

CATEGORIES OF FASTING

1. *Obligatory fasting:*

Every adult and sane Muslim male and female is obliged to keep fasting during the whole of the month of Ramadan.

(A) Fasting for atonement of mistakes or sins committed. Fasting has been prescribed in the Quran and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) for the atonement of certain specified mistakes and sins. There can be no alteration in this respect.

(B) Similarly, if somebody vows to fast, if a particular wish is fulfilled, it becomes obligatory for him to fulfil his vow.

2. *Forbidden Fasting:*

(A) It is forbidden for a wife to fast without the permission of her husband or against his will. But some jurists regard such action as merely reprehensible. Nevertheless, if the wife is sure that her husband is agreeable to such action or there is distance between the couple, there is no question of establishing family relations for the time-being such as during the absence of the husband or during his journey for Hajj or Umrah or his being in confinement to mosque [*I'tikaaf*]. So, in all such conditions a wife can keep optional (*nafil*) fasts even without the permission of her husband.

(B) It is forbidden to fast on Idul-Fitr, Idul-Adha and during the days of *Tashreeq*. During the days of *Tashreeq* only those pilgrims [*Hujjaj*] to Makkah are permitted to fast who have not taken an animal with them to offer sacrifice (i.e., who do not have the capacity to offer sacrifice). Some jurists say that fasting during the days of *Tashreeq* is obnoxious [*makrooh*], not prohibited [*haram*].

(C) It is forbidden for women having menstrual or puerperal flow to keep fasting of any category. If such women keep fasting during Ramadan or for atonement of a sin or for fulfilling a vow, such fasts will be null and void and they will have to recoup their missed fasts after getting clean.

(D) It is also prohibited for persons unable to keep fasting because of infirmity, old age or sickness, if there is a perceived risk that they may die if they kept fast.

3. **Reprehensible fasting:**

- (A) It is reprehensible to fast continuously.
- (B) It is reprehensible to fast only on Fridays.
- (C) It is reprehensible to fast only on Saturdays.
- (D) It is reprehensible to fast on thirtieth day of the lunar month of Sha'baan when the sighting of the Ramadan moon is doubtful.
- (E) If a person who has skipped the last Ramadan's fast keeps *nafil* fast such *nafil* fasting of him will be regarded as reprehensible because he ought to have had completed his missed Ramadan fastings first.
- (F) It is also reprehensible if somebody keeps fasting continuously for two consecutive days without breaking fast at sunset. It is called *saum-i-wisaal*.

4. **Voluntary (nafil) fasting:**

Voluntary fasting is one that is kept by a believer to seek the pleasure of Allah Almighty; to earn greater reward on the Day of Judgment and to deserve the Paradise promised by the Lord. It is preferable to fast on days which were preferred by the Prophet (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) for fasting or recommended by him. These are:

- Monday and Thursday of every week.
- Thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth days of the lunar months. Hazrat Ibn Malhan (*RadhiAllahu Anhu*) narrated through his father that the Messenger of Allah (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) exhorted us to keep fast on these days of moonshine (Abu Dawood, Nasai, and Ibn Majah).
- Fasting on six days of Shawwal: The Messenger of Allah (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that if after Ramadan one fasted on six days of Shawwal it is as if he had fasted a whole year (Muslim). Fasting may be kept on six days consecutively or with intervals in between, but it is commendable to keep them consecutively after Eidul-Fitr.
- Fasting on the ninth and tenth days of Muharram. When asked about fasting on the day of *Ashurah* the Messenger of Allah (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that these fasts atone for all sins of the past and all sins of the coming year (Muslim).

- Fasting on the day of Arafah. When inquired about fasting on the day of Arafah the Messenger of Allah (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that it is atonement for the past one year and for the coming one year (Muslim).
- Fasting on the first nine days of Zul-Hijjah (for those who are not performing hajj, including the day of Arafah).
- Fasting frequently during the venerable months of Muharram, Rajab, *Zul-Qa'da* and *Zul-Hijjah*.
- Fasting frequently during the month of Sha'baan.
- Fasting on one day and skipping on the next day. The Messenger of Allah (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said that the best fast was that of the Prophet Dawood (*Alaihis Salam*). He fasted on one day and skipped on the next. It is permissible to keep *nafil* fast on any day during the year except on the forbidden days. If one breaks his *nafil* fast, he is not obliged to recoup it. Once Hazrat Salman Farsi (*RadhiAllahu Anhu*) came to visit Hazrat Abu Dardaa (*RadhiAllahu Anhu*). Hazrat Abu Dardaa (*RadhiAllahu Anhu*) served food for him and said you take it, I am fasting. Hazrat Salman (*RadhiAllahu Anhu*) said unless you take I will not take. Therefore, the latter broke his fast and ate with him (Bukhari). However, some jurists hold that if somebody broke a *nafil* fast, he will have to recoup it later.

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