

# Rewards of Ramadan and importance of Eid-ul-Fitr

ABUL KALAM ELIAS

THE word Ramadan is derived from 'Ramaj' which means burning. Ramadan was first introduced in the month of summer implying rigour of pains-taking self-denial.

Ramadan is the month of fellow-feeling. It is the month of Fazilat (benefit), Barket (well-being), Rahamat (mercy), Magferat (forgiveness) and Nazat (salvation) -- above all it is the month of Taqwa (God-fearingness). As a matter of fact Taqwa means avoiding evils and dangers while treading along prickly path full of unknown fear.

There are five features of Ramadan. In this holy month the door of hell is locked. Satan is chained. Paradise is arranged anew for the devoted and the pious. The fish of the sea and the angels of the sky seek blessings and benediction of God for the fasters. The small hours of the night during "Sheri" is the best time for attaining nearness to Al-mighty Allah Sobhanahutala. After Sheri Muttaqi (God-fearing Muslims) perform Tahajjat prayer prior to Fajar (morning prayer). At this august time God comes down to the nearest sky to distribute rewards and blessings among the staunch adherents, as is believed by the faithful perfect Insane kamil or Morde momin (as Allama Iqbal said) Muslims.

Taqwa is achieved through fasting to Ramadan. What is Taqwa? It is another name of God fearingness. As Mowlana Jalal Uddin Rumi writes in his Masnavi:

Harke tarsidaz hoque o taqwa guzid

Tarsad azwa jin inse o harke did."

Means: Those who fear God and attain taqwa are feared by jin inse and various evil forces.

How to attain, Taqwa?

It is through Towakkal (reliance upon God); Tauhid (reposing trust in oneness of God); Abadat (prayer) and 'huguri qalb' of heart.

The purity of heart (qalb) is attained by honest living (eating halal or legal and not haram (forbidden), worship and by controlling Nafse Ammara (bestial propensity).

The significance of Ramadan lies in the fact that Rojadar (faster) will purify his or her body and soul by fasting. Self-purification can be achieved by controlling animal instincts, lust, greed, anger, rancour, spite, malice, hatred, lying, falsehood, etc.

Quran was revealed in this holy month of Ramadan. In innumerable places of holy Quran and the sayings of the holy Prophet (SM) the importance and objectives of Siam

(fasting) is proclaimed by Almighty Allah.

According to the holy Prophet fasting is a shield against all evil forces. It can protect the faster from doing wrong and act as a guard against any danger lurking on the horizon.

According to the tenets of Islam those who have elevated their soul

only read Quran but also get the verses by heart, pause and think over it, and carry out research throughout the month of Ramadan.

Goethe, the German poet and thinker, stated the crying need of faith and belief in religion to the skeptics and atheists of the time by saying that if it is supposed that there is no God, we have to invent it.

rectification are achieved through fasting of Ramadan.

Man is the 'Ashraful Makhhlukat' -- best of the creation. Those who cannot acquire Taqwa during Ramadan are damn failure and the very purpose of Ramadan is defeated upon them.

At the end of holy Ramadan comes the happy Eid-day, day of

**How many of us pause and think over the sufferings of the ailing humanity and have-nots who have none to lament while they are pilgrims to the graves. There are many who have been starving for days together. Ramadan is the month of mercy or rahamat. Every faster should bestow mercy upon the indigent around him by alleviating their sufferings and by dispelling darkness by expanding mental horizon of the ignorant.**



The poorman's Eid market on the roadside.

through fasting have come out with flying colours; but who did not succeed in getting remission of their sins by dedication and devotion are utter failure. Deliverance from darkness is a far cry for them.

Fasting like prayer has many other benefits to offer to the devoted Muslims -- physical, mental, moral, psychological and spiritual.

Thus it is said that Iman or faith of a true believer is just like electric generator, source of all power and energy, here and hereafter.

Mowlana Rumi, in one of his couplets has beautifully expressed this theme of spiritual power: 'Human power can break stone and hill but spiritual power can bifurcate the moon'.

Ramadan is the month that is called festival of prayer or season of achieving Taqwa (La Allakum Tattakum) and the spring of Quran. Staunchest adherents of Islam not

The reason is obvious, without belief in religion, and food for the soul, human beings will become dull-dreary like robot, bereft of emotion and feelings. In that case, there will prevail chaos and confusion in the material world.

It is by looking askance at religion that the modern civilisation is falling into deep valley of degradation. Just have a glimpse of what is happening in the West in the name of modernism and culture. Think over the stupendous problems with which the whole world is crawling today.

Ramadan teaches us to inculcate in us divine qualities. 'Takhallako bil Akhlakillah' -- as the holy prophet said. It means that be inspired with divine qualities.

There are two aspects of human qualities -- angelic and bestial. By abstaining from eating and drinking, etc, during Ramadan, human beings attain angelic qualities and virtues. It is thus that self-purification and self-

rejoicing and merry-making. In the whole Muslim world this day is celebrated with colourful ceremonies and rituals. Those who do not keep fast and do not perform prayers during Ramadan, can hardly enjoy the Eid. They suffer from prick of conscience and a sense of guilt in their mind. They are looked down upon by their fellow brethren.

Ramadan is the month of fellow-feeling and brotherhood. By suffering from the torment of hunger and thirst a Muslim at this time can better realise the sufferings of others and his brothers and neighbours than at any other time of the year. Thus the milk of human kindness swells up in the sanctuary of his mind for the less fortunate and the deprived.

But how many of us pause and think over the sufferings of the ailing humanity and have-nots who have none to lament while they are pilgrims to the graves. There are

many who have been starving for days together. They sleep in silence in squalor. But there is none to think over their fate.

Ramadan is the month of mercy or rahamat. Every faster should bestow mercy upon the indigent around him by alleviating their sufferings and by dispelling darkness by expanding mental horizon of the ignorant.

But what we see today in our society and the country? Many rich men do not keep fast and do not perform prayer. They are sadly lacking in Iman or faith. They have materialistic outlook of hedonism -- "eat, drink and be merry, because tomorrow we will die." Such sensualist type of men and women, cannot think of doing good to others. They do not prove good Samaritan even to their dear and near ones. Become selfish and self-centred, out and out. But selfishness is next to meanness in social sense.

Rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam wrote:-

"One or two will be very fortunate and millionaire

But myriads of people will die in darkness,

This is not dispensation of Islam."

The money and property of Muslims is purified by zakat (Sadaqa). The month of Ramadan and the day of Eid-ul-Fitr are the proper time for distributing money and gifts among the indigent and have-nots. We must not forget about our duties and responsibilities towards the poor and the needy. He who serves mankind, serves God. This is the essence of Islam.

There is an ayat in a particular surah of the holly Quran that the deprived and have-nots have every claim to a portion of the property and possession of the opulent. Such prevalence of extensive poverty in plenty as we see in our society, runs counter to the tenets of Islam.

One of the ghazals of poet Kazi Nazrul Islam enjoin on us to do our duties towards those who are having a very hard time of it:-

Give away zakat to the poor and the needy

Let your hands be opened first and foremost,

See the injunctions of the Quran Hear the command of the Prophet Mohammad,

Muslims have not come on earth for luxurious life,

God has not given you immense wealth for you alone;

Hundreds of thousands Muslims cry at your door and corridor,

They are also sharer and partner of your wealth,

In stead of the zakat you will be conferred upon rewards of paradise.

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# The greatest of Muslim festivals

KAZI AULAD HOSSAIN

MOST Gracious and Merciful Allah has enjoined all Muslims of the world to observe "Siam" (Fasting) for full 30 days during the holy lunar month of Ramadan in Ayats (Verses) 183 and 184 of Sura Baqara (or the Heifer) of the holy Qur-an. Ramadan is the month of self-purification. So after observing Siam (Fasting) for full thirty days and following certain rigid concomitant religious duties meticulously besides offering 20 "rakats" of special "Tarabih" prayers while offering "Isha" (night) prayer every night, a Muslim faster is naturally inclined to think of diversion for entertainment and mirth. He thinks of some gastronomical delights on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, and we all know Eid-ul-Fitr is the greatest Muslim religious festival.

The term "Eid" means happiness, and that is why there is no other occasion which can match the bonanza and excitement Eid-ul-Fitr has to offer. We may recall here the kind sentiment of our holy Prophet (peace be upon him) about celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr. As the people of other communities, specially the people of Iran celebrated their New Year Day ("Nowraz") every year the holy Prophet (pbuh) was also not against harmless entertainment and mirth on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr festival.

But the pertinent question is while thinking of joyous atmosphere and harmless entertainment, while thinking of delicious dishes and new clothes on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr festival do we ever think for a moment that there are needy, helpless and indigent persons in every locality who can hardly meet two square meals a day, and there are widows and elderly women who are putting in their back-breaking labour every day from morning till evening without enjoying any weekly holiday in order to keep their body and soul together? We don't. The wealthy traders and tycoons, the moneyed and well-to-do persons, the rich and the affluent hailing from the upper strata of the society certainly owe a

duty to the poor and the indigent of the society who very often feel the sharp pinch of hunger.

According to a newspaper report we learn that a prospective buyer can think of buying a nice 3-piece Lehanga suit (Salwar, Kamiz and Dopatta) costing Tk. one lakh for his beloved daughter on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr festival, then he is certainly ready to spend at least a sum of Tk. 6/7 lakhs for his entire family (consisting of say, 5 members) in order to meet other expenses connected with celebration of the Eid-ul-Fitr festivity. There are such numerous well-to-do and resourceful persons living in almost all the areas/localities of the country but they are quite oblivious of the needs of their poor and indigent neighbours they are unmindful of the dire needs of the helpless orphans, widows and elderly women who live in the same area.

In this context we may divert our attention to Ayat (Verse) 7 of Sura (Chapter) Maun (or the Neighbourly Needs) of the Quran. In this Ayat Lord Creator Allah has taken a serious view of certain classes of people who are unmindful of the needs of helpless poor and indigent persons including their needy neighbours. In this Ayat Almighty Allah declares: "Seest thou one who denies the judgement (to come)? Then such is the (man) who repulses the orphan (with harshness), and encourages not the feeding of indigent, so woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers, those who (want but) to be seen (of men), but refuse (to supply) (even) neighbourly needs." So, the rich wealthy and resourceful people of the society should be cautious, careful and meticulous about spending money for the poor and indigent persons (including their neighbours) in view of the aforesaid very important Ayats of Sura Maun.

We may recall here what the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said about the needs of the neighbour. He has said, "He is not a true Muslim who takes his meal to his heart's fill keeping his neighbours unfed."

Medina Charter, we know, is the first written constitution of the world on the basis of which the first Islamic Republic was governed some 1400 years ago, and the holy Prophet (pbuh) had the unique honour and privilege to be at the helm of its affairs. It may be recalled here in this connection that a very important clause of this Charter, among others, was, "The weak will be protected." Needless to say that the indigent and poor people are helpless people of the society and they need protection. And the kind and considerate holy Prophet (pbuh) took positive action while adding an important clause like this in the said historic Medina Charter.

If a proud and audacious moneyed person, who is the owner of a huge bank balance, claims that he has earned his money by the "sweat of his brow" so he may or may not spend a portion of his money for the benefit of the poor and indigent persons, then he is sadly mistaken for in Ayat (Verse) 7 of Sura (Iron) of the Holy Quran Benign and Almighty Allah declares: "Believe in Allah and His Messenger and spend of that whereof he has made you trustees, and such of you as believe and spend (aright) theirs will be a great record."

So, it transpires from the aforesaid Quranic Ayat that a moneyed man is not actually the owner of the huge amount of money he has earned, he is simply a trustee of the money. The poor and indigent have definitely a share in that. Let the moneyed and wealthy persons of the society, who think in terms of enjoying, gastronomical delights on the occasion the Eid-ul-Fitr, also think that there are people including their near and distant relatives who are languishing in distress for want of proper diet and medicine. Islam is a complete code of life. It guides a man from cradle to grave. Sharing of mirth and merry-making with the poor and the indigent will certainly give the well-to-do an additional pleasure and Almighty Allah will also be pleased.

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A posh shopping mall: Serving the affluent.

# The joy with a difference

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earnest -- days in the morning of which are the Muslims supposed to say a two-rakat special congregational prayer. And, as in all other prayers in Islam, there is no discrimination of race and nationality, no difference between black and white, rich and poor, wise and ignorant, slave and master, haves and have-nots in this thanksgiving, congregational prayer of *Eid-ul-Fitr*.

The word Eid in Arabic means "Joy" and *Fitr* stands for "break of Fast" and symbolises "Return to Normalcy." *Eid-ul-Fitr* stands for the breaking of the fast or the joy of returning to normalcy. It reaches mankind every year as a Divine Boon, with a promise of joy and happiness, culminating as it does in the month-long period of *Siyam* and *Taqwa*, fasting and self-restraint, *Tarawih* and *I'tikaf*, prayers and penance.

*Eid-ul-Fitr*, the day of rejoicing and offering heart-felt gratitude to Allah through *Sadaqa-i-Fitr* and the two-rakat congregational prayer, in the morning, is indeed a great and auspicious occasion. It is so auspicious that even women, who are always equal participants in the hardship, austerities and pleasures of Ramadan, have been told by the holy Prophet (peace be upon him) to go out and say the 'Eid prayers in the Eidgah'. Even the nights of Eids

have special importance in the eyes of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "He who passes the nights of *Eid-ul-Fitr* and *Eid-ul-Azha* through prayers will never waver or be afraid on the Day of Judgement, while others will tremble or quiver on that fateful Day."

*Eid-ul-Fitr* is really an exceptional occasion, something totally different from an ordinary festival. The month-long fasting in Ramadan teaches a Muslim how to practice *Taqwa* or self-restraint in the most scientific way. Sex and food and drinks are prohibited for the every able-bodied Muslim from dawn to dusk during this holy month but these are permitted not only throughout the remaining eleven months but also from dusk to the small hours in the night even during the month of Ramadan -- a scientific scheme which is quite reasonable and bearable. This hitherto unknown system not only makes hardship of self-restraint bearable but also pleasant, and the temporary renunciation makes the fulfilment of the basic desires even more pleasant. Naturally, therefore, at the end of the month-long arduous *Siyam* and *Tarawih*, *Taqwa* and *I'tikaf*, *Eid-ul-Fitr* reaches us as a pleasant climax and teaches us that Islam is no static system of worship. It is a living and dynamic movement of thought

and action which frees men from the grip of animal instincts, from the ideas of artificial difference between rich and poor, high and low, and makes them act upon Divine Guidance. It teaches us over and over again that Islam is a comprehensive code of life, a perfect *Deen* which covers every aspect of life, and imposes the authority of Allah in all its dimensions, in every sphere of activity, in every domain of thought.

None can afford to ignore or fight shy of this auspicious day -- a unique prize-giving ceremony in which the Most Merciful and the Most Gracious Allah, in His infinite Mercy, Himself distributes the prizes to the winners who have successfully practised not merely fasting but *Siyam* in the true sense through prayers and penance, self-restraint and abstinence from vices in the right kiln of Islam.

History testifies to the fact that even a towering personality like the great Caliph Omar bin Khattab (RA) was found weeping like a child in the morning of an *Eid-ul-Fitr*. No ordinary man was Omar! A man of indomitable spirit, unbelievable courage, unshakable conviction, unimpeachable dedication, profound and absolute faith in Allah as he was, Omar had fought many a battle, had weathered many a storm, had tidied over many a crisis, had faced many a grave danger, but

had never faltered or wavered, had never felt frustrated or nervous, not to speak of weeping or trembling in fear. A Titan among men, his "walking stick," in the words of Emerson, "struck more terror into those who saw it than another man's sword." What is more, even the holy Prophet (pbuh) according to many a reliable authority, claimed that if there were any prophet after him, it would be Omar bin Khattab (RA). But even such a giant among men was trembling in fear like a lamb ready for slaughter.

Omar was weeping simply because even a salt of the earth like him was not sure whether his *Siyam* in the just concluded month of Ramadan had been accepted by Allah, simply because he knew it well that the joy of *Eid-ul-Fitr* was not meant for one and all but was really meant only for those *Rozdars* who had practised *Siyam* through *Taqwa* and *Tarawih* in Ramadan in the true light of Islam. If a grandee like Omar (RA) is not sure of his right to enjoy the joy of *Eid-ul-Fitr*, can ordinary and humble persons like us be sure that *Eid-ul-Fitr* brings for us a day of pleasure and joy and happiness? Where Omar trembles can small fries like us remain unnerved?

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# Eid-ul-Fitr and Islam

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of the person fasting in accordance with the tenet of Islam. You ask yourself as a Muslim (a person who believes in Islam) how far you are obliged to perform your fasting properly. This is a great learning in Islam. It teaches the Muslims how to maintain self-restraint (self-purification). The fasting of Ramadan symbolises a sort of Jihad (holy war waged against evils driving them out of the soul). During this period abstinence is a boon to an individual while charity is an opportunity for a wealthy Muslim to provide succor to the suffering humanity.

This month of Ramadan is also against the gluttonous greed of the affluent. They are warned to reduce their caprice and temptation. Thus, fasting inspires one for self-rectification. Through this learning none of the true Muslims can become the evildoer. This fasting also makes the mind of an individual balanced and patient towards recluses of purified soul where the spirit of love for the have-nots wakes up. A moral obligation among human beings builds up to bring about a serene and sacred compassionate feeling to keep from all of the social turbidity. At the end of the month of Ramadan comes the great day of Eid-ul-Fitr that is the

most ecstatic joy of charity.

Prior to saying prayer of Eid-ul-Fitr every able and affluent person among Muslims must pay Zakat (proportionate share of the price of property) and Fitr (charity) to the needy relatives or neighbours without any hesitation and after saying the prayer one must embrace another to confirm amity according to Islamic brotherhood. In this performance there should not be made any difference between the rich and the poor, high and low. Everybody must be treated equal irrespective of so-called social status. This is the glaring example of social uniformity in Islam. Eid-ul-Fitr does neither invite competition of fashion shows between the rich and the poor on any account nor allow undue privileges of unfair income or expenditure. This joyous day of great festival otherwise hardly entertain fun or frolics, pomp and grandeur, pride of passion or vaunt of riches. It is straight love for humanity as a whole. Be happy here making others happy. That is why distribution of sweetmeats among all irrespective of age, sex, caste or creed, Muslim or non-Muslim, poor or rich, high or low is in vogue among Muslims. And this cosmopolitan custom is continuing since such a great festival was started by the great Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (pbuh)

since his hijrat (migration) from Mecca to Yathrib (now Madinah) in 622 AD.

At that time the people of Arabia got influenced by the Persian culture and civilisation. They used to celebrate Nauroz and Mihrajan for a few days with funs and frolics, enjoying often vulgar dances of women and gambling, unusual violence and conflicts often led them to bloodshed. Moreover there was a gulf of difference between the rich and the poor in course of celebration of this new year's day (Nauroz) along with other festivals. These were absolutely incompatible with Islam. Hazrat Mohammad (pbuh) was shocked having seen such immoral and inhuman carnival. He rather introduced Eid-ul-Fitr to Islam for the Muslims. This is a huge congregation of people saying prayer to the Almighty Allah's blessings for the benefit of all irrespective of the haves and have-nots. And this great assembly of united people of all castes was throng with the great expectation of love and amity among all in the community. There is no bar of such assembly and congregation on the part of Muslim women also.

Religious ideals are not mere words of ethics. We must have them in our everyday life in practice. The

very simple adage to be considered is that practice makes a man perfect. Islam professes perfect unity of human beings. That is the reason why five times prayer in jamat (assembly) is obligatory for the Muslims. And each mosque is the local assembly house for the Muslims to strengthen the fortitude of faith without any distinction between the rich and the poor. This faith must have reciprocal effect both social and economic in order to make the community free from all material bonds and live peacefully. Eid-ul-Fitr is the proof of that large assembly of the faithful to have the test of fraternity. Let Muslims fortify that spirit of Islam faithfully by the grace of Almighty Allah.

Let us sing Nazrul's song in unison: "After the end of the fasting of Ramadan the Eid-ul-Fitr of grand pleasure has come ... Let's sacrifice our excess wealth to those have-nots expecting their share of our riches." And Allah's message must be remembered by every Muslim: "Behold, Allah enjoins justice, and generosity towards [ones] fellowmen; and forbids all that is shameful and all that runs counter to reason,"

Al-Quran, Surah, An Nahl; 90 (part).

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# *Eidul Fite*

## SPECIAL



The Daily Star  
THURSDAY NOVEMBER 3, 2005

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