Ramadan: Striving for God Consciousness

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Ramadan is the month of fasting for Muslims the world over. Muslims refrain from eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse from dawn to dusk for the duration of Ramadan. For some, fasting may appear as a form of deprivation and of bodily exertion. On one level, abstaining from sensual needs and pleasures is indeed a physical experience. But those who stop at the physical aspects of fasting miss the essence of Ramadan and its purpose.

Fasting the month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. These are the foundation upon which the entire structure of Islam is built. These consist of the declaration of faith, prayer, fasting Ramadan, paying of Zakah [the annual charity payment], and performing the pilgrimage to Makkah, known as hajj. Three of the five pilars of Islam are rituals, that is, prescribed religious acts whose rationale is not immediately available for understanding. These are prayer, fasting, and hajj. Muslims are required to do them because they are part of their religious duties, that is, they are part of their covenant with God.

As a ritual, fasting is a symbolic act whose meaning becomes gradually apparent through experience. The meaning embodied in a ritual is always unveiled when one immerses himself or herself in the act itself. This does not mean that fasting is not open to intellectual delineation, but rather any intellectual delineation either presupposes or predicts a meaning that can best become apparent through performing the symbolic act itself.

**Spiritual Development**
The essence of fasting Ramadan and its goal is summed in the Qur'an in one word: **taqwa**. "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that you may attain taqwa." (Qur'an 2:183)

But what is taqwa? And how does it relate to the physical act of fasting?

Taqwa is a recurring theme in the Qur'an and a paramount Qur'anic value. Taqwa is both an attitude and a process. It is the proper attitude of the human toward the divine that denotes love, devotion, and fear. Love to the source of good and beauty that make life worth living; devotion to God's boundless wisdom and majesty; and fear of misunderstanding the divine intent or failing in maintaining the appropriate posture and relationship.

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The attitude of taqwa cannot and does not stay in the confines of the human spirit, but is ultimately revealed in expression and action. The attitude of taqwa is ultimately revealed in, and in turn reveals, the true character it nurtures: the commitment to the sublime values stressed by divine revelations of courage, generosity, compassion, honesty, steadfastness, and cooperation in pursuing what is right and true.

Taqwa is equally the process by which the believers internalize the sublime values of revelation and develop their character. Thus the Qur'an reminds the believers that they should not reduce religious practices to a set of blind rituals, of religiously ordained procedures performed at the level of physical movement, and that they should always be mindful that religious practices, like praying and fasting, ultimately aim at bringing about moral and spiritual uplifting: "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or West: But it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last day, and the Angels, the Book, and the Messengers; to give out of the things you hold dear to your kin, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarer, the one who asks, and to free the slave. And to be steadfast in prayer and to give for charity. To fulfill the covenants you have made, and to be firm and patient in times of pain, adversity, and panic. Such are the people of truth, and such are the God-conscious." (Qur'an 2:177)

As Ramadan helps us to develop our moral discipline, it also reminds us of the plight of those who live in constant hunger and deprivation. We are reminded time and again by the revealed book that religiosity is meaningless and pointless if it does not lead people to care and share: "Have you seen one who belies judgment; it is the one who repulses the orphan, and does not insist on feeding the needy. So woe to those who pray but are neglectful of their prayers. Those who are guilty of duplicity and refuse to provide for the ones in need." (Qur'an 107:1-7)

**Commitment**
Fasting Ramadan, like other religious practices in Islam, is an occasion for pursuing moral excellence that can also be translated into excellence in social organization and interaction. In a tradition that was reported in the books of Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet was once asked: "O messenger of God! who is the most honored of people? He said: the one who has most taqwa. They said: this is not what we are asking about.... He said: ... the best of them prior to Islam is the best of them in Islam if they comprehend (the revealed message)."

It is not difficult to see that the Prophet's companions did not have immediate access to the meaning of taqwq, as many Muslims today still don't. When they did not accept his first statement as an answer, the Prophet gave them an explanation of what he meant when he responded to their question about "the most honored of people." In responding with the question, the Prophet was reiterated the meaning provided by the Qur'an: "Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous (mutaqi)." (Qu'an 49:13) The Prophet's statement underscores the fact that taqwa as a moral and spiritual quality is significant in the human world insofar as it leads people to act with compassion and respect toward others.

**Empowerment**
Nothing does empower a community more than the development of the moral character of its members. By embodying the moral values of revelation, people can have a higher social life, one that is based on mutual respect and help, as it is based on honest and fair dealings, and a sense of duty that encourages people to observe the principles of right and justice as they pursue their varying and competing interests. The theme that moral life based on the notion of taqwa leads to societal strength and prosperity is an oft repeated theme in the Qur'an: "Whoever has taqwa of God, He prepares a way out for them, and He provides them from sources they never could imagine." (Qur'an 65:2-3) And again: "Verily the earth is God's to give as a heritage to such of His servants as He pleases; and the end is best for the God-conscious." (7:128)

Fasting is not simply a time during which people deprive themselves from physical pleasures, but is an occasion to exercise moral restrain and experience spiritual growth. Ramadan is a time of remembrance of God and renewal of commitment to the high and noble values he revealed to mankind. And nothing would give us the sense of spiritual fulfillment than a state of taqwq, of God-consciousness, that Ramadan helps us to realize.

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14 Comments[COMMENT](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#respond)

1. *Babandi A.Gumel from U.K* [July 17th, 2013](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-44779)

Ramadan is really the month of striving to achieve Gods consciousness Taqwa. That is why Alhamdu Lillahi you see all the masajid are full of worshippers due to Gods consciousness. Even those who used not go to Masajid in other months Alhamdu Lillahi now go for Tarawih in Ramadan striving to please their Creator.

1. *TAMSIR GAYE from GAMBIA(US)* [September 19th, 2008](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-38160)

Assalamu Alaikum, "Susheel", Alhamamdullih for you accepting Islam by "heart". The "shahada" is a formal way and a witness of saying you are entering into Islam. And IMAAN (faith) must decend from the tongue (BIL LISAN) and enter the depth of the heart ( THE KALB). So as you said your heart accepted Islam, just manifest it from your tongue infront of a Muslim believer as a witness;in the mosque or someone you know may help you further to understand Islam. You may also go to the nearest mosque to renew your shahada(this time from the heart to the tongue); hence as you said your heart accepted Islam already. Go to the nearest Mosque to renew your shahada and get some spiritual guidance. It serve as a witness and also as a providence for spiritual help and guidance to help walk you through the fold of Islam. May Allah guide you and make you a steadfast Muslim. Jazha Kha Allau Khairan. Brother Tamsir.

1. *Alongan Mangorsi from Philippines* [October 7th, 2007](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-35839)

Very enlightening article on the essence of Ramadan. Taqwa is the basic foundation of God's consciousness and the very purpose why we worship Allah after realizing that it is ALLAH who gives us life, sustains us, and be responsible to HIM.

1. *turiya from usa* [September 27th, 2007](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-35783)

an excellent article to remind us of the deeper lessons and benefits of fasting in the sacred month of ramadan. jazakullah khairun

1. *Kris MacPherson from Malaysia* [September 24th, 2007](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-35768)

Assalamualaikum and greetings,

Sister Susheel, please go to the nearest Islamic religious department or you can even take a trip to Malaysia, and seek help from any religious department or organisation.

I believe that you are already a Muslim, Insya Allah but the Syahadah forms an integral part of making a person a Muslim. And you need to learn the basics of the fardhu', be it specific and general. Of course these will take time but ALLAH grace will be with you.

And also what is equally important is that you must have the right Muslimah peers to guide you.

May your Ramadhan be full of Baraqah from ALLAH.

Wassalam,

1. *yusuf bashir from nigeria* [September 20th, 2007](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-35756)

I recommend this article to all brothers for both it's significance and relevance to the holy period we now are. it has captured the whole essence of fasting;may Allah reward the writer and those who spread it ISLAMICITY.COM along with those that may have the patience to read.

1. *SUSHEEL from SINGAPORE* [September 20th, 2007](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-35754)

i am now a muslim by heart but have not said any shahada. i practice reading quran and saying prayes and recite ayatul kursi and al fatehah. i am also fasting and i feel good and clean, i want to be close to allah

1. *Meres-Sia from USA* [September 19th, 2007](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-35751)

I deeply appreciate this insight into the purpose of Ramadan. I

am a new Muslim in that I took Shahada 1.5 years ago. I am stil,

therefore acquainting myself with the rituals. However,

meditation, fasting and praying in one form or another has

always been a part of my life. At this stage there are two things

in Islam (unrelated to Ramadan) that disturb me and I seek your

perspective to assist me. 1-The issue of continuously referring

to The Most High as "He" when Allah has no gender. I think it is

our duty to degenderize Allah and be very conscious of how we

speak of It. Otherwise we perpetuate the imbalance between

masculine and feminine energy that exists in most societies. 2- I

am also deeply hurt by what I see in a lot of polygamous

relationships where the women have given into polygamy

because they feel that they have to. Many are pressured by their

husbands as a way to follow the tradition of The Prophet (Peace

be upon him.) But so little attention is given to the fact that The

Prophet was at first monogamous. In striving for our God

consciousness it hurts to see that many Muslims don't

unserstand how God Consciousness manifests in our personal/

intimate relationships. Why do something because it is

"tradition" if it hurts the ones you have committed yourself to,

ie. the first wife you married and the children from that

marriage?

1. *djanabou from united statea* [September 16th, 2007](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-35740)

assalam alaikum, ramadan is a month of blessing's in which the quran was revealedas guidance for humanity so whoever among you is present that month should fast. if anyone is ill or on a journay then theprescribed term is to be from other days. almighty allah wishes ease for you not hardship and that you fulfill the prescibed terms, and that you celbrate allah for guiding you;and that you may be grateful. have a nice and rewarding ramadan. salam

1. *Imam AKhiliq from U.S.* [September 15th, 2007](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-35736)

May the blessings of Allah be upon all who are striving in Islam during the sacred month.

Remember to Salat and fellowship with one another and continue on your deen until the day arrives when the Lord of the worlds raises our consciousness to a broader perspective of his will and grant us peace according to his promises.

Amen.

1. *IRENA BINTI IDRIS from Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA* [October 5th, 2006](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-32585)

Ramadhan is the most wonderful time of the year for me because i can feel the closeness to Allah by seclusion and conducting all my ibadat in peace for Allah swt. Never at any other time i have felt this peace, contentment and thankful to Allah for all that i have and have gone through, the good and bad, to make me a better muslimah inshallah.

1. *Kevin from USA* [October 4th, 2006](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-32582)

Fasting is wonderful for several reasons. for one, one becomes conscience of the rythms of the day and thus by default conscience of Allah's power and control. Also, it is an honor to fast by choice rather than circumstance because more in the world have empty bellies than full ones. Ramadan is a chance to be close to perfect for at least a month out of a year. I am a huge football fan.. I yell at the players on the televison and sometimes use colorful language... but during Ramadan I try to curb that desire lol . It is a peaceful time a time of patience and clear reflection on your manhood or womanhood and how much of it you wish to surrender totally to Allah.

1. *joy from united states* [October 13th, 2005](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-27786)

i am a new muslim and i want 2 learn all i can of ramadan and islam i love this article its very uplifting....

1. *Hassan from Saudi Arabia* [October 12th, 2005](http://www.islamicity.org/6059/ramadan-striving-for-god-consciousness/#comment-27770)

Know, that in the fast ( Sawm ) is a special quality that is not found in anything else. And that is its close connection to Allaah, such that He says:

''The Fast ( Sawm ) is for Me and I will reward it.'' [Bukhari & Muslim]