.

There are many desires, passions and temptations which often flare up and give a blow to the dignity and position of man. It is, however, possible that he may increase his power of resistance and self-control, show perseverance against every evil, not succumb to every temptation and not respond to every call. At the time of the outburst of an unlawful desire, he should exercise self-restraint, use his common sense, look into the future and keep the final result in view so that he may not sacrifice himself to a transient passion.

To develop this resisting power gradually one must have an occasion to fight against his desires and personal pleasures. Fast provides such an opportunity. It renders the required help in the development of this resistance. The Qur'an describes the creative role of the fast especially in Ramadan in these words:

"O' you who have Faith! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those who have gone before you, so that you may guard yourselves (and remain firm against evils, sins and slips)
)
".
(Qur'an, 2:183).

"(Fast for) a certain number of days. But whoever among you is sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) the same number of other days, and for those who are hardly to do it, (there is) a redemption by feeding an indigent. But whoever volunteers to do good, it is better for him; and it is better for you that you fast, if you did (only) know." (Qur'an, 2:184).

"The month of Ramadan that wherein the Qur'an was sent down to be a guidance for mankind, and as clear signs of guidance and a criterion (between right and wrong) . Therefore, whoever of you is present (at his home) during the month, he shall fast therein and whoever is sick or on a journey, he shall then (fast) the same number of other days; Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you; so you should complete the number (of days decreed) , and exalt Allah for His having guided you, and that you glorify Him ." (Qur'an, 2:185).

As referred above, the Qur'an explains the philosophy of this humanizing worship in a short but meaningful sentence, says: *"... so that you may guard yourselves (against evil) ."*

According to what the Late Kolayny says in his famous book (Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 18), piety is rendered into one's restriction from sin. Most sins originate from wrath and lust. Fasting brings the extravagance of this instinct under control, which, consequently, decreases corruption and increases piety.

Yes, fasting effectively streamlines the process of training the spirit of piety in all dimensions of every field. Due to its great impact in training human body and soul, as mentioned in the verse above, fasting is not appointed only for Muslims but it had been practiced by the former nations, too.

A tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says:

"The pleasure found in (the phrase: ' O' you who have Faith! ' is so that) it has removed the tiredness of this worship and effort." (Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 2, p. 27)

Above verses of Holy Quran also mention that in order to reduce the hardship of fasting, it commands to keep fasting for certain number of days and do not oblige us to fast all the year. Quran also takes this duty of fasting off from sick and from the travelers and advise them to fast when they recover from sickness and return back from their travel.

Quran also excludes the third group, those who are absolutely unable to fast, such as elderly men, elderly women, the constant patients with chronic diseases, where it says:

"... and for those who are hardly able to do it, (there is) a redemption by feeding an indigent. ..."

"... But whoever volunteers to do good, it is better for him ..."

And finally, at the end of the verse, the fact is restated, which itself is another emphasis on the philosophy of fasting, thus: *"... And it is better for you that you fast, if you did (only) know."*

This meaning also refers to the fact that the worship of fasting, as other worships, does not add anything to the Glory and Dignity of Allah but all its merits are for the worshipper. Islamic traditions confirm the same meaning, too

The holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) has said: *“He who fasts during the fasting month for the sake of Allah, all his sins will be forgiven.”* (Tafsir-i-Maraq-y, vol. 2, p. 69).

The last verse of this group of verses (2:185) introduces the time of fasting and a part of its ordinances and their philosophies. At first it says that those certain days that you must fast are the month of Ramadan, and:

“The month of Ramadan is that wherein the Qur'an was sent down...” And this Qur'an is the same that is:

“...to be a guidance for mankind, and as clear signs of guidance and a criterion (between right and wrong)”

Then again, the command for the passengers and the sick is restated and, as an emphasis, it says:

“... Therefore, whoever of you is present (at his home) during the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or on a journey, he shall then (fast) the same number of other days; ...”

The repetition of the ordinance of the sick and passenger in this verse and the previous one may be for the purpose that some people, think that not to fast is absolutely a disgraceful action, insist on fasting when they are sick or are on a journey, so the Qur'an, by this repetition, makes the Muslims understand that fasting is a divine duty for the safe and sound persons while, in the same manner, not fasting is also a divine command for the sick and passengers (with their proper conditions) so that the offense of it is a sin.

At the end of the verse, it pays attention to the philosophy of the divine legislation of fasting once more, and says: *"... Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you: ..."*

It points to this fact that although fasting is apparently a kind of strictness and limitation, its conclusion is ease and tranquility of man, both spiritually and materially.

This sentence may hint to this matter that the Divine commands are not similar to the commands of tyrants. In the case that the fulfillment of an action is very laborious, Allah enjoins an easier duty to be performed. Therefore, the ordinance of fasting, with all its importance, was exempted for the sick, passengers, and those feeble ones unable to perform it.

Then, it adds: *"...So you should complete the number (of days decreed) ..."*

This means that everyone who is safe should fast one month a year because it is necessary for his health. For this reason, if a person is sick or on a journey during the month of Ramadan, the one must practice of fasting those days until the same number is completed. Even monstrous women, who are excused from establishing prayers, are not exempted from fasting at a later date.

So, in the final sentence of the verse, it says:

"...and exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you glorify Him)."

Yes, we must exalt Allah for the guidance He has endowed upon us, and be thankful to Him for all those blessings He has mercifully given us.

It is noteworthy that the act of thanksgiving is mentioned with the term 'glorify', while the matter of exalting Allah is stated conclusively. This difference of statement may be for the reason that the fulfillment of this worship (fasting) is, at any rate, the exaltation of the Essence of Allah, but

thanksgiving, which is the same as using the blessings in their proper sites and taking benefit from the effects and practical issues of fasting, has some conditions which will not be fulfilled unless those conditions be obtained, the most important of which are: a perfect sincerity, the recognition of the reality of fasting, and acknowledgement about the philosophy of fasting.

Fasting and Its Educational, Social, and Hygienically Effects

From the point of various effects that fasting may spiritually and materially produce in the unity of man, it has different dimensions that can be discussed. The ethical dimension and the philosophy of fasting are the most important of all.

- Fasting makes the soul of man elegant, then strengthens his will, and moderates his instincts. The one who observes the fast, although he is hungry and thirsty, must restrain himself from eating food and drinking water, and also, from the pleasure of carnal desires when he is fasting. One must prove that he/she can hold the rein of his/her restive passions and is able to dominate his/her desires and lusts.

- Indeed, the most important philosophy of fasting is this very spiritual status of it. A person who has many kinds of food and drinks available at his reach to use of them whenever he is hungry or thirsty cannot be so tolerant at the time he is in lack of them. But the one who observes the fast is like a plant which grows in a dry desert. It resists when water is rare, stands steadfast against strong storms and intense cold. Such people can deal with deprivations when they are challenged with them, and, therefore, can be firm and perseverant.

· Fasting trains the soul of a person. With temporary restrictions, fasting gives man perseverance, authority in will, ability of challenging with severe deprivations, and, since it controls restive instincts, it showers light and inner purity into the heart.

However, fasting causes man to promote from the animate nature so that he can ascend unto the rank and the world of angels. The famous tradition from Imam Sadiq (a.s) is another hint to the same matter which says: *"Fasting is a protector from Fire."* (Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 96, p. 256)

Another tradition narrated from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (A.S.) says that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was asked what they would do that Satan be banished, and he (p.b.u.h.) answered:

"Fasting blackens his face; charity breaks his back; the love in (the path of) Allah, and persistence in righteous deeds put an end to him, and seeking (Allah's) forgiveness cuts his aorta (main artery)." (Ibid, p. 255)

When Ali-ibn-Abi-Talib (A.S.), stating the philosophy of worship, speaks about fasting and he, says: *"(Allah has laid down) fasting as a trial of the people in their sincerity..."* (Nahju l-Balaqah, Saying No. 252).

In another tradition, the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) has said: *"Verily, there is a door for*

(entering) Heaven by the name of ' Al-Rayyan ' (quenched of thirst) none enters therein but fasting ones." (Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 96, p. 252).

Explaining this tradition, the Late Saduq cites in his book ' Ma'any-ul-Akhbar ' the reason that this name has been taken for that door of Heaven is that much of the toil of a fasting person is because of his thirst. So when the fasting ones enter this door, they will be so saturated that they will never become thirsty thereafter.

The Social Effect of Fasting

Every intelligent person realizes that fasting works as a lesson of equality among the members of a society. By practicing this religious command, the rich realize perceptibly both the state of the hungry and the deprived of their society, and, with saving in their daily meals, can help them well. It is possible, of course, that by explaining the status of the hungry and the deprived to the rich, it will make them understand that status, but if this condition becomes perceptible and objective, it will react more effectively. Fasting gives this great social subject a perceptible form to those who observe it.

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) in a well-known tradition that: Hisham-ibn-Hakam asked him about the reason for the divine legislation of this ordinance when he (a.s.) said: *"Allah has enjoined fasting in order to settle equivalence between the rich and the poor, and this is for the sake that the rich feel the taste of hunger and, consequently, be merciful toward the poor (by giving them their rights) . And, since the things are usually available for the rich, then Allah, the Exalted, is pleased when equivalence is erected between His servants. So, He, thereby, has ordained that the rich feel the taste of hunger and pain so that they feel sympathy for the weak*

and be merciful toward the hungry."
(
Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 7, fasting section, p. 3
).

Verily, if the populations of rich countries throughout the world customarily fast a few days a year and feel the taste of hunger, will there still remain so many hungry people in the world?

Fasting and Its Hygienical & Remedial Effects

In modern medicine, as well as the old one, the miraculous effect of 'abstinence' in curing various kinds of sicknesses have been proven so evidently that it cannot be deniable. Several of physicians have pointed out this fact in their scientific notes.

As all of us know, the reason of the origin of many diseases is gluttony, because the unabsorbed extra materials of food-stuffs in the form of obtrusive tallow or additional sugar in blood remain in different parts of the body. These additional materials, inside the levies of muscles of body, are, in fact, as some putrid oozy sites where kinds of microbes of some infectious diseases can grow. The best way of defending against these sicknesses is to annihilate them by means of abstinence and fasting.

Besides this property of fasting, which causes the additional and unabsorbed materials of the body to be burnt, fasting is a considerable factor for servicing the body with giving a rest to the organs of digestion. This rest is extremely necessary for these organs. They are the most

important parts of the body and are continuously busy working throughout the year.

It is clear that one who observes the fast, as Islam advises, ought not to eat too much food at the time of breaking the fast and just before the dawn during the fasting month of Ramadan in order to enjoy the result of the hygienic effect of fasting, otherwise the consequence may become contrary.

Alexy Sufurin, a Russian scientist, writes in his book that by means of fasting a specific result can be obtained in treating diseases such as: anemia, dyspepsia, chronic extended enteritis, furuncle and inner abscess, consumption, rheumatism, gout (padagra, chiragra, gonagra) , dropsy, sciatica, some ophthalmic diseases, diabetes, skin diseases, renal diseases, and so on.

Treatment through fasting is not limited to the foregoing diseases alone, but also the sicknesses concerning the fundamentals of the body involving the bodily cells like cancer, syphilis, and plague can be cured by means of fasting. (Fasting, a New Method in Treating Diseases, p. 65 (first edition)

The holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) is narrated to have said in a famous tradition: *"Fast to be healthy."* (Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 96, p. 255)

Again, in another tradition he (p.b.u.h.) has said: *"The stomach is the site of all ailments, while dietary (abstinence) is the head of all remedies."*

(
Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 62, p. 290
)

Fasting in Former Religions

The existing Torah and Bible indicate that the Jews and the Christians had fasting, too, (Math.6:16,17; and Luke 5: 33-35) . The followers of some other religions used to fast in times of sorrow and affliction. In the Lexicon of the Bible it is cited that fasting, in general, has always been practiced among every nation and in any religion at the time of an unexpected sorrow or disaster (The Lexicon of the Bible, p. 427).

It is also caught from the Torah that Moses (A.S.) had forty days of fasting. It is cited in the Old Testament thus: *"When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of covenant which the Lord made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water."* (The Old Testament, Book called Deuteronomy, Chapter 9, No. 9, p. 222, English version printed by British and Foreign Bible Society, A.D. 1611
)

Also, at the time of repentance and seeking the pleasure of the Lord, the Jews fasted. So, it is cited in the Lexicon of the Bible that when the Jews got the opportunity that they wanted to state their weakness and humility before the Lord, they fasted in order that they confess their faults and to obtain the pleasure of His Essence by means of that fasting and repentance. (The Lexicon of the Bible, p. 428)

It is probable that 'the Great Fasting with atonement', which was for one particular day a year, was common among the Jewish people. They had, of course, some other temporary days to fast in remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem, etc., too. **(Ibid)**

As the Bible indicates, Jesus (A.S.) had also forty days of fasting. It says thus:

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2) And when he had fasted forty days and nights, he was afterward an hungered.

"

It is also understood from the Evangel that the disciples of Jesus used to fast. It says: *"33) And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? 34) And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? 35) But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast those days."* (The New Testament, the Gospel St. Luke, Chapter 5, No. 33-35, p. 1053 (English version), printed by London, the British and Foreign Bible Society, A.D. 1911).

Again, it is cited in the Lexicon of the Bible that the lives of disciples and believers, in old times, were full of negation of pleasure and tremendous toils accompanied with observing the fast. (Ibid, and the Lexicon of the Bible, p. 428).

Thus, the Qur'anic sentence saying: *"... as it was prescribed for those before you ..."* is also confirmed with many historical religious evidences existing in other divine religions even after they had been perverted.

Ramadan, the Transcendent Month

The month of Ramadan has been selected for fasting because it has a preference to other lunar months of the year. In the verse under discussion, this preference is stated such that the Qur'an, which is the Book of Guidance for humankind and, with its commands and legislations, has separated the right from wrong to lead man toward prosperity, was revealed in the month of Ramadan.

Besides that, both some verses of the Qur'an and the Islamic literature indicate that all the great heavenly Books, such as the Torah, the Bible, the Psalms of David, the Books of Ibrahim, and the Qur'an, have all totally been sent down in this month.

In this respect, Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: *"The Torah was sent down on the sixth of Ramadan, the Bible on the twelfth, the Psalms on the eighteenth and the Qur'an by the Night of Destiny (Laylat-ul-Qadr) in Ramadan."* (Wasa'il-us h-Shi'ah, vol. 7, section 18, tradition 16).

Thus, the month of Ramadan had always been the month of the great heavenly Books to be sent down. This month had been the month of education, since training without teaching and practice is fruitless. The training aim of Fasting should also be parallel with the more and the utmost profound knowledge about the divine instructions so that it wipes out the soul and self of man from sin.

Once, on the last Friday of Sha'ban, the Prophet of Islam (p.b.u.h.) delivered a sermon about the significant of the month of Ramadan to prepare his companions for receiving this sacred month.

In that great sermon he (p.b.u.h.) said:

“O’ people! Allah's month has approached you laden with blessing, mercy and forgiveness. It is a month which Allah regards as the best of all months."

“Its days, in the sight of Allah, are the best of days; its nights are the best of nights; and its hours are the best of hours."

“It is a month in which you are invited to be the guests of Allah, and you are regarded during it as worthy of Allah's Grace."

“In this month, your breathing praises Allah, and your sleeping adores Him. Your deeds (of worship) are accepted, and your pleas are answered therein.”

“Therefore, ask Allah, your Lord, in sincere intentions and pure hearts to enable you to observe the fast and to recite His Book (the Qur'an) during this month, for only a wretch is the one who is deprived of Allah's Forgiveness in this great month.”

“Let your hunger and thirst during it remind you of the hunger and the thirst of the Day of Judgment. Give alms to the poor and indigent among you, respect your elderly and be kind to your youngsters, and strengthen blood-kinship of yours.”

“Safeguard your tongues (from sin), do not look at what Allah has prohibited your eyes from watching it, and do not listen to what your ears are forbidden to hear. Be kind to the orphans of other people, so that your own orphans be consequently given affections, too. ...”

The Principle of ' No Hardship'

In the above mentioned verse, this matter was pointed out that Allah's Will is not that you be troubled and uneasy, but He ordained so that you feel ease. It is certain that this ordinance here is about the proposition of fasting and its benefits together with the concerning commandment due to passengers and sick persons. But, regarding its universality, this ordinance has been used as a general principle upon all Islamic rules, and the verse has been taken as a reference for it which is known as the rule of ' No Hardship ' (la-haraj) among jurisprudents.

This religious rule says that the foundation of the Islamic legislation is not based upon hardship. So, if, somewhere, an ordinance creates intense hardship, it can be exempted temporarily. For

instance, the jurists have said that when performing one's ablution or standing erect, and the like of them, due to establishing prayers requires much pain, it changes to dry ablution and prayers in sitting position.

Concerning the lack of hardship in Islam, it is also stated in Sura Hajj No. 22, verse 78, thus: *“He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion.”*

Also, another hint to this subject is the famous tradition of the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) where he says: *“I was appointed to a tolerant and facile religion.”* (Kanz-ul'Ummal, vol. 1, p. 178; & vol. 11, p. 445).

Conclusion:

By the way, fasting had been in vogue in every religion in some form or other. It is one of the cardinal doctrines of the practice of the faith, in Islam, taking its rank next only to the obligatory five times daily prayers. The practice of fasting was enjoined by all the prophets of Allah who preceded the holy Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.).

It should also be noted that fasting in Islam is to train to suppress our natural appetites and

shun evil. It does not mean abstaining only from food but from every kind of evil. Abstention from food is only a step towards the realization that if one has to abstain from that which is lawful, how much more he must abstain from what had been forbidden by Allah. The main object of the Islamic fast is to purify the conduct and character and get the soul charged with divine attributes of Allah in the practical life for one complete month.

It helps the Muslims to guard themselves against evil as well as conditioning with restraint by habituating themselves to suffer physical affliction and self-control and resistance and fortitude which they must always be prepared to suffer in the defense of faith and the faithful.

On the other hand, since Islam is a tolerant and easy religion, fasting is not allowed for those who are on lawful journey. Or, it is exempted for Muslims in the case of the risk of any illness being aggravated, testified by a reliable doctor. This is due to the fact that Islam does not put intense hardship for its followers.

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