

Fasting for Ramadan: Notes from a Spiritual Practice by Kazim Ali

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With recipes

“Kazim Ali—a writer whose powers astonish in everything he puts pen to—has made in *Fasting for Ramadan* a book that is hybrid, peregrine, and deeply, quietly revelatory. Ali’s meditations on the month-long ritual fast unfold, across cultures and spiritual practices, the deep meaning of a chosen foregoing. These journal-born pages are both intimate and public, at once ecumenical, particular, daily, and eloquently learned; planted on the deep roots of tradition, they breathe this moment’s air. **Is it possible for a work to be at once modest and an undeniable tour de force? This book proves: it is.”**—Jane Hirshfield, author of *Come, Thief: Poems* and *After*, which was named a “Best Book of 2006” by *The Washington Post*

“Ali brings a razor-sharp minimalism to his prose. From morning runs through the pre-dawn streets in Oberlin, Ohio, planning his high-protein morning meal to post-dusk iftar meals with students who offer prayers in his yoga studio, **readers are wooed with intelligent prose onto this pilgrim’s path.** Those seeking traditional Islamic piety or a logic-driven religious apologetic will not find it here. Instead, Ali boldly sketches the modern artist engaged in an ancient religious practice in an age of iftar Tweetups and iQuran mobile phone apps.”
—*Publishers Weekly* <<http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-932195-94-1>>

“As a practicing Muslim, I found myself nodding as I read *Fasting for Ramadan: Notes From a Spiritual Practice*, particularly at Kazim Ali’s descriptions of the feeling one gets when going without food or drink. Like this: ‘One feels, at the end of a day of fasting, like a tree branch or a bone bleached in the sun.’ Reading these essays is about as close as you can get (short of doing it yourself) to experiencing the monthlong daylight fast that millions of Muslims worldwide keep each year. He paints a rare and intimate portrait of the faster’s mind-set.” — Allie Shah, *Minneapolis Star Tribune* <<http://www.startribune.com/entertainment/books/126345378.html>>

“The mix of quotidian detail and the extraordinarily rich vocabulary Ali has cultivated through the discipline of inwardness for raising subverbal impression to the level of speech locates the reader both in and outside of the fasts. We encounter observations on Islamic texts and practices alongside breakfast menus ..., etymological musings ..., accounts of yoga practice ..., lines from Dickinson, Rumi, the Indigo Girls, and the Bhagavad Gita, ruminations on hunger, and scenes from *The Matrix*. All of these serve as spiritual resources, as does the love of his parents the poet is rediscovering, as does the mystery of the relationship between body and spirit...” — Lee Sharkey, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*

“In *Fasting for Ramadan*, poet and yoga teacher Kazim Ali **gives us so beautiful and quiet a book, we turn its pages with a willing hush, at once meditative and philosophic....***Fasting for Ramadan* is also an important and compelling work for contemporary yoga practitioners. It

liberates the frustratingly polarized discussion of practice from ideological and historical turf wars.”—*The Magazine of Yoga* <<http://themagazineofyoga.com/blog/2011/04/18/book-review-fasting-for-ramadan/>>

“*Fasting for Ramadan* is **a remarkable book**: an intensely personal meditation — shot through with poetry, philosophy, revelation, and doubt — on one of the world’s great spiritual practices.”—**Toby Lester**, *Atlantic magazine consulting editor and author of *The Fourth Part of the World**

“Ali’s essays range from detailing his struggles with staying active and inactive during the Ramadan period, to his relationship to the exterior world and his own body, to beginning to understand the outline of his own spiritual life....it is this focus on the minor details of one’s daily existence and the forced attention Ramadan brings to the practices of awakening, exercising, eating, working, and meditating that allow some of Ali’s pieces to become **quiet and illuminating gems**....As a practicing student and teacher of Yoga and a young man who comes from a Muslim-Indian family, Ali weaves together a variety of religious and cultural narratives from the varying practices of Yoga to the symbolism of the Buddha and Ganesha to the story of Ismail and Hajira to his own vegetarianism and complex technology-fueled modern American lifestyle. Although Ali may worry if he is authentically Muslim, South Asian, American, spiritual, or artistic enough, it is his embrace of the diverse and varying set of customs and cultural values which constitute his own reality which makes Ali authentically human, and which make his journeys into Ramadan and into himself such **a pleasure to read**.”—**Rita Banerjee**, *DesiLit*

“**[A]n important book**.... Written 'in that third voice, a voice between two people, neither one nor the other, neither embodied nor disembodied.' I have wanted to know what fasting in Islam involves...to admire its intentions and effects in solitude.... I hope that multitudes will find their way to [this book].”—**Fanny Howe**, author of *The Winter Sun: Notes on a Vocation* and *Radical Love*

“Kazim Ali’s *Fasting for Ramadan* is an intimate journey through thirty days of fasting. Like a flower wilting in a dry pot, Ali’s body grows weary without food and water. But as the days go on some other form of sustenance takes over to revive and replenish him, propelling him forward so that he ends the month in a very different place than where he began. This book is more than just a simple account of spiritual hardship. It’s **an incisive look at what it really means to be Muslim in today’s world, essential for anyone interested in understanding the multicultural fabric of America and of the Muslim community that exists here**.”—**Samina Ali**, author of *Madras on Rainy Days*

“[Ali] interweaves insightful musings and his personal spiritual doubts with the practical considerations and sublime benefits of maintaining a rigorous fast....[A]n inspiring and eloquent read.” —Irene Petruszak, *Yoga International*

“Ali’s most comfortable mode is interrogative. So as he observes what happens to his body’s relation to itself and to the outer world during the thirty days of the fast, even his declarative sentences have the feel of a probing, a wondering....[T]his is a book for all seasons. And for people of any faith or no practiced faith. It’s American in the best sense of our plurality: wisdom from one faith that is the opposite of exclusionary, that speaks to and for our shared humanness.” —Peggy Rosenthal, *Image Journal* blog <<http://imagejournal.org/page/blog/a-muslim-yogi>>