

The Lasting Lessons of Ramadan: Spiritual Growth and Reflection

Dr Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak



Ramadhan, the obligatory fasting month for Muslims, falls in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Since the Islamic calendar is shorter by eleven days compared to the Gregorian calendar, the sacred month of Ramadhan moves around the Gregorian calendar, meaning it shifts each year.

As a result, Ramadhan can appear at different times of the year—sometimes during winter or summer in Western countries, and in tropical regions, it may fall during the rainy or dry seasons.

For Muslims, Ramadhan is a blessed month that revives their faith and spirit in Islam. Long before the crescent of Ramadhan is sighted, Muslims worldwide make various preparations to reap the blessings it brings.

Compared to the past, the knowledge and benefits of Ramadhan are now widely known, even among people of other faiths. Thanks to the internet and social media, Ramadhan has been shared and promoted within the global community.

The practice of Ramadhan by Muslims in the West has inspired many non-Muslims to experience fasting in the same way. Going through the experience of fasting during Ramadhan has even led some non-Muslims to embrace Islam.

This article serves as a reflection and reminder of the valuable lessons learned during

Ramadhan. Below are some of the ways in which Muslims have revived their commitment and spirit toward their religion:

Five Daily Prayers and Efficient Time Management

According to the Seerah, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) became extra vigilant and efficient in managing his prayer times during Ramadhan. Muslims who follow in the footsteps of the Prophet strive to emulate him as much as possible to be closer to his practices.

Since Muslims spend less time on meals during Ramadhan, they can focus more on their prayers and be punctual. It is during Ramadhan that mosques and prayer halls worldwide are usually filled with worshippers. In addition to performing prayers on time, Ramadhan also teaches Muslims about the importance of time management.

The Study of the Qur'an

Muslims are told in the Qur'an and Seerah that the first revelation of the Qur'an was brought to the Prophet (PBUH) by the archangel Jibrail (A.S.) in the month of Ramadhan. During this fasting month, millions of Muslims around the globe attempt to read the entire 114 chapters of the Qur'an.

Some complete it once within the thirty days, while others, who have more time, may do so multiple times. This effort is made not only to gain virtue but also to enlighten their hearts with knowledge and immerse themselves in the spiritual light that emanates from the Qur'an. One can observe that during Ramadhan, Muslims dedicate more time before and after prayers in mosques and homes to reading the final message sent by God as guidance for humanity.

Charity and the Spirit of Giving

In Islam, charity, which is one of the five pillars of the religion, is an act of helping the poor, needy, and underprivileged. As a praiseworthy act, charity is carried out to alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate. According to the Seerah, the Prophet (PBUH) became more charitable during Ramadhan than at any other time.

Following his example, Muslims also become most charitable during Ramadhan. Well-to-do individuals and Muslim organizations distribute dates and other food items as acts of charity, hoping to gain virtue and the pleasure of God Almighty. Mosques worldwide prepare free Iftar and Suhoor meals, inviting both Muslims and non-Muslims, especially those in need.

In Islam, terms such as Zakah, Sadaqah, Infaq, and Hadiah emphasize the sense of togetherness that individual Muslims have with the rest of humanity. All forms of charity in Islam counter financial oppression and instill the philosophy of loving, caring, and sharing.

Mindful Eating and Avoiding Waste

Ideally, during Ramadhan, Muslims are encouraged to practice mindful eating and avoid waste in all forms. Overconsuming food during Iftar and Suhoor is discouraged in Islam. Spending excessively on meals and overeating are not praiseworthy acts. The Qur'an condemns extravagance and gluttony.

Since the vast majority of Muslims eat moderately and spend wisely, they not only emerge healthier at the end of Ramadhan but also feel spiritually rejuvenated. The month-long training they undergo teaches them valuable lessons on maintaining a healthier diet and practicing self-discipline.

Spiritual Strength and Inner Peace

The fasting and spiritual training undergone by Muslims during Ramadhan refine their character and personality. It is true that while fasting, the body may feel weak, but what is not widely known in secular perspectives is that during fasting, one becomes spiritually strong and intellectually sharp. Such a concept is best understood by those who believe in God and spirituality.

According to Muslim scholars, fasting during Ramadhan reconnects a person with their primordial nature. The rituals observed during fasting restore an individual's natural state as created by God. In other words, fasting brings Muslims back to their true human essence.

Many good qualities of a person may be overlooked throughout the year due to overindulgence in worldly affairs, but Ramadhan provides an opportunity to return to the human qualities in which God has created them. Unlike the belief in 'Original Sin,' Islamic teachings emphasize that human beings are born pure and only become corrupt due to external influences, such as improper education or an environment that does not nurture moral and spiritual development.

Take-Home Message

From the above discussion, we have learned that the blessed month of Ramadhan has many spiritual and social benefits. Ramadhan restores human qualities such as goodness, compassion, love, care, and generosity.

The fasting month, which comes like a 'Madrasah' (school) every year, refines one's character and strengthens the bond with the Creator. Ramadhan is not only a month of spiritual cleansing but also an opportunity to strengthen one's connection with humanity. As Muslims, we should not forget the valuable lessons learned during Ramadhan and strive to sustain them throughout the next eleven months of the year.