



Sawm

FASTING IN ISLAM



ALBIRR FOUNDATION UK



SAWM

[FASTING]



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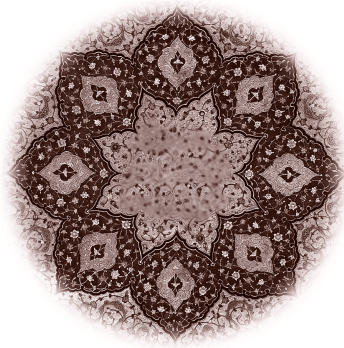
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SAWM

[FASTING]

S*awm* (fasting) in Islam means to give up eating, drinking and intimate relations with one's spouse during the day-light hours – from dawn (the first light) to sunset.

Fasting is one of the most ancient ways of worshipping Allah.

“O believers, prescribed for you is the fast, just as it was prescribed for those before you – that you may be God conscious.” (Q 2:183)

The practice of fasting exists in all major religions, however the reasons behind its practice vary. Buddhists fast as a method of purification, Christians fast to control their desires. Hindus fast to enhance their concentration during spiritual exercises. Islam recognises all of these benefits, yet Muslims fast to express their total obedience to Allah (God), and with a view to becoming fully conscious of the Almighty.

This God-consciousness is what prevents the fasting Muslims from quenching their thirst and satisfying their hunger throughout the day (from dawn to dusk), even though they could easily eat and drink in private. Thus, the fasting Mus-

lim is constantly reminded of the Presence and Power of Allah by their hunger and thirst.

Allah says in a hadith *Qudsi*: ¹

“Fasting is Mine and it is I Who will give reward for it”. ²

Fasting in Ramadan, (the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar), is an obligation upon all Muslim believers over the age of puberty. This month is of special significance for Muslims because during this month the Holy Qur’an first began to be revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)³. So fasting during the month of Ramadan is, in part, a celebration of the Qur’an itself.

When fasting, Muslims are required to avoid quarrelling, gossiping, or using foul words. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“Fasting is a shield. So when one of you is fasting, let him avoid obscene language and indecent behaviour. If someone tries to slander, or quarrel with you, then say ‘I am fasting’”. ⁴

Fasting inspires sympathy for the poor, as experiencing hunger and thirst first hand makes a person realise the plight of those who struggle daily to get enough food to survive. As a result Muslims usually give more charity during this month. Also, fasting strengthens the bonds of brotherhood as Muslims typically break their fast together – the poor and rich, black and white, all sharing the same food and water.



THE MONTH OF RAMADAN

The month of Ramadan is the most sacred month in the Islamic calendar. In the same way that Allah elevated the status of the Prophet (peace be upon him) over the rest of the creation, and the status of the cities of Makkah and Madinah over the rest of the cities, so has the month of Ramadan also been elevated above the other months.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“When the month of Ramadan begins, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are chained.”⁵

The Prophet (peace be upon him) added:

“Whoever fasts during the month of Ramadan, with full faith in Allah and hoping for reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.”⁶

Among the nights of Ramadan is a special night known as *Laylat al-Qadr*, translated in English variously as the Night of Power, the Night of Destiny, the Night of Value, or the Night of Decree. It is the night that Muslims believe in which the first verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him). More about this Night is mentioned later in this book.

HOW TO FAST

The essentials of fasting are:

1. Making the intention to fast before the fasting time begins. It is not necessary to express this intention verbally.
2. Refraining from eating, drinking, and having intimate relations with one's spouse during the hours of fasting.



Things That Invalidate the Fast

Actions that break the fast can be divided into two separate groups:

1. Those acts that require the fast/s simply to be repeated on another day.
2. Those acts that require the fast/s to be repeated AND also for a penalty (*kaffara*) to be paid.

The following actions make the fast invalid and the fast has to be made up on another day but do not incur any penalty (*kaffara*):

- Eating, drinking, or vomiting deliberately.

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

“One who is overwhelmed by nausea and vomits is not obligated to repeat the fast; but one who forces himself to vomit should make up the fast.”⁷

- When a woman starts her monthly period, or when her postnatal bleeding starts. Such a woman should stop fasting until the bleeding ends, and make up for all the days she misses. She should abandon her fast even if the bleeding starts near to the end of the fasting time.
- Deliberately ejaculating the semen (the male reproductive fluid), for example, by way of kissing or fondling one's wife, or such similar act. However, if a person has a wet dream (involuntary ejaculation of semen in a dream) while he is fasting, the fast is not affected.
- According to the majority of scholars, swallowing a large quantity of a substance not intentionally meant as food by itself (for example, salt), invalidates the fast.
- Making an intention, or deciding to stop (end) the fast, even if no food is eaten, will break the fast.
This is because intention is an essential part of fasting, and thus, when the intention is changed, the fast becomes nullified.
- Eating, drinking, or having intimate relations with one's spouse thinking that the dawn (fasting time) has not yet started, or that the sun has already set, will spoil the fast.

To make up for the fasts missed during the month of Ramadan, one can fast on any day or days of the subsequent months, but before the start of the next Ramadan.



Acts in Fasting That Demands a Penalty

According to some jurists (experts in Islamic law), having intimate relations with one's spouse deliberately during the daylight hours of fasting, is the only act that requires both making up the fast and paying a penalty.

Both husband and wife must pay the penalty if they had intimate relations deliberately during daylight hours of fasting. However, according to Imam Shafi'i, a wife is not required to pay the penalty whether she has consented or not.

The penalty is as follows:

- to free a slave. If he cannot find any then he must,
- fast for two consecutive months. If he is unable to do so then he must,
- provide food for 60 poor and destitute persons.



Recommended Acts to Perform Before, While and after Fasting

- Eating a light meal before dawn (*subur*).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

*"Eat the pre-dawn meal (subur) because there is blessing in it."*⁸

Eating before the start of the fast will give a person strength and stamina for the day ahead. The Prophet (peace be upon him) preferred delaying the *subur* meal until its very end time, and he broke the fast as soon as it was time to do so.

- Once it is certain that the sun has set, one should break the fast immediately, preferably with an odd number of dates. Alternatively, one can break the fast with any food or drink, or even just with water. This is the teaching of the Prophet (peace be upon him).
- Making supplications. The supplications (*dua*) of the people who are fasting are answered, especially in the moments just before the fast is due to be broken (*iftar*). The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: *"The invocation of a fasting person, at the time of breaking the fast, is not rejected."*⁹
- At the time of breaking the fast one should say:

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ صُومْتُ وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ

"O Allah! For You I have fasted, and with Your provision I break it."¹⁰

- After *iftar* one should say:

ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ وَابْتَلَّتِ الْعُرُوفُ وَثَبَتَ الْأَجْرُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

"The thirst has gone, the veins have been moistened and the reward is established if Allah wills".¹¹

- A fasting person should keep away from any act that will decrease the reward of fasting. They have to constantly remind themselves that fasting does not simply mean to give up eating and drinking, but it also demands strict physical discipline and spiritual vigilance.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

*"Those who do not stop telling lies and acting unethically, then Allah has no need for them to abandon their food and drink."*¹²

In another *hadith*, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

*"There are many who fast but get nothing out of it except hunger. There are many who stand in salah (prayer)¹³ at night and get no reward except staying awake."*¹⁴

- Brushing and keeping the mouth clean during fasting is highly recommended.
- Ramadan is the month of charity and sympathy with those who are in need. Hence, showing generosity and spending in charity is strongly recommended during this time.

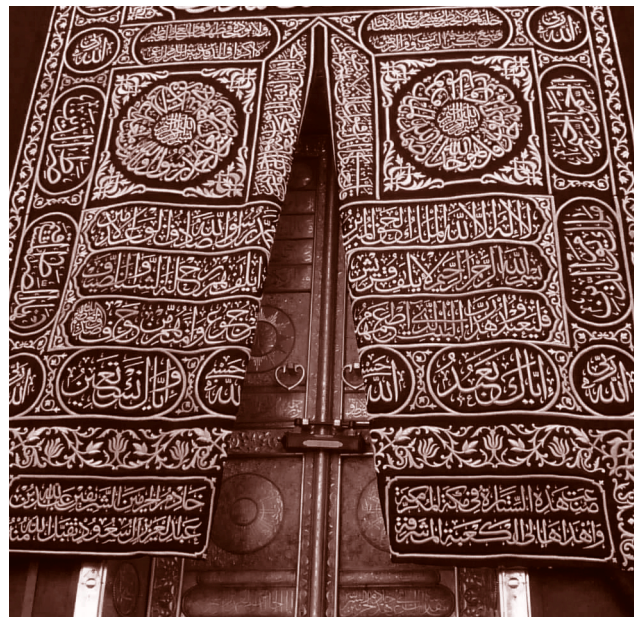
- A person observing the fasts should spend as much time as possible reading and understanding the Holy Qur'an.
- The fasting person should strive to perform as many good deeds in Ramadan as possible, especially during the last ten days of this blessed month. 'Aisha said: *"The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) exerted himself in the remembrance and asking forgiveness of Allah in the last ten days of Ramadan more than he did in other days."*¹⁵



Acts Permitted During Fasting

- Taking a dip in water or pouring water on the head and face.
- Using eye drops and *kohl*.
- Kissing one's spouse. 'Aisha said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to kiss and touch his wives while he was fasting. However, he was more in control of his desires than one of you is."¹⁶ Scholars are of the opinion that kissing is allowed for a person who is in full control of his actions and desires.
- Taking injections (that are not nutritional in any way), either in the muscles or intravenously.
- Giving blood, provided it does not cause weakness in the donor.
- Rinsing the mouth and nose.
- Unavoidable acts such as swallowing the saliva, dust, flour particles, etc.

- Delaying an obligatory bath (*ghusl*) until after the fast begins does not affect the fast.
- If a woman's postnatal bleeding or menstruation stops during the night just before the morning meal (*subur*), she should then have *subur* and begin her fast. It is not necessary for her to take her obligatory bath (*ghusl*) before she starts her fast.



CATEGORIES OF FASTING

Fasting is of two kinds:

- a. **Obligatory** (*fard*), and
- b. **Voluntary** (*nafl*)

a. The Obligatory Fasting

i. Ramadan

Fasting (one of the five pillars of Islam) during the month of Ramadan is obligatory upon every adult Muslim, male or female. Fasting begins when the crescent moon of Ramadan is sighted at the end of the month of Sha'ban, and the beginning of the month is established. Fasting ends when the new moon (crescent) of the month of Shawwal is sighted at the end of the month of Ramadan, either on the 29th day or the 30th.



People Exempted from Fasting During Ramadan

- Travellers on a journey are allowed to suspend their fast/s and make up for the missed fasts later, a day for a day. However, if it is easy to fast while travelling, one may do so. Making up for the missed fasts can be done any time during the year. It is not necessary to do them in sequence, but it is better to make them up as soon as possible.

- People who are unable to fast because of their old age, are not required to fast. Instead, they are required to pay a ransom in the form of feeding one poor person for every day of fasting that they miss.
- A person who is seriously ill, or the one who fears that his condition may worsen due to fasting should suspend the fast/s but make up for the days missed, later. A person who is chronically ill or who is physically incapable of fasting, should feed a person for every day of fasting that they miss.
- Pregnant women who fear that fasting might cause harm to their unborn baby should suspend their fasting and make up for it later.
- Women who breast-feed their babies are allowed to defer fasting if they fear doing so may affect their health. However, they must make up for the missed fasts later.
- Women who are menstruating, or those experiencing postnatal bleeding should suspend their fasts and make up the missed fasts later.



ii. Fasting in Fulfilment of a Vow

When a person makes a vow to observe a fast, they must fulfil it.

The Qur'an praises people who fulfil their vows: *"They fulfil their vows and fear a day whose evil flies far and wide."* (Q 76:7)

And Allah commanded the pilgrims to fulfil their vows: *"Let them fulfil their vows and go round the Ancient House."* (Q 22:29)

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: *"Whoever makes a vow to obey Allah should do so, but whoever makes a vow concerning disobedience of Allah should not fulfil it."*¹⁷



iii. Fasting for Expiation (Kaffarah)

There are certain sins that, if committed, legally require fasting for a definite period. They are:

- Accidentally killing a believer. Someone who does this is required to fast for two months consequently.

Allah Almighty says:

"It is not for a believer to slay a believer, except it be by error. If any slays a believer by error, then let him set free a believing slave, and blood money is to be paid to his family unless they forgo it as a charity [...]."

But if he finds not the means, let him fast for two consecutive months by way of repentance to Allah." (Q 4:92)

- The practice of *zihar*, that is, a man declaring his wife unlawful to him as his mother is unlawful to him.

Whoever does this will have to pay *kaffarah* [expiation], which is to free a slave. If he has not got the means to do this, then he will have to fast for two consecutive months before resuming normal relationship with his wife.

Allah, the Most High, says:

"As for those who [henceforth] separate themselves from their wives by saying 'You are as unlawful to me as my mother,' [let them bear in mind that] they can never be [as] their mothers; none are their mothers save those who gave them birth: and so, behold, they but utter a saying that runs counter to reason and is [therefore] false." (Q 58:2)

- Failing to fulfil an oath one has made.
The penalty for doing so is to fast three days.

Allah the Exalted says:

"Allah will not take you to task for a slip in your oath, but He will take you to task for your deliberate oaths, for which the expiation is to feed ten poor persons with the average of the food you would serve to your families, or to clothe them, or to set free a slave; or if any finds not the means, let him fast for three days. That is the expiation of your oath when you have sworn." (Q 5:89)

- Killing game (wild animals or birds hunted for sport or food) in the state of *ibram* during *Hajj* or '*Umrah*. Whoever does this, and does not have the means to make an offering or to feed the poor, then they have to fast for a number of days fixed by the judges.

“O you who believe! Slay not the game while you are in ibram (pilgrim sanctity); whoever of you slays it wilfully, there shall be recompense – the like of what he has slain, in flocks as shall be judged by two just men among you, an offering to reach the Ka’aba; or expiation – food for poor persons or the equivalent of that in fasting, so that he may taste the mischief of his action.” (Q 5:95)

- Deliberately having intimate relations with one’s spouse during the hours of fasting. Whoever does this must set a slave free. If he cannot find any then he must fast for two consecutive months. If he is unable to do so then he must feed 60 poor and destitute persons.
- Shaving or removing hair while in the state of *ibram*. If a person in the state of *ibram* has to shave his head or remove the hair of his body for a valid reason, then fasting is prescribed for him.
- Combining *Hajj* and '*Umrah*'¹⁸ in the form of *Tamattu'* or *Qiran*. In doing *Tamattu'*, the pilgrims have in mind to perform

both '*Umrah* and then *Hajj* but separately. When a pilgrim does so, they take off their *ibram* after performing '*Umrah* and then takes a break (rest) before commencing the *Hajj* by putting on their *ibram* again on 8 Dhul-Hijjah for *Hajj*.

In *qiran* a pilgrim performs *Hajj* and '*Umrah* in a single *ibram*.

Pilgrims who do either *tamattu'* or *qiran* are required to offer sacrifice. If, however, the pilgrim cannot afford to make a sacrifice, then they will have to fast for ten days, three days during *Hajj*, and seven days after they have returned home.



b) *Nafl* (Voluntary) Fasting

Fasting is a mode of worship. Hence, Muslims are required to observe it as much as they can. Besides the obligatory fast, voluntary fasting is highly recommended. Voluntary fasting can be observed at any time of the year, except on the following five days when it is prohibited.

- The day of '*Id al-fitr*
- The day of '*Id al-adha*
- During *Ayyam al-tashriq* – the three days after '*id al-adha*.

Voluntary fasting should not exceed half the total number of days of the year, that is equivalent to fasting every alternating day of the year.

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) has recommended fasting on the following days:

The Day of 'Arafah

This is the 9th day of the month of Dhu al-Hijjah when the pilgrims gather in the plain of Mount 'Arafat engage in the remembrance of, and ask forgiveness from Allah, until the evening.

Abu Qatadah reported that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) was asked about fasting on the day of 'Arafah and he replied:

*"It wipes off the sins committed during the preceding year and of the following year."*¹⁹

However, the pilgrims themselves are not allowed to fast as it will result in hardship for them.

According to some reports, fasting on the first nine days of Dhu al-Hijjah is also recommended. Hafsa, the wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him), related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) never missed four things: fasting on the tenth day of Muharram, on the ten days of Dhu 'l-

Hijjah and the three days of every month, and praying two rak'ah before the Fajr (dawn) prayer.²⁰



The 10th Day of Muharram (The first Islamic month)

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

*"This is Ashura (i.e. the tenth of Muharram). Fasting on this day is not obligatory, but I am fasting. So, whoever wishes, let him fast and whoever wishes, let him leave it."*²¹



Six Days in the Month of Shawwal

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

*"Whoever fasts in the month of Ramadan and then follows it (fasting) with six days of fasting in the month of Shawwal, it will be as if one has fasted for the whole year."*²²

This is based on a very simple calculation: the minimum reward given for any good act is tenfold. Fasting in the month of Ramadan gives the reward of 10 months worth of fasting. If a person adds to that the fasts of six days, he will get the reward of 60 days, i.e. two months, which will complete the year.

One can observe these six fasts from any days in the month of Shawwal, either in succession or separately. The Prophet

(peace be upon him) has not given any specific instructions concerning the days and the manner to fast, and hence no one has any authority to dictate how they should be done.



Three Days Every Month

Namely the 13th, 14th and 15th of every month, when the moon is full. Abu Hurayrah related: "My friend [the Prophet, (peace be upon him)] advised me to fast three days every month; to perform two *rak'abs* of prayer at forenoon, and *witr* prayer (thee *rak'abs*) before going to bed in the night."²³

In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

*"Fasting three days every month is like fasting for the whole year."*²⁴

This means that the three days are multiplied so that they are equivalent to 30 days. There are many other hadith that recommend fasting three days in the middle of every month.



Mondays and Thursdays

Abu Hurayrah related that the Prophet (peace be upon him) very often fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. When asked about it, he replied:

*"On Mondays and Thursdays Allah forgives every Muslim except two who have forsaken one another, and Allah says: 'Leave these two until they reconcile.'"*²⁵

A person observing *nafl* (voluntary) fast may break it at any time of the day if a need arises to break it, and he does not need to make up for it. However, it will be good if he does not break it until the end of the day.



QIYAM AL-LAYL [TARAWIH PRAYER]

Qiyam al-layl means to pray in the depths of the night. It is also called *tabajjud*. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to perform *tabajjud* every night. According to some scholars, the same prayer is called *tarawih* when it is performed in Ramadan.

Tarawih prayer is *sunnah*²⁶ for both men and women. The Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged Muslims to observe it. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) would encourage people to perform the night prayer in Ramadan but without making it an obligation. He said:

*“Whoever prays during the nights of Ramadan with full faith in Allah and hoping for reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven.”*²⁷

Tarawih time starts after ‘*Isha*’ prayer until the start of *Fajr* (dawn). It is performed individually or in congregation.

‘Aisha said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) came out of his apartment and observed prayer in the masjid. People prayed behind him. The following morning the people talked about it thus resulting in more people gathering in the night and joining the prayer with the Prophet (peace be upon him). Again, those who attended the prayer, talked about it, and so in the third night the number of peo-

ple in the masjid increased. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) came out and led them in prayer. On the fourth night the people were so many that the masjid could hardly accommodate them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) did not come out and the people waited for him until Fajr, after completing the Fajr prayer he turned to the people, praised Allah, and said:

*“I was aware of your presence, yet I did not come out, because I feared that this [night prayer] be made compulsory on you, and you find yourselves unable to do it.”*²⁸

The above report shows clearly that it was the Prophet (peace be upon him) who instituted *tarawih* prayer in congregation. However, after the passing away of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Muslims performed the prayer either in congregation or individually, depending on their convenience. Later, ‘Umar bin al-Khattab, the second Caliph, appointed Ubayy bin Ka’b, and told people to follow him in the prayer.



Number of Rak’ahs In Tarawih

As indicated above, *tarawih* and *tabajjud* are the same prayer according to some scholars. Both are *qiyam al-layl*. The Prophet (peace be upon him) never observed more than eleven *rak’ahs* of *qiyam al-layl*. ‘Aisha said: “The Messenger of Allah never did more than eleven *rak’ahs* of the night prayer, whether in Ramadan or at any other time.”²⁹

Tarawih is a non-obligatory prayer and an act of devotion. Muslims like to perform this prayer as much as possible. For this reason, the number of *rak'abs* for this prayer is kept flexible. In many countries people perform twenty *rak'abs* in addition to *witr* prayer.

They perform them in sets of two *rak'abs* units and take some rest after every four *rak'abs*. They prolong the recitation (of the Qur'an). And at the end, they perform the *witr* prayer.

There is no limit for the number of verses that can be recited. However, during Ramadan, people generally prefer to recite the whole Qur'an. There are people who recite the complete Qur'an in just one night. However, this is an innovation that should be stopped.



SOME SPECIAL FEATURES OF RAMADAN

Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*)

Laylat al-Qadr is the best night in the entire year. During this night the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power.

And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is?

The Night of Power is better than a thousand Months.

Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand:

Peace! . . . This until the rise of Morn! (Q: 97:1-5)

Laylat al-Qadr falls on one of the odd nights of the last 10 days of Ramadan (that is the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th or 29th). There are different opinions concerning the exact night it falls on. According to some reports, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) indicated that it is the 27th night of Ramadan.

It is recommended to offer prayers, recite the Holy Qur'an, and engage in the remembrance of Allah throughout the night. However, there is no special prayer to perform for that night. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said:

*"Whoever keeps vigil on laylat al-Qadr with faith in Allah, and expecting reward from Him, all his past sins will be forgiven."*³⁰

The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught his wife 'Aisha the following dua to be repeated as many times as possible in *laylat al-Qadr*:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَزُومٌ تُحِبُّ الْعَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي

*"O Allah! You are Forgiving. You love to forgive. So, forgive me."*³¹



***I'tikaf* (Seclusion)**

I'tikaf is the practice of secluding oneself in the masjid with the intention of winning the favour of Allah. It is an act that is highly recommended. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to make *i'tikaf* for ten days during Ramadan, and in the year he (peace be upon him) passed away, he went into *i'tikaf* for twenty days. *I'tikaf* can be *wajib* (obligatory) or *sunnah* (recommended).

The *sunnah i'tikaf* is one which a Muslim observes voluntarily in order to receive reward from Allah and to please Him by following the footsteps of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). The best time to do *i'tikaf* is during the last ten days of Ramadan.

The obligatory *i'tikaf* is the one which a person makes com-

pulsory on himself by making a vow. Bukhari reported that 'Umar said to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him): "Messenger of Allah! I had a vow to stay one night in the inviolable masjid [as *i'tikaf*]", and the Prophet said to him, "fulfil your vow." This *i'tikaf* has to be made at the time and in the place that the person specified in their vow.

The *sunnah i'tikaf* has no specific period. It is done by simply staying in the masjid with the intention of *i'tikaf*, whether for a short or long period. The person going into *i'tikaf* can suspend and terminate it whenever they wishes. They can terminate it even before the period they initially resolved to stay for.



Essentials of *i'tikaf*

I'tikaf means staying in the masjid with the intention of receiving reward from Allah and of getting closer to Him. *I'tikaf* must be observed in a masjid where the five daily prayers in congregation are established. Some scholars hold that it can be done only in the Jamea masjid where Friday prayer is observed.

If *i'tikaf* is performed outside Ramadan, then fasting during the *i'tikaf* is not compulsory. There is no evidence in the Hadith to suggest this. However, scholars are divided on the issue. Some consider it necessary, others do not.

How to make *I'tikaf*

As mentioned earlier, there is no specific period for *i'tikaf*. As soon as a person retreats in the masjid with an intention of *i'tikaf*, his *i'tikaf* will have begun and will continue until he leaves the masjid. However, it is important that if one intends to make *i'tikaf* during the last 10 days of Ramadan, one should be in the masjid, making the intention of *i'tikaf*, before sunset on the 19th day of Ramadan. The *I'tikaf* will end after the sunset of the last day of Ramadan. Even if the moon for the end of the month is cited on the 29th of Ramadan, the *i'tikaf* of 10 days is nevertheless completed.



What to Avoid During *I'tikaf*

While in *i'tikaf*, it is desirable to devote most of one's time in the remembrance of Allah, reading and understanding of the Qur'an, and observing voluntary (nafl) prayers. One should repeatedly glorify and praise Allah, and send blessing of Allah on His Messenger (peace be upon him). Besides this, doing some reading and contemplation with a view to increase one's knowledge of Islam, the Quran and Sunnah is also very desirable. One should keep away from gossiping and idle talk.

Permitted things/actions in *I'tikaf*

- A person performing *i'tikaf* can be visited by members of his family. In case of necessity/urgency, he can come out of the masjid to escort his wife.
- A person in *i'tikaf* is permitted to comb his hair, have his hair cut, clip his nails, clean his body from dirt, wear his best clothes and use perfume. 'Aisha used to wash the head of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and comb his hair when he used to be in *i'tikaf*.
- Scholars unanimously agree that a person in *i'tikaf* can leave his place to answer the call of nature. He is also allowed to go out and bring his food and drink if there is no one to do this for him. In general, the devotee is allowed to go out of the masjid for all his necessary requirements that he cannot do inside or obtain from the masjid.

Some scholars, like 'Ali, Sai'd bin Jubayr, al-Hassan al-Basri and al-Nakh'i allow the person in *i'tikaf* to go out and attend the Friday prayer in another masjid (if the masjid he is doing his *i'tikaf* has no facility for the Friday prayer), to visit the sick, to attend funerals, and to visit the family for necessary guidance and support.

- The person in *i'tikaf* is permitted to eat, drink and sleep in the mosque.

Things that Invalidate *I'tikaf*

- Leaving the masjid, even for a short period, without a valid necessity or reason.
- Act of apostasy. If one has renounced Islam, none of one's acts are accepted.
- Losing one's sanity. The person must not be mentally unstable nor use any intoxicants.
- Commencement of the monthly period of bleeding or postnatal bleeding of a woman.
- Having intimate relations with one's spouse during *i'tikaf*. However, whether having physical contact with one's spouse affects one's *i'tikaf* is disputed amongst scholars.



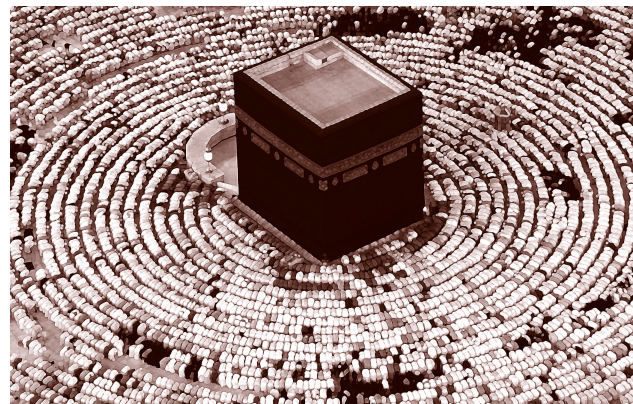
Making up for *I'tikaf*

After beginning an *i'tikaf* and then abandoning it before the completion of the days initially intended, one should make up for it. This is regarded desirable according to some scholars, and compulsory by others. However, it is unanimously agreed among scholars that if a person starts an *i'tikaf* in the fulfilment of a vow, and then suspends it, he will have to make up for it.

Making a Vow to Observe *I'tikaf* in a Particular Place

If one vows to make *i'tikaf* either in the holy masjid of Makkah, or Madinah or Jerusalem, one will have to fulfil it by doing the *i'tikaaf* in that particular masjid.

However, if one vows to make *i'tikaf* in any other masjid, then it is not necessary to make it in that particular masjid; performing the *i'tikaf* in any other masjid will fulfil the vow. The reasoning behind this is that all the massajid (plural of masjid) are equal, there is no particular excellence attached to any masjid other than the three mentioned above, ie. Makkah, Madinah and Jerusalem.



References

1. A hadith by Allah to the Prophet (peace be upon him) by inspiration, and the Prophet has related it in his own words.
2. Bukhari, Muslim, al-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah
3. "May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him". To be said whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned or whenever he is referred to as the Prophet of Allah.
4. Bukhari and Muslim
5. Bukhari and Muslim
6. Bukhari and Muslim
7. Abu Dawud
8. Bukhari and Muslim
9. Ibn Majah
10. Abu Dawud
11. Abu Dawud
12. Bukhari, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah
13. Salah (pl. salawat). The supreme act of worship in Islam and one of its five pillars. There are five appointed salawat (fajr, zuhr, 'asr, maghrib, and 'isha')
14. Ibn Majah
15. Muslim
16. Bukhari
17. Bukhari, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and al-Nasa'i
18. 'Umrah: A lesser pilgrimage
19. Muslim and Ibn Majah
20. al-Nasa'i
21. Bukhari and Muslim
22. Muslim
23. Bukhari and Muslim
24. Bukhari and Muslim
25. Ibn Majah
26. Sunnah (pl. sunan). The practice of the Prophet (peace be upon him)
27. Bukhari and Muslim
28. Bukhari and Muslim
29. Bukhari and Muslim
30. Bukhari and Muslim
31. Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and al-Nasa'i



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