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Eid-ul-Fitr Serves Three Purposes

Eid-ul-Fitr is the most important festival in the Islamic calendar. The day does not mark any historical event or episode; but its existence provides the Muslim for an occasion to offer thanks to Allah for having given him the strength and the will to observe fast during the holy month of Ramadhan.

It is also an occasion for prayers when the Muslims gather in large congregations, standing shoulder to shoulder, to demonstrate the equality and equity which is the inherent feature of Islamic society all over the world.

But the greatest significance of this day of rejoicing lies in the fact that on this day every Muslim is enjoined to give the needy food at the rate of the prescribed weight per every member of his household, including servants and guests who were sheltered under his roof the preceding evening.

Eid-ul-Fitr then serves a three-fold purpose: It places upon every Muslim the obligation to remember Allah and offer Him thanks; it affords him an opportunity of spiritual stock-taking in that he can now ponder over the strength of his will or the weakness of his character, as the case may be, which manifested itself during the preceding month; it also is the day for the haves to share a portion of what they have with the have-nots.

And, for those persons who disobeyed this command of Allah this is the day of an end to the month-long pangs of conscience, inner struggle and continuous realisation of the feebleness of their character. No more will they have to argue, without much conviction, against fasting'. No more will they have to think up an excuse every morning for not fasting'. No more will they have to say "Oh, but fasting is old-fashioned; it was not meant for the modern world."

It is not my object here to explain the philosophy of fasting. Almost everyone realises the spiritual, social, scientific and medical benefits which are derived from fasting. But so far as a Muslim, a true believer, is concerned, it should be sufficient that fasting is prescribed in the Holy Book, and as such is the command of Allah. Should one seek to justify Allah's commands?

The measure of a man's love for his Creator is his unquestioned obedience to the commands of the

Creator. When for whole month a Muslim has obeyed Allah, unquestioningly, without complaint, without regret, and ,when he has spent his time in prayers, in humility and in charity, should one wonder, if at the end of this period, the Creator may Himself turn to such creature of His and say: "It is now for thee to ask for Me to give."

Ramadhan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, is the period when man is subjected to a supreme test. Without compulsion, without coercion, the Muslims throughout the world obey God; and every day from dawn to sunset abstain not only from sensual pleasures but even from the necessities of life like food and drink. Some do this in shivering cold, some in burning heat, some do it where days are short and others where days are interminably long. The rich fast as well as the poor, the master as well as the servant; the parents as well as the child; the ruler as well as the subject. They all fast, regardless of the colour or their social position.

Having done this, for one whole month, today on this auspicious day of Eid-ul-Fitr, every Muslim should be ready to face the year that lies ahead with renewed strength, greater understanding and universal goodwill. He has fasted to acquire piety, discipline and self-control. Now the habit of unquestioning obedience to God is cultivated in his heart and mind. He is now trained to accept the commands of Allah, in the remaining eleven months of the year, with the same unwavering loyalty. He has emerged from the month of Ramadhan with a new personality and a stronger character, confident of his ability to subordinate his desire to his will, his emotion to his intellect.

No longer will it be difficult for him to refrain from intoxicating drinks; no longer will he turn away from his less fortunate brethren; no longer will he fail to understand and appreciate the pain of hunger, the pangs of thirst.

So the training period of Ramadhan has come to an end. Now we are entering the era of normal activities of life. If the lessons learnt in Ramadhan have left their marks upon our character, we are entitled to enjoy Eid-ul-Fitr.

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