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A Purpose For Every Work

There are essentially two component factors in any work which a man has to perform. The first thing is the purpose for which a work is done and the second thing is the particular shape of that work which is chosen to achieve that purpose. For instance, take the case of food your object in taking food is to remain alive and maintain your strength. The method of achieving this object is that you take a morsel, put it in your mouth, masticate it and push it below the throat.

This method is adopted by you since it is the most effective and proper one to achieve this object. But everyone of you knows that the main thing is the purpose for which food is taken and not the form and procedure of this action. What will you say if anybody were to make a

morsel of saw-dust or cinder or mud, put it in his mouth, chew and gulp it?

You will say only this that his brain is out of order. **Why?** Because this idiot did not understand the real purpose of eating and is suffering from the misunderstanding that only the aforesaid four component acts constitute eating. Likewise, you will call that person also mad who soon after taking the food vomits it by thrusting his fingers into his throat then complains that the benefits said to accrue from taking food have not been availed of by him and that, contrarily, he is daily getting lean and is on the verge of death.

This fool blames the food for his growing weakness little realizing that it is due to his own stupidity. He imagined, due to his intellectual deficiency, that life vitality could be got by fulfilling those requirements which constitute the act of eating. As such, he thought why should he sustain the load of food in his stomach? "Why not throw it out so that the stomach may become light?"

I have already fulfilling the requirements of eating", he surmises, Naturally he has himself to suffer the penalty of harboring such a foolish idea and then implementing it also. He ought to have known that until the bread gets digested after entering the stomach and having transformed into blood, is diffused into the whole body the vitality of life cannot be obtained.

Although outward actions are also necessary, because without them the bread cannot reach the stomach, yet the object cannot be achieved by merely fulfilling the outward actions. There is no magic in these actions that by merely fulfilling them, blood starts running in a wizardly manner in the veins of a man. Blood will be obviously produced according to the law prescribed by Allah. If you break it, you will kill yourself by your own hands.

Consequences of Considering The Outward As Real

If you ponder over the example I have just placed before

you in detail, you can understand why your 'Ibadat' have become inefficacious today. As I have already pointed out repeatedly, the greatest mistake of all is to regard the acts of Salah and fasting and their outward shape as real

'Ibadat' and you suffer from the delusion that whoever fulfilled these requirements performed the 'Ibadat' of Allah.

You are just like that person who thinks that performance of four acts, i.e. making the morsel, putting it in the mouth, masticating it and pushing it below the throat makes up the process of eating, and that whoever did these four things has eaten the food and so should receive the benefits of eating irrespective of whether he pushed down in his stomach mud and stone, or vomited the bread soon after eating it.

If you have a little sense then tell me how a man who is fasting and is thus engaged in the 'Ibadat' of Allah from morning till evening, can in the midst of that 'Ibadat' utter a lie and indulge in backbiting? Why does he quarrel at the slightest pretext and utter abuses from his mouth?

How dare he encroach on other people's rights? How does he indulge in acquiring illicit money and giving money to others illicitly? And having done all these things, he still thinks that he has performed 'Ibadat' of Allah? Does this not resemble the work of that person who eats cinder and mud and thinks that by merely completing the four requirements of eating he has actually done the job of eating.

Again Freedom From Restrictions After Ramadan

Then tell me how is it that when you are relieved after doing Allah's 'Ibadat' for about 360 hours throughout Ramadan all the effect of this whole exercise in piety disappears on the 1st of Shawal? You do during the 'Eid' days all that Hindus do in their festivals, so much so that in the cities even adultery, wine-drinking and gambling are resorted to on 'Eid' day. And I have seen some wretched people who keep fast during the day and drink wine and commit adultery in the night.

The general Muslims, by the grace of Allah, are not degenerated to that extent but after the end of Ramadan how many of you are there who retain some effects of piety and virtuousness on the second day of 'Eid' also? Which law of Allah is left unviolated? What part of your time is devoted to good deeds, and how much is selfishness reduced?

Result Wrong Conception of 'Ibadat'

Think and ponder as to what after all can be the reason for this? I assure you that its only reason is that the very meaning and purport of 'Ibadat' has become twisted in your mind. You think that mere abstention from eating and drinking throughout the day is called fasting and that this alone is 'Ibadat'. Therefore you observe it meticulously.

You fee the fear of Allah to that extent that you avoid every transgression which even slightly endangers the break-up of the fast so much so that even if the life is at

stake, you are not prepared to break the fast. But you do not know that being merely hungry and thirsty is not real ‘**Ibadat**’

but only a form of it. And the purpose of prescribing this form is to create in you the fear of Allah and love of Allah, and thereby develop in you so much strength that by repressing yourself, you are enabled to avoid the seemingly profitable things but which actually displease Allah, while, on the other hand, by controlling yourself you make yourself agreeable to those things which possibly entail risks and losses but definitely please Allah.

This strength can be developed only when you understand the purpose of fasting and make use of the practice you have gone through for curbing the corporeal urges, under fear of Allah and love for Allah, and then making these urges work according to the pleasure of Allah. But soon after Ramada you throw to the winds this practice as well as the virtues acquired from it just as a man after taking food vomits it by thrusting his fingers into his throat. In fact, some of you spew the virtuousness of the whole day soon after breaking the fast.

Now you yourself decide, is there in Ramadan and fasting a magic that by mere completing their outward shape you can acquire that strength which in reality should emanate from genuine fasting? Just as physical strength cannot be obtained from the bread until it is digested after entering the stomach and until it is transformed into blood and penetrates every vein in the same way spiritual power cannot be obtained from fasting until the person who keeps fast does not fully comprehend the purpose of fasting and allows it to permeate his heart and mind and dominate his thought, motive intention and deed.

Fat, Source of Becoming Pious

This is why Allah said after ordaining fasting : "**La'allakum tattaqoon**"

i.e. fasting is made obligatory on you, may be you become pious and virtuous. It is not said that you will certainly become pious and virtuous because this outcome of fasting depends on the perception and intention of the man concerned. Whoever will understand its purpose and will try through it to achieve its objective,

will become pious to the desired extent, but one who will not comprehend its purpose and will not even try to get at it, cannot hope to gain any thing out of it.

REAL AIMS OF FASTING

Abstention From Lying

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has drawn attention in various ways towards the real aim of fasting and has explained that to be hungry and thirsty without keeping in view the objective is in no way useful. He said : **"Whoever did not give up lying and practicing falsehood, Allah is in no need of his giving up food and water"**.

In another Hadith he said : "Many are the fasters whose fasting does not bring them anything except hunger and thirst and many are those who keep standing in the night but their standing does not bring anything except being awake in the night".

The purport of both these Ahadith is quite plain. It means that being merely hungry and thirsty is not by itself 'Ibadat' but

an instrument of performing real 'Ibadat'.

And real

'Ibadat'

consists in not violating the law of Allah for fear of Allah, and for the love of Allah an eager pursuit of every such work as would please Him, and lastly avoidance of satisfying corporeal urges as far as possible. Whoever remained heedless of this real 'Ibadat', unnecessarily caused inconvenience to his stomach with hunger and thirst. Why should Allah need to make him merely give up food and water for twelve to fourteen hours?

Faith And Self-Scrutiny

The Prophet has drawn attention to the real aim of fasting thus : **"Whoever observed fast imbued with faith and with the expectation of reward from Allah, all his past sins are forgiven"**. The reference to faith implies that the belief in Allah with a Muslim should remain fully fresh in the mind of a Muslim, Ihtisab denotes that man should be desirous of only Allah's pleasure constantly keeping an eye on his thoughts and actions to check if he is doing anything against the pleasure of Allah.

If, in accordance with these two principles, a person were to observe all the fasts of Ramadan, he will have all his past sins forgiven because even if he was once an unruly and disobedient slave he has now turned fully repentant to his master-and. **"A penitent is like one who has, as it were, never committed a sin at all"** this the Prophet said.

Shield For Protection From Sins

In another Hadith it is said : **"Fasts are like a shield (just**

as a shield is meant for protection from the enemy's assault, so is fasting for protection from Satan's attack)".

Therefore when a man observes fast he should (utilize this shield and) abstain from disorderly behavior. If anybody abused him or quarreled with him, the person who keeps fast should tell him : "Brother, I am fasting (do not expect from me that I shall take part in such activities of yours)".

Temptation of Goodness

The Prophet (sallallahu alaihi vasallam) has directed in other hadith that man while fasting ought to do more and more good works and should be eager to perform benevolent acts. Particularly during fasting, he must develop with full intensity a sympathetic sentiment for his other brothers because being himself in the throes of hunger and thirst he can all the more realize what is befalling other slaves of Allah in their plight of destitution and misery. It is related by Hadrat Ibn 'Abbas (rahmathullahi alaihi) **that the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi vasallam)** used to become especially kind and benevolent during

Ramadan.

No beggar in that period went empty-handed from his door, and the slaves secured emancipation.

Reward for Providing 'Iftar'

According to a Hadith the Prophet (sallallahu alaihi vasallam) said : "Whoever in Ramadan provide a person who is keeping fast with Iftar, this act will become a source of forgiveness for his sins and safety from Hell Fire and he will get as much reward as will the keeper of fast get without any reduction in the recompense of the latter".