

Fasting and its Masails

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. The month of Ramadan itself has tremendous significance in our life. We completely change our lifestyles and working schedules in this month. Following is a translation of some of important aspects of fasting, as taken from one of the fiqh books.

Types of Fasting

1. **Fardh** - Fasting for the entire month of Ramadan
2. **Sunnah** – Those fast which Prophet Muhammad (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) kept and encouraged others to keep e.g. fasting on the 9th and 10th of Muharram, 15th of Shaban, 9th of Dhil-Hijjah (day of Arafah) etc.
3. **Mustahab** – All the fast besides the fardh and sunnah are mustahab e.g. fasting on Mondays and Thursdays.
4. **Haraam (Unlawful)** – It is haram to fast on five days during the year. They are Eid-u-fitr, Eid-u-adha, and three days after Eid-u-adha(ayyamul-Tashreeq).

The intention (Niyyah)

The intention of fasting is necessary. If a person abstains from all those things that break one's fast without intention, the fast will not be valid. It is not necessary to express the intention verbally, and the intention in heart will suffice. However, it is preferable to express the intention verbally as well.

The intention of fasting

Wa bisawmi ghadinn nawayitu min shahri Ramadan

I intend to keep the fast for tomorrow in the month of Ramadan

The time of making the intention lasts up to midday (zawwal). However as some scholars are of the opinion that it should not be delayed at all after dawn, thus it is strongly recommended that one intends his fast from before dawn. The hours of a day of fast are from subh sadiq (true dawn) to sunset.

The prayer at the time of ending fast

Allahumma inni laka sumtu wa bika aamantu wa alayka tawakkaltu wa ala rizq-ika aftartu.

O Allah, I fasted for you, I believe in You, I put my trust in You, and I break my fast with Your sustenance.

Desirable (Mustahab) Action in Fasting

1. To eat Suhur (the food to be taken prior to beginning the fast in the morning).
2. To delay the Suhur up to a little before dawn (subh sadiq)
3. To end one's fast immediately after sunset by consuming something and not to delay in doing so.
4. To break one's fast with dry or fresh dates if available. If dates are not available, then water is an alternate.
5. To make intention at night.

Disliked (Makruh) Action in Fasting

1. To chew gum, rubber, plastic items or other such things.
2. To taste any article of food or drink and then spit it out.
3. To collect one's saliva in the mouth and then to swallow it trying to quench thirst.
4. To intentionally delay a bath that has become necessary until after dawn.
5. To use tooth paste or tooth powder to clean one's teeth. It is permitted to clean using miswaak (tooth stick) of any type.

6. To complain of hunger and thirst.
7. To gargle more than necessary, or to take water too far up the nostril when cleaning the nose. If one needs to perform ghusl while fasting, he should gargle and take water up the nostrils only to the extent that he is sure the water does not enter the throat. Then after he has broken his fast, he should perform those two actions again (since he no longer has to worry about ruining his fast).
8. To quarrel, argue, or use filthy or indecent language.
9. To backbite, tell a lie, or swear etc. They are sinful acts even when one is not fasting. Therefore they entail greater sin when fasting.

Nullifiers of the Fast

There are two types of nullifiers of the fast.

1. Those which require make-up (Qadha) of the fast
2. Those which require both make-up (Qadha) and expiation (Kaffarah) of the fast

Qadha- To keep a single fast in place of the one that is broken.

Kaffarah- A penalty of observing sixty continuous fasts followed by the missed one. If a person is unable to keep these 60 fasts for some valid reason e.g. sickness, then one has the option of choosing from one of the following four options:

- A. Feed sixty poor people to their fill for two meals
- B. Feed one poor person two meals a day for sixty days
- C. Give 60 poor persons 3 ½ lbs. of wheat, rice or its value in cash or food grains
- D. Give to one poor person not less than 3 ½ lbs. of wheat, rice or food grains etc. or its value in cash for sixty days.

Nullifiers which require Make-up (Qadha) only

1. Anything put by force into the mouth of a fasting person which is consequently swallowed.
2. Water accidentally passing down the throat while gargling, even though conscious of one's fasting.
3. To vomit a mouthful intentionally or to return any amount of vomit down the throat.
4. Intentionally swallowing a pebble, piece of paper or any item that is not normally used as food or medicine.
5. Swallowing something edible, equal to or bigger than a grain of gram (a chick pea), which was stuck between the teeth. However if it is first taken out of the mouth and then swallowed, it will break the fast whether it is larger or smaller than the size of a gram.
6. Putting oil into the ear or nose (includes medicinal ear and nose drops)
7. Inhaling snuff into the nostrils or some medicine through the mouth (e.g. asthma medicine) [if somebody suffers from acute asthmatic reactions and breathing becomes extremely difficult then it is permissible for them to use the medicine, thereby nullifying their fast. He will need to make-up that fast, but expiation is not required, and insha'Allah he will not be sinful for breaking the fast].
8. Swallowing the blood from the gums if the color of the blood is more than the saliva with which it is mixed.
9. To eat and drink forgetting that one is fasting and thereafter thinking that the fast is broken, eating and drinking again.
10. To continue eating and drinking after subh sadiq (true dawn) or to break the fast before the sunset sets in, due to a cloudy sky or a faulty watch etc, and then realizing one's mistake.
11. To apply medicine to the anus.
12. For women to apply medicine in to the urinary organs.
13. Smoking.
14. For women to begin her menses during the fast.

Nullifiers which Require Both Make-Up (Qadha) and Expiation (Kaffarah)

1. Eating, drinking or breaking the fast in any other manner without a valid reason.
2. Thinking that the fast is broken, after applying kohl (surmah) into the eye or rubbing oil on the head, etc. and then to eat or drink intentionally.
3. To take any medicine intentionally (i.e. through the mouth or applied through the nose).
(Note: intravenous or intramuscular injections do not break the fast, when taken for medicinal purposes and not to give strength to the body).
4. To have marital relationship.

Things Which Do Not Nullify the Fast

1. To eat or drink something forgetfully (regardless of how much).
2. A mosquito, a fly or any other object going down the throat unintentionally.
3. Water entering the ears.
4. Dust or dirt going down the throat.
5. Swallowing one's own saliva.
6. Taking an injection (for example insulin or flu shot).
7. Applying of kohl (surmah) into the eyes.
8. Taking a bath to keep cool, or for any other reason.
9. Rubbing oil onto the body or hair.
10. To vomit unintentionally.
11. Applying perfume or some scent. It is not permitted to inhale the smoke of incense stick while fasting. It is also not permitted to smoke cigarettes or inhale its smoke.
12. Brushing the teeth without toothpaste or powder e.g. using a miswaak, or a clean brush etc.
13. A wet dream does not break the fast.

People Exempted from the Fast of Ramadan

1. Sick people if their health is likely to be seriously affected by fasting. They should make up the loss, a day for a day, when they recover after Ramadan.
2. A musafir (a traveler who is undertaking a journey of more than 48 miles and does not intend staying more than 14 days at his destination). However, it is preferable or a traveler to fast in Ramadan than keep qadha later, provided the journey is not a tiresome one.
3. If it is feared that hunger or thirst will lead to one's death, it is permitted to break the fast and make it up later.
4. Women in menses (haydh) or postnatal bleeding (nifas). They should make them up later, preferably before the next Ramadan.
5. Note that those people exempted from the fast of Ramadan do not give compensation (fidya) for the fast: they will only make-up that fast once they are able.

Compensation (Fidya) for the Fast

1. A very old person who does not have the strength to fast or a very sickly or diseased person who has no hope of recovering after Ramadan should give fidya for each fast he missed of Ramadan.
2. The compensation for a fast is similar to that of a missed fardh or wajib prayer i.e., to give 3.5 lbs of wheat (approx. 1.6 kg), or 7 lbs of barley (approx. 3.2 kg), or the equivalent in cash or kind.
3. If, however, an old or sick person gains strength or recovers after Ramadan, he must make-up all the missed fasts and whatever was given as compensation will be considered charity (sadaqa) for him.

Additional Regulations

1. No one is allowed to fast for another (sick or fit) person.
2. Children should be encouraged to fast, but should not be forced to complete the fast up to sunset if they are unable to bear the hunger.
3. If a person's fast breaks due to any reason, he should continue not to eat or drink anything for the rest of the day. It is necessary (wajib) to abstain from eating or drinking for the rest of the day and act like a fasting person.
4. This is the same ruling for a woman whose menstrual periods ends after the morning. She cannot fast that day, and she cannot eat or drink, but she should remain like a fasting person.

Prohibitions to be observed in Ramadan and At All Times

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| 1. Speaking without purpose. | 2. Being vulgar or rude. | 3. Being irritable. |
| 4. Telling lies. | 5. Backbiting. | 6. Arguing or fighting. |
| 7. Being boastful and arrogant. | 8. Swearing. | 9. Eating doubtful food. |
| 10. Looking at undesirable things. | 11. Listening to objectionable speech. | |
| 12. Gossiping. | 13. Committing sins. | |

Ramadan, The Month of Gain or Loss

It is a gain for those who spend the month in attracting the mercy of Allah (swt), and asking for forgiveness from Him for their wrong doings, and thereby seeking freedom from hell fire. As a hadith has it, that the first ashara (ten days) of Ramadan are the days of mercy, the second ashara (ten days) is the days of forgiveness, and the third one is the days of freedom from the hell fire. For others, it's a month of loss, if all previous sins are not forgiven, loss to extent that they lose the benefit of more than 83 years of life in one night. The Qur'an describes Laillatul-Qadr (the Night of Power) as better than one thousand months.

In general, the Muslims take this auspicious month as the month of fasting. Luster to its sanctity is added with the revelation of the Qur'an, so we should complete its recitation at least once in this month. The Ummah take fasting as an act of worship; but as to how this act is not visible! Saum (fasting) is not a visible act of worship (ibadat), but an honest and sincere obedience to Allah (swt). In Islam, obedience (ita'at), and worship (ibadat), go hand in hand and maybe used as interchangeable words. Saum also establishes a criterion for halaal and haram, right and wrong, good and bad, lawful and prohibited. All things and all actions within the frame work of guidance are good and use, and beyond that, are bad and abuse. It projects a relationship between Iman and Islam. It helps build a paragon of good moral character free from show-off, and hypocrisy. It teaches overall self control and self restraint: of eyes, of ears, of tongue, of instincts, of feelings, even heart and mind. For God conscious people, this month is a special one for self accountability. For fasting, not only that Allah will reward the servant Himself but as the hadith says, He offers Himself as a reward.

STAYING HUNGRY IS NOT THE PURPOSE OF FASTING.