

A Brief Note on Fasting

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FASTING: is a form of worship by abstaining from things, which nullify it, from dawn till sunset.

FASTING OF THE MONTH OF RAMADAN: is one of the five pillars of Islam, as indicated by the saying of the Holy Prophet " Islam stands on five (pillars)": *To witness that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet; to perform Prayers; to pay Zakah; to fast the month of Ramadan and to perform pilgrimage to Makkah.*

PEOPLE IN FASTING

1. Fasting is obligatory upon every adult Muslim who is in his senses, can bear it, and is not traveling.
2. Non-believers do not fast and they don't have to compensate for it when they embrace Islam.
3. Children don't have to fast but they should be encouraged to fast so that they get used to it.
4. The insane don't have to fast nor do they have to feed for it even if they are adults. Similar is the case with a stupid or very elderly persons who do not behave sensibly.
5. The invalids such as very elderly persons or persons having illness with no hope for their recovery should feed a needy person for everyday missed.
6. People befallen with a sudden illness waiting for recovery may not fast if they find it too difficult to do and they should compensate (by fasting) after their recovery.
7. Pregnant and feeding mothers may not fast, if they find it too difficult for themselves or for the fear for their children. They should compensate for these days after passing this period or when they no more fear (for themselves or their children).
8. Women during their monthly cycles (menses) and bleeding after childbirth (Nifas), should not fast in these days ' They should compensate by fasting later on.
9. Travelers can choose whether to fast during their journey or compensate for it later on after reaching their destinations. This is good for all types of travelers - those who are traveling for a sudden purpose such as for performing Umrah or those who travel for the sake of their Profession such as taxi or truck drivers.

THINGS THAT DO NOT NULLIFY THE FASTING:

Fasting is not affected by eating or drinking something by mistake or unknowingly or by being forced to do so on the authority of the words of Allah the Almighty: "O our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error..." (2:286) "...Except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in Faith..." (16:106) "But there is no blame on you, if ye make a mistake therein. (What counts is) intention of your hearts." (33:5)

So the fast of someone who eats or drinks something not remembering that he is fasting, will not be spoiled because he forgot. Or if someone eats or drinks assuming that the sun has set or that the dawn has not yet broken, it will not spoil his fasting because he did so unknowingly. Or if someone gargles and water reaches his throat unintentionally, it will not spoil his fast as he did not intend it. Discharge of semen while in sleep also does not spoil the fast as one has no control over it.

THINGS THAT NULLIFY THE FASTING:

Sexual Intercourse. If someone indulges in it during day hours of Ramadhan, he has to compensate for it by fasting in addition to a heavy penalty which is freeing a slave or (if he can't find one) fasting sixty consecutive days or (if he cannot afford to do so) feeding sixty hungry poor persons. Indulging in intentional excretion of semen by masturbation or caressing or kissing or hugging etc. Eating or drinking anything whether beneficial or harmful, like smoking. Taking injections or dietary drugs which are used instead of food, because such drugs are as good as food and drinks. Other types of injections having no food value do not break the fast whether they are intramuscular or intravenous and irrespective of their taste being felt in the throat or not. Bleeding of menses or after childbirth. Forcing out blood from the body through cupping or similar means. Bleeding by itself such as nose-bleeding or during extraction of a tooth etc. do not break the fast as they are not regarded as cupping. Forcing out vomit intentionally. Vomiting by itself does not spoil the fast.

RULES

1. A person can make intention of fasting in the state of major ritual impurity and to continue his fasting after taking bath after the dawn or daybreak. 2. A woman coming out of her menses or childbirth bleeding before dawn must fast even if she washes herself after the dawn. 3. It is permissible for a fasting person to apply ointment, lotions, etc. on his head or body or to use perfumes, but he should avoid inhaling the 'bakhoor' smoke. It is also permissible to extract one's tooth or to apply medicines to his wounds to put medicine drops in his eyes and ears or to use eye powder, even if the taste of the medicine drops are felt in the throat. 4. Brushing of teeth by branches of trees (Siwak) is not only permissible but desirable, during all hours of fasting. 5. A fasting person can cool himself with water or air conditioner, etc. 6. It is permissible to spray in the mouth to get relief from suffocation due to pressures or asthma. 7. It is permissible to wet one's lips if they dry up, or to wash inside of the mouth with water without gargling. 8. Following the tradition of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), it is desirable to delay in taking "Suhoor" (the meal before the dawn) and to hasten in breaking the fast after the sunset. It is preferable to break the fast with a fresh date or any other form of date or (not finding these) with water or (if not finding water) with any permissible (Halal) food or drink. If, however, he has nothing of all these he should simply make intention to break the fast and do so as soon as he finds something (to eat or drinks). 9. A person fasting should try to do more and more of obedience and avoid of disobedience to Allah during his fast. 10. A fasting person should perform his obligations and obtain from the prohibitions. He should offer his daily prayers in time in congregation (if it is obligatory upon him) and must abstain from speaking lies, backbiting, deceiving someone, dealing in interest (usury) or indulging in anything prohibited - whether verbal or practice The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: *"One who does not give up forged speech a evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink."*