



## Ramadan: A Soul-Searching and Ethical-Mentoring Month for the Entire Muslim *Ummah*

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### Abstract

Indeed, Islamic worships encourage the spiritual and ethical domains of human life. The main objective of Islamic worship is the attainment of the state of righteousness (*taqwa*) to become closer to Allah Almighty. The human being, with overall nature and inbuilt system, invariably needs refurbishing of thoughts and renewal of behavioral strengths. For that matter, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Controller of the universe, Allah Almighty has prescribed, among other worships, the entire month of Ramadan as that of fasting to achieve the goal. Ramadan offers opportunities for those who fast to get closer to Allah, beseech Him earnestly, internalize the messages of the Qur'an, develop themselves intellectually, accustomed to looking at the things critically, seek His forgiveness, orientate themselves morally, treat the beloved ones with love and compassion, and remember those in the society who were left behind in the material competition. With this training availed in the fasting month, humankind can hardly stumble in any dimensions of life, including moral, devotional, social, familial, political, and economical in the remaining eleven months of the year. The methodology applied in the discussion over these issues related to Ramadan is rational and analytical, rather than traditional. The conclusion reached in the discussion is that Ramadan is the month of the all-inclusive mentoring of humankind. Overall, the study reflects upon the soul-searching and ethical-mentoring activities in the month of Ramadan for the growth of the entire Muslim *Ummah*.

**Keywords:** Human being; Ramadan; Allah; Qur'an; Growth; Muslim *Ummah*.



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### 1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, Ramadan is considered as the honorable guest that brings the believer closer to Allah's mercy and forgiveness and away from *Satan* and Hell-Fire (Awad, n.d. 5). The human being is forgetful by its nature. The Qur'an states the reality: "We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot, and We found on his part lack of resolve" (The Qur'an, 20:115 Ali (2006)). The forgetfulness nature of human beings is multifarious, including engagement in familial, social, political, financial, intellectual, educational, cultural, and devotional activities that make him/her, most of the time, ignore deliberately or inadvertently his/her original position of vicegerent on the earth. The Qur'an declares humans a vicegerent of Allah Almighty, as stated, "Behold, your Lord said to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on earth" (The Qur'an, 2:30 Ali (2006)). The Divine revelation has been guiding the entire humankind on do's and do not's in their daily life, as mentioned, "So, there will surely come to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows my guidance, he shall not go astray, and neither will he be unhappy" (The Qur'an, 20:123 Shakir (2009)). One of the so many instructions and injunctions revealed by the Creator the Almighty to keep the humanity aright is observe fasting in the lunar month of Ramadan. The Qur'an explains, "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you so that you might be able to develop self-restraint" (The Qur'an, 2:183 Ali (2006)). Apparently, the fasting is to abstain totally from food, drink, and physical intimacy with spouses from dawn to dusk throughout the month of Ramadan, 29-30 prescribed days. The Qur'an explains: "So, you may now consort with them and seek what Allah had ordained for you, and eat and drink until the whiteness of the day becomes distinct from the blackness of the night at dawn, then resume the fast until nightfall..." (The Qur'an, 2:187 Khan (2013)). The fasting during Ramadan is aimed at achieving, as mentioned in the Qur'an (2:183), piety (*taqwa*), which is much more than being hungry, thirsty, and self-control. Undoubtedly, Ramadan contains many spiritual benefits as it allows deep introspection and increased awareness of one's relationship with Allah (Mughal, 2014). The Muslim *Ummah* can attain the state of righteousness and piety by observing fasting in the month of Ramadan, which is the sole purpose of all worships in Islamic tradition. The present study represents a humble reflection on some of the underlying objectives of the fasting in the month of Ramadan, which ultimately have direct influences on the lives of Muslims around the globe.

### 2. Ramadan: The Month of Soul-Searching for Muslim *Ummah*

In Ramadan, Muslim *Ummah* can devote and motivate them to achieve a tranquil state of mental health by connecting with the Creator and physical fitness by observing fasting from dawn to dusk. For that matter, Muslims need to determine the specific aspects of the expected spiritual and ethical achievements in the month of Ramadan,

keeping in view the very nature of the month. The subsequent discussion highlights the soul-searching domains during Ramadan for the entire Muslim *Ummah*. The following are the main aspects of soul-searching and ethical-mentoring to be observed during the month of Ramadan:

## 2.1. Ramadan: The Month of the Qur'an

For Muslims, the month of Ramadan commemorates the first revelation of the Qur'an. The Qur'an informs that the month of Ramadan is the month of the revelation of the Qur'an, as stated:

*"It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed as guidance unto mankind and a self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Hence whoever of you lives to see this month shall fast throughout it..."* (Qur'an, 2:185, Asad (1980)).

The verse mentions that the revelation of the Qur'an began in the month of Ramadan and describes the Qur'an as guidance for humankind, as self-evident proof of that guidance, and as the criterion for the right and the wrong. The verse of chapter 97 (*al-Qadr*) confirms the idea of revelation:

*"We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the Night of Power"* (Qur'an, 97:1, Ali (2006))

To summarize, to consider that Ramadan is the month of the Qur'an is to invite humanity to seek guidance therefrom, feel convinced over the authenticity of the Qur'anic scheme of life, and utilize its principles to know what is desirable and what is undesirable.

To unfold the three dimensions of the Qur'an, including *huda li al-nas* (guidance for humankind), *bayyinat min al-huda* (self-evident proof of the guidance), *al-furqan* (the criterion to discern the right from the wrong) one is required to ponder over the Qur'anic text seriously. The Qur'an states: *"Do they not ponder on the Quran? If it had been from anyone other than God, they would have found much inconsistency in it"* (Qur'an 4:82, Khan (2013)). Thus, the month of Ramadan is to be dedicated to the task of deliberation over the Qur'an in its entirety, particularly over its above-mentioned three attributes. *Huda li al-Nas* (guidance for humankind) does not denote the guidance abstractly, but it means clear guidance in all walks of life. The Qur'an contains all the required details about the human being, concerning origin, nature, attributes, temperaments, behavior, needs, problems, and solution to those problems. That is what the Qur'an says abruptly: *"[O Men!] We have now bestowed upon you from on high a divine writ containing all that you ought to bear in mind will you not, then, use your reason?"* (Qur'an, 21:10, Asad (1980)). *Bayyinat min al-Huda* (self-evident proof of the guidance) signifies that every single component of the Qur'an, its eloquence, its coherence, its messages, its description of the unknown scientific facts, its principles for the bliss, etc. speak volumes about its origin, Allah, the Ultimate source of knowledge and wisdom. *Al-Furqan* (the criterion to discern the right from the wrong) means that human is incapable of identifying the true from the false and the Qur'an which represents the wisdom of Allah, the All-Wise is the only Standard wherewith human can know what is good, what is bad, what is right, what is wrong, what is desirable, what is undesirable, what is lawful, what is unlawful, what is blissful, what is harmful, what is rewarding and what is reprehensible.

It is noteworthy that all the previous Scriptures were revealed to their respective Prophets in the month of Ramadan. Wathilah ibn al-Asqa' reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: *"Suhuf Ibrahim* were revealed in the first night of Ramadan, the Torah on the 6th of Ramadan, the Gospel on the 13th Ramadan, the Psalms on the 18th Ramadan, and the Qur'an on the 24th Ramadan" (Ahmad (1999), 28/191); (Abu Ya'la' (1984), 4/135); (Al-Baihqi (2003), 3/521). It flows from here that the fasting prescribed for the followers of the previous Prophets was also in the month of revelation of the heavenly Scriptures. The wording of the middle part of the verse (2:183) — *as it was prescribed for those before you* — corroborates this notion. Consequently, Muslims need to ponder on the verses of the Qur'an deeply for the contentment and tranquility of their soul and promotion of their ethical domains of life, which can be achieved under the guidance and direction of the Qur'an during the month of Ramadan.

## 2.2. Ramadan: The Month of Introspection

The Qur'an lays stress on the desirability of self-reflection, as mentioned: *"Do they not reflect within themselves?"* (Qur'an, 30:8, Shakir (2009)). The verse undoubtedly highlights a statement on the significance of introspection. The human being, indeed, needs to search one's inner self as to the questions one faces in daily life: who he/she is; what is his/her origin; what is his/her nature; what he/she needs; why he/she confronts problems; and how he/she can solve his/her problems. Psychologically, a human being in the state of fasting becomes more inclined to make a soul-searching and ethical-mentoring for his/her entity. Therefore, he/she tries to find out the answer to all his/her questions he/she faces, not by merely staring into space, but by laying his/her hands on the available relevant sources, including the Qur'an. It is then the Qur'an that helps humans get a satisfactory answer to their questions. Human being realizes that the Qur'an conforms to one's inner feeling about the existence of the Supreme Being. The Qur'an mentions the dialogue in the eternity between Allah, the Lord, and the entire humankind:

*"When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)? - They said: Yea! We do testify!"* (Qur'an, 7:172, Ali (2006)).

Introspection leads to self-recognition, which in turn climaxes in recognition of the Creator, Allah. This reality further gets strengthened with the Qur'anic statement that the human entity is composed of two elements, one natural (the clay) and the other supernatural (essence of the divine spirit). The Qur'an reveals:

*"And when your Lord said to the angels: Surely I am going to create a mortal of the essence of black mud fashioned in shape. So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down making obeisance [prostration] to him."* (Qur'an, 15:28-29, Shakir (2009)).

It is this element of the divine spirit that elevates humanity above most of the creations, as described in the Qur'an:

*"We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation"* (Qur'an, 17:70, Ali (2006)).

The moment human being realizes his/her prestigious status on the surface of the earth; he/she falls before Allah Almighty in humble prostration. The natural element (clay) in the human body urges him/her to cling to the earth. In contrast, his/her supernatural part (the soul), as a result of constant introspection in the month of Ramadan, lifts him/her towards the sublime way of life. Therefore, introspection is a key of socializing the state of soul and moral aspects of human life during the sacred month of Ramadan for the whole Muslim *Ummah*.

### 2.3. Ramadan: The Month of Intellectual Exercise

Humankind is an intellectual being. This intellectual power makes human distinct from most of the creation, including animals. An individual cripples intellectuality and gets flung into the animal setting. The Qur'an describes such a situation vividly:

*"They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, - nay more misguided: for they are heedless (of warning)."* (Qur'an, 7:179, Ali (2006)).

In the human body, the heart, eyes, and ears constitute its intellectual power. Therefore, the three human faculties are either used or unused, with no possibility of their misuse. The use of heart, eyes, and ears provide understanding, seeing, and hearing powers, respectively. Otherwise, non-use and misuse of these faculties render human worthless like an animal. The Qur'an inspires people to apply their reason to understand the truth, and the repeated phrases with this import are two. First, *"do you not then use your reason"* (*afala ta'qilum*)? Second, *"do they not then use their reason"* (*afala ya'qilun*)?. Wonderfully, the Qur'an does not force humankind to follow its instructions blindly like robots; instead, it considers the application of reasoning to make a strong relationship with the Creator. The Creator has granted the human mind an incredibly neutral power to understand the truth from the false. That is why the Qur'an declares as worthless those who do not use their reason, as cited:

*"Verily, the vilest [worst] of all creatures in the sight of God are those deaf, those dumb ones who do not use their reason"* (Qur'an, 8:22, Asad (1980)).

The verse metaphorically refers to those who keep away from using their intellectual power as deaf and dumb. In another verse of the Qur'an describes the use of reason as one of the most desirable attributes of the believers:

*"And those who, when they are reminded of the revelations of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat"* (Qur'an, 25:73, Pickthall (1999)).

Essentially, Ramadan is the sacred time devoted to enriching spirituality by reading the Qur'an, saying night prayers (additional), and reciting supplications. The Ramadan provides opportunities for intellectual exercises through the recitation of the Qur'an during the day and night, reflecting on the verses of the Qur'an, listening to the Qur'an in night prayer (*Salat al-Lail*), waking during the last week. For instance, the Prophet (s.a.w.) made mention the reward of establishing prayer in the month of Ramadan,

*"Whoever establishes the (Nawafil voluntary) prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards (not to show off) then all his past sins will be forgiven"* (Bukhari (1997), 1/72).

The Qur'an is revealed in the month of Ramadan, which is guidance for humankind, as cited:

*"It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed as guidance unto mankind ..."* (Qur'an, 2:185, Asad (1980)).

Furthermore, Muslims can recite the Qur'an during the month of Ramadan for taking its intercession on the Day of Resurrection, as described in a tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.):

*"The fasting and the Qur'an are two intercessors for the slave of Allah on the Day of Resurrection. The fasting will say: 'O My Lord, I have prevented him from his food and desires during the day, so let me intercede for him.' The Qur'an will say: 'I have prevented him from sleeping at night, so let me intercede for him.' And their intercession will be accepted"* (Ahmad (1999), 11/199); (Al-Baihqi (2003), 3/378).

Muslims are encouraged to recite the Qur'an thoughtfully for pondering on its verses and increasing their faith, as quoted in the Qur'an:

*"They only are the (true) believers whose hearts feel fear when Allah is mentioned, and when His revelations are recited unto them they increase their faith, and who trust in their Lord"* (Qur'an, 8:2, Pickthall (1999)).

Historical evidences of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) reveals his dedication towards thinking and practicing positively (Yucel, 2015).

### 2.4. Ramadan: The Month of Devotion to the Creator

A human's real identity remains in place as long as he/she stays connected with the Creator; otherwise lost if disconnected with the Creator. The human being needs a close connection with the Creator. In contrast, the Creator does not require human beings for His Entity. The human can retain self-identity by attaining the state of *taqwa* (righteousness/piety). Asad (1980), a great scholar of the Qur'an in the 20th century, invariably translates the Qur'anic term *taqwa* (righteousness/piety) into English as "consciousness of God," this rendering signifies the very

essence of *taqwa*. It is the in-depth and reliable cognizance of Allah Almighty, which prevents humans from sinning. It is, therefore, the consciousness of God (Allah), whereby human establishes an enviable connection with Him. The development of *taqwa* is essentially to create a mechanism of sensible devotion to Allah Almighty.

The Qur'an mentions *taqwa* (righteousness) as the sole objective of fasting in the month of Ramadan:

*"O you who have attained to faith, Fasting is ordained for you as it was ordained for those before you, so that you might remain conscious of God"* (Qur'an, 2:183 [Asad \(1980\)](#)).

The practical manifestation of *taqwa* has been elucidated in the verse as:

*"Allah will ease for you, and does not will you to suffer hardship; He wills that you complete the stipulated says, and that you extol Allah for His having guided you aright, and that you render your thanks to Him"* (Qur'an, 2:185, [Asad \(1980\)](#)).

The portions of the verse (you extol Allah and you render thanks to Him) refer to the demonstrative method of *taqwa*. Extolling Allah Almighty and thanking Him for His bounties granted to human beings signify human's sincerity of commitment to Allah Almighty. That is precisely called devotion to Allah Almighty. This devotion is to be further strengthened by offering consistently prescribed daily prayers. The Qur'an says:

*"Be guardians of your prayers, and the midmost prayer, and stand up with devotion to Allah"* (Qur'an, 2:238, [Pickthall \(1999\)](#)).

The last part of the verse devotion to Allah (*Qaniteen*) indeed avers to the result of regular and punctual observation of prayers. The original Arabic word for devotion is *Qunut*, which means an unconditional commitment to Allah Almighty. In the month of Ramadan, the observers of fast pay special attention to obligatory prayers and night prayer (*Qiyām al-lail/ Tarawīh*). This endeavor on the part of the believers is highly commendable, as it provides an opportunity for them to devote and dedicate themselves to Allah Almighty. Consequently, Muslims can uplift the state of their soul and elevate their ethical standards by attaining devoutness, uprightness, virtuousness, and piousness in the month of Ramadan.

## 2.5. Ramadan: The Month of Invocation to Allah Almighty

Generally, humans come across something painful and afflicting in their daily life. To surmount these pains and afflictions, they approach other humans around them. However, when they fail to find the solace, they instinctively stand reminded of the Supreme Authority, the Creator, and speak to Him earnestly, seeking His infinite favor. It is interesting to learn that the Qur'an invites humans to implore Allah Almighty for their needs whatsoever in the same context, which deals with the prescription of fasting in the month of Ramadan. The verses (2:183-187) of Surah al-Baqrah address some fundamental issues related to fasting; and the verse (2:186) reads:

*"When My servants ask thee [you] concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them): I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth [calls] on Me"* (Qur'an, 2:186, [Ali \(2006\)](#)).

The verse (2:183) prescribes fasting; the verse (2:184) refers to some relaxation in fasting for the sick and the traveler; the verse (2:185) describes the relationship between the month of Ramadan and the revelation of the Qur'an; the verse (2:186) invites man to stretch his hands to Allah, and the verse (2:187) outlines some basic rules for fasting. Indisputably, the invitation to human to invoke Allah Almighty for help (Qur'an, 2: 186) is an intrinsic part of the entire system of fasting, which makes the fasting person inclined to get connected with Allah Almighty. The deep link between the fasting and the invocation to Allah Almighty could incredibly be grasped in the light of a saying of the Last Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.):

*"Allah said: The Fast is for Me and I will give the reward for it, as he (the one who observes the fast) leaves his sexual desire, food and drink for My Sake. Fasting is a screen (from Hell) and there are two pleasures for a fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast, and the other at the time when he will meet his Lord. And the smell of the mouth of a fasting person is better in Allah's Sight than the smell of musk"* ([Bukhari \(1997\)](#), 9/355; [Muslim \(2007\)](#), 3/222).

The above hadith makes it clear that human in the state of fasting gets closer to Allah Almighty. If the fasting has an extraordinary elevated status in heaven, the invocation during fasting must hold a special consideration over there. It is then believable that one's supplication to Allah Almighty will be granted. Salman al-Farsi reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

*"Your Lord is Kind and Most Generous, and is too kind to let His slave, if he raises his hands to Him, bring them back empty," or he said, "frustrated"* ([Ibn Majah \(2007\)](#), 5/121; [Tirmidhi \(2007\)](#), 6/263; [Abu Dawud \(2008\)](#), 2/200).

Likewise, the invocation of a fasting person at the time of breaking would be granted. Anas Ibn Malik reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

*"There are three whose supplication is not rejected: The fasting person when he breaks his fast, the just leader, and the supplication of the oppressed person; Allah raises it up above the clouds and opens the gates of heaven to it. And the Lord says: 'By My might, I shall surely aid you, even if it should be after a while'"* [Tirmidhi \(2007\)](#) 6/295; [Ibn Majah \(2007\)](#), 2/529).

To summarize, the sayings of the Prophet (s.a.w.) demonstrate the significance of invocation during the month of Ramadan. Muslims can get closeness to Allah Almighty by supplicating sincerely and elevate their mental and ethical status in worldly life.

## 2.6. Ramadan: The Month of Moral Orientation

Ramadan is the month of self-control, patience, and ethical behavior ([Anonymous, 2012](#)). The beautiful blend of natural (clay) and supernatural (divine spirit) elements in human being give a new form, that is, moral being. As a



moral being, humankind stands responsible for all his/her deeds, familial, social, political, economic, intellectual, educational, and devotional. An individual must choose either of the two options, the desirable or the undesirable. The Qur'an vividly affirms this moral nature of human beings: "And He imbued human soul with moral failings as well as righteousness" (Qur'an, 91: 8). As mentioned earlier (2: 183), the very objective of the fasting is to achieve righteousness and piety (*taqwa*). Thus, Ramadan is the month of *taqwa*, which is nothing but moral uprightness. The Qur'an talks in detail about moral failings and moral uprightness. For example, the following verses constitute moral exhortations for humankind:

*"And do not kill your children out of fear of poverty...and go not nigh to fornication...and do not kill any one whom Allah has forbidden, except for justice...and draw not near to the property of the orphan except in a goodly way...and give full measure when you measure out and weigh with a correct balance...and follow not that of which you have no knowledge...and do not walk about in the land exultingly..."* (Qur'an, 17:31-37, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

Consequently, total abstinence from infanticide, illicit sex, homicide, dishonest appropriation, commercial honesty, unconfirmed information, and arrogance is *taqwa*, the very wisdom of fasting. Arfajah reported from the Prophet (s.a.w.):

*"He (Arfajah) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah say: In it the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of the Fire are closed, and the devils are chained up, and a caller calls out every night: O doer of good, proceed; O doer of evil, desist"* (([Al-Nasā'i, 2007](#)), 3/167-68).

Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

*"Fasting is a protection for you, so when you are fasting, do not behave obscenely or foolishly, and if any one argues with you or abuses you, say, 'I am fasting. I am fasting'"* (([Mālik, 1985](#)), 1/310; [Bukhari \(1997\)](#), 3/79).

Abu Hurairah that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

*"Whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting)"* ([Bukhari \(1997\)](#), 3/84).

Obviously, fasting entails total restraint from all that is abominable, indecent, shameful, immodest, and disgusting. As the hunger and thirst cleanse the body of toxic elements, restraint from evil deeds and doing good deeds purifies human thought and behavior. The thirty days continuous attempts to internalize high moral values in life bring about revolutionary changes in human being.

## 2.7. Ramadan: The Month of Penitence and Repentance

The Qur'anic scheme of life may be compared with an extraordinarily gated and guarded garden. Those who remain outside this garden may not be considered lucky enough to survive peacefully. Those who wish to benefit from the Qur'anic scheme of life will have to enter the garden. This entry into the garden is not to be made haphazardly from any point of its periphery. One can enter it only through the designated gate. That gate in the Islamic scheme of life is termed as *tawbah* (repentance/penitence). *Tawbah* is an intellectual and behavioral process requiring a sincere and serious accomplishment of several tasks. Three of them fall under intellectual category: (1) considering the evil-deeds as sinful acts, (2) feeling deeply remorseful over committing the sins, and (3) making a sincere pledge not to let the sins recur in life. And three of them are behavioral: (1) observing two cycles of prescribed prayer for seeking Allah's forgiveness for the sins committed, (2) turning to Allah consistently seeking His forgiveness, uttering inside the heart or murmuring between lips the approved wording of forgiveness, such as "RABBIGHFIR" (O My Lord forgive me) and "ASTAGHFIRUALLAH" (I seek forgiveness of Allah), and doing more and more good deeds to make up for the loss caused by the past sins.

The Qur'an invites the entire humankind to make *tawbah* for their invalid and sinful acts. For instance, the following verses highlight clearly:

- 1) *"And most surely I am most Forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good, then continues to follow the right direction"* (Qur'an, 20:82, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).
- 2) *"And turn to Allah all of you, O believers! So that you may be successful"* (Qur'an, 24:31, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).
- 3) *"O you who believe! turn to Allah a sincere turning; maybe your Lord will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow..."* (Qur'an, 66:8, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

The first verse (20:82) refers to individual repentance yet applies to the entire humankind. The second and the third verses (24:31 and 66:8) address the entire community of believers collectively. This collective repentance could undoubtedly be made anytime. Still, it may not be practically feasible except in the month of Ramadan in which believers fast collectively all over the world and seek forgiveness of Allah throughout the fasting month. The collective *tawbah* in the month of Ramadan may be considered a practical interpretation of the above-quoted verses on *tawbah*. The significance of repentance in the month of Ramadan is clear in the light of the tradition of the Prophet (s.a.w.), reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah:

*"May the man before whom I am mentioned - and he does not send Salat upon me - be humiliated. And may a man upon whom Ramadan enters and then passes, before he is forgiven, be humiliated. And may a man whose parents reached old age in his presence, and they were not a cause for his entrance to Paradise, be humiliated"* ([Tirmidhi \(2007\)](#), 6/253).

This hadith demonstrates beyond any confusion that the most desirable achievement of fasting in the month of Ramadan is Allah's forgiveness. The failure to achieve this goal may be because (1) the person concerned failed to observe fast as it should be observed, or (2) the person concerned adopted unwittingly or knowingly lackadaisical approach to *tawbah*. Repentance guarantees not only Allah's forgiveness but also ensures great favors from Allah:

*“Then I said, Ask forgiveness of your Lord, surely He is the most Forgiving: He will send down upon you the cloud, pouring down abundance of rain: And help you with wealth and sons, and make for you gardens, and make for you rivers”* (Qur’an, 71:10-12, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

The believers are fortunate to avail fasting in the month of Ramadan through, among other things, continuous process of repentance, which guarantees material prosperity in this world, besides eternal bliss reserved for them in the life hereafter.

## 2.8. Ramadan: The Month of Love and Compassion

Humans constitute family, society, groups, organizations, and nations. The main elements that bind the members of these constituted entities, respectively, are love and compassion. The husband and wife, parents and children, neighbors and relatives, friends and siblings, traders and customers, organizers and helpers, managers and subordinates, rulers and the subject remain connected with one another so long as the spirit of love and compassion endure. The more the love and compassion among the people promote the stronger bond among them, and the dimmer the love and compassion result in the weaker relationship. Allah Almighty has deposited these two instincts, love, and compassion, in the very nature of humanity. The Qur’an says:

*“And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect”* (Qur’an, 30:21, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

It is the love and compassion between the husband and wife, which extend to the offspring and family. Thus, all the families in a society share the same attitude of love and compassion with one another. Likewise, all the communities in a nation demonstrate the same spirit of the relationship. It may here be questioned as to why then the people also fight with each other. There is no denying the fact that negative attitudes like hatred, jealousy, and ill-will do exist in the human psyche, along with the spirit of love and compassion. The two sets of attitudes, negative and positive contrast with each other and the unseen forces behind one try to dominate the other, whichever is stronger prevails. In Islamic tradition, Ramadan is an ideal month to make the positive attitudes, love, and compassion stronger among Muslim *Ummah*. The most important relationship based on love and compassion is that of husband and wife. In Ramadan, the love and compassion between them need to be paid special attention to. The verse 2:187 is a part of verses constituting the context of Ramadan. One part thereof reads:

*“It is made lawful to you to go into your wives on the night of the fast; they are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them; Allah knew that you acted unfaithfully to yourselves, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and removed from you (this burden); so now be in contact with them and seek what Allah has ordained for you...”* (Qur’an, 2:187, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

This verse refers to the practical demonstration of love and compassion between husband and wife. It is not to be forgotten that the sexual relationship between husband and wife is the leading adhesive element responsible for enhancing love and compassion between them. Had the sex even at night in Ramadan been forbidden, the conjugal link between husband and wife would have adversely been affected. The suggestion that abstinence from sex even at night enhances *taqwa* may not withstand the scrutiny. If conjugal sex makes a spiritually negative impact on the husband and wife, why did then Allah declare it lawful? Moreover, the statement—*they are cover for you, and you are cover for them*—does not leave even an iota of doubt over the wisdom behind the legalization of sex in fast nights. The husband and wife, particularly the young ones or the newly married, always look for the opportunity to enjoy sex. So, during Ramadan, they can do so at night. One meaning of the above phrase that husband and wife are covers for each other is that they should both remain inclined and ready to satisfy each other’s strong desire. Otherwise, they may resort to some other ways that will surely be invalid and unlawful. Undoubtedly, Allah Almighty allowed the married couple to enjoy sex at night of Ramadan because He created love and compassion between them. Thus, the more the opportunity for sex in the sacred month nights, the more the love and compassion will penetrate their hearts.

## 2.9. Ramadan: The Month of Creativity and Inspiration

Curiosity is embedded in human nature. Human being wants to know what and why about everything. For that matter, he/she uses his heart, eyes, and ears. As discussed earlier, these three organs constitute intellectual power. The Qur’an has mentioned the three intellectual faculties (hearing, seeing, and understanding) six times in the same order which is quoted below:

- 1) *“And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers-- you did not know anything-- and He gave you hearing and sight and hearts that you may give thanks”* (Qur’an, 16:78, [Shakir \(2009\)](#))
- 2) *“And follow not that of which you have not the knowledge; surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that”* (Qur’an, 17: 36, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).
- 3) *“And He it is Who made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts; little is it that you give thanks”* (Qur’an, 23:78, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).
- 4) *“Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit, and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts; little is it that you give thanks”* (Qur’an, 32:9, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).
- 5) *“And certainly We had established them in what We have not established you in, and We had given-- them ears and eyes and hearts, but neither their ears, nor their eyes, nor their hearts availed them aught, since they denied the communications of Allah, and that which they mocked encompassed them”* (Qur’an, 46:26, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

- 6) *“Say: He it is Who brought you into being and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts: little is it that you give thanks”* (Qur’an, 67:23, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

The ears, eyes, and heart are the organs, faculties, or acts that refer to three stages of knowledge development. The hearing means learning the existing knowledge on the subject concerned; the seeing signifies observing the collected knowledge and analyzing it, and the hearts denote the developing a new dimension of knowledge. This is the Qur’anic scheme of the growth of knowledge involving three human faculties. All these three stages are significant, but the second stage seems to be more important than the first and the last. The second stage, *basar* or *absar* is critical thinking over the collected, compiled, and memorized existing knowledge in a subject concerned. Critical thinking involves understanding, analyzing, recognizing, and internalizing the existing information. Let us now take only one relevant example in this regard. The interpretation of the Qur’an (*tafsir*) is available today in the form of hundreds of works written by many scholars in the classical, medieval, modern, and contemporary periods. Around 99% of these works may be deemed as collection and compilation of the already existing material in the field. It may then be said that the *tafsir* works merely represent only the first stage of knowledge development. It needs to undergo the second and the third stages, particularly the second one. The Qur’an is the repository of wisdom that needs to be unfolded in the *tafsiri* exercises. It is possible only by undertaking the effort to the stage of critical thinking and thereafter identifying the pearls of wisdom. The Qur’an was revealed in the month of Ramadan. With the relationship between the Qur’an and Ramadan believers are advised to utilize the month of Ramadan in playing their part in the development of knowledge.

The Qur’an uses two terms quite often in its messages, *tafakkur* and *tadabbur*. Both these terms denote contemplation, deliberation, critical thinking, and pondering, etc.

- 1) *“With clear arguments and scriptures; and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect”* (Qur’an, 16:44, [Shakir \(2009\)](#))
- 2) *“Do they not then reflect [yatadabbarun] on the Quran? Nay, on the hearts there are locks”* (Qur’an, 47:24, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

These two verses indicate the relationship of humanity with the Qur’an. Obviously, the Qur’an was revealed for the humankind to read it, to ponder it, to believe in its authenticity, to delve into its the fathomless ocean of wisdom, and to internalize its messages into practical life. It is through critical thinking (*tafakkur* and *tadabbur*) that one can develop an in-depth understanding of the Qur’an, which was revealed in the month of Ramadan.

## 2.10. Ramadan: The Month of Charity and Social Welfare

Humankind is a physical being. For its strength and survival, human’s physique needs life resources. Allah, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, has deposited the life-resources in abundance. The human being is required to explore, exploit, and utilize these resources for the maintenance of his/her physical dimension. Since time immemorial, the entire humanity has been engaged in obtaining food, drink, clothes, and shelter. In order to ensure the procurement of life resources, humanity has managed to develop innumerable ways and methods. There are available manufacturing concerns, factories, businesses, shops, employment opportunities in different sectors, private and public. Yet, due to differences in the mental and physical abilities of men and women, parity in the distribution of life-resources among all human beings could not and cannot be possible. That is why; amount and value of the wherewithal to access to life-resources vary from person to person, family to family, community to community, and even nation to nation. In this situation of disparity, the people may be classified into two major categories, haves and have-nots. And among have-nots, there are those below the poverty lines and those with nothing in their possession. At these unfortunate people, those around them from the fortunate categories look differently. Some are indifferent to the unfortunate; some merely take pity on them but doing nothing for them; some even express their anger over them and consider themselves responsible for their poverty, and some others take their poverty to their heart and try to help them as much as they can. In the Islamic scheme of life, helping the poor and the needy is an obligation not only for the wealthy but also for the average earning people.

Wherever the Qur’an mentions the significance of daily prayers, it mentions that of charity and poor-due. Some such verses will bring the idea home:

- 1) *“And keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and bow down with those who bow down”* (Qur’an, 2:43, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).
- 2) *“And keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and whatever good you send before for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees what you do”* (Qur’an, 2:110, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).
- 3) *“Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate and enjoin good and forbid evil; and Allah’s is the end of affairs”* (Qur’an, 22:41, [Shakir \(2009\)](#)).

The above verses inspire believers to spend on the poor and the needy around the year. However, it is well-known to Muslims that performing prayers and paying poor-due in the month of Ramadan are more commendable. The Prophet (s.a.w.) is reported to have paid special attention to helping the unfortunate in Ramadan. Abdullah Ibn Abbas observation concerning the Prophet’s tradition in Ramadan has been recorded by authentic hadith compilations:

*“The Prophet (s.a.w.) was the most generous of all the people and he used to become more generous in Ramadan when Gabriel met him. Gabriel used to meet him every night during Ramadan to revise the Qur’an with him. Allah’s Messenger (s.a.w.) then used to be more generous than the fast wind”* ([Bukhari \(1997\)](#), 4/460).

The believers believe in the authenticity of the Prophet's statement on the highest significance of charity. Anas Ibn Malik reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

*"Indeed charity [sadaqah] extinguishes the Lord's anger and it protects against the evil death"* (Tirmidhi (2007), 2/117).

Further, Anas Ibn Malik reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was asked:

*"Which charity is best? He (s.a.w.) said: Charity in Ramadhan"* (Tirmidhi (2007), 2/117).

There are two categories of charity payments that are directly connected with the month of Ramadan: First, those who due to illness or journey wish not to fast are required to feed the hungry:

*"For a certain number of days; but whoever among you is sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days; and those who are not able to do it may effect a redemption by feeding a poor man; so whoever does good spontaneously it is better for him; and that you fast is better for you if you know"* (Qur'an, 2:184, Shakir (2009)).

During Ramadan, like other days and months, many people fall sick and embark upon the journey. Some might continue fasting, but the majority prefers to skip fast. Such people have three options: (1) they should fast in some other months the same skipped days, or (2) they should pay the ransom by feeding the hungry, or (3) they should pay the ransom and also fast in some other months. Second, all the believers are required to pay in charity a certain stipulated amount of money in cash or in-kind on the eve of Ramadan feast. It is incumbent upon the head of a family to give in charity on this occasion on behalf of all the family members. It is because this special Ramadan charity is to be paid by or on behalf of every single person, including the newborn baby. Abdullah Ibn Umar reported that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said:

*"Allah's Messenger (s.a.w.) enjoined the payment of one Sa' of dates or one Sa' of barley as Zakat-ul-Fitr on every Muslim slave or free, male or female, young or old, and he ordered that it be paid before the people went out to offer the Eid prayer. (One Sa'=3 Kilograms approx.)"* (Bukhari (1997), 2/338).

The wisdom behind this obligation is to help the unfortunate join others in the fasting feast. Therefore, Muslims can perform works of charity and generosity in Ramadan for the promotion of social welfare of less fortune people in the community.

### 3. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the Qur'an and Ramadan are deeply connected. For the sake of benefitting from the fasting month, the Qur'an is to focus on throughout Ramadan. One can then surely realize that Ramadan is the best opportunity for the humanity for reflection on the message of Allah Almighty, for introspection, intellectual exercise, devotion to Allah Almighty and invocation to the Creator, moral orientation, demonstrating love and compassion and financial succor to the needy. Thus, Ramadan serves as a venue for the training of Muslim *Ummah* to prepare them and make them ready for actions and deeds during the remaining eleven months of the year. Ramadan from this angle is the month of Allah's mercy on humanity in general and Muslim *Ummah* in particular. Muslims can utilize the wisdom of Ramadan in the best way possible for creating peace, harmony, and justice on the surface of the earth.

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