

# fasting

## CELEBRATION FOR LAYLATU'L QADR

*a gift of knowledge on behalf of my mum & kull ruhan*

### INTRODUCTION

This article is a spontaneous response on the topic of fasting. A pragmatic view necessitates the esoteric inclusion of the Shai Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslim understanding of fasting.

We live in a pluralistic world and therefore celebrating our Ismaili faith becomes more significant and wondrous. Lets reflect and think how essence is transformed into form and how the principles of our faith and great past inspire the current evolving culture and future possibilities. In keeping with the law of nature WHY the forms change with time, but the essence<sup>1</sup> always remains the same. See surah Rum 30:30

We continue to practice our tradition, the tradition of Mawla Ali *‘alayhi’s-salam*, the glorious tradition of **“a thinking Islam and a spiritual Islam”**<sup>2</sup> and we invite humanity to work with us to create opportunities for a dignified life for all.

In Islam there is no dichotomy between the material and the spiritual dimensions of life and actualization of one’s potential both physically to the highest level and spiritually to the “Companionship-on-High”<sup>3</sup>, prayer of holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family, is encouraged.

Just as there is progression in physical education from school to university to continued life long learning similarly, spiritual journey is a process of learning and has many dimensions including baytu’l khayal imagination, rational and intellectual inquire to know oneself as is said in a Hadith<sup>4</sup>

**“He who recognizes himself, indeed, recognizes his Lord”**, Lughat, Ayn, p. 82.

1

THERE ARE TWO THINGS IN NATURE: EQUALITY, *MUSĀWĀT* & LEVELS OR STAGES  
Similarly, Islam the religion of nature is based on equality and has four stages.

Our beloved 48<sup>th</sup> Imam<sup>5</sup> Hazrat Mawlana Sultan Muhammad Shah al-Husayni, a.s. clearly explains **“Islam’s basic principle can only be defined as monorealism and not monotheism”** and **“Ismailism has survived because it has always been fluid”**<sup>6</sup>. These precious words show “Soul is One” and that all humanity is created from “Nafs-i Wāhida, Single Soul”, chapter Nisa 4:1

### FOUR STAGES OF ISLAM, SIRAT-AL MUSTAQIM THE STRAIGHT PATH

**Shari‘at** focuses on the physical material forms

**Tariqat** the path or Sufism emphasizes personal search

**Haqiqat** the truth or Ismailism emphasizes the necessity of Hazir Imam and his living guidance

**Ma‘rifat** the recognition of God leads to *fana’ fi’llah*,<sup>7</sup> annihilation in God, and *baqa’ bi’llah*, survival in God, our real destination, as it is said in surah Al-Qasas 28:88 **“Everything is perishable but His Face. To Him belongs the Command and to Him you shall be returned”**.

### NOTES & SOURCE

<sup>1</sup> Aga Khan III, Hazrat Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah al-Husayni. *Usul-i Din*. Dar-es-Salaam, 1899

<sup>2</sup> “The *usul-i Din*, principles of our faith are like the kernel of a plant. Every man is ultimately inclined towards the *Usul* or Essence”

<sup>3</sup> Aga Khan IV, Hazir Imam Shah Karim al-Husayni. *Message on the 25th anniversary of AKU*. May 14,1992

<sup>4</sup> Aga Khan III, Hazrat Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah al-Husayni. *The Memoirs of Aga Khan*. London, 1954 p.176

<sup>5</sup> Hadith is the saying of holy Prophet. Hadith-i Qudsi is the saying of God through the holy Prophet

<sup>6</sup> The word Imam is common in the Ummah. For Ismaili Muslims the word Imam is special and is used for the living, hereditary Imam in direct descent from the holy Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him and his family, through his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, the first Imam, and his wife Fatima, the Prophet’s daughter.

<sup>7</sup> Aga Khan III, Hazrat Imam Sultan Muhammad Shah al-Husayni. *The Memoirs of Aga Khan*. London, 1954 p. 175

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. *Usul-i Din*. Dar-es-Salaam, 1899

*Fana* stands for annihilation, *fi* meaning in and *Allah* being God. To be *fana’ fi’llah*, is to lose oneself in God’s Essence

## introduction

### FOUR STAGES OF ISLAM, SIRAT-AL MUSTAQIM THE STRAIGHT PATH

Each stage of Islam has different teachings. Just as in a flowering tree, leaves come first and after a time leaves fall, then come flowers, followed by raw fruit which slowly transforms into ripe fruit, and from its kernel oil is produced from which light is created.

Similarly fruit cannot come before the stage of leaves, that is Ma'rifat can not come before Sharī'at.

When a tree is flowering it obviously has to pass through the stage of falling leaves, that is changing of Shari'a, so flowers can bloom.

Sharī'at is the material form of Islam and is very different from Haqiqat the spiritual form.

Those who follow Sharī'at prefer the Book, the fast and prayer, the others yearn for freedom.

At the level of Haqiqat or Ismailism, the forms of Sharia are different. The difference in the nature of fasting is explained in *Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi*<sup>8</sup> by Imam Mustansir bi'llah al-Husayni:

“The whole year you must fast, just as the *zāhirīs* (the literalists) fast one month. The meaning of this fast is *riyāzād* (spiritual exercise). Watch yourselves, keep yourselves away from bad qualities, evil and indecent actions and devilish acts, so that the mirror of your hearts may be gradually polished.

Also know that in those thirty days during which the *zāhirīs* fast, the *'id* is only for one day. They fast thirty days in order to attain that one day and that again is a symbol. Just as they fast thirty days in order to attain one day, so you must undergo the entire life of difficulties, pain, have patience, do *riyāzat* and keep fasting internally in order to attain the beatific vision (*liqā'/dīdār*) of your Lord”.

2

An expert of Qur'anic Science Prof. Allamah Nasir al-Din Nasir Hubb-i Ali Hunzai explains that from the batin, depth of Shari'at, Tariqat emerges and from the depth of Tariqat, Haqiqat emerges and from the depth of Haqiqat, Ma'rifat emerges. The following table shows that the percentage of spirituality practiced at the level of Shari'at is less than Tariqat, which is less than Haqiqat which is less than Ma'rifat.

Here the principle should be remembered that at every stage, parts of other stages more or less are included<sup>9</sup>.

stage	% sharī'at	% tarīqat	% haqīqat	% ma'rifat	total
1 SHARĪ'AT	40	25	20	15	100
2 TARĪQAT	25	30	25	20	100
3 HAQĪQAT	20	25	30	25	100
4 MA'RIFAT	15	20	25	40	100

THIS FOURFOLD STAGES TABLE CLEARLY SHOWS THAT AS ONE PROGRESSES ON THE STRAIGHT PATH THE PERCENTAGE OF SHARĪ'AT, PHYSICAL FORM BECOMES LESS AND THE PERCENTAGE OF PERSONAL SEARCH, SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT, YEARNING OF THE SPIRIT AND RECOGNITION INCREASES.

#### NOTES & SOURCE

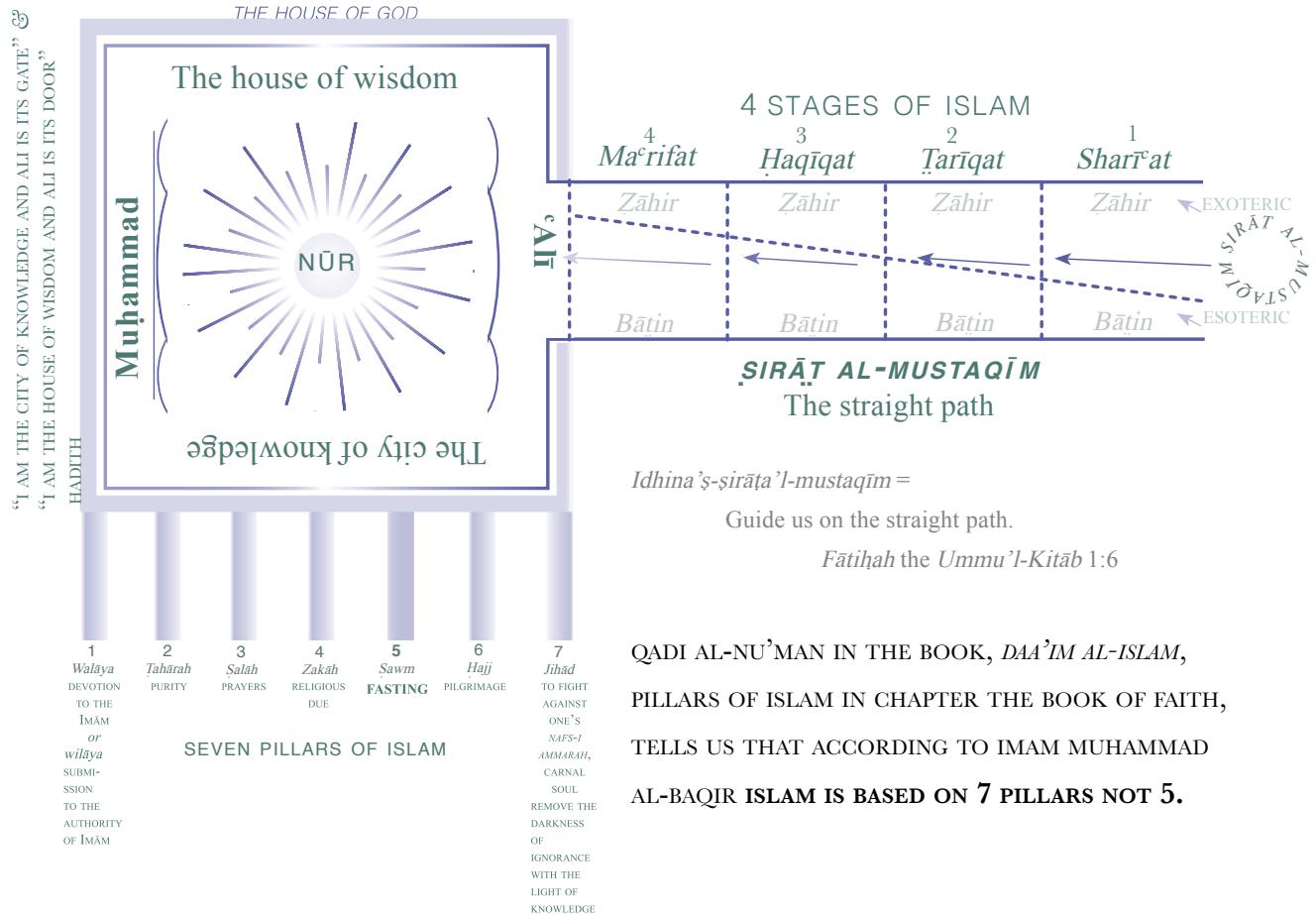
<sup>8</sup> Imam Mustansir bi'llah al-Husayni - Translator W Ivanow. *Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi*. The Ismaili Society Series

<sup>9</sup> Hunzai, Allamah Nasir al-Din Nasir. *Eight Questions Answered*, Karachi 1976 p.36

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. *Diagrams of Wisdom*, Karachi 1976 p. 44 - 48

## introduction

### FOUR STAGES OF ISLAM, SIRĀTA'L-MUSTAQĪM THE STRAIGHT PATH



3

### SIRĀTA'L-MUSTAQĪM, THE PATH OF GOD, IS THE LIGHT OF PROPHETHOOD AND THE LIGHT OF IMAMAT

God in surah Al-An'am 6:153 says: "*And (know) that verily this is my straight path, so follow it.*" That is, follow the Nātiq, Prophet and the Imām, **because it is the light of Prophethood and the light of Imamat which is the straight path.** (Jāmi'ah, p. 200).

An alternate example to understand the reality of the straight path is the rope of God, such as in surah Ali-Imran 3:103: "*And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of God and do not separate.*" That is, the blessed and holy personality of the representative of God (Prophet and Imam) is the luminous path of God as well as His luminous rope.

***Is he who goes prone upon his face better guided or he who walks upright upon a straight path?***

Surah Al-Mulk 67.22

## introduction

### HISTORIC MANIPULATIONS & CONTROVERSY

Attempts were made, which failed, to efface the event of Ghadir-i Khum.

Some Qur'anic translators and literalists manipulate verses such as in surah Al-i Imran 3:7 where a full stop after Allah is used when God Himself says:

**“wa-ma ya’lamu ta’wilahu illa’llahu wa’r-rasikhuna fi’l-cilm,**

**none knows the ta’wil, wisdom except God and those (who are) firmly rooted in knowledge.”**

There are many arguments on this between the Sunni and Shi'a Islam. This controversy is based on the acceptance of Mawla Ali as the first Imam and the continuation of the chain of Imamat from the Prophet's progeny, peace be upon him and his family. According to Ismaili Muslims the Imams from the Alh-i Bayt, family of holy Prophet are the rasikhuna fi'l-cilm,<sup>10</sup> firmly rooted in knowledge who continue to give Ta'wil<sup>11</sup> according to the changing time.

### HOLY QUR’AN HAS TWO ASPECTS TANZIL, EXOTERIC & TA’WIL, ESOTERIC

Tanzil is guidance revealed through the Prophet and Ta'wil is the esoteric meaning given by Hazir Imam the living NUR, the Speaking Book that continues by light upon light, through the hereditary line of Hazrat 'Ali a.s. and his wife Fatima a.s., the Prophet's daughter.

The cycle of Prophethood has ended with Prophet Muhammad, as God says in surah Al-Ahzab 33:40

**“Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets; and Allah is ever Aware of all things.”**

4

Thus Divine guidance now continues through the chain of Imams, starting with the first Imam 'Ali and today we receive guidance from 49th hereditary Hazir Imam Nur Mawlana Shah Karim al-Husayni as surah Al-Anbiya 21:73 says **“And we made them Imams, who Guide by Our Command”**.

The principle of Imamat is **“Wa-kulla shay’in ahsaynahu fi imamim-mubin.”** Ya-Sin 36:12

The manifest Imam like sun light illuminates and guides every single soul in the cosmos.

Thus he has two titles: IMAMU’N-NAS<sup>12</sup> Imam of humankind, and IMAMU’L-MUTTAQIN<sup>13</sup> Imam of those who have done his bay'at, oath of allegiance. Al-Fath 48:10

The guidance of the manifest Imam, present Nur Mawlana Shah Karim al-Hussaini is like the example of breathing. Just as breathing is automatic during wakefulness or sleep, so too, whether one is aware or not, whether one accepts the Imam from the Ahl-i bayt or not, his guidance and wisdom like sun light illuminates all.

Pir Nasir-i Khusraw beautifully explains the concept of zahir, physical and batin, spiritual in his poem The Esoteric and the Exoteric<sup>14</sup>

**“Since pearls and jewels are to be found on the sea-bed,  
look for the pearl-diver instead of running on the shore.”**

### NOTES & SOURCE

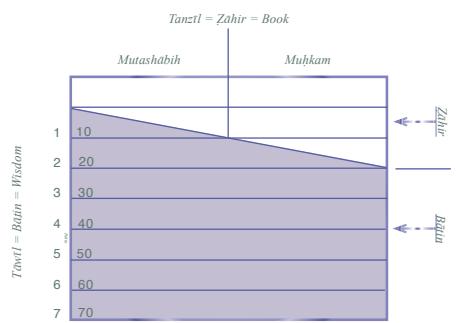
<sup>10</sup> Hunzai, Allamah Nasir al-Din Nasir. *A Thousand Wisdoms*, Karachi 1996

<sup>11</sup> *The Constitution of the Shi'i Imami Ismaili Muslims*. Preamble B

<sup>12</sup> Hunzai, Allamah Nasir al-Din Nasir. *The Wise Qur'an and The Works of Humanity*. Karachi 2002

<sup>13</sup> God guides humanity through the manifest Imam who is sirat-i mustaqim, straight path - the guide and the guiding light the esoteric meaning of sirat-i mustaqim is Hazrat qaim al-qiyamat. Hadid 57:28

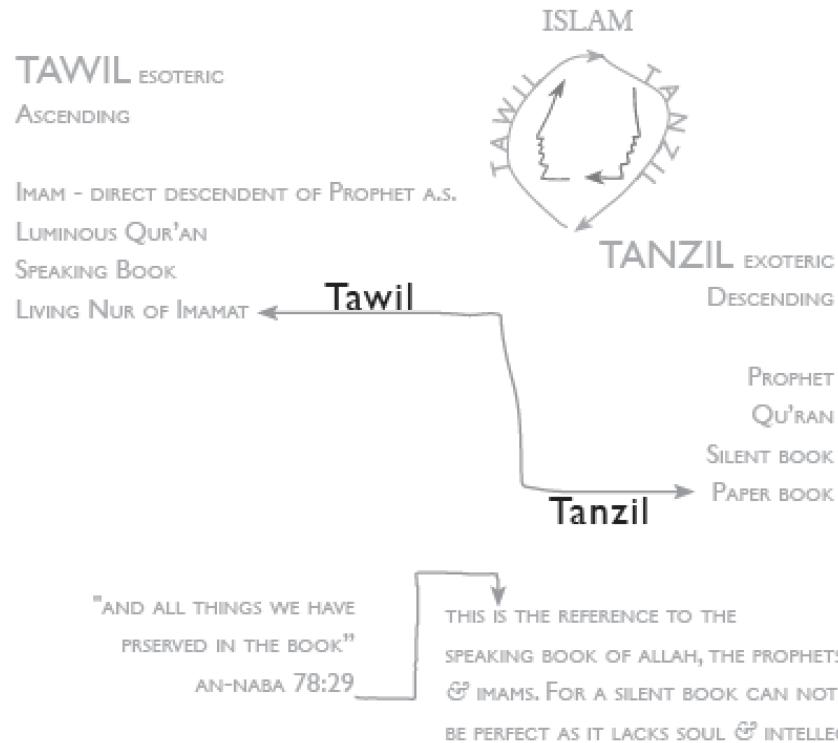
<sup>14</sup> Hunzai, Dr. Faqir Muhammad. *The Shimmering Light – an Anthology of Ismaili Poetry*. London UK 1996



Every batin of the Qur'an has 7 or 70 batins (esoteric meanings).

## introduction

HOLY QUR'AN HAS TWO ASPECTS TANZIL, EXOTERIC & TA'WIL, ESOTERIC



ISLAM IS THE RELIGION NATURE AND HAS NO OBSTACLE IN PROGRESSING IN ANY ASPECT OF ONE'S LIFE. THUS, TO BE IN HARMONY WITH NATURE ONE MUST STRIVE TO PROGRESS PHYSICALLY, SPIRITUALLY & INTELLECTUALLY.

"SOON WE SHALL SHOW OUR SIGNS IN THE HORIZONS (OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD, AFAQ), AND IN THEIR SOULS (SPIRITUAL WORLD, ANFUS) UNTIL IT BECOMES MANIFEST TO THEM THAT HE IS THE TRUE" CHAPTER HA MIM OR FUSSILAT 41:53

VERILY GOD IS NOT DEPENDENT ON THE WORLD,  
THATIS HE IS NOT IN NEED OF ANYTHING FROM HIS CREATURES.  
AND IF THEY HAVE NO NEED OF HIM, IT IS THEIR OWN BUSINESS<sup>16</sup>

## introduction

### HISTORIC EVENT OF QIYAMAT-I QUBRA, BIG RESURRECTION

23rd Imam Hasan Ala Zikrihi's Salaam al-Husayni a.s. during the month of Ramazan, in the middle of the day when followers were fasting, told them he lifted all the rules of shariat and that they are to start a feast and celebrate Eid-i Qiyamat<sup>15</sup>.

This historic event is known as Qiyamat-i Qubra, big qiyamat and marks the termination of Prophet's traditional laws or Shari'at ending the cycle of Dawr-i satr, cycle of concealing pure wisdom and began the new spiritual cycle we are in today DAWR-I KASHF<sup>16</sup> The Cycle of Unveiling. According to surah Hudd 11:7, Dawr-i kashf began with the miracle of arsh on water "**And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and His Throne was/became/is on the water ...**". See Zumar 39:69, A'raf 7:54, YA-SIN 36:68, Anbya 21:104.

This was the resurrection of that time, and before this Eid-i Qiyamat all Ismailis were following the **Waz'i Shariat**, which is according to the physical conditions of the time and social environment. Waz'i Shariat is the law that expresses spiritual realities allegorically. Today we follow **'Aqli or Intellectual Shari'at** which is logical and gives ta'wili mujarrad-i mahz, wisdom in its pure form, surah Hudd 11:7.

The manifest Imam brings changes as the time change and he is the supreme authority, as God says in surah Nisa 4:59 "**O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Prophet and obey those who possess the Divine Command (ulu'l-amr) amongst you**".

6

Ismailis are firm believers in the changing forms of worship according to the changing time.

Thus, Tanzil is the miracle of the Prophet and Ta'wil is the miracle of Imams in their times.

The famous hadith of Khasifu'n-nal regarding the esoteric wisdom of the Qur'an says:

**"Indeed, from among you is he who will fight for the sake of the Ta'wil of the Qur'an, as I fought for the sake of its Tanzil".** al-Mustadrak, III, 132

Surah Al-Kafirun 109.6

YUSUF ALI: To you be your Way, and to me mine

PICKTHAL: Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion

SHAKIR: You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion

### NOTES & SOURCE

<sup>14</sup> Hunzai, Dr. Faqir Muhammad. *The Shimmering Light – an Anthology of Ismaili Poetry*. London UK 1996

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. *Oriente Moderno - A Living Branch of Islam*. Italy, 2004

<sup>16</sup> Hunzai, Allamah Nasir al-Din Nasir. *Divine Science*, North America 2016

<http://www.qwiki.monoreality.org>

<http://quran.com/109/6-16>

<http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/quran/verses/109-qmt.php>

## fasting

### THE RULES OF SHARI ARE DIFFERENT IN EACH STAGE OF ISLAM

Fasting in the month of Ramadan, is the best means of purifying the heart and dissolving the carnal soul. The purpose is purity of body and soul so that it may enable an individual to progress towards the desired destination. As God says in surah Baqarah 2:183:

**“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that due to which, gradually you may attain taqwa, purity”**

The importance and usefulness of hunger among world religions is given the status of a supreme prayer. The dire need of hunger is also used by medical science, in the form of diet, starvation, prevention, etc. In addition, so long as there is no comfort or rest and silence in the stomach of a person, he can neither do any mental work peacefully, nor any successful prayer.

Fasting in Arabic is called “sawm”, meaning “to abstain” from something that people habitually do. It is the fifth pillar of Islam. Every muslim fasts.

The form of fasting depends on which level of Siratul-al mustaqim one is on: Sharī'at, Tariqat, Haqīqat or Ma'rifat. The manifest Imam or Ali-i Zaman, Ali of the time is the supreme authority in the matters of religion.

Physical fast only in the month of Ramadan is not mandatory for those who are at the level of Haqiqat, Ismailism because skipping a meal or two in a week and moderate eating throughout the year plus fasting with one's intentions 365 day a year is prescribe. Every second, every moment one gets for Divine remembrance is in preparation for fulfilling hadith-i nawafil, supererogatory prayers and hadith-i taqarub, seeking Divine closeness, in which state the most merciful Lord became one's senses. Qur'anic proof surah 6:103, Al-Anfal 8:17, 89:27-30

**How hard it is to fast with actions and deeds, and be patient, which is the essence of physical fast?**

How can the human intellect know more than the Universal Intellect?

The purpose of fasting is to defeat the carnal soul, and achieve balance in din, physical world and duniya the spiritual world .

**FASTING IS FOR SPIRITUAL UPLIFTMENT & PREPARATION FOR LAYLATU'L QADR**  
**The intention of fasting is spiritual upliftment and the preparation for Laylatu'l Qadr.**

Laylatu'l Qadr, the night of power is mentioned in surah Qadr 97, which has five verses.

The last verse says **“It (the night of Qadr) is peace, till the break of dawn”**. If one looks at this exoterically or literally it makes no sense, because the physical night of Qadr continues with all its activities good and bad and the descend to the physical world of angels and the supreme soul from the world of command is not visible.

So what is the significance of the month of Ramazan and who is real Laylatu'l Qadr?

How can one understand the symbolism and allegories of the Laylatu'l Qadr?

What is actual fasting and what is its esoteric reality?

May Hazir Imam's Nur guide us to see beyond the literal meaning of Laylatu'l Qadr and reward us on Eid with wisdom and mulk-i kabir, Al-Insan 76:20. Praise belongs to God, the Lord of personal worlds for His mercy!

Yasmin Pyarali Karim

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