

The month of Sha`ban is one of the meritorious months for which we find some peculiar instructions in the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . It is reported in the authentic *ahadith* that the Holy Prophet

ﷺ used to fast most of the month in Sha`ban. These fasts were not obligatory on him but Sha`ban is the month immediately preceding the month of Ramadan. Therefore, some preparatory measures are suggested by the Holy Prophet

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1. The blessed Companion Anas reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked,

"Which fast is the most meritorious after the fasts of Ramadan?" He replied, "Fasts of Sha`ban in honour of Ramadan." [ﷺ (ﷺ)ﷺ]

2. The blessed Companion Usama ibn Zaid reports that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ

"Messenger of Allah, I have seen you fasting in the month of Sha`ban so frequently that I have never seen you fasting in any other month."

The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied:

That (Sha`ban) is a month between Rajab and Ramadan which is neglected by many people. And it is a month in which an account of the deeds (of human beings) is presented before the

Lord of the universe. so, I wish that my deeds be presented at a time when I am in a state of fasting." [بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ]

3. Ummul Mu'ineen `Aishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا سَأَلَتْ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ says,

"The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to fast in the whole of Sha`ban. I said to him, 'Messenger of Allah, is the month of Sha`ban your most favourite month to fast? He said, 'In this month Allah prescribes the list of the persons dying this year. Therefore, I like that my death comes when I am in a state of fasting.' (رواه البخاري)

4. In another Tradition she says, "The Holy Prophet ﷺ would sometimes begin to fast continuously until we thought he would not stop fasting, and sometimes he used to stop fasting until we thought he would never fast. I never saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fasting a complete month, except the month of Ramadan, and I have never seen him fasting in a month more frequently than he did in Sha`ban" [(رواه البخاري)]

5. In another report she says,

"I never saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fasting in a month so profusely as he did in the month of Sha`ban. He used to fast in that month leaving only a few days, rather, he used to fast al-most the whole of the month. [(رواه البخاري)]

6. Ummul-Mu'mineen Umm Salmah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا says:

"I have never seen the Messenger of Allah fasting for two months continuously except in the months of Sha`ban and Ramadan." [رواه البخاري]







4. Sayyidna Mu'adh ibn Jabal رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

"Allah Almighty looks upon all those created by him in the middle Night of Sha`ban and forgives all those created by Him, except the one who associates partners with Him or the one who has malice in his heart (against a Muslim)". [((

Although the chain of narrators of some of these Traditions suffers with some minor technical defects, yet when all these traditions are combined together, it becomes clear that this night has some merits peculiar to it, and observing this night as a sacred night is not a baseless concoction as envisaged by some modern scholars who, on the basis of these minor defects, have totally rejected to give any special importance to this night. In fact, some of these Traditions have been held by some scholars of hadith as authentic and the defects in the chain of some others have been treated by them as minor technical defects which, according to the science of hadith, are curable by the variety of their ways of narration.

That is why the elders of the ummah have constantly been observing this night as a night of special merits and have been spending it in worship and prayers.

### What should be done in this night?

In order to observe the Night of Bara`ah, one should remain awakened in this night as much as he can. If someone has better opportunities, he should spend the whole night in worship and prayer. However, if one cannot do so for one reason or another, he can select a considerable portion of the night, preferably of the second half of it for this purpose, and should perform the following acts of worship:

**(a) Salah:** Salah is the most preferable act to be performed in this night. There is no particular number of Rak`at but preferably it should not be less than eight. It is also advisable that each part of the salah like qiyam, rukoo' and sajdah should be longer than normal. The longest surahs of the Holy Qur'an one remembers by heart should be recited in the salah of this night. If someone does not remember the long surahs, he can also recite several short surahs in one rak`ah.



reason, like illness or weakness or being engaged in some other necessary activities. Such people also should not leave themselves devoid of the blessings of this night. They should observe the following acts:

(i) To perform the salah of maghrib, `isha' and fair with jama`ah in the mosque, or in their homes in case of their being sick.

(ii) They should keep reciting the dhikr, particularly the one mentioned in para (c) above, in whatever condition they are until they sleep.

(iii) They should pray Allah for their forgiveness and for their other objectives. One can do so even when he is in his bed.

(f) The women during their periods cannot perform salah, nor can they recite the Holy Qur'an, but they can recite any dhikr, tasbeeh durood sharif and can pray Allah for whatever purpose they like in whatever language they wish. They can also recite the Arabic prayers mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the hadith with the intention of supplication (and not with the intention of recitation).

(g) According to a hadith, which is relatively less authentic, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went in this night to the graveyard of Baqi` where he prayed for the Muslims buried there. On this basis, some of the fuqaha hold it as mustahabb (advisable) in this night to go to the graveyard of the Muslims and recite Fatihah or any other part of the Holy Qur'an, and pray for the dead. But this act is neither obligatory nor should it be performed as regularly as an obligatory act.

### What should not be done in this night

1. As mentioned earlier, the Night of Bara`ah is a night in which special blessings are directed towards the Muslims. Therefore, this night should be spent in total submission to Allah Almighty, and one should refrain from all those activities which may displease Allah. Although it is always incumbent upon every Muslim to abstain from sins, yet this abstinence becomes all the more

necessary in such nights, because committing sins in this night will amount to responding to divine blessings with disobedience and felony. Such an arrogant attitude can invite nothing but the wrath of Allah. Therefore, one should strictly abstain from all the sins, particularly from those mentioned in the Hadith No. 3 quoted earlier in this article, because these sins make one devoid of the blessings of this night.

2. In this night some people indulge in some activities which they regard as necessary for the celebration of the Night of Bara`ah, like cooking some special type of meal, or illuminating houses or mosques, or improvised structures.

All such activities are not only baseless and innovated in the later days by ignorant people, but in some cases they are pure imitation of some rituals performed by non-Muslim communities. Such imitation in itself is a sin, let alone to perform it in a blessed night like the Night of Bara`ah. The Muslims should strictly abstain from all such activities.

3. Some people spend this night in holding religious meetings and delivering long speeches. Such activities are also not advisable, because these acts can easily be performed in other nights also. This night requires one to spare himself for the pure acts of worship only.

4. The acts of worship like Salah, recitation of the Holy Qur'an and dhikr should be performed in this night individually, not collectively. The Nafil Salah should not be performed in Jam'ah, nor should the Muslims arrange gatherings in the mosques in order to celebrate the night in a collective manner.

On the contrary, this night is meant for worshipping Allah in solitude. It is the time to enjoy the direct contact with the Lord of the Universe, and to devote one's attention to Him and Him alone. These are the precious hours of the night in which nobody should intervene between one and his Lord, and one should turn to Allah with total concentration, not disturbed or intermitted by any one else.

That is why the Holy Prophet observed the acts of worship in this night in total seclusion, not accompanied by anyone, not even by his favourite life companion Sayyidah `Aishah ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ ﷺ, and that is why all forms of the optional worship (Nafil `ibadah), are advised by him to be done in

