

Shab-e-Bra'at - The Night of Seeking Redemption

-by Mawlana Hazrat Abul Fatah Syed Nusrat Tashrifullahi Sahib

Muslims have observed the night of the fourteenth of Sha'baan from the time of Prophet SAS, as a night for especially seeking forgiveness of our sins from the Merciful God. The word Bra'at means Redemption. Several traditions (Ahadith) of Prophet SAS tell us that in this particular night the Grace and Mercy of our Lord are showered upon His subjects and their prayers are heard.

A few of the traditions are given below:

1. Ibn Maja reported a Hadith, narrated by Aisha RZ, wife of the Prophet (along-with a full chain of narrators), as follows:

"Ummul Mu'mineen Aisha RZ said that during a night I did not find the Prophet SAS. I went out to search him. I found him in Baquee (graveyard). His head was lifted towards sky. H asked me 'Aisha! Do you fear that Allah and His Messenger would do any injustice with you?' I replied I do not fear that but I thought you have gone to visit some of your wives. Thereupon, he said that 'Verily Allah, the Most High descends over the horizon of the world in the middle night (15th night) of the month of Sha'baan and forgives sins of the people more than the hair of the sheep of Bani Kulb (a tribe known for a large number of sheep possessed by them).'"

2. Ibn Maja also reports a Hadith narrated by Ali RZ (with the names of chain of narrators) as follows:

Ali Ibn Abi Talib RZ narrated that the Messenger of God SAS said that when it is the 15th night of the month of Sha'ban, worship in the night and observe fast the next day because verily Allah descends towards the horizon of the world from the sunset of that night and says that:

"Is there anyone who seeks redemption from his sins so that I redeem his sins? Is there anyone who seeks provision (Rizq) so that I grant him his provision? Is there anyone who is suffering with troubles so that I bestow well-being to him etc.... until it is dawn."

3. Ibn Maja reports another tradition narrated by Abu Musa Ash'ari, a companion of the Prophet SAS as follows:

The Messenger of God SAS said to me that on the 15th of Sha'ban, Allah comes into manifestation and forgives the sins of all except the polytheists (mushriks) and the backbiters. He has reported one more tradition from Abu Musa Ash'ari, which is similar to the above tradition.

Many more traditions of the Prophet SAS can be quoted to show how much rewarding is the worship during this night and especially in the latter half of it.

However, there are some groups amongst Muslims, who oppose waking up for worship in this night. They argue that the traditions regarding this night are weak. To be true, their negative arguments are very weak because we find numerous verses in the Qur'an and numerous sound traditions of the Prophet SAS, which describe and promise great rewards of waking up for sometime every night for worshipping. For example Qur'an says about the people who would be in paradise as follows:

"Surely the God fearing shall be in the gardens and fountains, taking whatever their Lord has given them; they were good-doers before this, Little of the night would they slumber and in the hours of early dawn they used to pray for forgiveness. [51:15-18]

"They forsake their beds of sleep while they call their Lord, in fear and hope, and they spend in charity." [32:16]

The Prophet SAS was commanded by His Lord:

O Thou folded in garments Stand (to prayer) by night, But not all night, Half of it, or a little more, and recite the Qur'an In slow, measured rhythmic tones. [73:1-4]

God, the Almighty commanded His Prophet SAS that:

"And as for the night keep awake a part of it as an additional prayer (Tahajjud) for thee: soon will thy Lord Raise thee to a station of praise and glory." [17:79]

One should consider for himself, if keeping awake for sometime during every night for prayer is so rewarding for the Prophet SAS as well as for his humble followers, why the night in the middle of Sha'ban alone should be singled out for not awaking and not praying.

Moreover, if the traditions (Ahadith) like those quoted above which are ignored and rejected by these people saying they are weak (and which are in fact in consonance with the above verses of the Qur'an), happened to be sound, we shall be missing the great bounties of the Lord promised to be bestowed on His humble subjects in this great night. Hence without being misled, we should make sure that we keep awaking during this night worshipping our Lord with utmost devotion, love and adoration, as our forefathers have been traditionally doing for centuries.

How to invoke Mercy of the Lord during the Shab-e-Bra'at or Night of Redemption:

1. Be with Wuzu (Ablution) throughout the night as far as possible. And when Wuzu is lost, take a fresh ablution and offer two Raka'ats of Wuzu - Greeting Prayer, immediately after taking an ablution.

2. Start performing Zikrullah (Remembering God under the breath) and continue it up to the sunrise. The tongue should not be used while performing Zikrullah. Try to keep attention of your heart towards your Lord. Do not waste time in idle talk with friends.

3. Say Magrib and Isha obligatory (Farz) prayers with congregation (jama'at). So also, the Fajr prayer in the morning should be offered with the congregation.

4. Everyone is answerable for the obligatory prayers lost by him in the lifetime. We must offer the Qaza (make-up) prayers to save us from being answerable in the grave. The best way of offering these Qaza prayers, traditionally followed, is to offer five or seven day's prayers in this night. If it is not possible for any reason, at least three day's prayers (5 obligatory and one Witr wajib, makes one day's prayers) may be offered. For Niyat (words to make intention) please refer to the book "Charag-e-Deen-e-Nabawi." We may pray God to accept these Qaza prayers and exonerate us from remaining answerable for the prayers lost by us in the lifetime.

5. According to the sayings of the Holy Prophet, the servant is more close to God while he is prostrating than in any other condition. Hence he should pray as much as he wants while he is in prostration. We do not raise our hands for supplicating. We invoke while we are prostrating.

6. Whenever the Wuzu is lost, take a fresh Ablution and offer two Raka'ats of Wuzu-Greeting Prayer and in the end offer a Sajdah (prostration) and say the Munajaat as per the procedure. Then stay prostrating and most humbly pray from the depth of your heart, first and foremost for a firm and strong Faith (Iman) to be granted. And then for a determination to hold it fast till the last breathe. This may be prayed for your loved ones also. Pray for enabling us to live as per our Faith and to act according to what pleases our Lord and keep away from what displeases Him. This is the most opportune time to pray for the great bounties of His Love and Vision.

We may most humbly beg for forgiveness of our sins and our lapses in following the religion of God and in performing our obligatory duties. We may pray for difficulties in our life to be relieved and our problems to be solved. We may pray for the health and well-being for ourselves and for our loved ones. We may invoke for granting Halal provision, (Rizq-e-Halal) for ourselves and our brothers and sisters in faith. Also we may invoke for peace and well-being of all the fellow human beings.

7. More and more time should be devoted to Zikrullah (remembering God) because it is obligatory.

8. Reading Qur'an for sometime is rewarding. However, reading with meaning and understanding is more rewarding and reading with a resolve to follow what it demands from us and with a determination to keep away from what it forbids, is most rewarding.

9. Our fortunate brothers and sisters who regularly offer Tahajjud (late night prayer) may offer it before the end of the night. Others may keep remembering God till the dawn.

10. Those who want to observe fasting (SAUM or roza) next day may eat their Sahri (meals before dawn).

11. Offer Fajr prayer in congregation.

12. Stay in Zikrullah (remembering God) up to the sunrise.

May Allah, our Lord accept our prayers and absolve us from our sins during this great Night of Redemption. Amen!