

REFLECTIONS FROM RAMADAN

By Umme Muhammad Popatia

The news of the Shawwal moon being sighted was all over social media. My daughter was frying the puris, and their aroma filled the house. The preparation for sheer khurma was complete. The sweets were ready. The curtains were being changed. Every nook and corner of the house was sparkling.

It felt like Ramadan had ended so soon. The night of rewards had arrived. As I raised my hands in Du'aa to Allah, a rush of emotions and thoughts flooded my mind. Ramadan had passed in the blink of an eye. There lay my Ramadan journal, filled with the plans and goals I had set for the month.

Browsing through it again, I felt that although Ramadan had departed, it had left behind many valuable lessons. Ramadan taught me the strength of my willpower. I could stay hungry and thirsty not just for 14 hours straight, but also willingly give up what is halal for the sake of Allah, knowing that fasting brings reward. As the Hadith says:

الصوم لي وأنا أجزي به

"Fasting is for Me, and I shall reward it."

Abstaining from the halal during Ramadan equips us to protect ourselves from the haram beyond Ramadan.

Ramadan made me truly conscious of Allah, just as the Qur'an describes:

هُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

"He is with you wherever you are."

All the cold drinks, crispy snacks, and fries never tempted me, because I knew Allah was watching me even when no one else was around. I felt Allah's closeness just as He describes in the Qur'an:

وَحُنَّ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

"We are closer to him than his jugular vein."

This closeness didn't just wake me for tahajjud, it made me whisper to Him and cry to Him in my Du'aas. That overwhelming connection made it easier to stand in taraweeh and become absorbed in the Qur'an. Isn't this the very feeling described in the Hadith of Jibreel:

الإِحْسَانُ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

"Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then know that He sees you."

SubhanAllah. This feeling helped protect me from sins, reminding me constantly that Allah is watching.

Ramadan also taught me the meaning of sabrun jameel, beautiful patience. Being patient not only in performing good deeds but also in staying away from sins crushes the nafs e ammarah. It trains us to fight our desires, wait a little longer and it will be iftar, wait a little longer and Eid will come. One Eid upon sighting the Shawwal moon, and another Eid, true joy, when we meet our beloved Rabb. Ramadan taught us to hasten toward good deeds before meeting our Lord and to avoid sins until our last breath. And this patience will never be wasted. Allah says:

إِنَّمَا يُوفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

"Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without measure."

And:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"Indeed, Allah is with the patient."

So just as we show patience during Ramadan, we must carry this trait with us beyond it.

Ramadan indeed reformed my character. Even when I felt anger rise, I swallowed the bitter pill to protect my fast from becoming invalid. I avoided social gatherings to steer clear of gossip, idle talk, gheebah, lies, and stayed off social media to guard my eyes from the haram. Though these sins are forbidden outside of Ramadan too, during fasting the Hadith would echo in my mind:

"Whoever does not give up false speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink."

Ramadan prepares us to meet our Rabb. It uplifts our Imaan and reminds us that just as Ramadan is a limited number of days, so is our life, and the meeting with our Rabb is certain. Ramadan draws us closer to Allah and fills our hearts with such joy that we begin longing for it the moment it ends. The true lesson is to recognise the importance of Allah's remembrance in our daily lives.

Ramadan is when we practise the Deen the most. We see many sisters beginning to wear the hijab, brothers growing beards, and masajid overflowing, especially on Fridays and even at Fajr. The implementation of the Qur'anic ayah:

أَدْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً

"Enter into Islam completely,"

comes alive in Ramadan.

It becomes a period of intensive training to know Allah, practise the Deen, and remember our eventual accountability on the Day of Qiyamah.

As I sit in the comfort of my home and pen these reflections, I must not forget one often overlooked lesson of Ramadan, feeling for others. We fasted, but we had suhoor and iftar, often lavish, with desserts, savouries, fruits, juices, and more. But our brothers and sisters in Gaza have had food, safety, and security snatched away. Their homes and their dreams are shattered. Children without parents, parents who've lost children to martyrdom. Ramadan made us raise our hands in Du'aa for them. We felt a glimpse of their hunger and thirst. Though their pain is beyond words, their cries brought tears to our eyes.

Ramadan also teaches us to part with our wealth through zakat, Sadaqatul Fitr, and other acts of charity. The first verse of the 4th para deeply moves me:

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ

"You will never attain piety until you spend from what you love."

So the month of piety doesn't pass without cultivating piety within us, by engaging in good deeds, charity, and abstaining from sins, we ultimately hope to attain the love of Allah.

Indeed, Ramadan is full of lessons for those who reflect.

