

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Basic Teachings of Islam

Sawm– Fasting

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Virtues of Fasting

- Hadrat Abu Huraira (ra) reports that the Blessed Prophet said:
 - "All the good deeds of believers are increased from ten to seven hundred times except for fasting.
 - Allah says; fasting is for Me and I alone will give reward for it as I wish, since the person has given up his food and passions for My pleasure.
 - There are two joys for the fasting person: a joy at time of breaking the fast and a second joy at the time of meeting his Lord on the day of Judgement.
 - To his Lord, the bad breath of the fasting person's mouth is better than the odour of musk."

The Dreadful consequences of missing the fast

- Abu Huraira (ra) reports that Holy Prophet said:
- "Whoever misses a single fast of Ramadan without an excuse or illness will never be able to make up for it even if he fasted for eternity."

Learning Objectives

- The above saying of Holy Prophet sets the scene for today's presentation.
- We will learn:
 - Who has the obligation to fast
 - Who can postpone the fasts
 - Valid reasons for missing the fasts
 - What invalidates the fasts
 - What does not invalidate the fasts
 - What to do if a fast is invalidated

Who must fast?

- Fasting is obligatory on every adult Muslim who is
 - sane,
 - healthy
 - not travelling.
 - For women there is the additional condition that she should be clean and not be in her monthly period or in the postnatal bleeding period.

Who are exempt from fasting

- Following categories of people are exempt from fasting:

The fasting of an insane person

- Insane people are not obliged to perform worship.
- For insane people, worship is not obligatory on them because they have been deprived from intellect which is the real cause of all obligations.
- The Blessed Messenger has said:
 - "The pen of recording has been lifted from three kinds of people; the sleeping until he wakes up, the child until he attains puberty and the insane until he becomes sane." (Ahmad)

Children's fast

- Fasting is not compulsory on a child till he reaches the age of puberty (around 12 years of age).
- But parents or guardians should train him to fast from the early period so they get into the habit of fasting.

The fasting of a traveller

- In sharia, a travelling person is one:
- who begins his journey with an intention,
- travels for more than 48 miles,
- and stays at another place for less than 15 days.
- When a person qualifies as a travelling person, he has the option of keeping the fast or postponing the fast and make up for it on his return after Ramadan.

The fasting of a traveller

- However, if the journey is not difficult then its much preferred to fast during a journey.
- Now days, travelling to London or going to different country by plane is very easy.
- Food is also readily available during the journey.
- Therefore, a person must judge how difficult his journey is and whether he should postpone his fast.

The fasting of a traveller

- Its important to remember that an existing fast cannot be terminated due to starting of a journey.
- For instance, if a person was fasting, then during his fast he starts his journey, now it is impermissible for him to break his fast.
- Only if during the journey, it gets too difficult for him to maintain his fast, then he is allowed to end his fast.

A sick person's fast

- If a person becomes too ill during the month of Ramadan and finds it difficult to keep the fast due to his illness, he is allowed to miss the fast.
- **He must make up the missed fasts after the end of Ramadan.**
- If a person was fasting and becomes ill during his fast, he should try his best to complete the fast.
- If he is too sick to complete his fast, he is allowed to terminate his fast.

A sick person's fast

- Similarly, if a person fears that his illness will get worse or it will cause delay in recovery of health then he is exempt from fasting until he gets better.

A sick person's fast

- It is important to understand that a sick person cannot miss his fast on his own presumptions, doubts and on his own will.
- He needs to get professional advice from trustworthy sources, such as a fully qualified doctor or a person who has already suffered the same illness.
- If a person is advised by sincere and trustworthy people that his health will worsen, then he is allowed to miss his fast.

A sick person's fast

- If a person is on medication and has to take regular medication throughout the day, he must seek his doctor's opinion on missing the medication during day time.
- If his doctor advises him against missing the medication, then the person is exempt from fasting.

A sick person's fast

- Similarly, if a person suffers from asthma and has to take inhaler regularly, he is exempt from fasting.
- However, if a person is not sure that he will suffer asthma attacks during fasting, **he must fast.**
- If during fasting he suffers from asthma attack and has to take the inhaler, he is allowed to terminate his fast.

A sick person's fast

- Such people who have missed or terminated their fasts due to illness, must make up for the missed fasts after Ramadan.
- If there is no hope of getting better then people can make-up for their missed fasts by feeding a needy person twice a day for every missed fast.
- So if a person missed two fasts, he needs to feed two people twice a day (or he can feed one person for two days).

A sick person's fast

- Rather than giving food to poor and needy people, equivalent amount of money can also be given to them.
- If a permanently-ill person who had missed his fasts and consequently had paid his ransom for missing the fast, if he ever gets better in future, he still has the obligation to make up the missed fast.

A sick person's fast

- Fasting can also be terminated if there is very severe hunger and thirst which becomes uncontrollable and causes undue anxiety and pain; however he must make up for them later on.
- There is no atonement for terminating the fast due to sickness.

A sick person's fast

- If a person is in such a profession that involves a lot of physical exertion, and he believes that if he keeps the fasts he will lose his health and thus be unable to make a living, then for this person it is **impermissible** to miss the fast till he suffers from deterioration of health.

The fast of the elderly

- If a person is really old and weak and unable to fast at any time of the year and there are no prospects of him getting better then it is permissible for him not to fast and just pay the ransom.
- If he cannot afford to pay the ransom being poor and needy then he should seek forgiveness from Allah for his shortcomings.

Fasting for women

- Menstruating and women suffering from postnatal bleeding are exempt from fasting.
- They would make up the missed fasts after Ramadan.
- If a woman was fasting and her monthly period starts, it invalidates her fast.
- She would have to make up this invalidated fast after Ramadan as well.

Fasting for women

- If a pregnant woman is advised by sincere and trustworthy people, or she herself feels that fasting will affect her health and consequently the health of her child, then she is exempt from fasting.
- If a breastfeeding mother believes that fasting will affect her health and she will not be able to look after the child, then she can miss the fast or terminate it.
- Every fast missed due to menstruation, postnatal bleeding, pregnancy and breastfeeding will be fulfilled after Ramadan.

Fasting for women

- Every fast missed due to menstruation, postnatal bleeding, pregnancy and breastfeeding will be fulfilled after Ramadan.
- Its important to remember that if a person is exempt from fasting, he should not eat in public or in front of others since other people will assume that he is breaking his obligation.