

# Understanding Fasting Part 1

by Es-Seyyid Es-Shaykh Taner Ansari

*Bismillah Al Rahman Al Rahim* [In the name of Allah, The One Who Acts with Mercy, The Source of Mercy]. All praise belongs to Allah. Allah owns everything. All power belongs to Allah and not to us. May Allah's peace and blessings be on Prophet Muhammad and his family and on all the other prophets and their families.

Ramadan is part of the *Sharia* and some conservative Muslims say there are five pillars of Islam:

- 1) saying "*La ilaha illallah, Muhammadun rasul Allah*"
- 2) performing five regular prayers a day
- 3) fasting during the month of Ramadan
- 4) going on *Hajj*
- 5) paying the *Zakat*

Fasting is good for you if you can do it. All of them are good for you if you can do them. Fasting is not only staying hungry; if you tie a donkey and you don't feed him water and food until sundown, will it be fasting? What do you think? First of all, what is the goal of fasting? Why does Allah want you to fast?

In the Qur'an, Allah says He only punishes the ungrateful (*Sura Saba 34:17*). Allah makes you from His existence. He makes you conscious from His consciousness. He gives you eyes so you can see, ears so you can hear, a heart so you can feel and love. After Allah does all this, what happens? Human beings become ungrateful.

Appreciate Allah by seeing what He has given you and by being grateful and thankful. We take everything for granted, and taking everything for granted takes us to vanity and ignorance, and it interrupts our communication with Allah, which is supposed to be peaceful and loving.

Lack of appreciation demonstrates your vanity, which means you are the source of power and you are your focus. This means you are in *nafs-i ammara* (first level of *nafs*). In other words, if  $A=B$  and  $B=C$ , then  $A=C$ , which means you are attributing partners to Allah. You are *mushrik*. So, as Sufis, our target is to take our attention from ourselves and turn it towards where it rightfully belongs, of course, to the Owner of everything (including us), the Power which we call Allah.

So all these practices, which are compiled under the statement "*aqim al salat* [establish a system of devotion, communication, relationship with Allah]" is the letter of the system, and there is the *ruh* [soul] of the system too. If you walk the path, then you have to make peace with the steps (of the path), which means you have to accept them knowingly and, in my opinion, scientifically so that you can accept, ascend, reach and keep on going. If you don't, then you are not hurting Allah. Allah has designed all these for you so that you have a better relationship with your Creator.

Allah does not need your fasting, your praying, your *zikr* and all this. Allah is the Truth; He is Truthful. He says what He means and He means what He says. You need to understand, and He is expecting that you should understand because He has given you the power of understanding.

Whatever we are doing, we have to keep the main goal in mind. Allah is steady and constant in

His goal that He has set for us and in the procedure that He has set for us. Always keep this in mind and don't lose this. We are on Earth to know Allah. That's why you are here. We are on Earth to love Allah. The knowledge you attain has to get you to Allah. Everything else is for you to find Allah in.

Your *nafs* coupled with Shaytan is to take your focus off Allah. (Whatever) your job is, under any condition, no matter who is blocking you or pulling you back, how you are dealing with life, poverty, sickness and kids, you still need to keep your focus on Allah and learn by doing (not just by reading and by listening). On-the-job training—you learn and you act with what you learn.

This world is an educational facility. This is the place where you can gain the degree of your closeness to Allah. If you don't like how you are created and what you lack, this is your chance. You make of yourself whatever you want, but know that it's going to be forever. If you want to be a thief, and that makes you happy, then be a thief forever. Whatever you do, if you are fasting, you have to keep this understanding. This understanding is the *amaana* (trust) in your heart that Allah is with you and your job is to recognize it and devise a plan and be constant in it—how to clean up your connection to Allah, how to solidify your connection to Allah, and then how to preserve your connection with Allah.

Your biggest enemy is you. I don't blame you. I don't blame anybody. You have Allah's *Ahad* [Uniqueness]. You have Allah's Power and you think you are god. You have a say---so in the matter. You only have a say---so in the matter when Allah says it is up to you. However, when Allah and His messenger make a decision for you, then you have no say-so.

Every word of the Qur'an is connected to every other word, cross-referenced and supporting each other. It all comes to: "There is Allah, and you are dependent on Allah literally, like a stamp on your hand. You are the stamp, the rest is Allah."

So when you fast, you have to keep the goal in mind. Am I just staying hungry or am I trying to achieve something? If you want to appreciate something, Allah takes it away from you, then you appreciate it. You have no right to be unappreciative, so why are you so arrogant? We have no justification.

So we have to be humble. Why? Because you are just a stamp, you have no power. The hand is the Power. That is the Hand of God, our Lord.

Do your best. Do something to live this Ramadan experience. Act like you are fasting. Think like you are fasting (even if you cannot fast).

We are all incomplete and we are learning all the time. *Alhamdulillah*, positivity is not seeing negativity at all. Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi said, "Wherever I looked, I did not see any incompleteness."

When you look at a picture, there are so many other pictures hidden in there. The important thing is how you prepare (yourself) to see all that, seeing ninety-nine names of Allah everywhere.

What is holding you back is the negativity in yourself. If you have an argument or a grudge from the past inside you, you must take it out. Don't leave any negative feeling or assumption in you. When you have done that, then that is the real positivity because there is nothing. Then you will

be a positive person.

—Es-Seyyid Es-Shaykh Taner Ansari  
June 20, 2015

### **Watch Your Own Behavior**

During Ramadan, some people’s eyes go out towards what other people are doing, e.g. “I am fasting, but other people are not fasting” and “I am praying while the others are not praying.” The Truth is, Allah is the Judge, not us. By committing this sin of arrogance, I don’t know if Allah will accept the prayers that we do. No matter how many prayers you do, it is in Allah’s hands. How does Allah decide to accept our prayers? He looks into our hearts. What is our intention? It is more than that—Who are you with? We are with ourselves when we are looking down on others. One must be careful about what we are thankful for with both our intentions and actions.

—Es-Sharifa Es-Shaykha Muzeyyen Ansari  
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### **Call of the Divine**

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