

The Spirit of Ramadhaan

Selected Articles of
**Hazrat Moulana
Muhammad Ilyas Patel Saheb
(daamat barakaatuhum)**



**Published by:
Madrasah Ta'leemuddeen
Isipingo Beach**

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The writer, compiler, editors, and typesetters humbly request your du'aas for them, their parents, families, Mashaayikh and Asaatizah.

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Foreword

The blessed month of Ramadhaan holds a very special place in the heart of every Muslim, and is eagerly anticipated by one and all. While most people are aware of the abundant blessings, special mercies and tremendous rewards that are on offer in this auspicious period, not all manage to capitalize on this opportunity and improve their relationship with their Creator during this month of mercy.

In this regard, it is the pious servants of Allah Ta'ala who truly understand the objective of Ramadhaan and the crucial role it plays in the life of a Muslim. They thus value every second of this blessed month and strive to gain maximum goodness and blessings from it.

In order for us to benefit in this month and make significant spiritual progress, it is vital for us to have the correct mindset so that we understand the true spirit of Ramadhaan. This booklet is a collection of various articles from the Al-Haadi newsletter of the madrasah which were written by Hazrat Moulana Muhammad Ilyas Patel Saheb (daamat barakaatuhum). It is hoped that these articles will assist in shedding light on different dimensions of the spirit of Ramadhaan.

Since the articles have been gathered from the Al-Haadi newsletters that were written through various years, on different occasions, some degree of repetition in the articles is to be expected.

May Allah Ta'ala accept it, out of His grace and mercy, and make it a means of tremendous benefit for the Ummah.

Madrasah Ta'leemuddeen publications department.

Ramadhaan is Coming

As the most blessed month of Ramadhaan approaches, many people commence their “preparations.” Some businesses prepare themselves by stocking up for the bumper sales as people do their “Ramadhaan shopping” or “Eid shopping.” Housewives begin stocking their freezers in advance with the “Ramadhaan savouries.” When Ramadhaan arrives, in some quarters people will “welcome” this blessed month with some programme of recitation of the Quraan Majeed, talks, etc. Nevertheless, though stocking one’s business or freezer is totally permissible, it really has no link with the true preparation for Ramadhaan.

Ramadhaan is a month of devoting oneself to the worship of Allah Ta‘ala more than at any other time. It is a time of charging the batteries of imaan to a peak. It is a time to develop the noble qualities of patience and kindness towards one’s fellow beings. Ramadhaan is a gift to cherish, a treasure to value and an absolute boon and blessing to the Ummah of Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam). Thus the preparation for Ramadhaan must be in that line which will enable one to derive the maximum benefit from this month.

Programme

In order to prepare for Ramadhan, one should make a proper programme as to how one will spend this month.

There will be those fortunate ones who will manage to free themselves from all worldly activities and devote the entire month of Ramadhan for Deen. Such people should be extremely grateful to Allah Ta'ala for this favour and hence they should make the best use of every moment.

Many others will not have the same opportunity. Nevertheless, they too can use every moment fruitfully. Firstly, one should look at one's daily programme and determine which worldly activities could be totally given up in this month. Such aspects must be completely avoided. If something can be postponed until after Ramadhan, it should certainly be postponed.

Then decide what can be scaled down. For example, one may decide to re-open the business half an hour later in the afternoon and take some rest at that time so that one will be fresh for Taraaweeh Salaah at night. Perhaps one may decide to close up an hour earlier at the end of the day in order to devote that time to the recitation of the Quraan Majeed. This will not affect one's sustenance. That is fixed. In no aayah of the Quraan Majeed or in any hadeeth has it been mentioned that one will only be granted sustenance if one works from "eight to five." Rather, if one works from "nine to four" in order to devote the

rest of the time for Deen, Allah Ta'ala will grant one much more barakah in that time.

Besides this, while one is busy in one's daily activities, one could also at the same time be engaged in zikr of the kalimah and in istighfaar. The bottom line is that one should prepare for Ramadhan by planning one's time in advance.

Employers

Muslim employers should attempt to make some concessions for their Muslim staff in this month and encourage them to use that time for Deen. To whatever extent possible, their workloads should also be decreased.

Refraining from Sin

The above pertains to postponing or scaling down worldly activity which is permissible so that one could devote more time to Deen.

Generally, most people do engage in much 'ibaadah in this month. Besides the five daily salaah which is obviously compulsory, many also engage in nafl salaah, recitation of the Quraan Majeed, zikr, charity, etc. This is indeed wonderful and should be increased as much as possible. However, more

important than this is... absolutely refraining from all sin at every single moment.

Often in order to “pass time”, people engage in idle chatter even in the month of Ramadhan. This chatter more often than not involves one in gheebat (backbiting) — a sin that has been described as worse than zina (adultery) in the hadeeth. What type of fast is this, that a person refrains from lawful relations with his wife during the time of fasting, but engages in an act which is worse than zina? He refrains from eating the halaal flesh of permissible animals, but “eats” the haraam flesh of his fellow brother!

Ruining the Blessings

Likewise, many people piously comment: “In Ramadhan I only watch the news.” Can one ever avoid the zina of the eyes and ears when watching anything on the “Shaitaan box?” What is earned by fasting, is ruined in the “news.”

The month of Ramadhan is also not for wasting on sports grounds, whether playing or spectating. Similarly, it is not a month to “pass time” touring or going for aimless “drives.” By means of these things we end up ruining the blessings of this great month.

“Virtues of Ramadhan”

The preparation for Ramadhan must commence now. One has to approach Ramadhan with the correct concept of this gift of Allah Ta‘ala in mind and with the true perspective of this treasure in one’s heart. For this one must become fully acquainted with the extensive guidance that Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has given us in this regard.

For this purpose, one should commence reading the “Virtues of Ramadhan” by Shaikhul Hadeeth Moulana Muhammad Zakariyya Saheb (rahimahullah) immediately. Choose an appropriate time when the entire family can sit together and have this read out to them daily for ten minutes. Do not regard this as insignificant. Go ahead... try it out... and notice the difference.

To read it to one’s family is extremely important so that they too could become prepared for Ramadhan. Then perhaps the true spirit of Ramadhan will be kindled in the entire family. Perhaps it will then be a Ramadhan that will be a turning point in our lives. After Ramadhan has gone, the punctuality upon salaah, recitation of the Quraan Majeed, etc., and most importantly the refraining from sin will still be a part of our lives.

May Allah Ta‘ala enable us to use every moment fruitfully in this month.

The Guest Is Coming

When an extremely distinguished guest has announced that he will be arriving soon, preparations commence well in advance for that great occasion. Thereafter, from the moment he comes until he has finally departed, all attention is fixed towards him.

The Ummah is going to be visited very soon by a guest whose rank and status is beyond our imagination. The guest is the blessed month of Ramadhaan.

Yes, indeed. Ramadhaan is a guest that will come and very shortly depart. Unlike other guests, it requires nothing. Rather it grants such abundant blessings to those who will appreciate and honour it that these blessings cannot be achieved at other times. Should we then not be enthusiastic about the arrival of this month?

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) used to so eagerly await the arrival of the month of Ramadhaan that from the time the moon of Rajab was sighted he would make the following du‘aa: “O Allah, bless us in the month of Rajab and Sha’baan and allow us to reach Ramadhaan.” (Shu‘abul Imaan #3534)

All Sin

What is the true appreciation and honour of this most distinguished guest? Simply to immerse oneself in the remembrance of Allah Ta'ala.

The fundamental object of Ramadhan is a month long training to develop taqwa (piety). The fast, Taraaweeh Salaah, recitation of the Quraan Majeed, zikr, etc. are all for this same purpose.

The bottom line of taqwa is abstention from **all** sin. Thus if one engages in all acts of 'ibaadah but does not refrain from sin, he has defeated the purpose of Ramadhan. It is therefore vitally important that we totally abstain from **all** sin in this month. One has to be especially careful about guarding the eyes and ears from sin as well as refraining from backbiting since one falls into these sins very easily. If just this one month is passed diligently without the commission of any sin, insha-Allah the next eleven months will pass likewise.

As for nafl 'ibaadah, among the various good actions, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is reported to have exhorted the Ummah to engage excessively in the following four aspects in the month of Ramadhan: Recitation of the Kalimah, istighfaar (seeking forgiveness), begging for Jannah and seeking refuge from Jahannum. (Saheeh Ibni Khuzaimah #1887)

‘Eid Shopping

One aspect that has exceeded the bounds is “‘Eid shopping”. Most definitely the Day of ‘Eid is a joyous occasion.

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has encouraged that one should don the best clothing that he owns on this day. However, there is no mention anywhere that one **must** purchase new clothing, shoes, etc. for every member of the family, even if this means falling into debt. Simply, one must don the best clothing in one’s possession.

One evil of the present custom of “‘Eid shopping” is that the valuable hours of Ramadhan are spent going from shop to shop or sizing garments. That time which should have been spent in the recitation of the Quraan Majeed, zikr, etc. is wasted in elaborate preparations for ‘Eid. The true ‘Eid in reality is for that person who has fruitfully spent the precious moments of Ramadhan and has earned the forgiveness of Allah Ta‘ala.

Furthermore, ‘Eid is an Islamic occasion. Does it make sense that on this extremely auspicious Islamic occasion we are draped in Western fashion? At least on this day one should be attired in the sunnah clothing (for the entire day — not only until ‘Eid Salaah).

May Allah Ta‘ala enable us to use the month of Ramadhan profitably and may He save us from wasting its valuable moments, aameen

When Ramadhaan Comes...

Perhaps businessmen will understand this better than many other people. The month of December is that time of the year when the tills ring more than most other times of the year. However, no businessman just sits back and expects the till to continue ringing. Long before December he orders much more stocks and plans and prepares for the busy month. Finally, when the month comes he can be seen working much harder than the previous months. Try and encourage him to close shop a few hours earlier because he is looking “tired”, or urge him to ask half the customers in his shop to go and buy elsewhere because he has had enough...

Enough? When is it ever enough? Even a billion is not enough nor does he ever close shop earlier because he is “too tired”. Rather, had it not been for the fear of hold-ups and looting, he would have remained open till the late hours of the night so that the tills can go on ringing (as people used to do in the past).

But why does this business fervour and frenzy overtake people in this month? Simply because the reality of the rands

and cents is before our eyes. We see it, we feel it and its material value is embedded in the deep recesses of our hearts.

Season of Earning

That was the month of earning the world. Allah Ta'ala has also given us a month to earn the Hereafter. It is the month of Ramadhaan. It is that month wherein Allah Ta'ala has increased the rewards of a nafl act to the equivalent of a fardh act. The reward of a fardh action is multiplied by seventy times. Then we have been given the extra 'ibaadah of Taraaweeh Salaah.

Yes, indeed, it is the season of earning the Hereafter. It is the time of earning the mercy and forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala and gaining emancipation from the fire of hell. Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is reported to have said: "The first ten days of Ramadhaan are the days when the mercy of Allah Ta'ala is showered, the middle ten days are the days of forgiveness and the last ten days are the days when numerous souls are freed from the fire of Jahannum." (Saheeh Ibni Khuzaimah #1887) It is a month when the doors of Jannah are thrown open, the doors of Jahannum are closed and the Shayaateen are chained.

Truly indeed, a million Decembers cannot compare to the greatness of one minute of Ramadhaan. Hence just as we value every minute to earn the world and continue to strive to "make

more”, every minute of Ramadhan is to be utilised to the maximum benefit to earn more of the Hereafter.

Thus just as a sensible businessman does not close his shop in December to go to spectate sports, or go for some past time, the time of Ramadhan is also extremely precious and should not be wasted in such futile (and even sometimes sinful) activities.

Gross Ingratitude

In fact, the matter is much more serious in the case of Ramadhan. To while away the precious time of Ramadhan which could have been utilised in tilaawat, zikr, learning and teaching Deen, etc. in playing or spectating some sports or watching the haraam box, is tantamount to gross ingratitude to Allah Ta‘ala for this invaluable gift of Ramadhan. In this regard, Allah Ta‘ala warns us: “If you are ungrateful, verily my punishment is severe.” (Surah Ebrahim v7) Therefore no time should be wasted in such futile things.

May Allah Ta‘ala enable us to value this great blessing and earn maximum benefit in this mubaarak month, aameen.

Lifetime Opportunity

You have been given an opportunity of a lifetime. A business operates twenty-four hours a day. The owner wishes to take a holiday and has requested you to run the business for one month. The arrangement is that for every second that you will personally man the business, you will get paid twenty rands. If you have to leave the business for any necessity, the person who relieves you will get the money for the duration of time that you are out! You have obviously grabbed the opportunity with open arms.

Over-Time

First let the above scenario settle in the mind. Now imagine that the month of running the business has just commenced. A close friend phones to invite you to a lavish function. “You must come,” he urges. Your almost spontaneous reply would perhaps be: “I am sorry but I am very busy and will not be able to attend.” The first weekend comes. Your children want to “go out for a drive.” “Not today. I am very busy,” says their father.

The children's mother also wholeheartedly agrees. After all she is also dreaming every night about what she will do with the twenty rands per second that her husband is earning. Hence she does not ask to be taken anywhere. How can she even think of it? Twenty rands per second — and just for one month only!

And you... well obviously you are working beyond the limits of overtime. No time to eat in peace. Only the minimal amount of sleep. No shopping. No “drives.” No time to sit around with friends over coffee. And entertainment? Whatever is that? The very word sounds unfamiliar.

All this due to the once in a lifetime opportunity of earning twenty rands per second for one month.

Problems

Yet, if the person who slogged for the entire month to earn twenty rands per second... passes away on the thirtieth day, the wealth he earned will be of no use to him. He cannot take it along to his grave.

If he does live to use it, the tax-man will be there to first take his share. He will have to worry about how to protect his wealth. Besides this, he will have to answer on the Day of Judgement about how he earned it and where he spent it.

Generally, despite the abovementioned problems we will grab the opportunity of running the business for one month.

Petty Cash

Allah Ta'ala is also granting us a lifetime's opportunity. The month of Ramadhan with its unlimited blessings is here.

One month in earnings at the rate of twenty rands per second cannot even be called petty cash in comparison to the rewards that Allah Ta'ala grants and the blessings and mercy that He showers in the month of Ramadhan. Every Ramadhan must be treated as a once in a lifetime opportunity, since we have no idea whether we will live till the next Ramadhan.

What are the rewards of good deeds in the month of Ramadhan? The reward of every fardh (compulsory) act is multiplied seventy times while every nafl (optional) act earns the reward of one fardh out of Ramadhan.

It is important to understand the latter aspect in its proper perspective. Tahajjud (nafl salaah in the last third of the night) is an extremely great 'ibaadah. Great virtues have been narrated for this salaah. However, a lifetime of Tahajjud Salaah cannot equal one fardh of Fajr Salaah! Yet in the month of Ramadhan Allah Ta'ala grants us the reward of a fardh action for every nafl performed.

Entertainment?

Thus, can we afford to waste this time? Can we still have time for “drives?” Is it possible for a person who values Ramadhaan in a similar manner that he values twenty rands a second, to spend hours “eating out” at after Taraaweesh feasts, or have time for other idle pursuits? Can we afford to spend valuable time glued to the airwaves listening to the “opinions” and “views” of all and sundry in Deeni matters whereas that time could have been used to at least recite durood shareef?

And entertainment? Have we heard that word before??? Thus the last thing that any Muslim who values Ramadhaan will bother about is who somewhere in the world is whacking a little red ball all over a field or who is kicking a ball between two posts!!!

Shortest Taraaweesh

It also does not behove of people who value Ramadhaan to try to “save time” from the performance of ‘ibaadah. Many people “work out” the shortest Taraaweesh — where they will be able to leave in the shortest possible time and head for the food outlets where ample time will be whiled away.

Think of the twenty rands per second. We would break the records for over-time work. Thus in Ramadhaan we should break

the record for the amount of time spent in salaah, tilaawat (recitation of the Quraan Majeed), zikr, du'aa, etc. Ramadhaan is not a month to “save” time from the performance of these acts. Rather it is a month to engage every moment possible in these acts.

Four Things

Apart from salaah, tilaawat, etc., Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) has himself stressed upon us to excessively engage in some practices.

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is reported to have said: “In this month you should endeavour to perform four things in great number, two of which shall be to please your Rabb, while the other two shall be those without which you cannot make do. Those which shall be to please your Rabb are that you should recite the “Laa ilaaha illallah” in great abundance and make much istighfaar (beg Allah Ta‘ala’s forgiveness with “astaghfirullah”). And as for those two without which you cannot make do, you should beg Allah Ta‘ala for entry into paradise and seek refuge with Him from the fire of Jahannam.” (Saheeh Ibni Khuzaimah #1887)

One Month

While one should engage to the maximum in the above good deeds, the purpose of Ramadhaan must be kept foremost in mind, which is to acquire taqwa (Allah-awareness and piety). Thus together with the maximum amount of righteous actions, one must totally refrain from all sins.

One month of strictly conducting oneself in this manner will insha-Allah have the effect of enabling one to live the next eleven months in a similar manner — in the complete obedience of Allah Ta'ala.

Time is Money

We live in a world of import and export, a world in which most goods and commodities are available in most countries for most of the year.

However, despite the year-round availability, there are many goods that enjoy a ‘peak season’. Astute businessmen are those who identify this period and utilize it to their advantage. For farmers, it may be the season in which their crops are harvested, while for shop owners, month-end and December are a few of the periods that deliver peak sales.

Unique Opportunity

The season presents a unique opportunity for one to secure tremendous profits in a minimal period of time. Hence, the farmer who diligently tends to his fields and ensures that he is present for the harvesting season will likely enjoy a bumper crop. Similarly, the shop owner will open his doors on time and remain behind the counter for the entire day in order to tend to the flood of customers.

During the season, even if the rest of the world is on vacation, it is practically unimaginable for one to find these businessmen on holiday. They understand the pivotal role that the season plays in their success; if they remain focused and committed, they will reap the profits, and if they allow themselves to become distracted or while away their time, they alone will suffer the consequences.

Dynamic Effect

The dynamic effect of the season is such that if the farmer works hard in harvesting, he will make enough money to comfortably tide him over to the next season. However, if he neglects to harvest during the season, he will watch an entire year's hard work go to waste.

Likewise, it often happens that a shop owner who struggles to make ends meet for the entire year not only recovers his losses, but even profits handsomely in the crucial season.

Season of Taqwa

Just as other things have a special season; taqwa also has a special season – the month of Ramadhaan. From fasting during the day to performing Taraaweeth during the night, the entire month has been specially designed to assist a Believer in

harvesting a bumper crop of fruit, from the tree of taqwa, that he will continue to enjoy long after the blessed month has expired.

However, just as with other seasons, this will only be possible if one avails himself for this blessed month and expends all his energies in striving to secure the bargains it has on offer.

Ready-Made Opportunity

During Ramadhaan, the reward of every fardh act is multiplied seventy times, and for every nafl act carried out, one receives the reward of a fardh act. The Shayaateen are chained and announcements of mass forgiveness are made. Du'aas are readily answered and on account of sehri, it is easy to perform Tahajjud Salaah. In short, this blessed season provides all the ingredients that will assist us to acquire the commodity that can neither be imported nor exported, nor sold for that matter, as it can only be acquired through each individual manufacturing his own – the priceless commodity of taqwa.

However, this month is exactly that – a short period which will soon end. The window of opportunity is thus narrow, making time the greatest capital and asset that one could have.

More than Money

If the shop owner arrives at work two hours late, he will regret the business that he lost and lament the money that he could have made. For every minute of the two hours, he could have been serving customers and turning the numbers.

We often hear the adage **‘time is money’**. However, contrary to popular belief, **time is NOT money - it is far more valuable than money**. Whereas money can always be later recovered if lost, time can never be recovered - and it is for this reason that time is our single greatest asset. In the race to secure the rewards of Ramadhaan, it is those who are particular regarding their time that profit the most.

Destructive Distractions

In this regard, along with the ready-made opportunities to benefit are a host of ready-made distractions. After-Taraaweeh braais, meeting friends for a chat, a quick run to the mall, an ‘Eid bargain-hunting’ excursion – these are all seemingly innocent activities.

However, when thoroughly scrutinized, we realize that the braai ‘burnt’ two or three hours of our time, whereas a normal supper would have been concluded in a maximum of thirty minutes. The run to the mall for essentials ended in us being

tempted into more stores than we intended, effectively dissolving our precious capital with every passing second. The excursion to purchase 'Eid-goods at the best prices may have saved us a few valuable Rands but undoubtedly cost us invaluable hours and minutes. When time holds far more value than money, it is well worth spending more Rands if it will result in us saving precious time.

Even meeting friends can be detrimental as apart from killing our time with idle chitchat, these gatherings often culminate in backbiting and other similar sins.

Media 'Mania'

In the opinion of many, the uncrowned yet undisputed champion of 'killing time' is social media in all its various guises and forms.

The magnetic effect of the smartphone transcends metal and hence it is the human eye that remains fixated to the screen. Whether in the masjid, or while attending a programme for spiritual upliftment, or at the time of sehri when du'aas are accepted – instead of maximizing and benefiting from these opportunities, there are many who become Media 'Maniacs' and while away the irrecoverable moments on their smart phones. Indeed, it appears as if the smart phone may have been named as

such, since after it enters the hand of its user, it is the only one that seems to be ‘smart’.

With even the West sounding the alarm over addiction to social media and the innumerable ills that accompany it, it is high time that we ‘switch off’ our phones and plug into the spiritual current of Ramadhan instead of our power banks.

For this purpose, just as we fast by shunning food and drink from dawn to sunset, let us make a resolution to ‘fast’ from all forms of media for all the 24 hours of every day in the Month of Ramadhan. Be it remaining abreast with the news, keeping up to date with Instagram or following on Facebook - we should initiate a complete ‘fast’ from all these time-consumers during this blessed period and afterwards as well.

Thus let us make this Ramadhan very profitable by correctly investing the capital of time that we have been blessed with. Insha-Allah we will reap the rewards in this world and the Hereafter.

Crucial Time

The word “curse” itself evokes an unpleasant feeling. How much more terrible it would be if that curse is invoked by the greatest angel of Allah Ta‘ala? Surely any true Believer would do everything in his capacity to avoid becoming a target of that curse.

Ka’b bin ‘Ujrah (radiyallahu ‘anhu) reports that once Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) called the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) close to the mimbar (pulpit). He then ascended the mimbar and upon ascending each step he said ‘aameen’. When he descended, the Sahaabah (radhiyallahu ‘anhum) asked him the reason for having said ‘aameen’ on each step. Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) replied: “When I ascended the first step Jibreel (‘alaihi salaam) appeared before me and said: ‘Woe to him who found the blessed month of Ramadhan and let it pass him by without gaining forgiveness.’ Upon that I said: ‘Aameen’. When I ascended the second step he said: ‘Woe to him before whom your name is mentioned and he does not recite durood on you.’ I replied: ‘Aameen’. When I ascended the third step he said: ‘Woe to him in whose presence both his parents or either one of them attains old age and

(through failure to serve them) he is not allowed to enter Jannah.' I said: 'Aameen'. (Shu'abul Imaan #1471)

In the light of the above hadeeth, can any Believer be casual and careless about the great month of Ramadhan and risk the curse of Jibreel ('alaihis salaam)? Can any person afford to let this great month go by without having exerted himself in order to gain the forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala? How then is this forgiveness gained and how is it lost?

Sincere Repentance

The answer to both the above questions are clear as day light. Make sincere taubah (repentance), keep all the fasts, perform all the salaah including Taraaweeh Salaah, recite as much of the Quraan Majeed as possible, engage in Deeni efforts that are totally in conformance to the sharee'ah and keep yourself occupied in other righteous deeds. Insha-Allah the mercy of Allah Ta'ala will pour down upon you and complete forgiveness will be attained.

Incurring the Curse

However, failing to sincerely repent, neglecting the fasts, salaah and other obligations or engaging in any sin will deprive one of

the forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala. This also exposes one to the curse of Jibreel ('alaihis salaam) mentioned above.

The month of Ramadhan is a month of reaping tremendous rewards and blessings, not a time to incur curses. It is a month when rewards of righteous actions are multiplied manifold and blessings are showered down. It would be the height of ingratitude and also utter foolishness to ignore these blessings and become involved in sins.

Let us use this crucial time to gain the best rewards and gain the forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala. If we fail, we could become the target of the curse of Jibreel ('alaihis salaam). Then who can save us?

May Allah Ta'ala enable us to be steadfast on Deen and to refrain from all sins, aameen.

Object of Ramadhaan

In a sweltering hot day your throat has become parched. You are in the privacy of your home and the refreshingly cool water is within hand's reach. You desire to drink it, but you do not. Why? Simply because you are fasting and while fasting you cannot eat and drink.

If somebody prompts you to nevertheless drink it and says: "Nobody is watching," you will immediately rebuke him with the words: "But Allah Ta'ala is watching!"

Allah Ta'ala is Watching!

Subhanallah! Allah Ta'ala is watching. Allahu Akbar! Allah Ta'ala is All Hearing, All Knowing, He is Omnipresent. He sees and knows when we cheat while fasting, thus we resist all temptations of food, drink and lawful conjugal relations from dawn to dusk.

We have learnt the lesson of taqwa. We have learnt that lesson which the fasting was meant to teach us. Allah Ta'ala is

watching! Yes, Allah Ta‘ala is watching! Every time there is an urge to eat or drink while fasting, the voice from within cries out: “Allah Ta‘ala is watching!” Dozens of times daily for an entire month this reality is reaffirmed. Allah Ta‘ala is watching.

So deeply is it embedded in the heart that by the time Ramadhan is over, a person becomes conscious of Allah Ta‘ala to such an extent that he is now guided by an inner force that propels him in the direction of righteousness and turns him away from sin.

Attaining Taqwa

The fasts of Ramadhan were prescribed for the purpose and object of attaining taqwa. This is clearly declared in the Quraan Majeed. Taqwa simply is to obey the commands of Allah Ta‘ala and refrain from all sin,

The increased rewards for ‘ibaadah (worship) in Ramadhan and all the blessings of this great month should be considered as the bonus. The object is taqwa. If one performs an abundance of salaah, completes the recitation of the Quraan Majeed thirty times and engages in many other acts of ‘ibaadah, but fails to give up sins – one has failed to achieve the object and purpose of Ramadhan. One has failed to firmly embed the reality of taqwa in the heart, the taqwa that cries out “Allah is watching” whenever one contemplates committing any transgression.

Demands of Taqwa

The dictates of taqwa are not restricted to abstaining from drinking, gambling, adultery, transacting in interest and other such vices.

Indeed, taqwa demands that while abstaining from all the above vices one also observes taqwa in one's business. When the temptation to cheat the customer beckons, or when one is tempted to buy stolen goods, or to indulge in fraud, at that time also the heart should cry out "Allah is watching" and it should restrain one from the sin.

Similarly, taqwa demands the fulfilment of the rights of the husband/wife. It also demands the joining of family ties. It demands respect for the elders and kindness for the young.

Taqwa entails, among other aspects, being honest and clear in all monetary dealings and social interactions. Hence when there is a wedding or funeral, or at the time of distributing the inheritance of the deceased, the same level of Allah-consciousness must be displayed as was apparent when refraining from drinking the cold water while fasting.

Likewise, when the laws of purdah are violated, does the heart cry out "Allah is watching"? Or when one intends to watch something on TV, which will most definitely involve one in zina of the eyes and ears, does one hear the voice from within: "Allah

is watching,” as a result of which one refrains from that sin? The same pertains to the shar‘ee aspects of appearance and clothing.

How often have we done things to appease and please even the enemies of Allah Ta‘ala and Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam)? How often have we abandoned the dictates of taqwa in order to earn a few coppers? Now is the time to sincerely repent. It is the time to say “Allah is watching” and to do everything to please Him. It is a time to acquire taqwa.

Abstain from Sin

This then is the object of Ramadhan. This will only be achieved if we conduct ourselves in this great month with taqwa. Or else the object of Ramadhan will be defeated. Hence Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is reported to have said: “He who does not forsake lying and other futile actions, Allah Ta‘ala has no need for him to give up his food and drink.” (Saheeh Bukhaari #1903)

Thus together with fasting, performing salaah, reading the Quraan Majeed, serving the cause of Deen, etc., one must totally abstain from every sin in the month of Ramadhan and adorn oneself with taqwa. Insha-Allah this will then carry one along for the rest of the eleven months to abstain from all sins.

May Allah Ta‘ala enable us to make this Ramadhan a month where we will truly attain taqwa, aameen.

Ramadhāan and Reformation

Multiplied rewards for good actions, an increase in one's sustenance, the showering down of the Mercy and forgiveness of Allah Ta'ala... and many other bounties.

These are all bonuses and gifts from Allah Ta'ala during the great month of Ramadhāan. However, the object of Ramadhāan is to acquire taqwa (piety) as has been clearly explained in the Quraan Majeed.

Taqwa can be explained in many ways. In short, it refers to becoming the true servants of Allah Ta'ala. Transforming oneself to become the true servant of Allah Ta'ala is what is termed as spiritual reformation.

The month of Ramadhāan is the ideal time for this reformation — wherein we have the opportunity to change our lives for the better forever, not just for the month of Ramadhāan. In order to achieve this reformation, the vital issue is to appreciate this blessed month and use every moment correctly.

Doubtful and Futile

While there are numerous points in this regard that could be discussed here, much of it can be summarised in the following two aspects:

1. Leave out everything that is futile and doubtful.
2. Spend time in only those things that will certainly earn one the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala and make the path to reformation possible.

If a person seriously gives up what is doubtful, the possibility of him becoming involved in haraam is extremely remote.

Forsaking futile aspects simply means that to leave out any such aspect which, by refraining from it one will not suffer any harm in this world or in the Hereafter. Engaging in futility happens in actions, talk and even thoughts. An effort must be made to forsake all of them. Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is reported to have said: "It is from the excellence of the Islam of a person that he forsakes all things that are futile." (Sunan Tirmizi #2317)

The idle chitchat, whether in private conversations, in public, on social media or on the air, is generally at the very least futile. Very often, it stoops to back-biting and other sins. We should therefore not spoil our Ramadhan in this manner.

‘Eid Preparations

While every moment of Ramadhaan should be spent in gaining the multiplied rewards of this blessed month, unfortunately much time is wasted on elaborate ‘Eid preparations. ‘Eid shopping, preparing ‘Eid outfits and other extensive and elaborate preparations long before ‘Eid, is not in keeping with the spirit of Ramadhaan.

In short, we should make every effort to use the time correctly. Give up the doubtful aspects and leave out the futile things. Insha-Allah the object of spiritual reformation will be achieved.

Interior Decor

Interior decor is an art. People spend much time, effort and money on their homes, offices and businesses in order to get that special finish and make it look as impressive and appealing as possible.

Great pains are taken to ensure that the furniture “blends in” with the surroundings. The carpets are made to match the curtains. Just any ordinary bulb sticking out of the ceiling is unthinkable. A variety of light fittings are positioned in the proper places so that the light may reflect in the best way. The right “tone” must be captured in the colour co-ordination. Several other trimmings and trappings are added for the final touch.

Allah Ta‘ala has also given us a month for interior decoration – a month to decorate our hearts. The month of Ramadhaan is a time to truly make our hearts sparkle and shine and to look truly impressive in the sight of Allah Ta‘ala.

Clean-up

The first part of interior decoration is to remove the cobwebs, scrape the rust and do a general thorough clean-up. The clean-up of our hearts requires sincere taubah. We will have to scrape off the rust of sin, remove the filth of jealousy, sweep out the dirt of malice, scrub away the pride and generally wash away all the evil within us with the flowing tears of earnest and sincere repentance.

Simply Weep

The preferable procedure of repenting is very simple. Dedicate some time in solitude. Perform a proper wudhu (ablution). Take care to fulfil all the sunnats and etiquettes of wudhu. Thereafter get on to the musalla (prayer mat) and perform two rakaats of nafl salaah with the intention of the Salaah of Taubah and then let the tears of repentance flow. If the eyes cannot cry just let the heart weep.

Weep over our utter ingratitude. Beg Allah Ta'ala's forgiveness by saying: "O Allah... You granted me a heart to fill with love for You... but I filled it with the love of the world... with even haraam love... O Allah forgive me. You granted me legs and feet to walk to the masjid and to places that You love ... but I walked to the dens of vice... please forgive me. You gave me

hands to raise unto You, to hold the Quraan Majeed and to assist the needy... but I used it to touch what You forbade, to indulge in illicit “chatting” on my phone and to take away what belonged to others... forgive me. O Allah... I ate the sustenance that You provided... and then used the energy to disobey You... please forgive me....” This is just a little example. Simply weep over every sin perpetrated and wash the heart clean.

However, when washing the heart with the tears of repentance the detergent that is compulsory to use is the deep regret for having transgressed the laws of Allah Ta‘ala and the firm determination that one will not return to the sin in future.

Allah Ta‘ala Knows

After removing the filth, rust, and dust, the internal decor must commence. The purpose of fasting is to decorate the heart with taqwa – the fear of Allah Ta‘ala and the constant awareness that **“Allah Ta‘ala is watching”**.

While fasting one refrains from all eating and drinking even if one is very hungry and thirsty. Why? Simply because it is the command of Allah Ta‘ala... and **Allah Ta‘ala is watching...** and **Allah Ta‘ala knows**. Likewise, no more gambling, drugs, zina, illicit chatting, looking at haraam, stealing, etc., because... **Allah Ta‘ala is watching... Allah Ta‘ala knows**.

Taqwa also requires the fulfilment of all the obligations of Deen, salaah, zakaat, fasting, hajj, etc. The heart with taqwa indeed is a billion times more sparkling and impressive in the sight of Allah Ta'ala than the most expensive decor that money can buy!!!

Decorate the Heart

Ramadhaan is also a month to decorate the heart with various other important trimmings and accessories. Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) is reported to have said that Ramadhaan is a month of patience and compassion. (Saheeh Ibni Khuzaimah #1887)

Therefore, paint the heart in the soft shades of patience. Tint it with the colour of tolerance. Give the heart an elegant look by draping it with compassion.

With patience and compassion, we can change the world around us. Patience will help us to be obedient to Allah Ta'ala as well as to be content. Compassion will enable us to feel the suffering of millions of people around us and make us do something to reduce their pain. The millions squandered in wasteful and even forbidden things will then easily and happily be channelled to the poor and needy.

Together with the above, the beautiful trimmings of humility, generosity, forgiveness, etc. have to be included in this heart to

make it truly shine. It will shine in the sight of Allah Ta'ala and His angels. It will sparkle on the day one passes away – that day when we will be removed from the shining car, the magnificently decorated home, the glittering jewellery and all the other trimmings and accessories. It will shine on the Day of Judgement – when all our beloved possessions of this world would have long become dust.

This Ramadhaan let us not waste much time in acquiring glittering garments, dazzling jewellery and shining shoes to decorate ourselves for 'Eid. While cleanliness and neatness are essential on the outside, the greatest effort must be made to decorate the inside – the heart.

This nevertheless does not happen merely by reading an article. We will have to spend time in Allah-fearing company and environments of taqwa. These qualities will then insha-Allah rub off on us.

May Allah Ta'ala enable us to truly adorn and decorate our hearts, aameen

Just Hunger

Can one ever imagine what are the rewards for fasting? Impossible! It is beyond human comprehension.

Allah Ta'ala's declaration has been narrated by Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) in the words: "Fasting is for Me and I will (personally) give its reward." (Saheeh Bukhaari #7492) How then can anybody ever comprehend the magnitude of the rewards for the fasting person?

However, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is also reported to have said: "Many a fasting person gets nothing from his fast except hunger." (Sunan Ibnu Maajah #1690) While the obligation of fasting may be fulfilled, the fast is devoid of its spiritual benefits and the unimaginable rewards are lost.

The reason for this severe deprivation is the indulgence in sin while fasting. Hence Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has said: "The one who does not give up sinful talk and sinful actions, Allah Ta'ala has no need for him to remain hungry and thirsty." (Saheeh Bukhaari #1903)

Therefore, the crucial factor in Ramadhan is to give up all sin. Avoiding all sin for this one month will become a launching pad to refrain from sinning in the future.

Tragedy

In Ramadhan people give up many of the vices that they were involved in. Yet some vices continue unabated. The utter tragedy is that many people while engaged in these sins are not even conscious of the evil they are involved in.

One of the most common major sins that many people heedlessly engage in is backbiting, or listening to such talk. In the Quraan Majeed, Allah Ta'ala has likened backbiting to eating your dead brother's flesh!!! As a result of backbiting, the rewards of the fast are destroyed. Moreover, one's good actions will be given away to the person one has spoken ill of.

Chatting

Another widespread sin is haraam "chatting" and conversations. This refers to communication with any non-mahram (one with whom nikaah is permissible) without any genuine necessity. Hence all idle talk and chatting is completely prohibited.

Therefore, make this Ramadhan a haraam-chat free Ramadhan. Insha-Allah, this will become the means of forsaking this sin forever.

Killer-Disease

One of the spiritual killer-diseases for all times, and especially during the month of Ramadhan, is the misuse of the eyes. Looking at non-mahrams, haraam pictures, videos, visiting immoral sites on the internet etc., kills the heart spiritually. As a result, all the enthusiasm for 'ibaadah and righteous actions vanishes.

Therefore, let us make the fasts of this Ramadhan true fasts by abstaining from all sin.

Express Taraaweeh

The special gift of Allah Ta‘ala to His servants, the gift that was granted to Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) beyond the seven heavens on the occasion of Mi’raaj, the gift that brings the servant closest to Allah Ta‘ala... this gift is indeed the bounty of salaah.

Hence in the month of Ramadhaan, the month of getting closer to Allah Ta‘ala, the Ummah has been granted much more salaah to perform — the Salaah of Taraaweeh. However, this gift will only take us closer to Allah Ta‘ala if it is appreciated and performed with due care.

Unfortunately, due to lack of appreciation for this great gift, some people prefer an “express Taraaweeh.” The result of such an “express Taraaweeh” is that one destroys the salaah.

40 Sujood

Rasulullah (sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam) is reported to have said: “A person is closest to Allah Ta‘ala while he is in sajdah.” (Saheeh Muslim #1083) In the state of sajdah, he has placed his

forehead onto the ground and lowered himself to the utmost. Thus when he humbles himself in this manner, he becomes closest to Allah Ta‘ala.

In the month of Ramadhaan Allah Ta‘ala has showered His special mercy and given us forty more opportunities to get closer to Him. In the twenty rakaats of Taraaweeh Salaah, a person will perform sajdah 40 times. With each sajdah he will get closer to Allah Ta‘ala.

However, to gain this proximity by means of salaah and performing sajdah, the salaah and sajdah must be performed correctly. Especially in the case of Taraaweeh Salaah, many people desire that the Taraaweeh Salaah should be performed at “top speed.”

A salaah that is performed in such haste that:

- The recitation of the Quraan Majeed is unclear,
- The rukoo’ and sajdah are performed haphazardly,
- The waajib aspect of i’tidaal (performing every posture properly without haste) is not fulfilled in the qaumah (standing posture after rukoo’) and jalsah (sitting between the two sajdahs),
- The durood at the end of the salaah is omitted,
- The salaah is performed in such a manner as if it is a burden which one merely wants to get over with,

... then such a salaah takes a person further away from Allah Ta'ala. The salaah itself curses the person for having destroyed it.

Bargain Five Minutes?

The month of Ramadhan is a month to exert oneself in the 'ibaadah of Allah Ta'ala. To be on the lookout for the place where Taraaweeh Salaah finishes ten minutes earlier than other places, just so that one can get "leave" earlier, is against the spirit of Ramadhan.

Undoubtedly, it is necessary that the huffaaz should consider the condition of the people since there are often weak and sick people in the congregation. Thus while performing the salaah properly with all its etiquettes; they should recite the Quraan Majeed clearly with tajweed at a good pace. Also, the tasbeehs in rukoo' and sajdah should be recited with ease so that the congregation can also recite it thrice with ease. However, to "bargain" for five and ten minutes, which is then often spent chatting outside the masjid, is completely against the spirit of this blessed month.

Therefore, appreciate the gift of salaah, the 40 sujood (plural of sajdah) in Taraaweeh Salaah and get closer to Allah Ta'ala. Do not destroy this golden opportunity — merely to save ten minutes.

‘Eid

Discussing ‘Eid before Ramadhaan even commences may seem strange. Though this is indeed unusual, such a discussion is extremely necessary if one wishes to truly enjoy ‘Eid in reality. The reality of ‘Eid can only be attained if one spent a true Ramadhaan.

While ‘Eid is certainly meant to be a joyous occasion, the true happiness of ‘Eid should be understood in its proper perspective. Consider the situation of a student who has spent the entire year at an institution. At the end of the year a celebration is held. He is wearing the expensive new outfit that he bought especially for this occasion. All varieties of treats have been prepared. The happiness in the atmosphere is enchanting. However, he has just received his results. The results state that he has failed. What occasion will he celebrate? What will he rejoice over? ‘Eid should be considered in a similar manner.

The month of Ramadhaan was especially given to the Ummah to acquire the wealth of taqwa (consciousness of Allah Ta‘ala). Allah Ta‘ala declares: “O you who Believe, verily fasting was prescribed upon you just as it was ordained upon those before

you so that you may attain taqwa.” (Surah Baqarah v183) Taqwa entails the forsaking of every disobedience of Allah Ta‘ala.

One who has spent his Ramadhaan in various forms of ‘ibaadah (worship) but has not given up sin, has not attained taqwa. What will he celebrate? What will he rejoice over? The only difference is that one’s results of Ramadhaan are not received “in black and white” in this world. However, every person can, to some extent, judge for himself whether he has passed or not.

Reality of ‘Eid

The reality of ‘Eid is encapsulated in some couplets attributed to Shaikh ‘Abdul Qaadir Jailaani (rahimahullah). If the message of these couplets is taken to heart, insha-Allah one will truly have an ‘Eid in reality:

ليس العيد لمن لبس الجديد

إنما العيد لمن أمن من الوعيد

‘Eid is not for the one who has worn new garments

*‘Eid in reality is for the one who has gained safety
from the warnings (of punishment)*

The message expressed here is clear. The joy of ‘Eid is for the

person who, by his obedience to Allah Ta‘ala, has gained safety from the warnings of punishment that have been sounded in the Quraan Majeed and the ahaadeeth against those who engage in disobedience.

Adorning oneself with new garments does not achieve anything. Indeed, adorning oneself with the garments of taqwa will gain the blessings of both worlds. Hence, how tragic it is that people spend hours, rather days, to get the “right” ‘Eid outfit. In the process numerous aspects that are against the dictates of taqwa are also perpetrated. This is besides the fact that every moment of Ramadhaan wasted is like millions lost. Therefore, one should not make new clothes a fundamental necessity. It is sunnah to wear the “best” clothes **that one owns on the Day of ‘Eid**, not necessarily something new.

ليس العيد لمن ركب المطايا

إنما العيد لمن ترك الخطايا

‘Eid is not for the one who rides a smart conveyance

‘Eid is for the one who has left out sins

Driving a fancy car is no measure of success. The person who has forsaken all sins has acquired taqwa — the object of Ramadhaan. He is indeed successful and has reason to rejoice and celebrate. ‘Eid is for him.

ليس العيد لمن تبخر بالعود
إنما العيد للتائب الذي لا يعود

‘Eid is not for the one who is perfumed with ‘oud

‘Eid is for the one who repents and does not return to sin

The one who has repented and remains steadfast upon his repentance will pass on the Day of Judgment. He will then enjoy perpetual ‘Eid.

Ramadhaan Specials

The day of ‘Eid at the end of Ramadhaan will come and go. In order to truly deserve celebrating on that day, we must dedicate ourselves to acquiring the object of Ramadhaan. We will have to spend our minutes of Ramadhaan in a correct manner. If hours are spent shopping for “Eid Specials” in Ramadhaan, while the “Ramadhaan Specials” given by Allah Ta‘ala in the form of increased rewards is lost, it will indeed be very tragic. Our ‘Eid will then be a very superficial one.

May Allah Ta‘ala grant us the ability to spend our time correctly in Ramadhaan and grant us a true ‘Eid, aameen.