



Importance of Abstinence in Spiritual and Moral Development after the Religious Fasting

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KEYWORDS Abstinence. Law-Abiding Lifestyle Muslim. Ramadan. Religious Fasting

ABSTRACT This study analysed the problems of believing people who fast in Ramadan. It is widely accepted that the main problem is the unpreparedness of believers to fast neither theoretically, nor psychologically, nor culturally. However, most Muslims face the problem of a difficult start to fasting. Therefore, the study described the reasons for difficulties at the beginning of the fast and the ways of gradual habit formation and preliminary preparation for the fast during the year. Most believers state the fact that after the end of Ramadan they do not fast during the year or do it very rarely. Therefore, this study aimed to secure the fasting person, warn in advance, and prepare them psychologically and physically for a long year. In conclusion, it is good to fast for a whole year but fasting time is the abstinence from all physical desires forbidden and questionable actions, and it would be better for everyone and especially for a believer to lead such a law-abiding lifestyle every day throughout the year.

INTRODUCTION

Humans have adopted periodic fasting, under a religious aspect, for centuries as a crucial pathway of spiritual purification. Caloric restriction, with or without exclusion of certain types of food, is often a key component (Brandhorst et al. 2016; Guidi and Longo 2018). Fasting varies significantly among different populations according to cultural habits and local climate conditions. Religious fasting in terms of patterns (continuous versus intermittent) and duration can vary from 1 to 200 days; thus, the positive and negative impact on health can be considerable (Persynaki et al. 2017; Venegas-Borsellino and Martindale 2018).

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting, prayer, reflection and community. During the entire month of Ramadan, Muslims are obligated to fast, every day from dawn to sunset. Fasting requires the abstinence from food and drink (Alkandari et al. 2012; van Bilsen et al. 2016).

Some people face difficulty with Intermittent Fasting because they approach it in the wrong. Being aware of the right methods when undertaking Intermittent Fasting can be the difference between success and failure (Bakhurji et al. 2017; Necula and Mann 2019). This study considers the typical mistakes of fasting believers, who would find it safer to fulfil this duty of the fol-

lowers of Islam by avoiding the possible occurrence of psychological and physical stress. Thus, the main problem, which would be solved, is the reduction of all possible adverse consequences from the incorrect fasting.

The scientific novelty of the study is that the authors paid close attention not to the implementation of the month's fasting, but to what happens to the believers after fasting and what the believers should not do to experience stress during the fasting time. Thus, the study represents a question of the present interest and it is much in demand because of connection with the revival of religion and emergence of religious organisations such as mosques, madrassas, and parishes on the territory of Russia 28 years ago. The main problem resides in the believers themselves, namely in the absence of the preparation downtime for most Muslims. In particular, many of them do not fast at all for 11 months or do it very rarely.

Objective

In the current study, it was tried to analyse the problems of believing people who fast in Ramadan.

METHODOLOGY

This scientific paper was written based on a comparative-competitive research method ap-

plied to religious-law sources used among the peoples professing the Islamic faith. For a more complete comparison, the authors described how most Muslims are fasting nowadays and how Muslims should fast according to the Quran. The authors used the works of both Russian and foreign scientists for comparison. The methods used during study were observation, comparative method, system-structural method, structural-analytical method, historical method and integrative method, which are described as follows:

Comparative Method is a method of investigation (as of ethnologic phenomena and relations) based on comparison.

System-structural Method is becoming increasingly important in the field of public administration research since it allows one to develop a system of knowledge about the state and state power that can be verified.

Historical Method is the collection of techniques and guidelines that historians use to research and write histories of the past. Primary sources and other evidence including those from archaeology are used.

Integrative Method is that type of study, which attempts to bring together the results of previous observations and results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most important thing is not to abstain during fasting, but after fasting. Many people may consider that this judgment is close to blasphemy. However, the researchers advise to look at this from other sides. There are many believers who fast for a day or a month and then they “break away” and stop eating without control.

The faithful neither eats, drinks, nor performs a sexual act (according to the religion). After sunset, they stuff themselves to a helpless condition. According to the knowledge sources, the imams call for abstinence during fasting but they do not say that after the end of fasting all prohibitions of food are lifted and you can eat as much as you want. One reads in the Bible, the Gospel, and the Quran (Sur 2, Ayat 183) that “The faithful should fast”, but one does not pay attention to the true purpose of the abstinence in food, drinks amusement, and other secular temptations. The main purpose of fasting is to

abstain not only during the fasting time, but the most important thing is that the person learns to manage and control his physical desires in everyday life, but not just in “fasting” days or in the month of fasting.

In supporting the above discussion, it is suitable to cite particular provisions laid down in Islam. For example, after thirty days of compulsory fasting in the month of Ramadan, it is recommended to fast during 6 days in the month of Shawwal having celebrated one day of Eid al-Fitr. Therefore, it is recommended to fast in the first days or during the month of Shawwal. After that there are ten fasting days before standing on the Mount Arafat.

There is another time stipulated in Islam as desirable for fasting. One should notice that the believers should fast every week, as Muhammad, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) did on Monday, Thursday, and also on the 13th, 14th, and 15th day of each month according to the calendar to entrench the effect of the month.

Therefore, it turns out that the Muslim can fast at will for 8 to 12 days every month additionally; that is, one-third of the month or 110 days a year. Consequently, all these advisable fasting times are not aimed at weakening the believers but on the contrary at taming his “nafs” (Alizade 2007) (from Arabic, temptation or negative characteristics).

It can also be noted that most of the believers who fast in the month of Ramadan do almost nothing in terms of preliminary preparation for the fasting. Everyone knows that a favourable preparation is almost fifty percent of the success of any action. There is no exception for fasting. The faithful who start fasting immediately from the first day of Ramadan without preparing themselves for this in advance gets considerable stress. Many believers experience different types of psychological and physical stress. In fact, psychological stress is manifested in the fact that they are not ready mentally for such abstinence in words and actions, and a person gets a physical stress because he rarely or never fasted during 11 months. Then, with onset of the month of Ramadan, he gets a hard-hitting stress and his body system is not ready for the lack of food and water. In addition, the circulatory, cardiovascular, and metabolic sys-

tems as well as the mind are not ready for such a different change in conditions.

Actually, the body has been working steadily for a year and then the supply of food and most importantly water ceases. It should be noted that the intervals between sunset and sunrise do not change significantly in Saudi Arabia during the year, but the duration between sunset and sunrise is about 4 hour, for example, in the Republic of Tatarstan in some years (Gabbrakhmanova et al. 2016). In this way, the organism gets food and water at 1:00 AM and receives nothing else till 9:00 PM, that is, the body gets along without food and water for 20 hours and a fasting person tries to provide food for the next 20 hours.

Thus, it is necessary to take into account that most fasting people are those who cannot quit their job for a whole month and cannot fast without exhaustion. In fact, working hours and workload usually do not change. Physical activity, volume of work, and labour productivity remain the same, but the single difference is a hungry stomach, and there are no breaks for breakfast, dinner or any snack.

Of course, the season should be considered. If it is summer, it is connected with dehydration. Therefore, it is excessively difficult to work for 20 hours without a sip of water in the hottest time of the year in the sun. Hence, it is very difficult to tolerate for 30 days without a day-off.

That is why God ordered fasting to believing people. Such torment, exhaustions, sufferings, and hardship really temper the person spiritually, he develops willpower and struggles with his inner 'nafs' (with the inner 'ego'). Thus, fasting in such conditions is a real and difficult test that strengthens faith, morality, conscientiousness, ethics, culture, integrity, and other positive qualities.

Now, the researchers present some tips for a successful, painless entry into fasting. In order to be psychologically ready for fasting, it is necessary to read the literature about the purpose of fasting, the rules for fasting, the moments that spoil fasting, and the moments that increase "ajr" (Gordon 2002), and reward for fasting. In fact, a person should theoretically understand the meaning and purpose of fasting, morally prepare self for such abstinence, and realise what reward one will get after fasting. It is necessary

to visit the mosques regularly, as imams change the theme of speech to prepare for fasting a month in advance. Actually, imams explain easily the purpose of fasting as well as how to fast properly.

It is important to know who is relieved of fasting, that is, sick people based on the types of diseases, travellers, pregnant and lactating women, children, and the elderly may not fast.

Advice on physical training before the long-time fasting is of high importance. It is necessary to fast every Thursday throughout the year according to the Sunna of Muhammad the Prophet. This weekly fasting will easily prepare a believer for a long fasting. If a believer fasts constantly during the year, his body gets used to that and it is not as stressful to fast for more than a week. Therefore, all systems and organs are prepared for fasting. After the believer gets used to fasting throughout the year, he will no longer have any negative effects of. He will moderately break fast and eat before "Sukhur", that is, before the start of everyday fasting (Plessner et al. 1997).

The next important point is that it is necessary to refuse not only in material terms but also most importantly spiritually. Refusing food, drinks, and sexual relations is clear but it is necessary to dwell on the moral side of fasting. The positive educational aspect of fasting will be more important. Thus, it is recommended to refrain from foul language, bad habits, having fun, and deviant and delinquent behaviour and try to do as many noble, and morally proper acts as possible (Al-Bukhari 2005).

It has been emphasised that a person should abstain from bad habits during fasting. It means they cannot smoke any tobacco products, smoking mixtures or hookahs, drink such intoxicating drinks as vodka, alcohol, wine, beer, champagne, and so forth while fasting (Michalak et al. 2007). Such behaviours are known as "haram" (Alizade 2007) (that is, from Arabic "forbidden" or "inviolable"). Therefore, they cannot be used at all. One should pay attention to the fact that forbidden things cannot be used not only during fasting but throughout the life in general.

The same can be said for lawful, moral, and law-abiding behaviour. Quoting the words of Tikhonravov (1998) in this case, "Religion must be unequivocally regarded as a factor restraining unlawful behaviour".

Fasting persons should suppress any outbursts of anger, cruelty or aggression in self and urge self to be patient and calm (Al-Bukhari 2005). In fact, it is very difficult and some believers are surprised why they 'lose their temper' and cannot control themselves, though most "shaitans" are held in chains. The answer is that despite the fact that "shaitans" cannot influence people's "nafs", which everyone has, in this blessed month are free from chains. Therefore, in this case, some Muslims who declare that "shaitan" seduced them breathe on him. Their fault in offences committed lays in them and their "nafs" controls them and leads them to illegal conduct.

According to the opinion of the majority of Muslim scholars who studied these issues, one can say that one must struggle with his "nafs". People can fight against the "nafs" and weaken it by various means. For example, they should fast regularly, eat moderately, and deny themselves extra comfort. Food and drinks should be the cheapest and simple without any excesses. One should sleep on a firm surface as Muhammad the Prophet did (peace and blessings be upon him), and wear clean and neat but not expensive clothes. To avoid a sense of pride, the car should not be expensive because it is a means of transport but not the chance to show the status of the car owner. If there are any additional funds, then a person should help the poor and needy people and not buy himself an extra apartment or a new car.

In fact, by refraining from material goods, the learner tries to avoid committing offenses and to be satisfied with the government, state government agencies, and the situation in the country, regardless of the crisis or prosperity. In addition, people should teach their children not only to love God, but also respect the country, the public authorities, the law, the parents, and the adults. Finally, they should develop the sense of justice, tolerance towards people in their children, and making no distinction on the basis of the national, social, racial, financial or other position.

Unfortunately, many believers make the same mistake, that is, as soon as the fasting day is over, they "attack" food and eat much more than they would eat on a typical day. When this believer overeats and goes to bed until morning, the stomach suffers digesting huge amounts of food. Then, abundant breakdowns occur before

bedtime, a person does not have time to spend the nutrients, and they turn into fat.

Interestingly, some Arabic countries offer statistical data that some Muslims gain 10 to 20 kilograms instead of losing weight in the month of Ramadan.

However, these facts do not refer to the inconsistency of religious dogmas, but confirm that the aim of fasting is to start restraining oneself from bodily passions and desires and to make an ability to do without excessive use of material goods as the believer automatically did it. However, unfortunately, few believers can state that they could achieve that.

Ultimately, the majority of believers state the fact that after the end of Ramadan, they do not fast or fast very rarely during the year. Of course, it is good to fast for a whole month, but fasting is the abstention from all bodily desires, not committing forbidden and questionable actions, and it would be better for everyone, and especially for a fasting person, to lead such a healthy and law-abiding lifestyle every ordinary day throughout the year.

CONCLUSION

According to the analyses, it is important to abstain not only during fasting but also after fasting. In fact, the main purpose of fasting is not to abstain during fasting time, but most importantly, to learn to control bodily desires (for food, water, sex, sleep, and behaviour) in everyday life, and not just in "fasting" days or in the month of fasting.

The believers should fast every week, as Muhammad the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) did on Monday and Thursday and also on the 13th, 14th, and 15th day of each month according to the calendar to entrench the effect of the month.

It was also found that most of the believers who fast in the month of Ramadan do almost nothing in terms of preliminary preparation for the fasting. Actually, the faithful who starts fasting immediately from the first day of Ramadan without preparing themselves for this in advance will undergo considerable stress. Many believers experience different types of psychological and physical stress.

The next important thing is to refuse both material and most importantly spiritual issues. Refusing food, drinks, and sexual relations is clear but it is necessary to dwell on the moral side of fasting. The positive educational aspect of fasting will be more important; it is recommended to refrain from foul language, bad habits, having fun, and deviant and delinquent behaviour and try to do as many noble and morally proper acts as possible.

Thus, a fasting believer must observe religious precepts not only during fasting, but also throughout the year, every day of his life, so that this abstention would turn into habit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study the researchers paid close attention to what happens to the believers after fasting and what the believers should not do to experience stress during the fasting time. Future studies can investigate the benefits of other religious acts like praying and how to turn them into habits.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was conducted according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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Paper received for publication in October, 2019
Paper accepted for publication in December, 2019