

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْعَمَ عَلَي الصَّائِمِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ بِرِضْوَانِهِ، وَمَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ
بِعُفْوِهِ وَغُفْرَانِهِ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ
سَيِّدَنَا وَنَبِيَّنَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى
سَيِّدِنَا وَنَبِيَّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ، وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ، وَعَلَى مَنْ تَبِعَهُمْ
بِإِحْسَانٍ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ.

All praises are due to Allah. Who has blessed those who fast and pray with His acceptance. Who has bestowed upon them His forgiveness and mercy. And I bear witness, with every facet of my being, that there is nothing worthy of absolute love and adoration, except Allah, the Uniquely One, having no competing second in that One-ness. And I bear witness that our Leader and Master, our Prophet, Muhammad, is the perfect example of servanthood unto Allah, and His sent Messenger unto the entire universe.

Fasting is **NOT STARVATION**; it is a **SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE** that **AWAKENS OUR FITRAH** - natural disposition towards God, and keeps our negative traits & ego in check. Via fasting, we are able to transform from a soul that has become accustomed to evil to a serene soul on the Straight Path.

RED FLAG 1: “Nay, man does transgress all bounds, when looking upon himself as self-sufficient!” (96:7-8)

It is easy to be absorbed & deceived by the luxuries of technology, military power, medicine, food... Some unconsciously feel that they do not need Allah, and others may act as gods!

Fasting offers a spiritual exercise to counter this delusion, arrogance & egotism of feeling invincible. Imam Al-Ghazali in his Ihya, **“Through mindful fasting and temporary hunger, we receive an opportunity to develop more humility and keep our ego in check as we recognise how fragile and weak we become in the absence of some morsels and water”**

If we fail to recognize our humility and limitations, we will undoubtedly fail to recognize the Divine power and sovereignty.

“He created man from a sperm-drop; yet behold he became an open opponent!” (16:4)

RED FLAG 2: “And few among my servants are the truly thankful” (34:13).

The power to see, hear and understand and the availability of water and basic food are among the Divine blessings that we would never trade. Why do many forget to thank Allah for these indispensable favours? Fasting to teach you not to take anything for granted and *to deal with each blessing as a special favour to you*. To many, the most precious thing at sunset is simply a water bottle and a couple of dates.

RED FLAG 3: “And you love wealth, you love wealth ardently” (89:20)

In Ramadan, we feel the hunger & thirst experienced by millions of people around the world, and thereby develop a strong sense of empathy for them. This empathy turns into action in Ramadan in the form of giving which purifies our hearts from greed & living a self-centered life.

RED FLAG 4: “The love of desires is made alluring to people ...” (3:14)

Imam al-Ghazali - fasting weakens lusts and desires to give an opportunity for the soul to lead the body and to communicate with Allah. This is a lesson in self-discipline and self-control. One is trained to be the master of the body, not the other way around. So remember that you are skipping a meal for a spiritual reason.

RED FLAG 5: "If only I had not taken so and so as a friend. He led me away from the Revelation after it reached me. Satan has always betrayed mankind" (25:28-29).

Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are! This indicates the importance of whom we choose to associate with. Lacking good friends, being disconnected from your local mosque and abandoning benevolent acts may place your faith at great risk. Ramadan is like an intensive course in good deeds which include: Taraweeh in the Masjid, Sadaqah for the needy, Zakah, Fitrana, Fidyah, reading and studying the Qur'an, sharing iftaar, developing good communal relations.

RED FLAG 6: "When they [hypocrites] stand up to pray, they do so sluggishly, showing off in front of people, and remember God only a little" (4:142).

Fasting isn't accepted by Allah due to our bodily actions, Allah wants our Ikhlaas - the opposite of which is *Riya'* (doing something seeking people's approval and praise, not Allah's pleasure and glory). During our fast, we stay away from food and drinks and other invalidators of fasting even if no one is watching us. In doing so, we are trained to live in the presence of Allah and do good deeds to glorify Him alone.