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ISLAM

## *Sabr* creates a peaceful society

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Ramadan is the seventh month of the lunar calendar. According to the Islamic teaching Muslims must observe fasting in this month. The form taken by the fast is abstinence from food and drink from sunrise to sunset. It begins after the sighting of the new moon of Ramadan and continues on a daily basis up to the end of the month. As to this *Hadith*, abstaining from food and drink is only the external form which fasting takes. The real inner purpose is something else. And that is, to prepare oneself for a divine mission — to live in peace — in the complete sense of the word.

The Quran says: "And God calls to the Home of Peace." (10:25). This means that God wants to see a peaceful society. A peaceful society is a result of peaceful persons. Therefore, peace can be established only when every single unit of society is ready to live in peace. Only those persons can live in peace who are ready to remain patient, regardless of the circumstances. The fact is that everyone is born with different tastes and everyone is free to follow his own agenda. That is the law of nature, due to which it is impossible to establish uniformity in society.

In such a situation, the question arises as to how peace is to be established in society? According to Islam, the only answer is the magic three-lettered word: *sabr* (patience). *Sabr* is the key to having a peaceful society. A peaceful society requires avoidance of friction, tolerance, positive thinking, and the ability to retain one's emotional equilibrium, even when provoked.

Fasting is a training course that develops this kind of positive behaviour. Abstinence from food is a kind of symbolic abstinence. Fasting, in its true sense, inculcates the spirit of self-control for living a self-disciplined life. The month of fasting is a period designed to enable every member of society to develop this culture of self-discipline.