

## The Final Stretch

By Riyaz Ibrahim

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*All praise belongs to Allāh, and may the choicest salutations and blessings be upon the Final Prophet, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh and his family, as is the right of blessings to be invoked upon them.*

*Bury your existence in the earth of obscurity, for whatever sprouts forth, without having first been buried, blossoms imperfectly.*

As we negotiate our way through the last ten days of Ramaḍān, I wish to do no more than REMIND why we have been depriving ourselves from food and drink throughout the day for the best part of twenty days.

To believe that fasting alone is enough to wipe the slate of sin clean is committing an error of huge proportions! Even if it were so, who is to say that his fasts are in accordance to what is required of him to begin with?

Before complacency sets in and fatigue dictates matters - due to the long fasts – we must remember that what we are experiencing climate wise in the UK is nothing compared to the sizzling weather experienced in some quarters! Just the thought of many Muslims sufficing on scraps of food for *iftār*, and *suḥūr* – that’s if there’s any leftovers – in deprived parts of the world, should be enough to dispel any improper thoughts that lurk every now and then in the back of our minds.

- The three things we are told to abstain from while fasting – eating, drinking and sexual intercourse with one’s spouse – the aim is to highlight the pleasure found in all three as ‘false’ and that the real pleasure is found in Allāh’s worship. In Hadhrat Shaykh Mawlānā Yusuf Motala’s D.B. words:

*It is to shift our focus to the pleasures of the hereafter that awaits us [inshā’Allāh].*

Often blessings are concealed with difficulties, hence we are told to forego lawful pleasures from time to time. In Imām Al-Ghazālī’s  words:

*To endure short-lived difficulties that are followed by long-lasting ease, is better than hurrying for a short-lived ease, that is followed by ever-lasting hardship.*

- Every year, Ramaḍān demands three things from us: Qur’ān recitation, feeding the poor and repentance. All three, very easy to undertake, when properly executed, lead to Allāh-consciousness (*taqwā*) and helps develop righteous character, leading to consistency in performing good deeds. Here

are a few pointers via the words of the *salaf* and pious predecessors regarding all three aspects:

- When Ramādān set in, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī رضي الله عنه would say:

*This is THE time to connect with the recitation of the Qur'ān and feed others.*

- The great Follower (*tābi'ī*), narrator of Ḥadīth and Ḥadīth Scholar of Masjid Nabawī, Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir رضي الله عنه, would say:

*The thing that makes forgiveness of Allāh necessary is to feed a hungry Muslim.*

- Rather than view the underprivileged fortunate to be receiving *ṣadaqah* etc from us, we should regard ourselves fortunate to be able to spend on them!

- And remember! To do something for someone who can never repay you [in physical form] is the pinnacle of kindness. Counting the number of times you felt better just because you made someone happy is enough satisfaction and motivation to repeat the same act again.

- Giving in charity is the quickest and easiest way to avert Allāh's wrath, attract His mercy and die a good death, as stated in the ḥadīth.

- Take stock and see what and how much of a connection you have developed with the Qur'ān and how much you have done to help the destitute and poor in this blessed month! Your target should be to outdo your performance of the last twenty days in the last ten. In a 100 metre sprint-rally, runners will spend the first 50 metres accelerating to top speed and then, stretching every sinew, run at top speed to the finish line. We must do the same!

- Ibn al-Qayyim رحمته الله once said:

*Those who are shackled in the sickness of temptations due to sin, should embrace Ramādān - the door to their treatment.*

- Even the most notorious of sinners, which we all are, have the ability, atmosphere and platform to wean off sin and bad habits in Ramādān. This is a Transforming Rehabilitation Programme aimed at reducing perpetual sinning rates. If you desire to become righteous, begin by believing that you are wicked - this is key to refining character and honing skills.

- Hadhrat Shaykh Mawlānā Yusuf Motala D.B. says:

*Our thoughts are filthy, our actions are filthy, whilst our hands, feet and bodies are full of impurities!*

- We can bury our heads in the prayer mat all day long but, just as we often lose the sense of taste during illness, the heart will be deprived of the pleasures of worship in the presence of sin. Why a lot of us get bored and are too tired to worship is due to the heavy load of sin that we are carrying.
- Once we clean and purify ourselves from the dirt we are covered in and the sins we are immersed in, we will begin to enjoy the pleasures of worship. To attain this, we must start by repenting not for just our transgressions, but also for delaying the *tawbah* and repentance.

## So what is repentance?

Repentance is returning from all reprehensible actions to all praiseworthy actions. Remorse, leaving, and negating returning are the conditions of repentance. (*Mi'rāj al-Tashawwuf ilā Ḥaqā'iq al-Taşawwuf*)

- In the remaining days, change your routine if you already haven't and disconnect yourself from meaningless and vain matters, as what good lies in being connected to social media and the people around you when your connection to Allāh is lost. Worst is when the signal from within is dead. Fittingly, the Nights of 'Power' provide a powerful connection for everyone as long as one is charged up and ready to connect.
- Each one of you can determine the state of his heart by pondering on Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh al-Iskandarī's ﷺ thought-provoking words stated hereunder:

*A sign of the heart's death is the absence of sadness over the acts of obedience that you have neglected and the abandonment of regret over the mistakes that you have made.*

- Even those whose Book of Deeds is brimming with bad, through Allāh's grace and favour, they too are freed from Hell by the time they reach the final stretch of this blessed month. Hence, a sincere servant of Allāh worships Allāh in every state regardless of how he feels.
- Taking charge of your thoughts is a big step to taking control of your lower self (*nafs*), because the soul becomes dyed with the colour of its thoughts.
- Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ:

*Whoever's Ramaḍān was spent in a valid manner and safeguarded from sin, his entire year will be spent in a valid manner.*

And to the many – young and old – who neglect fasting, Aḥnāf ibn Qays ﷺ forewarned while fasting in old age:

*It is easier to persevere to obey Allāh than to persevere on His punishment.*

It is spiritual strength that matters, for very many feeble people observe the fast, yet some youth neglect it. Thus, the more we exert ourselves, the more we'll feel spiritually enhanced. The spiritual dosage we receive in Ramaḍān is more potent than the ones we receive outside of it. It is much stronger and designed to keep us motivated for longer. Try it!

- Ibn al-Qayyim :

*The dumbest of people is he who goes astray at the end of his journey - just before reaching his house.*

In the end, without hope there is nothing.

- Imam Al-Ghazālī :

*Worship with hope is better because hope causes love and fear causes despair.*

Allāh, Most High, says:

*Never lose hope of Allāh's mercy. Verily, Allāh forgives all sins. Undoubtedly, He is the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Qur'ān, 39:53)*

May Allāh, the Exalted, enable us to value these precious moments. Āmīn!