

FASTING:

Fasting (Sawm) holds immense significance in Islam as one of the five pillars, serving as a spiritual discipline that fosters self-restraint, devotion and empathy for the less fortunate. This note examines fasting through the lens of Quran & Hadith, focusing on its obligations, types, benefits and contemporary relevance.

1- Definition and concept of Fasting:

The word "fasting" comes from the old English word *faesten*, which means "voluntary abstinence." The literal meaning of fasting is to abstain from food and drink, or to restrict food intake. In Islam, fasting is a moral and spiritual practice that involves abstaining from food, drink and certain actions from dawn until sunset with the intention of worship.

Allah (SWT) commands fasting in Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you - as it was for those before you - so perhaps you will become mindful of Allah.”

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) emphasized fasting's spiritual value:

“Whoever fasts during Ramadan with faith and seeking reward, his past sins will be forgiven.”

Ibn-e-Kathir in his tafsir explains that fasting was prescribed as a test of patience and a means of purification.

2- How is fasting observed?

Fasting is observed to:

- To worship Allah
- To learn self-restraint
- To mark the night when the Quran was first revealed to

mankind, known as Laylat-ul-Qadr.

3. Types of Fasting in Islam:

A- Obligatory Fasting:

1. Fasting in Ramadan: Compulsory for every adult Muslim, as stated in

Surah Baqarah: **try to add the arabic of quranic ayats.**

"The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind."

2. Fasting as Expiation: (Kaffarah) Required for breaking an oath or specific violations

3. Fasting for missed Ramadan Days: (Qada) Completing missed fasts.

B- Voluntary (Nafil) Fasting:

These are also known as Nafil, voluntary or superogatory fasts. After performing the obligatory acts of worship, the most beloved things to Allah are the voluntary acts of worship, as a means to draw closer to Him, and to gain a great reward for Him. It includes:

- Six days of Shawwal
- Ashura (10th Muharram)
- Six days of Arafah (9th Dhul-Hijjah)
- Mondays and Thursdays

Sahih Muslim: "He who observed the fast of Ramadan and then followed it with six (fasts) of Shawwal, it would be as if he fasted perpetually."

C- Prohibited and disliked Fasting:

In Islam, fasting is prohibited on certain days and in certain ways.

1. Eid Days: Eid-ul-Fitar (1st Shawwal) and Eid-ul-Adha (10th & 11th Dhul-Hijjah)
2. Days of Tashreeq: The 3 days following Eid-ul-Adha are prohibited.
3. Fasting every day of the year is prohibited.
4. Fasting on Fridays alone

Hazrat Aishah (R.A) said:

I never saw the messenger of Allah fasting during the first ten days of Dhu-al-Hijjah.

3. Benefits of Fasting:

A. Spiritual purification:

This is also known as Tazkiyah al Nafs. Fasting can help you feel more connected to God and receive guidance from the Holy Spirit. It also helps in bowel detoxification i.e. creating distance from things that disturb your soul.

Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Fasting is a shield; so the fasting person should not behave foolishly or argue" (Sahih al Bukhari)

B. Moral and Social Benefits:

Fasting purifies the mind and helps a person gain control over his ego and base desires as well as teaching a person how to modify his behaviour and change bad habits. It also strengthens bonds through communal meals and encourages empathy for the less fortunate.

no need to write paragraphs in notes; use bullets and phrases.

C. Scientific and Physical Benefits:

It boosts metabolism, detoxifies the body, and improves brain function. It also improves the heart health, blood sugar management, reduce inflammation, weight loss and improve gut health.

Al-Razi in Kitab-al-Hawi discussed fasting as a way to maintain good health.

4- Exemptions from Fasting in Islamic law:

A- Those who are exempted:

1. The Sick: People with acute or chronic illness are allowed not to fast if it harms them.

Allah says in Quran,

"Fasting is for a fixed number of days, and if one of you be sick, or if one of you be on journey, you will fast the same number of other days later on."
(Al-Baqarah)

2. Travelers:

People who are travelling long distances can also skip fasting if it causes hardship.

3- Pregnant and Nursing women: Women who are pregnant can also skip fasting.

4- Elderly people: They must pay fidyah i.e. feeding a poor person per missed fast.

B- Breaking the fast:

A- Acts that invalidate fasting:

There are certain acts that invalidate fasting i.e.

- Eating or drinking intentionally.
- Sexual intercourse (most serious fast breaking sin)
- Induced vomiting
- Blood letting

B- Expiation (Kaffarah) for breaking the fast:

Kaffarah is paid if you break a fast without a valid reason. When paying Kaffarah, the amount (payment) for is the equivalent of feeding 60 people or fast for two months.

Allah says in Surah- Al- Baqrah :

“ It has been made permissible for you to be intimate with your wives during the nights preceding the fast. ”

Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

“ If somebody eats or drinks forgetfully then he should complete his fast for what he has eaten or drunk, has been given to him by Allah. ”

Hazrat Abu Huraira had narrated that Holy Prophet (PBUH) commanded the person (who) broke the fast in Ramadan to free a slave or observe fasts for two (consecutive) months or feed sixty poor persons.

6- Nightly Rituals:

There are two rituals in (fasting) month of Ramadan:

1. Suhur (pre dawn) : Suhur is actually a blessing. A pre-dawn meal is eaten before the fast's commencing prayer Fajr, the dawn prayer. Suhur is essential in providing nourishment during the daily fast.

Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

“ Take Suhur, for in Suhur there is barakah (blessing) ”

2. Iftar: (Breaking the Fast) It is the fast-breaking evening meal of Muslims in Ramadan at the time of adhan of the Maghrib prayer-

Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

“ The people will remain upon goodness as long as they hasten to break the fast. ”

7- Contemporary Issues in Fasting:

In places where days are very long or short, fasting can be difficult. Scholars suggest following the fasting hours of a nearby country with normal day and night times, such as Mecca or Medina. This is based on the Qur'an which says:

"Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship"

Holy Prophet (PBUH) also advised estimating times in unusual conditions. This way, fasting remains manageable while still fulfilling its purpose in Islam.

discuss the impacts on individual, collective lives in detail.