

RAMADAN: A SOUL-SEARCHING MONTH FOR THE ENTIRE MANKIND

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INTRODUCTION

Man is by nature forgetful: “*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). The reasons for this forgetfulness are multifarious. His engagements in his familial, social, political, financial, intellectual, educational, cultural, and devotional activities make him, most of the time, ignore deliberately or inadvertently his original position, vicegerent on the earth: “*Behold, thy lord said to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on earth*” (The Qur’an 2:30). The Revelations from Allah, the Creator, the Provider, the Controller of the universe have been guiding the entire mankind on what to do and what not to do in their daily life, representing their status as vicegerent: “*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). 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: “*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). Apparently, fasting is to abstain totally from food, drink, and physical intimacy with spouses from dawn to dusk throughout 29-30 prescribed days: “*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). 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. This article represents a humble reflection on some of the underlying objectives of the fasting in the month of Ramadan.

RAMADAN: THE MONTH OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Ramadan is meant to be devoted to achieving comprehensive growth of human individuals. For that matter, man needs to identify in a categorical manner the certain dimensions of the expected achievements in the month of Ramadan, keeping in view the very nature of the month: (1) Ramadan is the month of the Qur'an; (2) Ramadan is the month of introspection; (3) Ramadan is the month of intellectual exercise; (4) Ramadan is the month of invocation to Allah; (5) Ramadan is the month of moral orientation; (6) Ramadan is the month of devotion to the Creator; (7) Ramadan is the month of penitence; (8) Ramadan is the month of charity; (9) Ramadan is the month of love and compassion to the loved ones; and (10) Ramadan is the month of creativity.

1-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an informs that the month of Ramadan is the month of the revelation of the Qur'an: "*It was the month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was revealed as a guidance unto mankind and 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...*" (2:185). Here revelation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan means beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an in that month. The first verse in the Qur'anic chapter 97 (*al-Qadr*)—"Surely, We revealed it in the night of Power"—confirms this idea. The verse applies the pronoun "it" (*ho*) concerning the revelation. This pronoun refers to the first five verses in the preceding chapter 96 (*al-'Alaq*): "*Read in the name of thy lord Who created...*". The verse (2:185) describes the Qur'an as the Guidance unto mankind, as self-evident Proof of that Guidance, and as the Criterion for the right and the wrong. To say that Ramadan is the month of the Qur'an is to invite the 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 in the life.

In order to see these three dimensions (*huda li al-nas, bayyinat min al-huda, al-furqan*) of the Qur'an unfolded one is required to ponder over the Qur'an seriously: "*Do they not then ponder over the Qur'an? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found therein many a discrepancy*" (The Qur'an 4:82). 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 unto the mankind) does not denote the guidance in abstract manner, but it means clear guidance in all walks of life. The Qur'an contains all the required details about the human being, his origin, his nature, his attributes, his temperaments, his behavior, his needs, his problems, and solution to those problems. This is what the Qur'an says in a brief manner: “*Verily, We revealed to you a Book in which there is your description. Do you not then apply your reason?*” (21:10).

Bayyinat min al-Huda (self-evident proof of the Guidance) signifies that each and 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. speaks 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 man is incapable to identify the true from the false and the Qur'an which represents the Wisdom of Allah, the All-Wise is the only Standard wherewith man 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. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal has recorded a hadith in his Hadith compilation, *Musnad Ahmad* on the authority of Wathilah ibn al-Asqa' 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” (Nasir al-Din al-Albani: *al-Silsilah al-Sahihah*, 1575). 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.

2-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF INTROSPECTION

The Qur'an lays stress on the desirability of self-reflection: “*Do they not reflect within themselves?*” (30:8). This is undoubtedly a statement on the significance of introspection. Man, indeed, needs to search his inner self as to the questions he faces in his daily life: who he is; what his origin is; what his nature is; what he needs; why he confronts problems; and how he can solve

his problems. Psychologically, man in the state of fasting becomes more inclined to make a soul-searching of his entity. Consequently, he tries to find out answer to all his questions he faces, not by merely staring into the space, but by laying his hands on the available relevant sources, including the Qur'an. It is then the Qur'an which helps him get satisfactory answer to his questions. He realizes that the Qur'an conforms to his 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 mankind: *"And when thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam—from their loins—their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea! We do testify"* (7:172). Introspection leads to self-recognition which in turn climaxes in the 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): *"And when your Lord said to the angels: Surely, I am about to create a mortal of the essence of the black mud molded into a shape. So, when I fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, fell down before him in prostration"* (15:28-29). It is this element of divine spirit that elevates humanity above most of the creations: *"Verily, We have honored the children of Adam, and born them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favored them far above most of Our creation"* (The Qur'an 17:70).

The moment man realizes his prestigious status on the surface of the earth, he falls before Allah in humble prostration. The natural element (clay) in the human body urges him to cling to the earth, whereas his supernatural part (essence of the divine spirit), as a result of constant introspection in the month of Ramadan, lifts him towards the sublime way of life.

3-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE

Man is intellectual being. What makes him distinct from most of creation including animals is his intellectual power. In case man cripples his intellectuality, he gets flung into animal setting. The Qur'an describes such situation in a vivid manner: *"They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle—nay, more misguided: for they are heedless"* (7:179). As is well-known, the hearts, the eyes, and the ears together constitute human intellectual power. The three human faculties are either used or unused, with no possibility of their misuse. If the heart is applied to understand something, the result will be true understanding. If the eyes are used to see something, they will

never fail to visualize the original nature of the thing. If the ears are utilized to hear something, man, the owner of the ears will get the message exactly as it is conveyed. Otherwise, non-use of these faculties will render man worthless like animal.

The Qur'an around forty-seven (47) times inspires the people to apply their reason to understand the truth. The repeated phrases with this import are basically two. First, "*do you not then use your reason*" (*afa la ta'qilun*)? Second, "*do they not then use their reason*" (*afa la ya'qilun*)? Wonderfully, the Qur'an does not force mankind to follow its instructions blindly like robots. It rather considers the application of reason as an essential exercise to make his relationship with the Creator, Allah strong and sturdy. Strangely, some people suggest to not apply reason in religious matters. Who is then to be listened to, Allah or the people? It is to be remembered that the Qur'an invited the ignorant to apply their reason to the Revelation. Mythically, human reason or mind is deemed as source of misguidance. Scientifically, human mind never gets corrupted. The Creator has granted 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: "*The worst of creatures in the eyes of Allah are the deaf and dumb, who do not apply reason*" (8:22). Here the verse metaphorically refers to those who keep away from using their intellectual power as deaf and dumb. Another verse in the Qur'an describes the use of reason as one of the most desirable attributes of the believers: "*And they, when reminded of the revelations of their Lord, do not fall deaf and blind thereat*" (25:73).

4-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF INVOCATION TO ALLAH

In their daily life humans come across something painful and afflicting. In order to surmount these pains and afflictions they approach other humans around them. 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 highly interesting to learn that the Qur'an invites man to entreat Allah for his needs whatsoever in the same context which deals with the prescription of fasting in the month of Ramadan. The verses 2:183-187 concern some fundamental issues related to fasting; and the verse 2:186 reads: "*When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close: I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Me*". 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, invitation to man to invoke Allah for help (2:186) is intrinsic part of the entire system of fasting, which makes the fasting person inclined to get connected with Allah. This deep link between the fasting and the invocation to Allah could incredibly be grasped in the light of a saying of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.): “Allah said: Every deed of the son of Adam is for him except the fasting, it is exclusively for Me and I reserve special reward for it” (Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, 1761; Muslim, *Sahih*, 1946). If the fasting has extraordinary elevated status in the heaven, the invocation during fasting must hold a special consideration over there. The above hadith makes it clear that man in the state of fasting is close to Allah. It is then believable that his prayer to Allah will be granted. It is reported on the authority of Salman al-Farsi that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “Allah is indeed most modest and most merciful. When someone raises his hands towards Him, He feels bashful to reject him emptyhanded” (Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 3556; Abu Da’ud, *Sunan*, 1488). It is reported on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “the prayer of three people are not rejected, the just ruler, the fasting person, and the oppressed” (Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 2525).

5-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF MORAL ORIENTATION

The beautiful blend of natural (clay) and supernatural (divine spirit) elements in human being gives a new form, that is, moral being. As a moral being man stands responsible for all his deeds, familial, social, political, economic, intellectual, educational, and devotional. He must choose either of the two options, the desirable or the undesirable. The Qur’an vividly affirms this moral nature of man: “*And He imbued human soul with moral failings as well as righteousness*” (91:8). As mentioned earlier (2:183), the very objective of the fasting is to achieve righteousness (*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 verses 17:31-37 constitute moral exhortations for man:

“And do not kill your children out of fear of poverty...and go not nigh to fornication...and do not kill anyone 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...”

Total abstinence from infanticide, illicit sex, homicide, dishonest appropriation, commercial honesty, unconfirmed information, and arrogance is *taqwa*, the very wisdom of fasting.

It is reported on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “The fasting is shield, so the one who fasts must abstain from indecent deeds and ignorance; if someone intends to fight him or revile him, he should say twice: I am fasting, I am fasting” (Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, 1894; Muslim, *Sahih*, 1151). It is also reported on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: “One who does not abstain from speaking lies and acting upon lies, his abstaining from food and drink are worthless to Allah” (Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, 1804).

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 30 days continuous attempts to internalize high moral values in life bring about revolutionary changes in man.

6-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF DEVOTION TO THE CREATOR

Fish lives, survives, and breathes in water. It dies outside water. Man may be likened to fish in and out of water. Man’s real identity remains in place so long as he remains connected with his Creator, Allah the Almighty, and he loses his self after having disconnected with his Creator. It is to be kept in mind that fish and water are not interdependent on each other. Fish does depend on water, but water does not need fish for its survival. Similarly, man needs close connection with his Creator, but the Creator does not need man for His Entity. Muhammad Asad, 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 deep and reliable cognizance of Allah, which prevents man from committing sin. It is therefore consciousness of God whereby man establishes an enviable connection with Allah. The development of *taqwa* is essentially to create mechanism of sensible devotion to Allah.

As has been seen earlier, the Qur’anic verse (2:183) mentions *taqwa* as the sole objective of fasting in the month of Ramadan. In the verse (2:185) the practical manifestation of *taqwa* has been elucidated: “...Allah wills 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”. The underlined portions of the verse (you extol Allah and you

render thanks to Him) refer to the demonstrative method of *taqwa*. Extolling Allah and thanking Him for His bounties granted to man signify human sincerity of commitment to Allah. This is exactly what we call devotion to Allah. This devotion is to be further strengthened by offering consistently prescribed daily prayers. The Qur'an says: "*Be guardians of your prayers, and of the midmost prayer, and stand up with devotion to Allah*" (2:238). The last part of the verse (devotion to Allah) indeed avers to the result of regular and punctual observation of prayers. The original Arabic word for devotion is *qunut*, which means unconditional commitment to Allah. In the month of Ramadan, the observers of fast pay special attention to *solah*. This endeavor on the part of the believers is highly commendable as it provides opportunity for them to devote themselves to Allah.

7-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF PENITENCE

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 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 sincere pledge to not 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 (3) 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:

- 1) "*And most surely I am most Forgiving to whoever repents, and believes, and does good deeds, then continues to follow the right direction*" (20:82).
- 2) "*And turn to Allah all of you, O believers! So that you may achieve blissful life*" (24:31).
- 3) "*O you who believe! Turn to Allah most sincerely. Your Lord might then erase from you your evil-deeds and cause you to enter Gardens...*" (66:8).

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, but 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 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 Hurayrah: “It is horrifying that a person hears my (the Prophet’s) name and does not utter the wording of Allah’s blessings on me (the Prophet); it is also shocking that a person witnesses Ramadan until the end, but does not deserve Allah’s forgiveness; and it is terrifying that a person stays with both of his parents or only one of them yet fails to get entry into the paradise” (Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 3545).

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: “*I (Noah) said: Seek forgiveness of your Lord, surely He is the most Forgiving: He will send down upon you cloud pouring down rain in abundance: and He will help you with wealth and children, and make for you gardens, and make for you rivers*” (71:10-12). 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.

8-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF CHARITY

Man is physical being too. For its strength and survival his physique needs life resources. Allah, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider has deposited these life-resources in abundance. Man is required to explore, exploit, and utilize them for the maintenance of his physical dimension. Since time immemorial the entire humanity has been engaged in obtaining food, drink, cloths, and shelter. In order to ensure procurement of life resources humanity has managed to develop innumerable ways and methods. Consequently, there are available manufacturing concerns, factories, businesses, shops, employment opportunities in different sectors, private and public. Yet,

due to differences in mental and physical abilities of men, parity in the distribution of life-resources among all human being 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, from family to family, from community to community, and even from 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 totally 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 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 significance of daily prayers, it mentions that of charity and poor-due. Some such verses will bring the idea home:

- 1) *“And be constant in prayer and pay the poor-due and bow down with those who bow down” (2:43).*
- 2) *“And be constant in prayer and pay the poor due and whatever good you send forward for yourselves you shall find it with Allah. Surely, Allah sees what you do” (2:110).*
- 3) *“Those who, should We establish them in the land, will be constant in prayer and pay the poor-due and enjoin good and forbid evil. And Allah's is the sequel of events” (22:41).*

These verses inspire believers to spend on the poor and the needy round the year. But they know well 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. ‘Abd Allah 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 the people particularly in Ramadan he would demonstrate much more generosity to the best of his capacity. In every night of Ramadan Archangel Gabriel would visit the Prophet (s.a.w.) and listen to him read the Qur’an. Probably because of that the Prophet (s.a.w.) would become more aggressive in spending wealth in the path of Allah than the speed of the tempest” (Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, 3048; Muslim, *Sahih*, 2308).

The believers believe in the authenticity of the Prophet's statement on the highest significance of charity. It has been reported on the authority of Ans ibn Malik the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Charity (*sadaqah*) extinguishes the anger of the Lord and protects from the tragic death" (Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, 664).

Two categories of charity payment 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: "*Fast is prescribed for a certain number of days. But whoever of you is ill or on a journey shall fast on other occasions the same number of days. For those who can afford it, there is a ransom: feeding some indigent person. And whoever does good more than he is bound to do does good unto himself thereby, and it is better for you to fast, if you know it*" (2:184). During Ramadan, like other days and months, many people fall sick and embark upon journey. Some might continue fasting, but majority prefer 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 ransom by feeding the hungry, or (3) they should pay ransom and also fast in some other months.

Second, all the believers are required to pay in charity 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. It is reported on the authority of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar that the Prophet (s.a.w.) made Ramadan feast charity payment (*zakat al-fitr*) obligatory on every Muslim noble, slave, male, female, young and old and advised that this charity be given before proceeding for the prayer of Eid al-Fitr" (Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, 1432). The wisdom behind this obligation is to help the unfortunate join others in the fasting feast.

9-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF LOVE AND COMPASSION

The humans constitute family, society, groups, organizations, and nations. The main constituents that bind the members of these constituted entities respectively are love and compassion. Wife and husband, 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 the stronger the bond among them. The dimmer the love and compassion the weaker the relationship. Allah has deposited these two instincts, love and compassion in the very

nature of humanity. The Qur'an says: "*And among His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find solace in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for those who reflect*" (30:21).

It is the love and compassion between the wife and husband which extend to the 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 relationship. It may here be questioned as to why then the people also fight with each other. There is no denying the fact that the 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 order to make the positive attitudes, love and compassion stronger, Ramadan is the ideal month for that. The most important relationship based on love and compassion is that of wife and husband. 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: "*sexual intercourse with your wives during the fast night has been made lawful for you; they are cover for you and you are cover for them; Allah knew that you acted hesitatingly in your souls, so He has turned to you favorably and forgiven you; so now share bed with them and seek what Allah has destined for you...*" (2:187). This verse refers to practical demonstration of love and compassion between wife and husband. It is not to be forgotten that sexual relationship between wife and husband is the main adhesive element responsible for enhancing love and compassion between them. Had the sex even at night in Ramadan been forbidden the conjugal link between wife and husband 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 spiritually negative impact on the wife and husband, 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 legalization of sex in fast nights. Wife and husband particularly the young ones or the newly married always look for the opportunity to enjoy sex. So, during Ramadan, they can do so at nights. One meaning of the above phrase that wife and husband are cover for each other is that they should both remain inclined and ready to satisfy each other's valid desire, otherwise they may resort to some other ways that will surely be invalid and unlawful. Undoubtedly, Allah allowed the married couple to enjoy sex at fast nights because He Himself

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.

10-RAMADAN IS THE MONTH OF CREATIVITY

Curiosity is embedded in human nature. Man wants to know what and why about everything. For that matter, he 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 one and the same order (16:78; 17:36; 23:78; 32:9; 46:26; 67:23). Only two of them are quoted here in full:

- 1) *“And follow not that about which you have no knowledge. Surely, the hearing, the seeing, and the heart, all of these shall be questioned about that”* (17:36).
- 2) *“He it is Who created you and made for you the power of hearing (al-sam'), the power of seeing (al-absar), and the power of understanding (al-af'idah) yet you are seldom grateful”* (67:23).

These three organs, faculties or acts 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 developing 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 the knowledge development. It needs to undergo the second and the third stages, particularly the second one. The Qur'an is the repository of wisdom which 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 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) *“We have sent down the Reminder to you to enable you to make clear to mankind what has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect (yatafakkarun) upon it” (16:44)*
- 2) *“Do they not then ponder(yatadabbarun) over the Qur'an? Or have they locked their hearts out?” (47:24).*

These two verses clearly indicate to the relationship of humanity with the Qur'an. Obviously, the Qur'an was revealed for the mankind to read it, to ponder it, to believe in its authenticity, to delve into it's 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 in-depth understanding of the Qur'an which was revealed in the month of Ramadan.

CONCLUSION

The Qur'an and Ramadan are deeply connected with each other. For the sake of benefitting from the fasting month, the Qur'an is to be 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, for introspection, for intellectual exercise, for invocation to the Creator, for devotion to Him, for moral orientation, for financial succor to the needy, and for demonstrating love and compassion. Thus, Ramadan serves as a venue for training of humans to make them ready to act for the remaining eleven months of the year. Ramadan from this angle is the month of Allah's mercy on the humanity. Utilizing the wisdom of Ramadan in the best way possible is to create peace and justice on the surface of the earth.