

## THE ROLE OF FASTING ON THE PHYSICAL HEALTH IN THE VIEW OF QURAN AND HADITHS OF IMAMS (AS)

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**Abstract. Introduction:** Fasting is one of the most important and most effective religious orders that in other divine religions also have been ordered, strictly. This heaven gift is in fact a type of pharmacy which will prevent from many of the diseases of humans and it has the ability to treat many problems and physical illnesses. Since, the blessing of physical health is one of the greatest blessings of God, therefore, Islam emphasized on the health. As far as in the tradition (Imams hadiths) is mentioned from this blessing as the greatest blessings. Among the various methods of worship and obedience, the fasting is one of the orders that add freshness and vitality to the body. Against this issue, the lack of proper nutrition is one of the basic causes of diseases. In this study, it was used from Quran, Imams hadiths and medical scientific literature to demonstrate the relationship between fasting and physical health. According to the survey of resources, it can be said that the fasting has an impact on physical health. Therefore, the purpose of this article is evaluation of the effects of fasting on the health of the body. **Method:** In this study, the relationship between the fasting and physical health is evaluated by investigation of Quran, Imams hadiths and related researches. **Results:** The cause of many diseases is the over-eating of the foods. This over-eating leads to the accumulation of excess fats in the various areas of the body. This excess fat is a risk factor for getting of many infectious and non-infectious diseases. **Conclusion:** The best way to combat this problem is fasting. Fasting leads to the cleaning of the body and removes impurities. And it is an important factor for improving the performance of the digestive system as well as physical health.

**Keywords:** Fasting, Physical health, Worship.

**Introduction.** Fasting has a lot of physical and healthy effects. This effect is so important that it cannot ignore the role of fasting in the health and longevity. Fasting eliminate the impurities. The over intake of calorie from the excess eating of foods remain in all of body tissues. The excess intake of fats accumulated around the heart, kidneys, liver and cardiovascular system and leads to the several diseases. In fact, myocardial infarction is the obstruction of cardiac vessels by excess fats. Obviously, the fasted person should not to eat a lot of foods in Iftar (the food eaten immediately after sunset to break the fast) and midnight supper (the meal generally eaten about half an hour to one hour before dawn) to use from this divine duty, effectively and usefully. Otherwise, the result may be reversed.

It is important that the body is not susceptible to the disease; otherwise, pathogens are in foods and water and the air and only it is important that the body is not ready to microbial contamination. This physical capability is generated when the waste material removed from the body. And this is that effect that makes by fasting. Fasting with some restrictions reinforce the digestive system and helps to the purification and cleaning of the body. Fasting has a lot of benefits for physical health and in some cases as a sole therapy or the treatment can be considered. Fasting has a lot of benefits for the treatment of anemia, intestinal weakness, chronic intestinal inflammation, external and internal abscess, tuberculosis, rheumatism, gout, neurasthenia, sciatic nerve disorders, skin scaling, eye disease, diabetes, skin diseases, kidney and liver diseases and etc.

**Method:** In this study, the relationship between the fasting and physical health is evaluated by investigation of Quran, Imams hadiths and related researches.

**Results:** The fasting in addition to the moral and spiritual effects has a lot of physical and healthy effects. This physical effect is very important that it cannot ignore the role of fasting on the health and longevity and etc. In fact, fasting is the fight against impurities. Fasting in addition to the moral, intellectual and cognitive impurities, remove some physical impurities. Imam Ali (AS) says about the philosophy of fasting “the God made fasting as an obligatory test for the sincerity of people” (1). Therefore, the God necessitate the fasting to refine the peoples and remove the impurities. And, Imam Sajjad (AS) has an interesting interpretation about fasting and Ramadan. He says “clearing month or in fact Ramadan is a month for clearing” (2). The God in Quran used from this phrase in keeping with the word of rain and says “we sent down from the sky a cleaner water” (3). Some things are clean, but they are not cleaner. But some things are both clean and cleaner. For example, rose extract is clean, aromatic and revitalizer but it is not cleaner. But the rain is clean and cleaner. Imam Sajjad (AS) says “fasting is clean and also cleaner. It is removed impurities and pollutions from the body. The month of fasting (Ramadan) is the month of cleaning of body from impurities. In the ancient and modern medicine, the amazing effect of refraining from eating and drinking in the treatment of various human diseases and physical health is considered, clearly and definitely. This is particularly important in medical recommendations. The excess intake of calories from over-eating of various foods and beverages will deposit in the body. The excess intake of fats accumulated around the heart, kidneys, liver and cardiovascular system and leads to the several diseases. In fact, myocardial infarction is the obstruction of cardiac vessels by excess fats. Among the body tissues, fats and other undigested foods makes some waste material and create

swamp for production of microbes. In any environment, it should better to eliminate the microbe's center. In the cities where garbage releases in the open air, the outbreak of diseases is higher. In cities where wastewater is not covered, diseases naturally are higher. In fact, fasting removed the waste materials as a purifier factor. In other word, it is burned the waste materials and clean the body. Fasting, in fact, is a considerable rest for digestive system and it is an effective factor for servicing of this system. As regards, this system is one of the most important systems in the body and has been working for all of the year; steadily, this rest is very necessary and useful for it. Obviously, in according to the Islam orders, the fasted person should not eat excessive foods in Iftar and midnight supper until this healthy action be useful and beneficial and otherwise, it may have a converse effect (4). It is important that the body is not susceptible to the disease; otherwise, pathogens are in foods, water and the air and only it is important that the body is not ready to microbial contamination. This physical capability is generated when the waste material removed from the body. This is the effect of fasting. It should be noted that fasting, itself haven't an independent role in physical health and finally, it is the power of God that perform this medical treatment and he is responsible for these actions. The Prophet (PBUH) as the best healer and wise human in the world knows abdomen as the source of various problems and says "stomach is the center of the most pains and avoiding from eating wrong and excessive foods is the base of every therapeutic drug" (5). The reason of the most mental and physical illnesses is over-eating and bad-eating that leads to the disorderliness in the regularity of stomach and other organs and is causing the creation of an imbalance in thought and behavior. Fasting with some restrictions reinforce the digestive system and helps to the purification and cleaning of the body. And also it can help to the avoiding from doing sinful acts with management and mitigation thoughts and behavior and keeps away the human's psych from contaminations. Fasting guaranteed the human's health in both psychological and physical aspects. Accordingly, the Prophet (PBUH) said "be fast to be healthy" (6). Fasting has a lot of benefits for physical health and in some cases is a sole therapy or the best treatment. The comments of some physician and the results of some studies about the fasting and its role in physical health are mentioned below. Russian scientist Alexei Sopherin writes, "fasting has an special benefit for treatment of anemia, bowel weakness, chronic intestinal inflammation, internal and external abscess, tuberculosis, rheumatism, gout, neurasthenia, sciatic nerve disorders, skin scaling, eye disease, diabetes, skin diseases, kidney and liver diseases and etc. Treatment by fasting is not only for above-mentioned disease and even it is used for treatment of cancer, syphilis and plague" (7).

Alexei Sopherin wrote in his book with the name of fasting, a new method of treatment of diseases "95% of human's disease is originated from malnutrition. When the human fast, the body used from its stored foods and calories to provide energy. It means that body will have an opportunity to refine its own by avoiding from eating and fasting. And the fasting is the greatest cleaner of the body. In the fasting, the body use from its stored nutritional materials and perform this action by use from reserved sugar, fat and protein. Therefore, treatment by fasting is based on the removing of additional tissues that restored again after the end of fasting. In short, nowadays, positive effect of fasting in the treatment of many diseases such as obesity and fasting, gastrointestinal diseases, acute gastritis, hypertension, asthma, and etc is well documented. This Russian scientist by emphasizing on the therapeutic effects of fasting says "if I want to show the benefits of fasting in treatment of disease, certainly I am not able, because every day, many of patients treated in this way. The recovery of these patients is an obvious reason for the effect of fasting in physical health. That all of the diseases in the present ages or at least 95% of them are treatable by the fasting" (8). Dr. Azizi (endocrinologist) stated that with the survey of scientific evidences, it seems that fasting is possible in many cases except of urgent and emergent circumstances that due to the weakness or severity of illness, fasting may be harmful. Now, we express an example that stated in the Islamic republic newspaper in 1990/4/5. Ms. Mahvash with the age of 43 years old who suffered from asthma for 9 years could treat herself by 40 days of fasting. She only drank water in this time. Now she has very good physical condition. And several neighbors that saw her fasting confirmed her recovery. Currently laboratory tests are normal. And only in the thirty-ninth day of fasting, her blood sugar level decreased to the 35 gr/dl. She said during of her disease activity, referred to the many physicians. And even she had done acupuncture but failed to cure her illness. Therefore, after the reading of a book about medical fasting, she decided to fast for 40 days.

She said that: I am fasted for 40 days and today, 39 days passed from this action and I'm good (thanks God). I haven't shortness of breath and wheezing and only, I have a little weakness. I had to use from a lot of sprays every day and also I used from a lot of ampules. But, now I don't use from these drugs for 39 days. And my disease is healed (9). Dr. Bokhtegi says in his article about biologic treatment of diseases (treatment with fasting): During the 50 years that have passed since the establishment of the clinic of Dr. bokhtegi, more than 50 thousand patients with chronic diseases have been treated at this clinic. He quoted the words of a Roman physician that "the first disease is related to the over-eating and the first treatment was performed by fasting. And also he is cited to the statements of an Egyptian physician "the human provides his/her energies with one fourth of things that eat and the physicians expend their life by the other three quarters (10). Dr. abdolaziz says fasting is used to treat the following:

- 1- In the cases of chronic intestinal anxiety and when conjoined with fermentation of aqueous humor and starch.
- 2- In the weight gaining due to the multiplicity of eating and decreasing of movements. In this case, fasting with moderation of eating in Iftar and use of water in mid-night supper is more effective in every aspect.

3- Hypertension: the blood pressure increased by over-eating and low motility. In these settings, fasting plays its treating role especially if the weight is more than the normal weight.

4- Hyperglycemia: this disease is very prevalent like hypertension. Before the appearance and in the early stages of this disease, it is often associated with obesity. Here, the fasting also is an effective treatment. Because the diabetes reduced by the body weight decreasing. When the diabetes is mild, in the five hours after the eating of meal, the blood sugar level falls below the normal. And after ten hours is at least level of normal. Even after the creation of insulin (especially when the patients are obese), the fasting is an important way of treatment.

5- In the cases of acute and chronic inflammation of kidney that coincide with the inflation and discharge.

6- In the case of heart disease coupled with inflation.

7- Chronic inflammatory diseases of the joints, especially when combined with obesity. So that most women after the age of forty, are affected by this disease. These patients have milder degree of complications in the Ramadan month. It is possible to say the use of fasting for treatment of these diseases needs to the order of physician and the Islamic fasting is the duty of healthy peoples. This statement is true but the fasting has a lot of benefits for treatment and prevention of many diseases especially above-mentioned diseases. Another point is that all of these diseases in humans are gradually; so that the definite diagnosis of them is not possible in the first. This means that neither the patient nor the physician could diagnose the disease. Because, the medicine hasn't progressed yet to know all of the reasons of diseases. But something that definitely needs to be done medically to prevent this disease is fasting. According to the certain statistics specified that the fattiness and obesity are the risk factor for diabetes, hypertension, chronic inflammatory joint and etc. And in the other hand, when the weight of body is reduced, the risk of these diseases decreased (11).

Doctor Fritz Becker said: the most innocuous and safest form of treatment is fasting and no way can be compared with it. In the opinion of me and Dr. Shelton, the fasting is the best way for treatment of gastric, intestinal and nervous systems. By fasting you can easily get rid of the waste accumulated in the body. And the whole body organism functions will be re-ordered. Fasting is the surgery without use of knife as the Dr. Simerman described this. For the prevention of diseases, the results are unimaginable. And I think that is the most valuable way for repairing and recovering of the body. And it is not comparable with the cell transplantation. He adds, fasting is neither starvation nor a therapeutic method and it is only a rest. Fasting allows the body to repair and clean its waste material. The mystery of miraculous effect of fasting is latent in our body. There is a God-given healing power within every person (12). The Dr. Shelton that was American said: the more books have been written against fasting wrote by the peoples who didn't avoid from even one meal. Fasting plays an important role in health and maintains it (12). In any case, this fact cannot be ignored. And it cannot ignore the impact of spiritual satisfaction during fasting on the body and the immune system. Some recent performed studies in abroad and inside the country showed that when a person has an spiritual spirit (For example by telling the religious stories and films and doing of obligatory and desirable Islamic duties), the level of Ig-A increase in the body fluids. The role of Ig-A is very clear in the strengthening of immune system in the body. The role of neurotic agents likes enkephalin in activating of T cells and association between enkephalin discharges and the mood is wonderful and yet scientifically is important. The recent researches about praying and the role of religious behaviors (including religious fasting) in prevention and treatment of diseases showed the direct and indirect role of morale in activation and strengthening of immune system (13). The past weak theories about the risk of fasting and developing of peptic ulcer is obsolete by the new scientific knowledge about the causes of peptic and duodenal ulcer and the relationship between gastric acid secretions with presence of food in the stomach. It seems that people with peptic and duodenal ulcers could easily fast except in the acute phase and crisis of disease. Of course, the appearance of some complications in these patients is related to the over-eating during Iftar. Patients with acute hepatitis prevented from fasting but the fasting improves the conditions of patients with steatosis and fatty liver. Fasting with decreasing of smoke-like movement of intestine makes the situation better in spasmodic colitis. In according to the above-mentioned issues, the patients who are believed that fasting is detrimental, it is better to consult with the virtuous and aware physicians. In the Islamic teachings when there is a serious danger based on the rational suspicion, fasting is unlawful. In the recent years that the slow-released drugs are more available, it can adjust the patient's medication regimen in the Iftar and midnight supper that provides the opportunity for patients to fast easily (12).

**Discussion:** It is clear that reward and blessing of this month will be achieved by fasting that indeed; wear the slavery earrings of God and not only the abdomen and mouth, even all of the organs must avoid from non-acceptance of God and suffer from the real fasting (fasting of all apparent and hidden organs). Indeed, it is pity that the month of Ramadan ends with its all of beauties and the fasted persons understand nothing except of hunger and thirst from this divine garden in the earth. Imam Ali (AS) says about the blame of this fasting "there are many peoples who are not interested from fasting except of hunger and thirst. There are many worshippers that didn't take advantage from worship except of suffering and affliction. The sleep of wise persons is good and that is better than the awaking and worshipping of stupid peoples. And eating of wise and alert peoples is very better than fasting of stupid peoples" (14). And also Imam Sadegh (AS) says "fasting is not only the abstention from food and drink; and even you must do not lie during fasting and you must don't look up to the religious unlawful things. And you should not fight with each other. Do not envy. Do not backbite. Do not lie under oath and even do not take oath. Do not insult. Do not oppress. Do not stupidity. Do not neglect the remembrance of

Allah. Be quite about something what should not be said. Be patient. Be honest. And get away from the evils. Avoid from lying, hostility to the peoples, take a bad thought, absenteeism and gossip. Wait for Imam Mahdi (AS) and hope to the reward of the hereafter. Take good deeds for the hereafter. Be with you the calmness, serenity of heart and humble. Be likes a slave who fears from his/her Lord. Be afraid from the doom. Hope to be close with the God's mercy. Oh, fast person! Your heart, conscience and body must clear from failure, tricks and pollutions, respectively. Purify your own for your God. Avoid from the things that your God prohibited it. Fear from the almighty God as the truth is worthy of fear. Forgive your soul and body to your almighty God. Clear your hearts from all of the things except of love and remembrance of Allah. Involve your body in the actions that your God ordered. If you do what I said, you do what is worthy of fasting and obeyed from the orders of your God. How much you decrease from these actions is reduced from the rewards of fasting. Indeed, fasting is not only avoiding from eating and drinking. Be sure that the God has put it as the veil and prevention from the evil's actions. And say the false words are nullifier of fasting as the eating and drinking can do this. The true fasted peoples are very little and the hungers are very numerous" (15). In addition to the hunger and thirst, all of the inward and outward organs must clear by this life-giving water. Avoid from looking to the peoples who are not intimate enough, listening to the sinful voices and avoiding from touching of the sinful things and peoples are necessary. For this reason, in the Islamic teachings, absenteeism, lying, looking at the peoples who are not intimate enough, swearing, oppression and other sins are the nullifier of true fasting (16). Although committing to these actions did not lead to the invalidating of fasting but it would be an obstacle to spiritual grace. Therefore, every organ of the body must take a great interest from this banquet. Fatemeh Zahra (AS) said "if the tongue, ears, eyes and other organs of the fasted person are not on the condition of fasting, what he/she will interest from the fasting (17)? These hadiths and the similar narrations are an important warning to the fasted person that their time would not be spent only in hunger and thirst. And at the end, all of these suffering and tribulations haven't any interest except of hunger and thirst. The bet of spiritual and psychological prosperity in Ramadan month and the effectiveness of this revival drug in the health of the human's body and psych is the great attention to the own and having of enough accuracy in the care of soul until even the moment is not be unaware of taking step in the path of God's satisfaction. And always be the servant of God and spent your times on worshipping. And it is not possible except of permanent care from the soul. The Until we are proud to be victorious in this battle, the Ramadan month is the month of practice of slavery, sincerity and be the scene of the Jihad Akbar (it means the jihad with ego, Satan and lust).

**Conclusion:** The main miracle of fasting is proved in the treatment of various diseases in the modern and ancient medicine. Therefore, we should point out to this truth in our writings. We know that the cause of many diseases is the over-eating of foods. Additional materials in the form of the annoying fat remain in different parts of the body as fat and sugar in the blood. The best way to fight these diseases is removing of the additional fats, sugar and other things by fasting. Fasting is burn the additional materials in the body. In fact, fasting is clean the body. Fasting is a worship that prevent from bacterial infection. In fact, the fasting is an agent for detoxification and refines the peoples from impurities. Fasting is a considerable rest for digestive system and is a significant factor for improving the function of the body. Given to this fact the digestive system is one of the sensitive organs in the body and works in all of the times in the year, this rest is very necessary for it. Nowadays, the scientists with a lot of researches concluded that the fasting is the best way for treatment of diseases and plays an important role in the health of the body. The prophet of Allah (PBUH) summarized the secrets of this issue in two words and said that the stomach is the source of many diseases and the fasting is one of the best treatments (18).

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