

Fasting in Newfoundland

Muslims use the Lunar calendar to monitor date and time. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims have two main meals: one just before Dawn called "Suhoor" and the second is just after Sunset called "Iftar". Usually, the Iftar meal starts with a few dates or something sweet to provide the body with energy after a day of fasting.

Muslims in St. John's meet daily in the Mosque for the evening prayers. Every Saturday, they meet for the evening meal (Iftar). At the end of Ramadan, they will celebrate Eid- ul-Fitr (the celebration of ending the fast) with prayers and a social gathering.



Kids celebrating Eid Ul-Fitr 2004



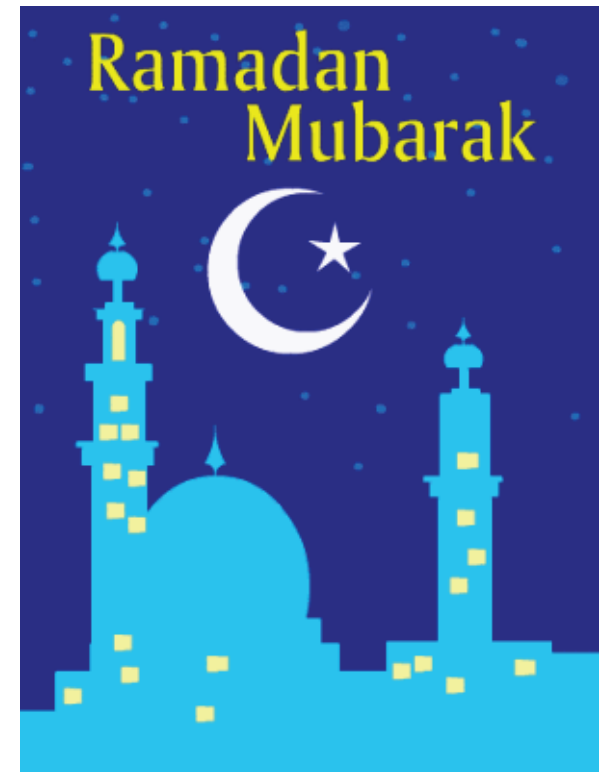
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FASTING IN ISLAM



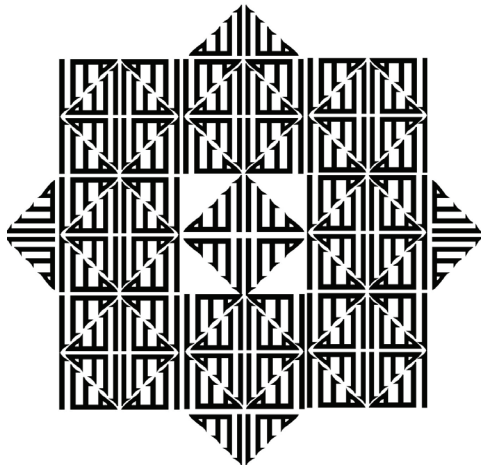
Fasting

Islam is built on a foundation of five pillars: bearing witness to the oneness of God and that Muhammad is His messenger, establishing prayers, paying poor dues, fasting, and pilgrimage. These pillars are not an end in themselves but they provide the moral foundation upon which the Muslim character is built.

Mechanics of Fasting

Obligatory fasting is observed during the month of Ramadan (the month of fasting). One abstains from food, drink, and intimate relationship with spouses from Dawn till Sunset.

One of the benefits of fasting is to release the human soul from the clutches of desire and produce within it a semblance of the divine attribute of the freedom of want. Yet, a balance between carnal desires and spiritual purification should always be maintained.



Purpose of Fasting

“O you who believe fasting has been prescribed upon you as it has been prescribed upon those before you so that you may become God conscious” [2:183]

“The month of Ramadan is the month in which the Quran was revealed, a book of guidance with proofs to guide in distinguishing between right and wrong.” [2:185]

These verses indicate that there is a special relationship among God consciousness (Taqwa), fasting, and Quran.

The term God consciousness is a very comprehensive term. To understand some of its aspects let us look at the following verse:

“O children of Adam ! We have indeed sent down to you clothing to cover your shame, and (clothing) for beauty and clothing that guards (against evil), that is the best. This is of the communication of God that you may be mindful” [7: 26]

The verse shows that as we need clothing to cover and beautify our bodies, God consciousness provide the cover that will beautify our souls. This cover is obtained by addressing our shortcomings and disposing of our bad habits. The ultimate status is to serve God as if we were able to see Him.

Fasting is one of the vehicles that can bring man to this status. It provides a unique way of communicating with God. It constitutes a purely private communication with God, because only God and the believer know whether the conditions of fasting have been kept by the believer.

Ramadan and Charity

Ramadan is labelled the month of generosity. Several measures are taken to instil generosity as a character in the believer. A person who is physically unable to fast and cannot make up for these lost fasting days, should offer a meal for each non-fasting day to a poor person. Feeding a poor person in Ramadan is equivalent to fasting an extra day. A special charity is paid to the poor at the end of the month to render the fasting complete.

Exemptions

Some people are exempted from fasting because of their health or physical condition. An old or a sick person, a woman who is pregnant or nursing, or a person who is on a long trip are examples of those that are exempt from fasting. Some of these are asked to make up for the lost days later when their conditions allow them to fast. Those who are unable to fast should then offer a meal to a poor person for every fasting day they miss.

