

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

# Submitters Perspective

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## Ramadan is over, now what?

Fasting in Ramadan is difficult but a better term would be challenging. We have fought our hunger and, more significantly, our thirst. Ramadan rotates through all seasons as part of God's plan for testing us.

[2:183] *O you who believe, fasting is decreed for you, as it was decreed for those before you, that you may attain salvation.* We do not need to question why as we know that it is a commandment of God and that should be sufficient for us.

There are millions who welcome Ramadan with pleasure rather than appear dejected for fear of hunger and thirst as they know they would be fulfilling their duty and purify themselves. Successful Muslims having completed the month are amongst those committed to control themselves even after Ramadan to obey all religious regulations as prescribed in the holy Qur'an.

Fasting is referred to in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism know fasting for attaining *moksha* or *nirvana*. However, Submission (*Islam*) takes this to a more inspiring and

loftier peak. God is not asking for you to hold your breath for extended lengths or like the Sufi self-renunciation. Why would our Creator and Sustainer place any hardship on us beyond our means?

Fulfilling our obligations toward God is the biggest part of Ramadan. We also have a duty towards our fellow beings. God has made it incumbent on us to meet the rights towards His creations. This shows that it is of extreme importance that we take care of the destitute. Giving food and drink to people who are not fasting is a sign of charity. Look after stray dogs and cats for they too are God's creatures. If your mother is working in the kitchen, offer your help and lessen her burden, for she too is fasting. God is pleased and your mother will be too.

Fasting is an experience which cannot be explained to anyone but needs to be undertaken to understand its unique properties. If you speak to anyone who has fasted, he or she will say that they had a feeling not of misery and fatigue but of awareness of mind and senses, calmly and contently. We feel so fresh and renewed after each Ramadan

passes, as if we are a new being altogether, who has more self-control, patience, a general feeling of empathy and kindness towards others. Ramadan is a month to build good habits that will last you the whole year. Make a new schedule and follow it with discipline. God will help you.

God loves those who are clean so we have *wudu / tayammum* before we offer *Salat*. Isn't it great to have a nice hot water shower and cleanse our body, but how do we sanitise the dirt from our soul? Hence, we fasted—controlling anger, sensual desires, feelings, faulty actions and negative reactions.

Ramadan does not mean you should not enjoy yourself. We enjoy a meal (*Iftar*) after each fast ends and especially after Ramadan ends, and we bow and prostrate giving thanks to God whom we pray will accept our supplications and sacrifices. There will be festivity after fulfilling this tremendous commitment. We have completed Ramadan, by the Grace of God, which requires a high grade of commitment and self-discipline.

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However, this celebration should not make us forget the true purpose of Ramadan. We must remain attentive on the final objective — to please God and become a better version of ourselves than we were at the start of the month. We are not commemorating the birth anniversary of a person or the anniversary of a victory in war. We have just completed a Divine command to purify our soul of collected sins. Experience the sense of relief and satisfaction, feel the joy! We have abstained and restrained in compliance with the command of our Creator not only in external forms but also in attitude and behaviour as well.

When the resplendent and blessed days of Ramadan are over, we should not quit all our great experiences during the month. We do study more Qur'an, do more zikr and charity but this needs to carry on throughout the year. The only thing that does not continue would be fasting for the next 11 months unless it is for missed fasts or atonement of sins. We can keep in mind the hunger and thirst we felt when we voluntarily gave up food and water. Now we should make sure that the needy do not get deprived of these essential necessities. Here lies the spirit of Ramadan—of fasting and submitting ourselves to the will and commands of Almighty God.

All of us will return to our daily routine and activities. Does fasting in one full Ramadan month reflect our behaviour? Are our good works of generosity, patience, well-controlled conduct also over? The large-heartedness, calmness and other merits performed during Ramadan should not be suspended as Ramadan ends. It helps us to do more good deeds. In essence, Ramadan is like a renaissance for us to maintain a better and more meaningful life, for ourselves as well as others. We are trained and taught to be upright and well-behaved not only during that month but also for the rest of the year.

We need to be aware of the troubles and hardships of the underprivileged. The purpose of fasting is to feel the dilemma and plight of the poor. We go without food from dawn to sunset during just one month of Ramadan; for some it is a daily routine.

We end up accumulating many sins 24/7 while encountering the daily fluctuations of life. We may be insolent or delve into verbal arguments with our parents, family and others, telling little white lies here and there, backbiting, vain talk and so many more sins. To make mistakes is human nature. Ramadan is a month to forgive and forget grudges. Here is a massive opportunity to atone for all those sins by repenting to God. Take it a step further, even after Ramadan, apologise to all those you may have hurt consciously or otherwise.

The love of God will come naturally in our hearts when we realise how much He has blessed us with. The fact we see and hear is truly a blessing of God — that He has blessed us with eyes to see, ears to hear and a mind that can comprehend. So be it social, educational or financial — we are doing far better than so many people in our society. Isn't this enough for us to be thankful to Him?

One of the ways to be grateful for the blessings we have is to pass it on and help others.

There are many families around who are roofless and sleep on the pavement. There are others who have to skip meals and drink unclean water. There are parents who deprive themselves just to nourish their kids. There are children who lack adequate clothes. There are the sick who do not have money for treatment and medication. All these are the unfortunate ones who need our help around the year. There are so many charitable organisations which are working unstintingly for the welfare of our people. You can either donate to those or find needy individuals. To feel the true essence of Ramadan, we must ensure that we retain all the good

habits we acquired during Ramadan and put them into practice for the rest of the year. Patience and tolerance should be instilled in us thoroughly.

When Ramadan is over, use the lessons learnt—the lessons of serenity by not yielding to our instincts when fasting. We can use the same resolve to control ourselves from getting angry, being rude, overindulging and not adhering to all the rules that God (and our parents) have set for us. This will not be so hard if we tap into our willpower that we used with such success. It is all in our mind; if we tweak it to only do good and stay sincere for one month, it will remain so. Why don't we inspire ourselves that we will be that way the rest of the year too? The format of kindness and good acts that we followed during Ramadan should not change, it should continue so that we become better humans and the world a better place for everyone to live in peace and security.

Is the red traffic light just refusing to change? Instead of cursing, be patient, wait a few more seconds and drive only when it turns green. If you are tempted to lie to your teacher about why you did not complete your homework, just remind yourself that lying is disgraceful and that one lie will lead to many more.

We can start with little gestures of kindness. Make someone's day better by giving them a nice compliment. Just smile — even smiling is an act of charity. If you spot something on the road or pavement which could pose a potential hazard and you remove it, that is your good deed.

So what happens after Ramadan? If you want to know if your Ramadan has been accepted, look to see how your actions are after Ramadan. God showed us that for an entire month we were better submitters, and we have the capability to augment this. The objective is to be able to implement most of these good habits we picked up in Ramadan to carry on even after.

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Ramadan teaches us that our faith is not a one-off, it is a way of life and covers everything we do. If we allow the Qur'an to be our path, then God will never allow us to get forsaken.

Let us take the lesson of piety/righteousness (*taqwa*) from Ramadan. When we have righteousness, we have everything. This is living a life of God-consciousness; knowing that God is always watching and listening. We begin to ponder over all our thoughts and actions. This is a beautiful characteristic because it leads us to living lives that are most pleasing to God and when we do so, God, in return, gives us inner peace.

Righteousness and piety is in our heart but reveals itself in the way we live and even in the way we dress and speak. We experience the work that we and others have put forward in this blessed month; God has shown us the capacity we have for virtuosity. Take some of that motivation and keep it handy. The more we further ourselves from our Creator, the more isolated we will be. The nearer we are to our Creator, the more fulfilled we will feel. When we live a life to come closer and closer to God, that is a true victory!

When we are conscious of the privileges provided by God in the very special month of Ramadan, we all long to return for another blessed Ramadan. However, we do not know whether we still have a longer life to meet in the next Ramadan as life and death are absolutely in God's command. We may not even be well enough to fast the next Ramadan so we implore God to grant us good health so that we follow through to the next Ramadan with a renewed and improved performance.

Let us start by bringing small changes into the lives of others by venturing to help them. This will help us as well, so that every new day is a reason to rejoice.

*Alim*

## Spiritual Capital

Capital is defined as "wealth in the form of money or other assets owned by a person or organization or available or contributed for a particular purpose such as starting a company or investing."

This got me thinking about spiritual capital, the only capital that is going to matter in the Hereafter.

How do we accumulate spiritual capital? How do we transfer worldly materials into spiritual capital? How do we take the money that we have in our bank accounts and convert it into spiritual wealth?

Luckily, God has given us tools to accumulate as much spiritual capital as possible, starting with time. The Contact Prayers (Salat) are a means of dividing our time, to become aware of the different times of our day, and not waste them. Each Contact Prayer (Salat) is named relative to its time, e.g., Dawn Prayer, Noon Prayer, etc. The Zakat charity is also time dependant. We must give Zakat "on the day of harvest" (6:141). Fasting Ramadan is 30 days long, also time dependant. Time is a tool we can use to our advantage and thus God gives us the means of converting time into spiritual capital.

Another tool we are given in this world is money. Money is a means of making a living, buying the necessities, and carrying on in our daily lives. However, this money will not give us access to Heaven: *[3:91] Those who disbelieve and die as disbelievers, an earthful of gold will not be accepted from any of them, even if such a ransom were possible. They have incurred painful retribution; they will have no helpers.*

We must find a way of converting worldly money into "spiritual money" to be deposited into our Hereafter "retirement accounts", as Dr. Khalifa put it.

Charity! Charity is the way! And what a

wonderful thing it is! In fact the word Zakat, means "to purify," and what can be better than purifying ourselves to get ready for the Hereafter?!

When we give money to the poor, we are converting our worldly bank accounts into Hereafter spiritual bank accounts. By spending our worldly money in the way God specifies, i.e., charity, we are GAINING "spiritual money" to grow our souls, thus, increasing our spiritual capital for the Hereafter. What a wonderful thing charity is. This idea helped me view money as a tool to be used in the world to work towards my Hereafter, not a possession to be cherished. Yes, money is a blessing, but what good is it if we only spend it on ourselves in this fleeting world, without thinking of our eternal life?

Those are the two tools I wanted to discuss by God's Grace, time and money. However, God has given us plenty of other tools that we can use in glorifying Him, such as our voices to recite the Quran, our bodies to do our salat, our clothes to be modest, our family to remind us of God, etc. Can you think of any more?

May GOD allow us to use every single day, every single blessing, and every single tool towards worshipping Him alone, and thus developing a successful and wealthy soul.

*Abeer*

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## God is in full control

It's important for us to remember that God is in full control of all things. If things go our way, then we can be thankful. If things don't go our way, we still need to know that it was because of God's will. Everything happens for a reason.

*[64:11] Nothing happens to you except in accordance with GOD's will.*

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*Anyone who believes in GOD, He will guide his heart. GOD is fully aware of all things.*

This is a beautiful reminder for the believers. God will guide their hearts. God is fully aware of everything. Nothing happens that is not in accordance with God's will. How much of a relief is that? If good things happen to us, it's wonderful to know that it's because of God. Things don't magically happen; it's God's will. If it doesn't work out, it's still God's will. Even if it seems like it's something that should be happening and it's not, it's still God's will. All these things, God is fully aware of. In the world of science, often there is no explanation for some events. What a comfort just to know it's all under God's control. It's not chance or accident.

*[64:12] You shall obey GOD and you shall obey the messenger. If you turn away, then the sole mission of our messenger is to deliver the message.*

*[64:13] GOD: there is no other god besides Him. In GOD the believers shall trust.*

Another great reminder: God has no partners. Who better to put your trust in beside God. Knower of everything and in full control of everything.

*[64:14] O you who believe, your spouses and your children can be your*

*enemies; beware. If you pardon, forget, and forgive, then GOD is Forgiver, Most Merciful. [64:15] Your money and children are a test, and GOD possesses a great recompense.*

Sometimes our close bonds can be a challenge. May God protect us, but they can be enemies or a test. They can also be a comfort and support, but everything is ultimately a test. They should not be a distraction, pulling us away from God, for He possesses the great recompense. And we are reminded to be forgiving—to pardon and forget transgressions against us. We should be kind and generous, knowing that God is in full control, and He is Most Merciful.

*[64:16] Therefore, you shall reverence GOD as much as you can, and listen, and obey, and give (to charity) for your own good. Anyone who is protected from his own stinginess, these are the successful ones.*

To be successful—not necessarily in this world, but successful in the Hereafter where it really counts—we need to take the high road, knowing that our reward comes from God.

*[64:17] If you lend GOD a loan of righteousness, He will multiply the reward for you manifold, and forgive you. GOD is Appreciative, Clement.*

Sometimes the things we do don't get paid in this world. But we do the right thing with the knowledge that our

reward comes from God. This world is not what we're working for. This world is temporary. We choose righteousness because we know God multiplies the reward for us many times over. "If you have the choice between being right and being kind, choose being kind" (Wayne W. Dyer, Ph.D.). Loan God a loan of righteousness. Be generous and know that God is the One who is most forgiving. Our works pale in comparison to everything God does.

*[64:18] The Knower of all secrets and declarations; the Almighty, Most Wise.*

God is the Knower of all. He is Most Wise. In His wisdom, He knows what's best for us. Our knowledge is just a small fraction of what God knows. Yet, we can get very arrogant with what we think we know. We must work on staying humble in our knowledge and always putting our trust in God. He is in full control of all things.

*[31:22] Those who submit completely to GOD, while leading a righteous life, have gotten hold of the strongest bond. For GOD is in full control of all things.*

*Kenan*

### A little joke

Be sure you remember to say Bismillah when you drink water (H<sub>2</sub>O). It contains 3 jinns—oxyJINN and 2 hydroJINNS