

## Ramadhan?

Ninth month of the Islamic Calendar.

**Meaning:** Derived from "RAMADHA", literally means "intense heat". The possible reasons for this meaning:

1. When the Islamic months were enforced the month of fasting coincided with the summer months of intense heat.

2. The second reason which has been mentioned is that due to fasting the temperature within the stomach increases, again the element of heat is a factor behind the actual naming of RAMADAN.

3. In a sense the name has been acquired due to the fact that Allah Ta'alaah burns away accumulated sins and eliminates them from the list of unlawful deeds. Once again the burning sins cannonade "HEAT". However. It should be acknowledged that this reasoning is not wholly reliable.

**Blessings:** Hadhrat Salmaan (R.A) reports that on the last day of Sha'baan the Messenger of Allah Ta'alaah addressed them and said, "Oh people, there comes before you now a great month, a most blessed month in which lies a night more greater in virtue than 1,000 months; (LAYLATUL-QADR). It is a month in which each day should be observed by fasting, this has been made obligatory by the Almighty Allah."

**Events:** 1. Hadhrat Hasan (R.A.), Holy Prophet ﷺ grandson was born on 15th of Ramadan, three years after Hijrah.

2. Qur'an was revealed on the 27th night of Ramadan from the "Lauhe Mahfooz" (on 7th heaven) to 1st heaven.

3. The first Battle in the Islamic History, "BATTLE OF BADR" took place on the 12th of Ramadan in year 2 A.H.

4. Victory of Makkah took place on 18th of Ramadan in the year 8 A.H.

5. Hadhrat Sawdah (R.A) was married in year 10 A.H. to the Holy Prophet ﷺ

6. Hadhrat Zainab Bint Khuzaima's (R.A.) marriage took place in the year 3 A.H. to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

**7. Deaths:** i) Hadhrat Ruqayyah (R.A), Holy Prophet ﷺ daughter, passed away at the young age of 23 in the year 2 A.H when the Prophet ﷺ was at "Battle of Badr".

ii) Hadhrat Khadijah (R.A), wife of the Holy prophet ﷺ departed from this world on the 11th of Ramadan in the year 10 A.H.

iii) Hadrat Fatimah (R.A) took leave from the world on a Tuesday 3rd Ramadan in the year 11 A.H. (6 months after the death of Holy Prophet ﷺ she was only 29 years old.)

iv) Hadrat Abbas (R.A.) the Holy Prophet ﷺ uncle passed away on a Friday 12th Ramadan in the year 32 A.H at the age of 88

v) Hadrat Ali (R.A.) the Prophet ﷺ son-in-law departed from this world on Friday 27th Ramadan, age 57 in the year 40 A.H.

vi) Hadhrat Saffiyah (R.A.) took leave from this world in the year 50 A.H., aged 60 years.

vii) Hadhrat Aa'ishah (R.A.) was 65 years old when she departed in the year 58 A.H.

### Medical Aspects of Islamic Fasting

There are close to 1.6 billion Muslims in the world observe total fasting (no food or water) between dawn to sunset in the month of Ramadan.

According to Islamic Laws, children below the age of puberty, sick patients, travelers, and women who are pregnant with any medical condition, menstruating or breast-feeding a baby are exempt from fasting. In addition to staying away from food or water for the

whole day, they are asked to stay away from sex, smoking or misconduct during the period of fast. In addition, they are encouraged to do more acts of piety i.e. prayer, charity, or reading Quran during this month.

Food is needed by the body to provide energy for immediate use by burning up carbohydrates, that is, sugar. Excess of carbohydrates which cannot be used is stored up as fat tissue in muscles, and as glycogen in liver for future use. Insulin, a hormone from the pancreas, lowers blood sugar and diverts it to other forms of energy storage, that is, glycogen. To be effective, insulin has to be bound to binding sites could receptor. obese people lack receptor; therefore, they cannot utilize their insulin. This may lead to glucose intolerance.

When one fasts (or decreases carbohydrate intake drastically), it lowers his blood glucose and Insulin level. This causes breakdown of glycogen from liver to provide glucose for energy need and breakdown of fat from adipose tissue to provide for energy needs.

On the basis of human physiology described above, semi-starvation (ketogenic diets (I -5) have been devised for effective weight control. These diets provide calculated amount of protein in divided doses with plenty of water, multi-vitamins, etc. These effectively lower weight, blood sugar, but because of their side effects, should be used only under supervision of physicians.

Total fasting reduces or eliminates hunger and causes rapid weight loss. In 1975, Allan Cott in his "Fasting as a Way of life" noted that "fasting brings a wholesome physiological rest for the digestive tract and central nervous system and normalizes metabolism." It must be pointed out, however, that there are also many adverse effects of total fasting. That includes hypokalemia and cardiac arrhythmia associated with low calorie starvation diets used in unsupervised manner.

### **Studies On Islamic Fasting**

Dr. Soliman, from the University Hospital, Amman, Jordan (ref. 8) has reported that during the month of Ramadan 1404 AH (June-July, 1984 AD) healthy Muslim volunteers; 42 males and 26 females, ranging

in age from 15-64 and 16-28 years respectively were studied. They were weighed and their blood levels of cortisol, testosterone, Na, K, urea, glucose, total cholesterol, high density lipoprotein (HDL), low density lipoprotein (LDL), triglycerides (TG) and serum osmolality were measured at the beginning and at the end of Ramadan. There was significant loss of weight in males from a mean of 73.8 +- 6.2 kg 72.0+- 7.1 kg (P less than 0.01) and in females from 55.2 +- 4.8 to 54.6 +- 4.2 kg (P less than 0.05). Blood glucose levels rose in males from 77.7 +- 23.6 mg/dl to 90.2 mg/dl (P less than 0.05) and in females from 76.0 +- 7 mg/dl to 84.5 +- 1.1 mg/dl (P less than 0.002). All other parameters did not show significant changes.

Dr. F. Azizi and his associates (ref.9) from the University of Medical sciences, Tehran, Iran has reported the following. serum levels of glucose, bilirubin, calcium, phosphorous, protein, albumin, FSH, LH, testosterone, prolactin, TSH, TI, TI, and T uptake, as well as prolactin and TSH responses to TRH were evaluated in group of nine healthy men before and on the 10th, 20th and 29th days of Ramadan. Mean body weight decreased from 65.4 +- 9.1 to 61.6 +- 9.0 kg at 29th day. Serum glucose decreased from 82 +- 4 mg/dl on the 10th day, and increased thereafter (76 +- 3 and 84 +- 5 on the 20th and 29th days of fasting respectively). Serum bilirubin increased from 0.56 +- 0.17 to 1.43 +- 0.52 mg/dl on the 10th day, and decreased thereafter (1.1+- 0.4 on the 20th and 29th days.) All Changes returned to basal values four weeks after fasting. There were no significant changes in serum levels of Ca, P, protein, albumin, and any of measured hormones. Prolactin and TSH responses to TRH were also unaltered. He concluded that: (1) intermittent abstinence from food and drink for 17 hours a day for 29 days does not alter male reproductive hormones, hypothalamic-pituitary-thyroid axis or peripheral metabolism of thyroid hormones and (2) physicians caring for Muslims should be aware of changes of glucose and bilirubin during Ramadan.

Therefore it is concluded from the above two studies that Islamic fasting does not cause any adverse medical effect and may have some beneficial effect on weight and lipid metabolism.

## 7 general benefits of fasting.

### 1. BREAK FROM BUSY LIFESTYLES

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is a break from demanding daily routines, often full of worldly concerns & issues. Ramadan is a gateway towards spiritual bliss & provides a retreat from excessive lifestyles, enabling us to focus on our religious duties & the improvement of our character.

### 2. FOOD CONTROL

Abstinence from food & drink allows the digestive system to rest & recover from the usual intake of food. Fasting gives the body a break from constant meals and helps us to better control what we eat/drink.

Science proves that fasting allows the body to 'detox', meaning to flush out toxic substances built throughout the previous months. It also improves stamina, circulation and strength. Additionally, it promotes clearer skin and whiter eyes as the body feels healthier & less contaminated while fasting.

### 3. OVERCOMING BAD HABITS

Fasting, over time, helps to fight cravings of nicotine, caffeine and other narcotics. Through aiding the development of abstinence and self-control, fasting has helped many people give up their addiction to smoking & other related habits.

It also provides the opportunity to give up habits such as lying, backbiting, gossiping etc. as we know that during the sacred month of Ramadan, our fasts are invalid if we do not abstain from evil. Thus, it provides a truly effective opportunity to turn away from these traits & start afresh.

### 4. MORE TIME FOR REFLECTION

As fasting removes the need for food during daylight hours, it gives us more time & opportunity to reflect and become closer to Almighty Allah. Our time is spent in acts of worship and kindness, seeking spiritual enlightenment without distraction.

### 5. GRATITUDE & UNDERSTANDING

Fasting enables us to understand a small portion of the plight suffered by the poor & needy. It allows us to undergo a fraction of the hardship they endure through hunger and the deprivation of food and drink.

*Alhamdulillah*, we are fortunate enough to know where our next meal will come from and we know that a good *Iftaar* awaits us at the end of the fasting day. Sadly, many Muslim families around the world are too poor to afford an *Iftaar* meal and are not even able to break their fasts. Thus, fasting reminds us of our fortune and encourages us to thank Almighty Allah for the sustenance He provides us.

### 6. TESTS PATIENCE AND STRENGTH

Fasting tests & improves our patience, as well as our inner strength, as we strive to purify ourselves of that which our *nafs* (lower self) desires. It allows us to practise self-control, training our minds against its usual habits.

### 7. STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY TIES

Fasting in Ramadan strengthens community links as Muslims in the same area will unite further at this time of year; gathering at the Masjid, sharing glad tidings, offering *Iftaar* to each other and spending time with their brothers & sisters in faith. It also strengthens & renews family bonds, as Ramadan is a month of forgiveness which brings families together to enjoy blessings and spiritual bliss.

