

Q. 1: What is "Rozah" (Saum)?

A. "Rozah" which is called "Saum" in Arabic, means to restrain and keep silence. The Holy Qur-aan defines "Saum" as "patience" too which means "self-control, perseverance and determination". Thus Rozah (Saum) stands, according to Islaam, for guarding oneself against selfishness, sensual and carnal desires and protecting one's instinctive restraint and perseverance. Food, drink and sexual relation between man and woman play very important role in human life that usually destroy human values and merits if not checked. Regulating and keeping oneself away from such human needs for a certain period is Rozah (Saum). But according to Shar'ee terminology "Saum" means conscious abstinence (of a Muslim) from food, drink and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk with the sole intention of worship. It is conditional for woman to be free from "Haiz-o-Nifaas" (menstruation and discharge of blood of the child-birth) for the observance of fast.

Q.2: What is the importance of fast in Islaam?

A. The importance of "Saum" (fast) can be gauged from the fact that: 1. It is the fourth of five pillars of Islaam. 2. Fasts help maintain health and develop the body well. 3. Fasts cleanse and purify the heart, mind and soul. 4. Fasts acquaint the rich with the plight of the poor. 5. Fasts help promote equality among community members by bringing the well-to-do and poor at par. 6. Fasts firm up spiritual strength and weaken carnal forces. 7. Fasts help one become used to difficulties and hardships. 8. Fasts provide one with forbearance, patience and endurance against hunger and thirst. 9. Fasts provide mental and spiritual concentration and peace. 10. Fasts serve as sentinel against evils and sins. 11. Fasts inspire Islamic spirit and zeal to do virtuous deeds. 12. Observance of fast is a secret and quiet worship which is free from show and hypocrisy. 13. Fast is an effective source of warding off calamities and disasters. There are many other benefits and advantages of fasts as defined by Quraan-o-Hadees.

Q.3: What objective of fast has been expounded by the Holy Qur-aan?

A. The Holy Qur-aan has expounded the aims and objectives of the fast in three brief sentences: 1. That the believers should praise His (Allah's) "Kibriyaa" (Magnificence, Grandeur) and "Azmat" (Greatness). 2. Be thankful to Him (Allah) on receiving Divine guidance that He lifted up the mankind to the height of "Rif at-o-'Izzat" (eminence and honour) from the depth of ignominy and disgrace. 3. That the believers may eschew evil deeds and "Taqvaa" (fear of Allah, piety) may develop in them. "Taqvaa" is a particular state of the heart which, when attained to, prevents one from evil deeds and sins and he becomes a voracious doer of virtues. This is the very object of fast that such an excellence should develop in a humanbeing. In other words, it may be said that the fast inculcates "fear of Allah" in humanbeing whereby he controls his "Nafs" (self) and thus the deference and greatness of the command of Allah gets embedded in his heart defeating all other temptations. Once the command of Allah got into the heart of a believer he would definitely give up his unlawful, illegitimate and evil habits and would never dare commit sins. This moral glory is called "Taqvaa".

Q.4: Please explain the excellences of fast as defined by Ahaadees?

A. Ahaadees are replete with the excellences of fasts. The Holy Prophet Saiey-yidinaa Muhammad (may Allah's choicest blessings & peace be upon him) said: 1. When the holy month of Ramadaan comes, the gates of heavens, mercy are opened up and of hell shut down. And Satans are chained up.

2. The Paradise is adorned and bedecked round the year for Ramadaan and when the first day of Ramadaan comes, there blows a wind originating from the leaves of the heaven trees, beneath the heavens over the houries who say: "O'Allah! provide us our husbands from among Your servants so that we are pleased with them and they are pleased with us". 3. There are eight gates of Paradise and one of those is called "Raiyaan". The believers who observe fasts will enter into paradise from this gate. 4. There are two pleasures for the believer who observes fasts. First when he breaks his fast and second when he will meet his "Rabb" (Creator, Sovereign Lord). The smell of the mouth of fasting man is purer with Allah than the fragrance of musk. 5. The first "Ashrah" (ten days) of Ramadaan is "mercy", the second one is "absolution, forgiveness" and the last (third) Ashrah is "freedom from hell". 6. Fast is (kept) for Allah and He alone knows how great a reward of fast is. 7. There is Zakaat of every thing and Zakaat of the body is fasting and fast is half of patience. 8. "Du'aa" (supplication) of fasting man is not rejected at the time of "Iftaar" (fast breaking). 9. If people had known the reality of Ramadaan, my (Prophet's) Ummat would wish that the whole year may be Ramadaan. 10. My Ummat has been graced with such five things that were not given to any other Prophet i.e. (1). That on the first night of Ramadaan Allah Almighty casts a merciful eye on them and whom Allah looks with mercy will never consign him to hell, (2) that the smell of the mouth of fasting man is more pleasant to Allah in the evening than the fragrance of musk, (3) that the angels pray for the forgiveness of fasting man every day and night, (4) that Allah Almighty commands the paradise to get itself adorned for the fasting people so that they may rest in it after having suffered difficulties and hardships in the world and (5) when the last night of Ramadaan comes, He forgives them all. Somebody asked the Holy Prophet. Is it the night of "Qadr"? No, he said adding don't you see that labourers work and when they finish it well are paid their due. 11. Allah Almighty releases one million people from hell daily in Ramadaan and on its 29th night He releases people equal to the total number of who were released during the whole month and when the night of Eidul Fitr comes, Angels rejoice and Allah Almighty manifest His Light (Noor) addressing the Angels: O' the group of Angels! What should be the return of the labourer who has completed his work well? Angels submit, he should be paid his full due. Allah Almighty says: Be you witness that I have forgiven them all.

Q.5: How many classes of fast are there?

A. There are three classes of fast i.e. (1) the fast of general people (Muslims) who avoid food, drink and sexual intercourse, (2) the fast of the pious ones who avoid not only food, drink and sexual intercourse but also eschew commission of sin by the eye, tongue, hand, foot and every limb of the body and (3) the fast of the highest class i.e. prominent ones who totally avoid the world and get immersed in Allah's love alone.

Q.6: How many kinds of fast are there?

A. There are five kinds of fast i.e. (1). "Fard" (Farz), (2). "Waajib", (3). "Nafil", (4). "Makrooh Tanzeehi" and (5). "Makrooh Tahreemi".

Q.7: How many kinds of Fard and Waajib fasts are there?

A. There are two kinds of (each) Fard and Waajib fasts i.e. "Mo'aie-yan" (fixed, appointed) and "Ghair Mo'aie-yan" (non-fixed, non-appointed).

Q.8: Which fasts are "Fard Mo'aie-yan"?

A. "Fard Mo'aie-yan" (fixed,appointed) obligatory fasts are such as the fasts of Ramadaan which are observed in the month of Ramadaan only and "Fard Ghair-Mo'aie-yan" (non-fixed,non-appointed) obligatory fasts are such as "Qada,Qaza" (missed,omitted) fasts of Ramadaan and the fasts of atonement irrespective of atonement for breaking fast before time or any other act.

Q.9: Which fasts are Waajib Mo'aie-yan and Ghair Mo'aie-yan?

A. Waajib Mo'aie-yan (fixed,appointed) essential fasts are such as the fasts of "Nazar-o-Mannat" (oblation and vow) for which time is fixed and Waajib Ghair Mo'aie-yan are those fasts for which no time is fixed.

Q10: Which fasts are Nafil ones?

A. Nafil (optional,superarogatory) fasts are such as (1).the fasts of "Aashoorah" (9th & 10th of Muharram), (2). "Aieyaam-e-beez(Beed)" i.e. 13th, 14th and 15th of every lunar month, (3). "Arafah" i.e. 9th of Zilhij, (4).six fasts after Eidul Fitr, (5). fast of Prophet David i.e. to observe fast on alternate day, (6).the fast of Monday and (7) of Thursday, (8) the fast of 15th of Sha'baan and others the reward of which is defined in Ahaadees. Some of Nafil fasts are "Masnoon" (as practised by the Holy Prophet) and some are "Mustahab" (desirable).

Q11: Which fasts are "Makrooh Tanzeehi"?

A. Makrooh Tanzeehi fasts are such as the fast which is observed only on Saturday likening to the practice of Jews, fasts of "Nay-roz" and "Mehr-gaan"(festive days of fire-worshippers) which are kept by fire-worshippers, "Saum Dahr" (to observe fasts on all days), "Saum Sukoot" (not to speak during fasting) and "Saum Wisaal" (to observe fast upon fast without breaking the preceding day's fast at appointed time).

Q12: Which are "Makrooh Tahreemi" fasts?

A. Makrooh Tahreemi fasts are such as of Eidul Fitr, Eidul Adha and "Aieyaam-e-Tashreeq" i.e. 1 lth, 12th and 13th of Zilhij.

Q13: What are the preconditions of fasting?

A. It is conditional for fasting person to be sane and mature and for women to be free from "Haiz-o-Nifaas".

Q14: Can minor boy or girl observe fast or not?

A. Fasting is not compulsory for minor boy or minor girl. However, Shari'ah enjoins that when a child attains the age of eight years, his guardian should direct him for prayer and fast and when he is of ten and enters into 11th year, the guardian should make him observe fast provided that he is healthy. On denial he should be beaten to observe it. In case, a fasting child breaks the fast before time, he will not be required to repeat it. But if he breaks off prayer he will be made to repeat it.

Q15: How does a fast become "Fard" or "Waajib"?

A. There are different causes,reasons by which fasting becomes Fard or Waajib. For example, advent of the holy month of Ramadaan, making "Nazar" and "Mannat" (oblation and vow), atonement for

fast, violation of "Qasam" (oath) or "Kaffarah" (to atone) for unintentional murder or "Zihaar" (uttering such word (s) to one's wife that have the effect of a divorce) etc.

Q16: When was fasting of Ramadaan made compulsory?

A. The fasts of Ramadaan were made compulsory in the 2nd year of Hegira when the believers had become accustomed to the belief of "Tauheed" (monotheism), prayer and other Quranic injunctions. Since the fasting is equally necessary for the poor and rich under Islamic principles, that's why it is wrong to say that Muslims often faced hunger and poverty at the outset of Islaam which made them inured to fasting. If it had been so the fasting would have been made compulsory in Makkah to suit their poor financial condition. But it was enjoined in the middle of Islaam after migration to Madinah.

Q17: What about he who does not observe fast?

A. The one who does not observe fast without any valid reason is a great sinner, "Faasiq-o-Faajir" (transgressor and veritable sinner) and deserves the torment of hell. If one openly eats or drinks intentionally in Ramadaan sans any valid reason, he be killed i.e. the Muslim ruler can order his killing as punishment.

Q18: What wisdom lies in making fasting compulsory as per the lunar calendar?

A. The real "Hikmat" (wisdom,reason) of it is better known to Allah Almighty and His Prophet, but apparently it may be said that the observance of fasts of Ramadaan in accordance with the lunar (Muslim) calendar establishes an equality among all Muslims across the world as the lunar month rotates in all seasons of the year. Had any solar (Gregorian) month been fixed for Ramadaan, the believers of one hemisphere would observe fasts with all ease in winter and of the other would always observe fasts in the sweltering summer, for, if one half of the world enjoys the winter the other faces the summer, which runs counter to the sublime principles of the universal religion - Islaam.