

## 5 Pillars Of Islam

### Swam

#### **What are the main observances followed by Muslims during the month of Ramadan?**

Sawm is another institution found among the five pillars of Islam and has been instituted in the second year of Hijri. It is the keeping of fast for a period of 29 to 30 days during the month of Ramadhan. Before the time of the prophet of Islam (s.a.w), the number of days was 40 for all prophets (as) from Hazrat Adam (as) till the time of Hazrat Isa (as). It is fard in Islam on all Muslims and not abiding to it without any proper reason, renders the Muslims sinners. During that month there are many observances that are followed by the Muslims.

**At the outset**, it is recommended to all Muslims to wake up early in the morning for the swalaat-ul-Tahajjud and to fast from before dawn (fajr) till sunset during Ramadan. The prophet (s) said that the Athan pronounced by Bilal should not stop you from taking Suhur (Sehri), for he pronounces the Adhan at night, so that the one offering Tahajjud from among you might hurry up and the sleeping from among you might wake up. It does not mean that dawn or morning has started.<sup>1</sup>

**Moreover**, it is sunnah of the prophet (s.a.w) when beginning the fast to eat suhoor (Sehri) and to make the niyat (intention) that the fast is for Allah and done in His obedience. Another name for Suhur is Al Falah mentioned in the hadith of the prophet (s).<sup>2</sup> Sahl bin Sa'd said that he used to take the Suhur meal with his family and hasten so as to catch the Fajr with Allah's messenger.<sup>3</sup> The prophet advised to take suhur as there is blessing in it.<sup>4</sup>

**Thirdly**, as from the time of Fajr where the Muslims will be gathered in the mosque for swalaat, it is vital to abstain from eating, drinking, smoking and having sex till the time of sunset. It is said that when the verse 'And eat and drink till the white thread becomes distinct from the dark thread for you. Then complete the fast until the sunset. And do not have relations with them ...'<sup>5</sup> this means 'min Fajr' that is as from swalaat Fajr referring to night and day.<sup>6</sup> However, eating, drinking and having sexual intercourse are permissible before and after the fasting hours.<sup>7</sup>

**Furthermore**, as usual it is recommended for a validated fasting to abstain from all evil thoughts, careless chatter, and undesirable actions respectively with our thought, tongue and limbs. The prophet said that whoever does not give up false statements (telling lies) and evil deeds, and speaking bad words to others, Allah is not in need of his fasting leaving his food and drink.<sup>8</sup> But instead it is recommended to do good deeds as the reward is multiplied ten times.<sup>9</sup>

**Fifthly**, it is recommended on Muslims to exert their utmost in patience and humility. This will help them to face the evil in this world. It is said in hadith that the prophet (s) advised the individual

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<sup>1</sup> Bukhariy 621

<sup>2</sup> An Nasa'i 1605

<sup>3</sup> Bukhariy 577

<sup>4</sup> Bukhariy 1923

<sup>5</sup> Qur'an 2: 187

<sup>6</sup> Muslim 1091

<sup>7</sup> Abu Dawood 2314

<sup>8</sup> Bukhariy 6057

<sup>9</sup> Bukhariy 1894

Muslim that if ever someone fights him or abuses him, he must tell him twice that he is fasting.<sup>10</sup> The month of Ramadwan is also known as the month of Patience as the prophet (s) said that the month of patience (Ramadwan) and the 3 days of each month is (equal to) fasting for a lifetime.<sup>11</sup> The prophet said that fasting is half of patience.<sup>12</sup>

**Added to the above**, as swalaat is already and always fard (obligatory) on Muslims, the latter are recommended to perform all swalaat on time with jama'ah till the breaking of fast (iftar) at sunset (maghrib) usually with dates and followed by a light meal depending on people taste and habit. It is said in hadith that the prophet used to break his fast before swalaat with some fresh dates, but if there was no fresh dates, he had dry dates and if there was no dry date, he would take some mouthful of water.<sup>13</sup> It is mentioned that the prophet would be seen in continuous swalaat at any time during the month of Ramadwaan.<sup>14</sup>

**Seventhly**, it is recommended to read the Qur'an and much of Darood Shareef especially before maghrib swalaat and then to invoke Allah through sincere du'a. During that month after swalaatul Isha, we have the tarawih prayers which are recommended with the lecture of one part of the Qur'an in each night to complete the whole recitation by the end of the month. It is mentioned that Umar found the swahaba scattered in the mosque for swalaat tarawih. Then he gathered them under Ubay bin Ka'b in jama'ah.<sup>15</sup>

**Besides**, it is recommended to read the Qur'an individually during this month which is also beneficial and after its completion to at least learn by heart a few verses. It is advised by the prophet (s) to recite the Qur'an and finish it in one month.<sup>16</sup> The prophet (s) said that the man who has memorised the Qur'an is like that of a limped (hopped) camel. If he remained vigilant, he would be able to retain it and if he loosened the limped camel, it would escape.<sup>17</sup>

**Ninthly**, it is sunnah for some Muslim men to spend the last ten days in I'tikaf in the mosque giving up all worldly occupations for the sake of Allah. It is said that the Sunnah for the one who is observing I'tikaaf in the mosque is not to visit a patient, or to attend a funeral, or touch or embrace one's wife, or go out for anything but necessary purposes. There is no I'tikaaf without fasting and there is no I'tikaaf except in a congregational mosque.<sup>18</sup> The prophet used to practice I'tikaf in the last ten nights of Ramadwan.<sup>19</sup> It is said that tents were pitched in the mosque for those doing I'tikaf.<sup>20</sup>

**Last but not least**, it is recommended to spend the night of Lailat-ul-qadr in ibaadah. According to the Qur'an this night is worth more than one thousand months<sup>21</sup>. It is said that the prophet (s) advised the Muslims to look for the night of Qadr in the last ten nights of the month of Ramadwaan.<sup>22</sup> It is said that the prophet advised the Muslims to look for that night during the odd nights when there will have clouds and rain.<sup>23</sup> The Swahaba used to tell the prophet their dreams that it falls on the 27<sup>th</sup> night.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bukhariy 1894

<sup>11</sup> An Nasa'i 2408

<sup>12</sup> Tirmidhi 3519

<sup>13</sup> Abu Dawood 2356

<sup>14</sup> Tirmidhi 769

<sup>15</sup> Bukhariy 2010

<sup>16</sup> Bukhariy 5052

<sup>17</sup> Muslim 789

<sup>18</sup> Abu Dawood 2473

<sup>19</sup> Bukhariy 2025

<sup>20</sup> Muslim 1167

<sup>21</sup> Qur'an 97: 3

<sup>22</sup> Bukhariy 2020

<sup>23</sup> Bukhariy 2036

## Give reasons why this month is special? What is the significance / importance of Ramadhan?

**At the outset**, fasting (sawm) during Ramadan is a pillar of Islam hence it is by itself obligatory on every responsible and fit Muslim. Its importance lies in its being vital to accept to be considered as a complete Muslim with the remaining pillars. It is said in hadith that the prophet said that muslims have to fast during the whole month of Ramadwaan.<sup>25</sup>

**Moreover**, Allah says in the Qur'an that Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an as a guide to mankind and it acts as a training period for Muslims to apply in the remaining months of a whole year. It is mentioned in the Qur'an that fasting has been decreed upon Muslims so that they may become righteous.<sup>26</sup> It is also said that Fasting is best for Muslims if only they knew.<sup>27</sup> As such we may be grateful.<sup>28</sup>

**Thirdly**, it is special as in this month Allah forgives us and purifies us from our sins and this leads to obedience to Him, and by exercising self-control, patience and humility in all matters, fasting gives Muslims a sense of hope in the mercy of Allah. It is said that fasting is a protection from the fire and from committing sins. Our sins are forgiven when we fast.<sup>29</sup> It is said for those who cant get married, they must fast as fasting diminishes sexual power.<sup>30</sup>

**Furthermore**, this month is special as in it the Muslims increase their study of their faith and the recitation of the Qur'an. It is a way towards the return to Allah or to approach Him nearer. The prophet sais that there are 2 pleasures for a fasting person, one at the time of breaking the fast and the other at the time he will meet his Lord. And the smell of the mouth of a fasting person is better in Allah's sight than the smell of musk.<sup>31</sup>

**Fifthly**, this month helps Muslims to unite as a community in acts of worship, especially for last ten days in I'tikaaf and the night of power or destiny known as Lailatul Qadr. It is important as it is a means for our sins to be forgiven as the prophet said that whoever establishes the prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's reward, then all his past sins will be forgiven.<sup>32</sup>

**Added to the above**, the mere fact of not able to eat and drink for specific hours makes Muslims more aware of the suffering of the poor and needy. It is also said that those who are old or ill can feed one poor person for each day of fasting (instead of fasting)<sup>33</sup>. This will lead to being more generous during Ramadan ending with the annual zakat to be given to the poor. The prophet enjoined Zakaat-ul-Fitr as a purification for the fasting person from idle talk and obscenities and to be paid before swalaat 'id.<sup>34</sup>

**Seventhly**, a big part of this month symbolises the celebrating the idea of brotherhood and sharing especially during the breaking of the fast at the time of Iftar. It is said that many deputations came to Mu'awiyah during the month of Ramadwan. The swahaba would prepare food for one another and Abu

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<sup>24</sup> Bukhariy 1156, 1157, 1158

<sup>25</sup> Bukhariy 1891

<sup>26</sup> Qur'an 2: 183

<sup>27</sup> Qur'an 2: 184

<sup>28</sup> Qur'an 2: 185

<sup>29</sup> Bukhariy 1904

<sup>30</sup> Bukhariy 1905

<sup>31</sup> Bukhariy 7492

<sup>32</sup> Bukhariy 35

<sup>33</sup> Bukhariy Book 65 Hadith 4505

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Majah 1827

Huraira used to invite frequently the swahaba at his house.<sup>35</sup> There is sharing of sweets or meals among neighbours or in the mosque.

**Besides**, it is a month allowing Muslims the opportunity to purify their egos, their hearts and their deeds. It is a spiritual month leading to the elevation of Muslims in the eyes of Allah. While purifying ourselves, the prophet said that paradise has 8 gates and one of them is called Ar Rayyan through which none will enter except those who observe fasting.<sup>36</sup>

**Ninthly**, that month which is headed by abstinence helps Muslims to stop and abstain from common evils such as telling lies, backbiting, quarrelling, eating haraam item, earning through unlawful means and any act which may harm or cause grief to a person. The prophet said that fasting is a shield (or a screen or a shelter).<sup>37</sup> As such the fasting person must abstain from behaving foolishly and imprudently.

**Last but not least**, it has been proven scientifically by a medical expert, Dr. Ralph Cinque who has supervised Fasting since 1976 that Fasting promotes detoxification of the body, gives the digestive system a much-needed rest, quiets allergic reactions, corrects high blood pressure without drugs, makes it easy to overcome bad habits and addictions, clears the skin and whitens the eyes, restores taste appreciation for wholesome natural foods, is the perfect gateway to a healthful diet and lifestyle and fasting initiates rapid weight loss with little or no hunger.

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<sup>35</sup> Muslim 1780

<sup>36</sup> Bukhariy 3257

<sup>37</sup> Bukhariy 1894