

Q.1: How many kinds of "Nafil" fasts are there?

A. All fasts other than "Fard" and "Waajib" are Nafil (supererogatory, Optional) fasts which include "Masnoon" or "Mustahab" (accepted or desirable) fasts and also those ones which are called "Makrooh Tahreemi" (odious to the extent of being forbidden) or "Makrooh Tanzeehi" (undesirable) under Shari'ah.

Q.2: Which "Nafil" fasts are excellent excepting Ramadaan?

A. Fasting on the first ten days of Zilhij is the most excellent act next to Ramadaan. There is in a Hadees that worship done during the first ten days of Zilhij is dearer to Allah than done on other days. A fast observed during these days carries reward equivalent to one year's fasting and staying in prayer i.e. offering "Tahajjud" (late night prayer) carries a reward equivalent to "Qadr" night and fasting on "Arafah" (major Hajj day) which is the most excellent day of the year is particularly an excellent worship.

Q.3: What is the reward of Arafah's fast?

A. An authentic tradition in this respect says that the reward of Arafah's fast is equivalent to thousands of fasts and forgiveness of the sins of full two years. The Holy Prophet said that Arafah's fast forgives sins of the preceding year and of the following year.

Q.4: Which other fast is highly rewarding after Arafah's?

A. The most rewarding fast next to Arafah's is the fast of "Aashooraa" (the day of the 10th of Muharram). This fast should better be preceded by the fast of 9th Muharram. Aashooraa's fast carries the reward of forgiveness of sins of the preceding year. The Holy Prophet said that I potently hope that Allah Almighty forgives the preceding year's sins of the believer who fasts on Aashooraa. The Holy Prophet himself fasted this day and enjoined others to do so.

Q.5: Where did the Holy Prophet observe Aashooraa's fast first?

A. When the Holy Prophet migrated to holy Madinah from holy Makkah found Jews fasting on Aashooraa. On inquiry they told that "this is a grand day, for, Allah Almighty had delivered Prophet Moses and his community from the evil of Pharaoh and drowned Pharaoh and his community. That's why Prophet Moses fasted this day as a token of gratitude to Allah and we followed his suit." Hearing this, the Holy Prophet said "we have a greater right and are nearer to Prophet Moses in following his practice than you." The Holy Prophet himself observed fast on Aashooraa and enjoined others to follow his Sunnat. (\*). Aashooraa is a very blessed day and carries many excellences. (\*). This Hadees reveals that observance/celebration of the day on which Allah Almighty showered His special blessings is correct and praise-worthy act as it reminds of the Divine blessing and make believers to be thankful to Allah Almighty. The Holy Qur-aan itself says: "Wazkuroo Aiyyaamih Laah" (remember the Days of Allah/Allah's blessings). To us (Sunni Muslims) the birthday of the Holy Prophet is higher than 'Eids, for, had this not occurred then there would have been no occasion to celebrate 'Eids. All Divine blessings, boons and favours were given, are being given and will continue to be given because of him (the Holy Prophet). Therefore, the Holy Prophet said about his observance of fast on Monday thus: "Feehi Wulittu" (I was born this day).

Q.6: Please explain some excellences of Aashooraa?

A. The day of Aashooraa is so blessed and illumined that Allah Almighty endowed a group of Prophets with an exclusive honour and miracles on this day and graced them with even closer propinquity to Himself and exalted them even higher. On this blessed day Allah Almighty: 1. Chose Prophet Adam from amongst His creatures and granted him the appellation of "Safi-yullah" (God's elect). 2. Lifted Prophet Enoch (Hadrat Idrees) up to the heavens. 3. Anchored Noah's Ark to mountain Joodee. 4. Invested Prophet Abraham with the robe of honour and graced him with the appellation of "Khaleel-Ullah" (God's friend). 5. Extinguished the pyre raised by Nimrod and changed into a garden for him (Prophet Abraham). 6. Forgave Prophet David his slip. 7. Removed calamities from Prophet Job (Hadrat Aieyub). 8. Rescued Prophet Jonah (Hadrat Younus) from the belly of fish. 9. Made Prophet Jacob (Hadrat Ya'qoob) and Prophet Joseph (Hadrat Yousuf) meet up. 10. Created Prophet Jesus and lifted him up to the heavens alive. 11. Created Prophet Adam and Eve.

Q.7: Please also tell about some good works (if are there) to do on Aashooraa?

A. There is in Taurah (Pentateuch) about the blessed day of Aashooraa that: 1. Observing fast on this day is as if one fasted the whole year. 2. Whoever strokes the head of an orphan this day, Allah Almighty will grace him with a grand tree laden with precious garments and ornaments whose quantity is known to Him alone for each hair, in paradise. 3. Allah Almighty will illumine the heart of the one who guides an astray into straight path this day. 4. Giving alms to an indigent, beggar this day is tantamount to giving alms to all indigent, beggars. 5. If one suppresses his anger this day (although he is able to vent his spleen, to retaliate), Allah Almighty will enlist him among those with whom He (Allah) is pleased. 6. Whoever respects and helps "Miskeen" (indigent, poor) this day, Allah Almighty will bless him in grave. The Prophet of Mercy (Saieyyidinaa Muhammad, may Allah's choicest blessings and peace be upon him) said about this day: 1. Whoever spends generously this day on his family (i.e. feeds them with the best victuals) Allah Almighty will grant him in abundance. Hadrat Sufyaan bin Oyaiena (may Allah shower His blessings on him) said that we did it for fifty years and found abundant subsistence every year. 2. If one takes bath this day no disease can afflict him during the whole year except for death and if he applies antimony to the eyes will not suffer from eye-sore (i.e. he will not lose his sight). 3. The one who spends the night of Aashooraa in worship and day in fast will be safe from the strain and stress of death.

Q.8: How is that for holding gatherings in respect of Hadrat Imaam Husain's martyrdom during the first ten days of Muharram?

A. It is permissible and lawful to hold gatherings to highlight the tragedy of Karbalaa i.e. martyrdom of Saieyyidinaa Imaam Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) during the first ten days of Muharram or during the entire month of Muharram provided that correct narratives are expounded. The events of Karballa carry a comprehensive lesson of patience, perseverance, resoluteness and submission to Allah's will and are reflective of unflinching adherence to the standards of Islaam and practical and intrepid demonstration of following Shari'ah and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet. He (Imaam Husain) sacrificed his children, family, relatives, companions and even his own life sans any crying or wailing to save Islaam. However, the blessed lives of the Prophet's companions should also be summed up in such gatherings to distinguish the gatherings of Ahle Sunnat wa Jama'at from that of Shia sect.

Q.9: Which other fasts are observed after Arafah's and Aashooraa's?

A. Six fasts during Shawwaal (Eidul Fitr's month). The Holy Prophet said that the one who observed the fasts of Ramadaan followed by six fasts during Shawwaal would be like he who fasted the full year, for, a virtue earns the doer ten-fold reward. Thus Ramadaan's fasting is equal to ten months' fasting and observance of six fasts is equivalent to two months' totalling full year's fasts. There is in another Hadees that the one who fasted whole the month of Ramadaan and then observed six fasts during Shawwaal would become free from sins as he was on the day his mother bore him.

Q10: Should these six fasts be observed consecutively or intermittently?

A. It is better for one to observe these fasts intermittently like two every week or as may be convenient for him. However, it is also permissible to observe the six fasts consecutively after Eid day.

Q11: When should Nafil fasts be observed during Sha'baan?

A. Fasting during Sha'baan to welcome the blessed month of Ramadaan is a highly rewarding act but stress has been laid on 15th of Sha'baan. A Hadees urges the believers to stay (in worship) on the 15th night of Sha'baan and observe fast in the day as Allah Almighty specially manifests Himself in the lowest heaven this night after sunset and says (addressing His servants): Is there any to seek forgiveness of Me so that I may forgive him. Is there any to implore Me for subsistence so that I may favour him with it. Is there any afflicted, distressed so that I may remove suffering from him. Is there any... and this grace continues until the dawn of Fajr. Another Hadees says that Allah Almighty casts a merciful eye on and forgives all His servants this night except infidel, malicious, he who severs ties with relatives, he who trails his garment(s), disobedient to parents, drunkard and murderer.

Q12: On which day should one fast during Rajab?

A. There is in a Hadees that fasting on 27th of Rajab earns one the reward of five years' fasting. However, the whole month is there to fast. On whichever day one fasts will get the reward.

Q13: Is there any injunction for observing three fasts every month?

A. Yes, there is in a Hadees transmitted by Hadrat Abu Dardaa (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Holy Prophet exhorted him to do three virtuous deeds regularly which includes observance of three fasts every month.

A Hadees says that observance of three fasts every month is like ever-fasting. Another Hadees says that fasting of Ramadaan and observance of three fasts every month purifies the breast (heart). Yet another Hadees stresses the believers to fast for three days every month, for, this worship clears one of sins as the water washes a dirty cloth clean.

Q14: Are there some determined days for these three fasts or one can do any days?

A. One can observe these three fasts any days during the month. But there is in a Hadees that if one wants to observe three fasts in a month then he should fast on "Aieyaam-e-Beed" (the brightest nights) i.e. 13th, 14th and 15th of a lunar month. Observance of fasts on Aieyaam-e-Beed will earn one double reward i.e. the reward of fasting and the reward of observance of fasts on the particular days. May Allah Almighty illumine our hearts with the blessings of these blessed days and the brightest nights- Aameen.

Q15: On which day of a week is fasting desirable?

A. Observance of fast on Monday and Thursday is a desirable act. The Holy Prophet said: doings of humanbeings are produced in the most exalted court of Allah Almighty on Monday and Thursday. So I like my deeds to be produced in a state of fasting. Ummul Mu'mineen Hadrat Aiesha Siddiqah (may Allah be pleased with her) said that the Holy Prophet used to fast particularly on Monday and Thursday. It has been reported in "Sahih Muslim" that when the Holy Prophet was asked about his fasting on Monday he said "it is the day of my birth and the day when I received first revelation (Vahee)".

Q16: Does fasting on Wednesday and Thursday carry excellence or not?

A. The Holy Prophet said that fasting on Wednesday and Thursday delivers one from Hell-fire. There is in a Hadees that the one who fasts on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday will be favoured with a transparent palace in paradise and another Hadees says that whoever fasts on these days and then gives "Sadaqa" (charity) on Friday will become free from sins as he was on the day his mother bore him.

Q17: How is that for fasting on Friday only?

A. Observing fast particularly on Friday without being preceded or followed by another fast is "Makrooh Tanzeehi" (undesirable act). There is in a Hadees that the night of Friday should not be particularised for stay (in worship) and (day of) Friday for fasting. However, there is no harm if one is observing some kind of fasts and Friday falls during the course of the fasting. A tradition transmitted by Ibne Khuzaimah says that Friday is (weekly) Eid day (of the believers) so Eid day should not be made a fasting day unless preceded or followed by another fast. When Hadrat Jaabir (may Allah be pleased with him) was asked during the circumambulation of Ka'bah, as to whether or not the Holy Prophet had forbidden fasting on Friday. He said: Yes, he did by the Sovereign Lord (Rabb) of this house (Ka'bah).

Q18: In which cases is breaking of Nafil fast before time permissible?

A. Breaking Nafil (supererogatory, optional) fast before time without a valid reason, excuse is impermissible. But in some cases, for instance, if the host does not join his guest while entertaining him to food and the guest will mind it or one is guest of somebody who serves him food and if he does not take, it will hurt the host, the Nafil fast can be broken before meridian Shar'ee not later provided that one could observe its Qada. If one observed a fast against the will of his parents, for example, he fasted for enjoyment but now it is unbearable for him he can break it even after "Zawaal" (decline of the sun) but prior to Asr time not later, due to displeasure of the parents and in case one wants to observe Nafil fast but his parents forbid him for fear of illness, he must obey his parents.

Q19: Is it permissible or not to break Nafil fast before time for invitation?

A. It is a Sunnat to accept a Muslim brother's invitation. A Nafil fast can be broken before "meridian Shar'ee" to attend the invitation.

Q20: How is that for observing Nafil fast without husband's permission?

A. Woman should not observe Nafil fast as well as the fasts of "Mannat" (vow) and "Qasam" (Oath) without the permission of her husband. If she fasts, her husband can make her break the fast before time and in such case "Qada" of the broken fast will become due. But for its observance too, she is required to seek his permission. However, if her husband is on journey or sick or attired in "Ehraam" (pilgrim robe) she can observe Qada fasts without his permission even if he forbids her to do so. But she can not observe Nafil fasts in the said cases without his permission. In case of Ramadaan fasts and Qada of Ramadaan she is not required to seek her husband's permission. If he forbids her even then she must observe.