

Philosophy of Fasting



**Written by
Farid Ahmed**

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Chapter one: What is Fasting?	5
Definition of Fasting.	5
3 main aspects in Islamic fasting.	5
Fasting is a pillar of Islam.....	8
Fasting on believers.....	9
Compulsory Fasting	11
Fasting was prescribed before.....	13
Stages for compulsion in fasting.....	14
Unique Islamic Fasting.....	16
Special aspects in Islamic Fasting.	18
Misunderstanding about fasting:	19
Fasting to be righteous.....	21
Righteousness from fasting.	23
Fasting is a special worship.	25
Fasting for obedience to Allah.....	27
Fasting on able or disabled Muslims.	30
Reasons for collective fasting	32
Chapter Two: Purpose of Fasting	34
Importance to know the purpose:.....	34
How many of us ask this question?	35
Purpose of fasting.....	36
Understanding Taqwa	38
Benefits of Taqwa.....	41
Self-control through fear of Allah:.....	44
How does Fasting helps to learn self-control?	47
Self-control for noble character	48
Self-assessment on fasting's purpose	52
6 pillars of self-control in fasting.....	55
Chapter Three: Is fasting cruelty or mercy?	59
Is it a correct question?	59

Is Allah cruel or merciful?	61
Every command of Allah is mercy:	63
Why is fasting in Ramadan a mercy from Allah?	64
Fasting is like a business with Merciful Allah.	66
What do we give up with fasting?	67
Some spiritual gains in fasting:	69
Chapter Four: Fasting is a divine prescription.	73
Fasting as a divine prescription:	73
Divine prescription with divine arrangements:	74
Divine prescription to solve world problems:	76
Fasting as remedy to unhappiness:	78
Fasting for a better world.....	80
Divine prescription for hope.....	82
Why fasting message should be shared?	84
Chapter Five: Holy Month of Ramadan	87
Month of Ramadan in the Quran:	87
Why Ramadan month is so honourable?	88
Month of Ramadan and Holy Books:.....	89
Special welcome to the month of Ramadan:	91
Night of honour in the Month of Ramadan:.....	92
Month of kindness:.....	93
Month of unity:.....	95
Month of Allah’s special Mercy:	97
Month of dua (Invocation):	99
Special worships in the Month of Ramadan:.....	101
Month of Quran.....	104
Month of protection:.....	105
Month of training righteous people:	107
Best month for I’teqaf:	109
Chapter Six: Some basic rules in fasting	112
Who do not need to fast?.....	112
What breaks the fast?	113
What does not break the fast?	114
Qada, Kaffara and Fidya.	116

Rules in manner.....	117
Rules around Moon Sighting:	120
Few rules around fasting:	122
Rules around Iftar:.....	123
Rules about Sahur:.....	123
Rules of fasting during sickness & travelling:	125
Rules of fasting in doubtful day?	126
Rules of fasting in Eid day:.....	126
Rules for I'teqaf:	127
Rules for Sadaqatul Fitr:	127
Rules for follow up voluntary fasting after Ramadan Month:.....	128
Chapter seven: EID UL FITR	131
What is Eid UL FITR?	131
Happiness in Eid:	133
Who gets the best happiness in Eid?.....	135
Why Eid is the best celebration?	137
Inspiration from the Eid.....	138
Holy prophet's (PBUH) practice on Eid day:	140
Conclusion:	141

Introduction

Why did Allah prescribe hunger and thirst for HIS beloved servants during the Month of Ramadan? We can't answer this question wisely without understanding the wisdom behind it. This book "Philosophy of Fasting - in the month of Ramadan" is to increase understanding around the divine prescription of fasting.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is a prescription from Allah, the All-Wise GOD. Allah's prescription is not like a normal prescription from a doctor. It comes with specialties that is beyond human knowledge. Such as:

One: What is the prescription for? Allah has given humans knowledge to know the immediate health issues and the medicines from HIS creations on the earth. But Allah prescribes for spiritual and moral health to guide people to happiness, peace, success in their life test, and for everlasting happiness in the next life.

Two: How much knowledge does the prescriber have? Allah gave little knowledge to the humans, and with little knowledge they are never perfect, and they fit in the proverb, "To err is human." But Allah's knowledge is complete. HE knows the accurate diagnosis in human spiritual and moral sickness as a creator of them. HE also knows what exactly they need for healing.

Three: How much cost is involved? Humans are dependent on Allah's blessings because they are created and provided by Allah. That's why they need to charge for their survival. Allah is independent. HE does not need any fee, and HIS gift of prescription and medicine are free. HE prescribed fasting to make moral people, yet HE did not set any charge on HIS patients.

Four: What percentage of mishap? Human prescription can often contribute side effects. Human treatments are never bulletproof from harm because of the limitations in them. But Allah's prescription is totally free from the mishap or side effects. HIS prescription is like a one-way street. It means, it only benefits without harm.

Five: How much chance to get cure? No human prescriber can be sure about the outcome. They can try their best. But Allah's prescription for self-control from fasting never fails if anyone is sincerely willing to take it.

Humans are Allah's super creation. In them, Allah placed good and bad cravings with will power to choose, for testing them. Then, has given them guidance, and practical training courses to master the ability to control their bad cravings and desires to establish the good desires, habits, and actions to become super beings. Super being needs something super to raise themselves to high honourable status, and for that HE has given the spiritual power in humans. If they follow Allah's prescription to reach above the lowly animal instinct, then they can reach to the angelic state. Fasting is HIS divine prescription for reaching the high levels in spirituality and in morality.

This book is an effort to understand Allah's prescription for the believers who will appreciate it. When we know something better, we love it more, see the importance of it more, know how beneficial it is for us, and we practice it with high confidence and strong faith. Fasting in the Ramadan month is a faith-based prescription from Allah, and the philosophical discussion around it is to strengthen our Imaan, to answer our questions, and to answer other's questions. My aims are all of them, but my knowledge is limited. In my efforts, I have tried my best, and I seek Allah's forgiveness for my shortcomings. I pray that someone more knowledgeable than me will notice this topic and will take it to higher level.

To the wise readers, I need your dua and advice. May Allah accept my effort, Ameen! My dua and thanks to those brothers and sisters who helped to complete this book and for those who will be helping sharing this books with others. May Allah grant high rewards for all.

Farid Ahmed, MNZM

Quran Class teacher, Masjid An-Nur | Homeopathic Health Consultant
Christchurch, New Zealand. | 30th September 2024

Chapter one: What is Fasting?

Definition of Fasting.

The Arabic word for fasting is “Saum” which means “To stay away from” or “To abstain from”.

Fasting is a very common practice in every society and in every religion. But Islamic fasting is very different from just, “Staying away from food or drinks.” Then, what is the definition for Islamic fasting? The definition is:

“Abstaining from food, drink and sex, from dawn to sunset, to obey the command of Allah is called Saum (Fasting).”

In the above definition, there are three special aspects. They separate Islamic fasting from other usual fasting. They are:

- **Intention of fasting.** The intention for Islamic fasting is unique. It is to please Allah and for Allah only. It specifies the fasting as an action to obey Allah’s command. When can one intend to please Allah only? A person can intend that when he or she has Faith in Allah fully and submits to the Will of Allah fully. The deeper that faith in Allah is, the sincerest intention in the fasting is. The specific intention to obey Allah separates one heart and soul from following the demands of other forces such as own desires, cravings, selfishness, greed, name, fame, family or social pressure etc. Intention is what is made up in the minds without doubt, resolutions, or confusion. It derives from a determined mind that can control the emotion and physical aspects. Determination to be good is one of the keys to the success, and fasting begins with determined intention towards the path of success in both lives.
- **Timing for fasting** is the second important part in the fasting. Islamic fasting is unique here because it does not give room to consult and decide when to fast and when not to. The timing also comes from the prescriber of it. Allah All-Wise has fixed the month for it which is Ramadan Month. Then HE fixed the time when it must start and when it must finish. The starting time is the dawn, and the finishing time is at sunset. Then, Allah made the night for the eating, drinking and intimacy with spouses. That fixity is best for all the believers to prepare and follow everything unitedly, and to avoid room for innovations, chaos, and divisions. The wonderful aspect in fasting in the month of Ramadan is that Allah made it a compulsion for all the Muslims in the world to practice unity in worship for Allah in the same month at the same method of timing etc.
- **What to avoid in fasting** is the third important aspect in Islamic Fasting. The three main areas of avoidance are food, drink, and sex. But the avoidance is not limited to these three. These are the doors to enter to the avoidance room to control many other things such as temptation control, greed control, bad desires control, wrong intentions control, negative thoughts control etc. The course of action behind the avoidance is to control one’s ins and outs, feelings and actions from negative to the positives for the fear of Allah’s punishment. From that self-control a believer learns to avoid things that Allah has forbidden for them for reaching the happiest destination in the next life.

3 main aspects in Islamic fasting.

Humans have some inner powers that can be beneficial or very destructive. For example, the fire in the fire stove. It can burn the cook or can burn the house if not kept under control. So, what do we do with fire stove? We place guards around it to take the benefit part and to save us from the harmful part. Basically, we control the fire with right gears. In humans, we need drink. But there is healthy drink, and there is unhealthy drink. For example, pure water can be good for our liver, but alcohol can damage our liver. So, for our safety, and for good health, we control our cravings to stay safe.

Our inner powers need guidance, otherwise they can act like unguided cars. If the driver is not in control, then the out-of-control car can take over causing devastation. That's why the car has gears, brakes and steering for control. Similarly, within humans there are powerful desires and cravings. There are wants without end. For example, the craving for food. For best health one must not eat excessively, nor eat less than what is required. So, in eating there must be balance, control, and healthy guidelines. Humans need control in their central system and that is their mind.

The human mind is like a city, and the city has entrances in few ways. To save the city from harm, the city authority keeps the entrance under control, and they prevent any sort of harm from getting through these pathways. Human mind can be corrupted if its pathways are unsafe, unguarded, and under control. The three main pathways for the human mind are food, drink, and sexuality. Islamic fasting begins the control from these three. The aim is, through these three main aspects is to establish full control in the mind and emotion, to control everything else in a person towards good, and to be away from bad.

Therefore, one must not think that in Islamic fasting, the requirements are only abstain from food, drink, and sex, and that is all. No, the truth is, that is only the beginning to complete control. Once you control an entrance of a city, it does not mean you have controlled the entire city. You have only just begun your mission to enter to the main city through the pathway. If someone does not understand this fact, then cannot understand the total philosophy of Islamic fasting.

Who can enter through these three pathways into human minds? It is human's unseen enemy Satan. Satan works quietly through our desires, cravings, greed, selfishness, and anger etc. Satan secretly inspires into human hearts to love their own out-of-control desires in the name of fun, joy, happiness, name, fame and power. His aim is to make humans slaves of their desires by forgetting their higher aspirations, their high honour and high purpose of their living. He tries to make human slaves of their lowly cravings to go lowest of the low. For example, if a human becomes a slave of his sexual temptation, then he can go too low to even kill himself (Suicide) or to kill another for anger, retribution, or jealousy.

Now, let us remember, the three main aspects in fasting are three main pathways to reach our minds, or to strengthen our minds to control the pathways with full authority. The main battle becomes whether the mind should be the boss, or the cravings and desires to be the boss. Fasting is all about making the mind the true powerful boss, and to make other pathways under the control of minds. When mind surrenders to Almighty GOD, controls everything according to the guidance of Almighty GOD Allah, then food, drink, or sex or all other actions in life runs under the control of Allah because the mind has surrendered to Allah completely. We shall discuss more on this issue later. Here, let us go through the three main aspects that Islamic fasting has prescribed to work on to start with the self-control program.

- **Food** - Misguidance, moral sickness, bad character, and inhumanity can come through the pathway called 'food cravings. Food is a necessity for humans, and within moderation it is beneficial. But too much craving for food makes people greedy, selfish, and destructive. The same way too little of food can turn people towards crime, stealing, robbing, killing, and becoming corrupt. For food people are working very hard in life. Some are happy with a little food, but most people are not happy with little. They want more and more food. They crave for more expensive food, and for that many people are practicing corruption in this earth. They are forcing some other people into starvation by craving for them more and more. In this world poverty is a man-made problem because of out of control in food craving.

For more food some people are taking bribes causing socio-economic problems, or taking complex interest to disadvantage so many people, or robbing to take away people's belonging from hard work and pushing so many people into mental-emotional and physical sufferings. For food some people are killing other people and so on. On the other hand, some people are begging, stealing for food, or taking slavery of wrongdoers to get food on the table for their families. Some greedy business people

are doing corruption in their food or food product businesses to be rich overnight. Food is a basic need for every human, and any exploitation about it brings unfairness, imbalance, corruption, fighting, and crimes in humans.

Because food is a need for every human and unless each human practices self-control to be fair to his own soul and to be fair for other souls, then it becomes a problem. Allah merciful in HIS fasting prescription has kept food as a main aspect to work on, so that Muslims can attain self-control regarding earning or consuming halal food fairly without causing any harm to himself and to others.

- **Drink** - Drink is another basic human need, and the creator Allah knows that very well. If people take proper drink, it is better for them and better for the entire society. But human desire, if it is not in control with some guidelines, then desires can be out of control, and it can push people to be misguided in what to drink and what not to. For example, if a believer has no guidelines about the boundary of what to drink and what not to, can drink anything, and can cause harm in himself and to others. Family violence and alcoholism has connection, and Islam guides a believer to avoid it patiently. Allah made healthy drinks Halal (allowed) for them, and unhealthy drinks Haram (prohibited) for them. On top of the boundary, Allah prescribed Fasting on them to practice self-control, so that they can avoid even Halal food and drink during fasting due to their self-control for their best.

Why did Allah make some food and drink Haram (Not allowed)? The brief answer is, Allah knows with HIS All-Knowledge that some food and drinks are harmful for our spiritual health in this life and in next life. So, for the best of HIS servants, Allah has prohibited some food and drinks. Satan uses the pathway of drinking desires to misguide people towards unhealthy drinking habits to make the person committing wrong. Unhealthy drinks damage their health, can excite them to be violent, can remove the reasoning ability for moral choices, and losing their honourable status with immoral activities. Unhealthy drinking contributes to violence, abusing human rights or family rights, to depression and suicide, or causing accidents on the road through drink-driving, and cost the economy a lot through accidents, rehabilitations, loss of working hours, and cost of hospitalisations and so on.

Drinking is an essential need for humans. Without it they cannot be alive. What do we do with our essential things? We protect them from damage, from contamination, from loss and from being misused. Why do we take extra care on our essential things? We do it because if our essential things are corrupted then, we will be corrupted with harms. Allah's prescription of fasting aims to protect and nourish the essential pathway like the cravings for food and drink as a basic safety exercise for our own benefits. Because if our essential cravings are imbalanced and out-of-control without Allah's guidance, then we cannot achieve the total success in our purpose of life for which Allah has created us for. Eating and drinking has a holistic purpose that Allah knows best as a creator and the Lord, and that is why, training self-control for the greater good is the fasting in the month of Ramadan.

- **Sexuality** - This is another essential pathway in humans for pleasure and future generations. Allah created the first man Adam, then his wife from him, and then from them now countless men and women in this world. That happened through the sexuality. This craving is beneficial if it is used in a pure way, but if it exceeds the moral boundary, then it can be the cause of numerous problems in this world. With proper control, human can control their lust, but without control, they may become the slaves of lust, and excessive lust can damage them and can damage others.

For out-of-control lust many people are losing their happiness, breaking their happy homes, spouses are cheating one another, couples are spending and fighting with court cases, children are suffering for their parent's out of control sexual behaviours, and so many females are being raped. Jealousy, and envy accompanied with lust is becoming human bombs to destroy one another, or even to kill the one once he or she loved very much. Anger and rage along with wrong sexuality can become

bigger bombs to destroy the hearts. This passion can be a killer if it has lost control. Allah wants believers to have that control to turn their essential sexuality into happiness, comfort, and peace only. Fasting prescription is to check the sex pathway to stop enemies entering through the sex pathway.

For out-of-control lust, some people have made women as their “Things for enjoyment” ignoring the respect that women deserve. Immorality with sex has turned many people as sex slaves, and so other people to exploit women’s rights. Greed pushed many people to make fortune through illegal sex, women trafficking by force, forcing poor girls into sex business, demeaning respect for women by using them as tool for money making etc. Sex should be for honourable relationships, for true love and happy family to supply happy citizens for building happy societies. Sex needs moral control to turn it into beneficial not harmful.

Fasting in Islam targets food, drink, and sex with great wisdom. For a safe city the main gates need full control. Or if you want to repair the leaky home, at first you must fix the leaks before you start repairing. Otherwise, you will try to repair the house, but continuous leaking will ruin your repairing. The moral character in human is like a house, and food-drink-sex can disrupt the stability of the house if they are not on check. Once, believers can control their three weak pathways through Taqwa (Self-control), then the rest of the bad desires and cravings in their day-to-day life can be controlled easily.

Fasting is a pillar of Islam.

Imagine a strong house. To stand strongly a house requires some main pillars. So that the rest of the parts of the house can be built safely. The pillars are not the total house. You need to put a roof, walls, windows, doors, and all other internal and external materials to make a house complete. Similarly, Islam as a house has 5 pillars and if those 5 pillars are strong, then the rest of the house is strong. The purpose of pillars is to give a stable foundation for the rest of parts of the house to lean on the pillars safely. It is worth noting that, if anyone thinks that practicing 5 pillars in Islam is everything about Islam, then that is wrong. Islam is a code of life consisting of every aspect in this life, but if anyone can practice 5 pillars properly, then that person will have the habit of following the rest of the Islamic codes for a sinless righteous life.

If we take a closer look about the 5 pillars, we can see how much time 5 pillars occupy a Muslim’s life. It is very little actually. Whereas Allah wants Muslims to obey Allah all the time. Look! One pillar is declaration of faith. How long does it take for one to declare? May be 2 minutes! Another pillar is 5 times Salah daily. How long does it take? May be an hour daily? But what about worshipping Allah for the rest of the day and night? Everything else Muslims do in a day must be according to the obedience of Allah and those things are not included in 5 pillars. Then another pillar is giving charity (Zakat). But is it compulsory on every Muslim? No! Only rich Muslims must pay Zakah. So, this pillar is also not part of daily life for many Muslims. Then fasting in the month of Ramadan is another pillar. Is it for daily? No! It comes only once a year. Then what about the Hajj being another pillar? Is it for daily? Not at all. It is compulsory on rich Muslims who can afford the journey once in life only.

From a closer look, we find that 5 pillars are not designed to be practiced daily in 24 hours. The same way, fasting does not cover every day, yet it is a main pillar. It raises the question, “If fasting does not cover every second in 24 hours, then what does it do to train believers to practice righteousness 24 hours daily? The answer is, Fasting is one of the main pillars, and it trains the believer for a month to be aware about Allah’s presence in every second, and to avoid Allah’s punishment. Suppose if I fast 14 hours a day, that 14 hours is a long time to be aware that Allah is watching me if I eat secretly. This is an acute feeling, an inner awareness, and an inner training in the mind and soul. It is a very powerful feeling because I chose it to rear in me for 14 hours, and day after day, that inner feeling becomes deeper and deeper-rooted inside of me. No one can see it inside me, and no one can take it away from me either. It stays inside me permanently.

Fasting trains me to plant the seed of “Allah is watching me, and I must not disobey HIM to avoid punishment.” When my mind accepts that seed, nourish it, then it becomes a strong tree inside me, and that tree reminds me even after the Fasting month that Allah is watching me in every second, and to avoid HIS Punishment I must avoid crimes, and I must control my desires and cravings from actions that disobey Allah’s guidance.

As I said, each pillar of Islam is important to put the mind, heart, and soul of a believer into the right track. Why right track is so important? For example, the train runs on the track, or the bus runs on the road. A train cannot run on the road because it is not the right track for it to run, and a bus cannot run on the train track because it is not suitable for it to run on. In our life journey, we also need not just the track or road but the right track or the road to reach to our destination safely. Islamic five pillars are to put the minds into the right track or road to arrive in the Paradise in the next life. It means, minds will lead the cravings that want to go here and there if it can. If the mind is weak, and defeated by the cravings, then the cravings become the boss and the mind is a slave. Then life turns to the wrong track or road. Instead of highway, the person may go to the wrong way. Fasting is a powerful inner training to empower the mind with wisdom, and guidance from All-Wise Allah WHO loves HIS servants to succeed.

With inner training and rightly guided strong mind, a believer can always decide to do the good deeds and to avoid the bad deeds. With that training, a criminal finds enough power to take U-turn in life. Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born into a society where there was no moral boundary. It was so bad that fathers used to bury their own daughters alive, or killing was their normal practice. He did not come with police, soldiers, or prisons to correct these people. Their inner training through Islamic Faith, 5 times prayers, charity, fasting, and hajj pillars empowered them to change themselves from within without any external pressure of punishment. Fasting training produced good people, righteous people, and righteous society.

Let me finish this with a Hadis that says that fasting in Ramadan month is a pillar of Islam. Abdullah ibn Omar (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ، وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ، وَالْحَجَّ، وَصَوْمَ رَمَضَانَ "

“Islam is standing on 5 pillars. Declaring that there are no other gods but Allah and Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is Allah’s servant and Messenger, Establishing Salah, giving charity, performing Hajj, and fasting in the month of Ramadan.” [Muttafaquun A’laih]

Fasting on believers

In the Holy Quran sometimes Allah addressed to the mankind, other times to those who refused to believe in Allah, or to the fake believers, or to the true believers. After every call from Allah, there is advice of what is best for them or what is bad for them. For example, in a verse Allah calls, “O Mankind [Al-Quran 4.1], and in another one Allah calls, “O you who believe! [Al-Quran 2:208].” For the fasting call, Allah made it very clear that it was specifically for the believers. In the Holy Quran Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you: as it was prescribed to those before you that you may (learn) self-control.” [Al-Quran 2:183]

From the above verse, it is evident that Allah did not make fasting a compulsion to mankind, or to one culture, or to one race, or to one nationality. We need to understand this a little better. I shall highlight a few points here for our reminder:

- **Allah has chosen appropriate candidates:** Any university calls students for admission with right qualifications. A primary school student cannot enter to the university and cannot handle the study expectations. If the university takes anyone as student, then it will be a disaster for the university and for the student. That's why, they go through a robust selection process to choose the right candidate for the right course. After the proper selection process, the right candidates get admission. Fasting for Allah is a divine course, and for it, Allah selects the right candidates, and those candidates are those who had taken admission, or who had submitted themselves to the loyalty to Allah. Who are they? They are the believers who accepted the faith in Allah and admitted themselves fully to the obedience to Allah. That is one of the reasons for which Allah has prescribed Fasting in the Ramadan month on those who believe.
- **Allah has chosen those who are willing:** Allah called the mankind in the holy Quran to worship HIM alone. For example, HIS call is,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you people! Worship your Guardian-Lord, WHO created you, and those who came before you, that you might have the chance to learn righteousness.” [Al-Quran 2:21]

It is as if Allah calls humans to enter to HIS Divine University. HE left that notice open and some people decided that they will join the course. Now, Allah offered something for them, and they accepted that offer, and they showed their willingness strongly. In response to Allah's call, they said:

وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

“We hear, and we obey: (We Seek) YOUR forgiveness, our Lord (Allah), and to YOU is the end of all journeys.” [Al-Quran 2:285]

Who are these responders? They are called believers, and Allah has prescribed fasting in the Ramadan month for them because they have willingly chosen Allah as their Lord and are willing to enter the course that Allah has prescribed for them. Here, Allah and HIS servants are happy. Allah is happy as the prescriber, and the servant is happy as the believer. That happiness, willingness, and devotion makes the believers the perfect candidates for the divine fasting course.

- **High quality students for higher course:** A primary school student will find to follow a university course he is not yet ready for it. No university would impose a high engineering course on a primary school student. For that reason, every school assesses the ability of a student before putting into any course. Fasting from Allah is a high course with high ambition and high purpose. If someone does not believe in it, and doesn't know why it is important, then he will not enjoy it, or will feel burden with it. He will suffer from inner questions like, why me, why should I do it, and I don't believe in it. A believer who has surrendered to Allah's Will with knowledge and understanding has achieved high level in spiritual education, and he fits to the high demand fasting course that has highest aim, and that aim is to become a person with best moral character. Fasting in Ramadan month is a divine prescription to cure moral sickness.
- **Allah has chosen the fairness:** Allah is All-Fair. How can HE force a hard course on someone who does not believe in it? Or who does not know well about it? Or who doesn't want it? Or who doesn't know the importance of it? Allah has created humans, then has given them freedom of choice for test, and then has given them guidance, and then given the courses for those who want to take the courses dearly for their benefit. If Allah has prescribed fasting course on everyone, some humans

may have complained about fairness. But besides the human feeling, as a creator HE knows what is fair, and HE does things with fairness. That's why, fasting for believers is a fairness of Allah.

- **Allah wants to make good example for other's guidance:** Through fasting course, Allah wants to guide the believers to attain righteousness, peace, and happiness in both lives. So, they will become good examples for others to follow. That's why, in every age, Allah sent role models, Allah's Messengers, to follow the divine courses of Allah for righteousness to show other people that they should come to that path as well. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (PBUH) have been the torch bearer of peace through best moral character, and believers in all ages followed them to be righteous and successful too. After the Messengers, the true believers must carry that torch, and for the inspiration and ability to practice righteousness, they need Fasting course.

Compulsory Fasting

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is prescribed on Believers, but we need to understand that it is compulsory on every believer to fast. There are two types of fasting in Islam. One type is voluntary fasting. It means if a believer fast voluntary basis will receive rewards from Allah, but does not fast, there is no punishment. The example is voluntary 6 days fasting in the month of Shawal. The other type of fasting is compulsory fasting. It means that one must fast if it is a compulsion on him or her, and failing to fast is a grievous sin. In this book, we want to look at who among believers must fast in the Ramadan month.

What is Allah's message around compulsory fasting? Allah has answered this question before anyone has even asked. If we look at a verse in the Holy Quran, the answer will be clear. Allah says:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

"Allah intends every facility for you; HE does not want to put you to difficulties." [Al-Quran 2:185]

This verse relays a clear message about the flexibility in compulsory fasting, and that makes sense because the All-Knowing creator knows every circumstance about humans. HIS commands cover all the necessary considerations about human needs, and their shortcomings. On top of that, in every command from Allah is with Mercy, and that mercy spreads on people who are sick, tired, or in difficulties. In brief, Allah's prescription is perfect in all senses, and HIS prescription is for benefitting humans and not putting them into suffering. Let us look at few examples about the compulsion of fasting and its flexibilities below:

- **The Believers:** In general, fasting is prescribed for the believers. All believers must believe in it, must welcome it, must thank Allah for it and they must show thanks to Allah for HIS blessings and benefits in fasting month. A true believer must feel happy about it and must be willing to take the challenge to work hard through fasting for learning Taqwa from it. True believers respect one another for fasting, and should assist, encourage, support one another to make fasting easier. Rich believers must help the poor believers with food, drinks, and other facilities to elevate the spirit of fasting in every believer. If they are healthy, able, and not in a tiring journey, then fasting is compulsory on them. In that case, they have no choice but to fast. If they do not, then it will be a big sin for disobeying Allah despite their ability.
- **The matured believers:** Fasting is not compulsory on immature believers. For example, little boys or girls are exempted from fasting. Once the believers are matured, then it becomes compulsory on them. But without practice, suddenly after maturity, fasting is not easy. That's why, children at a young age are encouraged to fast few hours, then half a day, or more or the full day if they can, to build up the habits. The good news is, when everyone else in the family fast, the children love to copy them. My siblings and I were too keen to copy our adult family members and the neighbours. When the entire community fast, then it becomes even more easier to fast for the young people

because the environment becomes favourable for fasting practice. If they do not fast, then no sin for them. So, for immature children fasting in the Ramadan Month is voluntary. Even though they are believers too, but Allah Merciful does not impose on them considering their age and abilities.

- **The sane believers:** Insanity is a sickness, and with it, a person does not know what he/she is doing. They are excused from fasting in the Month of Ramadan unless they become well again. No one in the family or society is allowed to push them to fast. When Allah is Merciful on them, humans have no right to be hard on them. Fasting is a practice of mental, emotional, and physical awareness about Allah's Presence, and to obey Allah through hardship. With insanity, one cannot follow this awareness. Fasting is not a ritual, but it is a life changing program and for it, one must be well mentally. Allah only places responsibilities on those who can carry them.
- **The healthy believers:** Here, healthy means not sick or it means that a believer is usually healthy to fast, but during the fast if he/she becomes sick, then until he/she becomes well, can break the fast. If the sickness is severe then, NOT FASTING IS COMPULSORY on that believer. Allah made it easier for the sick believers to break the fast when sick and to make up the lost days later. For minor cold, flu or any other minor sickness believers should continue fast, because with minor sickness they can carry on all other ordinary duties without problems. But such sickness becomes worse from fasting, and adds major health risks, then they should break the fast and should make up for it later.
- **The ability to fast in the believers:** What is ability to fast? I mean the people who are too old, and they lost their normal ability to fast. For their survival, they may need frequent food through mouth or through pipes, or they must have medicines in every specific hour for their survival etc. Some sick people are even not old, but with terminal illness, and there is no positive prognosis for their cure. What is the rule for them? The same rule applies for them. Due to their inability, they are excused from fasting but to receive the rewards, blessings, and mercy from Allah, they must pay food or money to feed a poor person for each lost day.
- **Believing women:** The general fasting is prescribed for believing men and women. Allah grants the same status in Paradise for believing men and women, and that's why Allah has given the same opportunity to earn rewards for both. At the same time, Allah has made fasting rules easier for the women for their special conditions, such as monthly period or bleeding after childbirth. These states are considered as sufferings, and women must break their fast, during bleeding, and make up the lost days later. The special considerations include pregnancy, breast feeding the baby and the health risk of the mother or the baby.
- **Travelling believers:** Travelling is essential for many people for business, work, Hajj, conferences, study, tours etc. Allah wants believers to work hard, study hard, to become equipped with money and knowledge to contribute positively to this world. Travelling can be very tiring or can be too easy. For tiring travelling, believers are excused from fasting. They can break the fast, count the missed days, and then make up the missed days later.

The summary is, even though fasting is prescribed on the believers, there are many flexibilities in it. Without knowing these flexibilities, some people misunderstand Islamic fasting, and they think it is a cruel religious law. Allah is merciful and HE says about the fasting:

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ

“So, every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting. But, if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every

facility for you; HE does not want to put you in difficulties. (HE wants you) to complete the prescribed period.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

Fasting was prescribed before.

What happened before the revelation of the Holy Quran? We need to clarify it according to Islamic belief. Islam teaches that Allah created humans for worshipping HIM, and HE gave them freedom of worshipping or not worshipping for testing them. The first man Allah created was named Adam, and from him his wife Hawa. Then, from them the entire mankind. Since the beginning of humanity, Allah sent guides, role models and they were Allah’s prophets and messengers. Allah revealed HIS message on those messengers through Angel Gabriel to guide their people in their time. Adam (PBUH) was the first man and the first prophet. Then onward Allah sent so many prophets and some messengers to convey Allah’s message to their people in their age. Those messengers and their followers are called “People before you,” in the holy Quran.

Why people before us are important to us? The answer is, we are connected in many ways. One way is we are all human brothers and sisters because our original parents are Adam and Eve. Secondly, we are all created by One Supreme GOD, and by default we are connected. The third way is we believe in the same GOD (ALLAH) as all other prophets, messengers and their followers believed. We believe in all prophets and messengers like Adam, Noah, Ibraheem, Musa, Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad (Peace be upon all of them.) The source of their revelation and our Holy Quran is the same Allah, and the followers of all prophets are our faith brothers and sisters. So, we are deeply connected with those who came before us to follow Allah’s guidance. We take inspiration from them, and that is why, Allah cited their stories in the Holy Quran for our lessons.

Now, fasting was prescribed before us on people before means that Allah has prescribed fasting for them in the past as well. It tells us that we have something in common and that something is so important that Allah prescribed it for the people and now and for future for its universal benefits. Allah sent so many messengers in the earth. Only 25 of them are mentioned in the Holy Quran and Allah did not mention the names of others. Allah made fasting a practice for each messenger and then, the messenger taught the followers to practice fasting. As a result. Fasting has been a universal practice for all the messengers and their followers.

Then, we should add another simple question for our reminder, and that is, why was fasting prescribed before? Before answering this question, we also need to ask how do we know for sure that fasting was prescribed by Allah before for all the prophets and their followers? We were not living in the past. Holy prophet (pbuh) was not present in the past before the Holy Quran was revealed on him. How did he learn about it? The answer is that it was Allah Who informed Holy prophet (pbuh) and the mankind through the Holy Quran. Allah said in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you.” [Al-Quran 2:183]

Now, the next question is why Allah prescribes fasting for all prophets and their followers. With this question, we should ask few more complementary questions.

1. Why all the prophets received prescription for fasting from Allah?
2. Does that mean Allah is One GOD for all?
3. Does that mean One Allah sent all the prophets with the same religion?
4. Does that mean Allah did not divide mankind in different religions, but humans did it?
5. In brief, does it mean that the GOD is one Allah, gave the same message to all the prophets, to unite them in one guidance from Allah with a unity in faith?

The answer is a big YES. Holy Quran answered all these questions again and again, and this is another proof Allah is giving by the sure message that HE Prescribed fasting to all the prophets to teach their followers.

Shall we look then, some philosophical reasons for why Allah prescribed fasting in all ages. What are the wisdoms behind it? Why was it necessary to have the same fasting prescription? Why is fasting so good for every human in every age? I shall highlight a few points to see reasons behind it below:

- **Similar needs:** Some basic needs are similar in all ages. For example, food for survival and for good health. We have technological advancements, yet no technology could replace that basic need. People had to eat thousands of years ago, and people must eat thousands of years after. Fasting is also a food for spiritual well-being and food for the soul. It is a basic need all the time, and people before or people after, all need it. Due to its universal need, Allah has prescribed it in every age. [Allah knows best].
- **Medicine:** Allah made sickness and medicine for wise reasons. Sickness is a part of every human from the first man Adam and the first lady Eve. For physical sickness Allah gave knowledge to human, and with it, Allah has provided ingredients on the earth to find the curative qualities in them to make medicines for the cure. But spiritual medicine for spiritual sickness, Allah has kept it with HIM. Fasting is the spiritual medicine, and humans in every age need it. The biggest sickness in human is moral sickness. Tablets and capsules cannot cure the moral sickness but fasting can. That's why, Allah prescribed fasting in every age. [Allah knows best].
- **The same enemy:** Satan is the greatest enemy of humans. Many people who do not know about it, are unaware about their biggest enemy. They don't believe in Satan's existence; therefore, they do not know how to defeat Satan in their everyday lives. Whereas, Allah has informed about Satan through every Prophet in all ages to guide them how to be safe from the enemy Satan. Fasting is one of those ways because fasting produces obstacles in the ways of Satan. For the benefit of every human, Allah prescribed fasting for them in the past, and in the present and in the future. [Allah knows best]
- **The same human weaknesses:** Allah created human with two sides in them. One side is moral weakness such as anger, jealousy, tendency to disbelief and doubtfulness, defiance, selfishness, cruelty, retribution and out of control greedy desires. Another side is all the good qualities such as love, kindness, peace of mind, generosity, obedience etc. Allah gave these two sides to test them, and to pass the test, Allah has prescribed tools such as fasting (one of them). Fasting weakens the negative part in a person and strengthens the positive righteous qualities in a person. That process is a need for every human in every age. That is another reason why Allah prescribed fasting. [Allah knows best]

Stages for compulsion in fasting

Here, I intend to go through the history of fasting in Medina during the time of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). One may like to know how fasting in the Month of Ramadan came. Was it a step-by-step gradual process, or was it prescribed suddenly? We shall look for the answer from authentic source Insha Allah.

According to Tafsir Ibn Kasir, when Holy Prophet (pbuh) came to Medina, he used to fast for three days in every month, and he also used to fast in the Day of Ashura. If we count then, that gave the total number of fasting days for holy prophet and his followers $3 \times 12 + 1 = 37$ days each year. Then in 2nd Hijri (Migration year from Makkah to Medina), in the month of Ramadan, Allah commanded to fast for the whole month of Ramadan. Ramadan is a month in the Lunar calendar.

But that compulsion went through stages. Firstly, Allah gave easier option for the believers to build up their habits. Also, Allah allowed the believers to taste it, to feel it, and to develop love for it. Part of the gradual process, initially, Allah gave the believers easy option either to fast or feed the poor. Holy Quran describes:

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ

“For those who can fast but with hardship, is a ransom; the feeding of one who is in need.” [Al-Quran 2:184]

Then, Allah did not limit the permission for everyone to feed without fasting, but Allah encouraged believers to fast if they can for their own growth in Faith and Practice. Allah encouraged both groups, not just the one, to spend more in feeding, and to fast if they can. Allah commanded:

فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“But if he who will give more, by his own free will, it is better for him. And it is better for you that you fast if you only knew.” [Al-Quran 2:184]

We should note that the easier option was only for the healthy, and able believers. Sick or travellers were not included initially nor were they included later. Allah has been consistent with HIS Mercy to those who need it. Allah’s command at the first stage about sick and travellers was:

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

“(Fasting) for a fixed number of days, but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later.” [Al-Quran 2:184]

Then in the next stage, the option for able believers (fast or feed) was taken away. Believers, by then, loved to fast for the enormous benefits in it, and Allah did not deprive them either. Allah wanted the believers to earn more good deeds in the Month of Ramadan. For all the able ones, Allah made fasting compulsory, but keeping the exemption for the sick and travellers as before. Allah prescribed:

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

“So, every one of you who is present (Gets Ramadan month) during that month should spend it in fasting. But if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

This stage came with provisions for the believers to find easier in the completing the month-long fasting. One of those was ransom (Fidya) for the too old or too sick believers who could not recover from sickness to be able to make up the missed number of days. Another rule was made easier, and that was the rule about the night. Before the rule was, at night before sleep they could eat, drink and sex with spouse but waking at night after a sleep there was prohibition to eating, drinking and sexual intercourse.

At the final stage, Allah changed the night rules, and permitted the believers to eat, drink and sexual intercourse at night. Holy Quran states:

أَحَلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۚ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۖ فَالْآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ

“Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives...and seek what Allah has made lawful to you and eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from its black thread (darkness).” [Al-Quran 2:187]

Finally, what are the wisdoms for making fasting compulsory in a month rather than keeping it open to any time for any individual? Why did Allah put the compulsory fasting in one month for the world’s Muslims? Allah knows the best reasons, but let me explore a few reasons below:

- **For unity in believers:** If Allah did not make one month for compulsory fasting for all Muslims, then the lesson for unity in faith was not going to be a strong one. Fasting in one month is a practical training for unity. Allah made it so easy that any Muslim from any corner of the world can feel part of the world’s Muslims in this month. Billions of Muslims can enjoy the unity, and that unity can fill their hearts with courage, confidence and belonging etc.
- **For motivation:** When every believer is fasting, then one motivates another. The entire environment encourages everyone to fast, to pray, to break the fast, and to exercise giving charity etc. In our childhood, when we saw everyone in the family was fasting, we were motivated to do the same. Fasting alone does not bring that level of inspiration. Allah made the fasting for believers as a team effort to support one another to get through the day for the sake of Allah. When I see she is doing it, that makes me feel that if she can do it, then I can do it too.
- **Accumulation of maximum blessings:** Allah prescribed Ramadan month in which HE sent down the Holy Quran. In that month, Allah gave opportunities to go ahead with piety, to race for Allah’s forgiveness, and to maximise the rewards with every worship, and gave one night of power that is better than a thousand nights. In one month, Allah has placed so many attractions, spiritual gain, moral gains, and success in both worlds to attract believers to invest their time in this blessed month. In night prayers, believers stand side by side and they encourage one another to race for the goodness.

Unique Islamic Fasting

What is unique? Unique is one of its kind, and there is no exact similarity in other things. Is Islamic fasting unique as well? We shall look for the answer with easy examples insha Allah. The concept of fasting is out there to different religions, cultures, and traditions. But they are not exactly similar as Islamic fasting. For example, the purpose of Islamic fasting, the method, and the actions in it has no similarity with other fasting practices. The general concept in people is that fasting is a good practice, but the methods and purposes are different.

Why Islamic fasting is unique? The simple answer is that it is prescribed by the unique, the One Allah. There is nothing in Allah’s creations that is like HIM. HIS creation is also unique. For example, in the same family, few siblings from same parents are not like mass production. With mass production I mean, the same design for all the products. When a manufacturing company produces one brand of dolls, the millions of pieces of that type of doll will be exactly the same. But Allah makes every child unique, grants every child unique quality in attitude, appearance, and strength or weakness. The same way, Allah’s prescription in worship, we also notice the uniqueness, and thus Islamic fasting is made unique by Unique Allah.

The next question is how Islamic fasting is unique? We can find the answer if I take the opportunity to explain the main aspects of Islamic fasting. I think, the below examples will be enough to find the answer.

- **The prescriber:** Allah is Unique. In HIS creations and in HIS Governing everything is unique. In HIS management there are no partners, nor helpers or advisers are involved, because HE does not need anyone, nor anyone to assist HIM. HE prescribed fasting in the Ramadan month with HIS Unique Wisdom. In this aspect, there is no similarity with other forms of fasting.

- **Fasting for Allah only:** People may fast for various reasons. One may fast to please his deity, or for gods, or for cultural tradition, or for before surgery, or for reducing the weight, or for detoxing body, or for dieting etc. Islamic fasting is Only to please Allah, and in this intention no other thing can be shared. It is another unique aspect in intention in Islamic fasting. Allah made the unique rule that HE will reward or will not reward to the believers according to their intention. If they have insincere intention, or they fast for some other reasons, then they will not receive rewards from Allah. It means, the intention must be above human selfishness, but to dedicate the fast only for the All-High Allah with heart and soul.
- **Asking rewards from Allah only:** The Islamic term for it is “Ihtisaab.” It means hoping to receive rewards from Allah. For fasting for Allah and hoping reward from Allah only. What about fasting to expect more salary from the employer? Or more name and fame to win the election? Hoping those things for fasting is not Islamic fasting because that has lost uniqueness of Fasting for Allah and reward from Allah. Fasting with wrong intention may bring some physical benefits, but no benefits in the next life.
- **Never-ending rewards:** If someone fasts for weight loss that is not a bad thing at all, but that is not Islamic fasting either. Why not? The point of difference is what is the fasting for. If the fasting is for worldly benefits, then Allah will grant worldly benefits according to the efforts the candidate is putting in. But if someone fasts for the reward in this life and in the next life, then Allah grants never-ending rewards. This life is temporary, and the next life is never-ending, and to receive never-ending reward [Such as Paradise], one must believe in the next life, and serve Allah for the reward from HIM. If the belief, and actions are not dedicated fully for Allah, then Allah does not force the reward on those who did not ask for it. In that sense, the next life reward aspect is unique as well.
- **Period for fasting:** In some other fasting, you are in charge to select a period for fasting. For example, you may choose 24 hours famine fasting to raise money. That is a good cause anyway. Or you may choose to fast for 40 days or 20 days? That is your decision, and your own choice. But in Islamic fasting, you have no choice. You must surrender your choice to the Will of Allah. Allah has selected the period from dawn to sunset, and from the first day of Ramadan until the last day of Ramadan. Allah has fixed the time, and believers follow Allah’s time selection. If believers exceed the limit, or reduce the limit, then that is not considered as fasting for Allah, and they will not be rewarded by Allah. So, fixed period is another unique aspect of Islamic fasting.
- **Selecting the method of fasting:** People in different ways, fast differently with different methods. For example, one may fast with method of not eating solid foods but can drink. That is, your method and good on you for that. Or another one may follow no sweet for certain days method. Good on you for that. In terms of method, again Islamic fasting is unique. Allah has guided the complete method and did not leave the choices with humans. Allah has selected what to avoid during fasting for example, eating, drinking and sex. Besides, the method is to control own tongue, eyes, ears, heart, hands, private parts, and legs from all the unrighteous actions.
- **Holistic approach in fasting:** You can fast for dieting, and that is good for your health. Good on you for your health consciousness. It will benefit your health. But is it holistic enough? Does it target your morality, spirituality, need for this life and the next life? Or does it target your whole purpose of life, and the success plan for your next life? Well, Islamic fasting does that. It doesn’t refrain from food, drink, and sex only, but it targets anger control, greed control, violence control, and all negative behaviour control from the fear of Allah’s punishment, and it trains a believer to gain necessary qualities to be successful in all aspects. Therefore, Islamic fasting is unique in terms of its holistic approach and universal approach.

Special aspects in Islamic Fasting.

Why should I call it special aspects, and what do I want from it? Well, I want to outline a few simple facts in fasting. Though they look simply, but each aspect is like a deep ocean. To these oceans, we can see the superficialities, or we can dive in deeper to see the precious minerals in them. For simplicity, and for easy identification, I have chosen to select a few special aspects in Fasting. There is another reason for choosing a few special aspects in Islamic fasting, and that is to remember easily. Instead of a long essay, if I point out a few key aspects, then for myself and for others, it will be easier to remember. There are some special aspects in Islamic fasting. As believers even though we do not question about the fasting, but to deepen our knowledge we should know those specialties. Besides, when someone asks me to explain what Islamic fasting is, I need to know some important aspects to explain. Often, we believers take fasting so easy that we understand for our satisfaction, but we do not understand deep enough to explain to others.

Let us identify a few simple yet special aspects of Islamic fasting below:

- **It is a command of GOD:** Islamic fasting is not a manmade practice. No human suggested it, and no culture has invented it. No human had any idea before it was revealed from Allah. That is a special aspect of Islamic fasting. The Supreme GOD, Allah, has commanded it for the benefits of humans. Therefore, its status is very high because its order came down from the Highest place, the place of All-High Allah. When something directly comes from Allah, and the command of fasting is from Allah, then its value goes to the highest point in terms of its nobility, universality, benefits in both lives, and status of it, and the honour and prestige with it. Allah's command comes with perfection, only with benefits, and without harms. All the praises for Allah!
- **A command with Allah's love:** When you call your beloved child, "O my child!" followed by advice, how much deep love does it carry? In your call, there is selfless love, a compassion for the well-being of your child, and advice for his success. As a father, I can feel your emotion and love, and your effort to do best for your beloved child. Now, think about Allah, WHO is full of Love for HIS special humans! Think more about Allah, WHO has full love for those who believed in HIM without fuss and are ready to follow HIS command! Allah's Love is great, High and beyond our imaginations! Yet, think once, how much love for HIS believers in HIS call for fasting, "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you ..." [Al-Quran 2:183]. If we try to feel that love from Allah to be believers, then is it not that an extraordinary specialty in Islamic fasting?
- **It is a divine prescription:** A divine prescription deals with every necessity for human to guide human for the ultimate success. It is not a prescription for simple flu, headache etc. But it is a prescription for spiritual well-being to excel the individual believer to the supreme success in the mission of life. It prepares believers to strengthen his/her belief in Allah, on the Day of Judgment, and increases in the heart the fear of Allah's punishment to remind the person to avoid all the bad actions and to adhere to all the righteous actions. Panadol, or any other capsules or drugs cannot cure human immoralities, but a divine prescription can do that. Isn't it true that the root of all human problems is moral sickness? Is killing the main problem in humans, or the greed behind it (Moral sickness), or is the racism the root problem for humans or the hatred feeling (Moral sickness) behind it? Remember! Allah prescribed fasting to cure the moral sickness. Isn't it a super special aspect in Islamic fasting?
- **Without harm or side effects:** Generally, with medicine there are lots of mishaps taking place because of limited knowledge, limited resources, and wrong implementation of medicines and so on. Side effects is very common in medicine. Sickness and cure with modern medicine has another aspect and that is side effects. It makes sense, because to err is human. But with Allah's prescription the harm is totally absent because Allah is All-Knowing, HE never makes mistakes, HE knows exactly what

is best for HIS creations and so on. That's why Islamic fasting is a "special prescription from Almighty GOD" without any harm in it.

- **It has definite goodness:** Allah did not prescribe fasting for any harm, but HE prescribed it only for the benefits. It has recipe for peace of mind, to be aware about Allah, to be more responsible in actions and characters, to be humble and peaceful with others, to be self-conscious about own intentions and actions to be a better person, to be honest for the fear of facing Allah's court in the next life and so on. It trains the believers to install the Taqwa device into the minds to empower them for self-control. Just imagine! A world with self-controlled people is a world with kindness, love, forgiveness, peace, and harmony! Yet it is another special aspect in Islamic fasting!

Misunderstanding about fasting:

Even though many people know about Muslim's fasting yet so many people do not know much about Islamic fasting. I hear comments from many sympathising non-Muslims about Islamic fasting. Some common misunderstanding about Islamic fasting is given below:

- **I could not do it:** Some sympathisers simply say, "I could not do it." They make it sound like an impossible task. They think Islamic fasting is not for ordinary people. So, I could see in their eyes and faces a respect and admiration towards me. But they have a wrong idea about Islamic fasting. They should know that Allah designed Islamic fasting for each human. Allah's principle is that HE never prescribes anything on anyone if he or she is not able to do it. The truth is, you and I can observe Islamic fasting. As a beginner, one may need to build up the habit, and once you are used to it, you will feel the sweetness of it, and you would not want to skip the fasting. This is my experience and I have heard others witnessing the same. Besides, Islamic fasting is for healthy and able people. Allah says:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ

"On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It enjoys every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill it earns." [Al-Quran 2:286]

- **Oh, poor you!** I also hear this comment from some sympathisers. It sounds like that due to faith I am suffering from fasting practice. One may feel sorry for me, that I follow such a religion that deprives me from eating, drinking and sexual enjoyment during the fasting period. Whereas it is from another misunderstanding. Do we mind if our family member work so hard to play in the world cup? Do we say, "Oh, Poor you!" knowing that my friend does practice diet control for best health? We do not because we understand the benefit of it. Similarly, if anyone understands the benefits of fasting, then would not say, "Oh, poor you!" instead would have said, "Good on you! I am really pleased about your fasting for self-control!"

فَإِنَّهُ لِي، وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ

According to a Hadis Qudsi, Allah says: **"MY servants observe fasting only to please ME and I Will Give Rewards for it (as much as I want to)."** [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Wow! One month without eating:** Some do not know that Muslims fast daily for a month from dawn to sunset. They misunderstand about the timing. They wonder how a Muslim survives one month without eating or drinking. But the reality is different. In that month we only change the eating times without changing our eating habits. Some non-Muslims say to me jokingly, "We know when fasting month comes! Just before the fasting month, Muslims buy lots of food!" They are right. What does

that mean? It means, some Muslims eat double in the fasting month. They start eating after the sunset, and they cannot control their eating due to varieties of nice foods. The point is, due to misunderstanding, some think Islamic fasting is an impossible practice for survival. The case is just the opposite. I feel very healthy, light, active during the fasting month due to my control in food and drink intake. If you are not sure, try once. Your night eating will be enough fuel for your engine for the whole day.

- **How can one survive without water:** That was my biggest concern after my serious injury. I was afraid if I could manage the long day without water. My doctor advised me to be mindful about it. I was determined to try out. So, I managed to drink enough by the night, and I had no problem with thirst by the day. I felt thirsty but I did not drink. So, this is my testimony of fasting without water. The reality is the human body stores water, and the output gradually lessens but good drinking at night gives enough water intake to survive by the day. But if a person works in hot weather and feels sick without water then Islam has given flexibility to break the fast due to sickness and to make up that day in a later time. Therefore, fasting without drinking water is impossible, is a wrong idea, rather a misunderstanding.
- **Sickness will be the fate:** This is another misunderstanding. Some people think that fasting is never good because it would make them weak and sick. Day after day doing without food is bad for health. It must not be a general statement. Every person is unique, and Islam prescribed the flexibilities to allow everyone to fit in fasting one way or another way. Some can fast, some can break to make up later, and some can pay charity to replace fasting duty etc. If anyone is sick, Islam allows him/her to break the fast and to make up in later days. Fasting does not necessarily make anyone sick. If someone has existing underlying sickness, or is exposed to bugs or virus, then that is a different issue. If one is healthy, then fasting enhances the good health with many more benefits. Often it depends on the strength of mind. If someone is determined to fast then the mind takes over and instead of suffering, the mind enjoys the serenity about the fasting. Fasting gives a divine joy in heart and only true believers feel it very strongly. That's why they love fasting.
- **Cruel on children:** This is another misunderstanding. Some people think fasting in Islam is cruel to children. That is not true. I started fasting when I was a child. My parents used to ask me to fast for half a day when I was little, but I used to cry for fasting for the whole day. It was a joy to fast with everyone in the family and breaking fast together with everyone. Now I realised that as a child I loved to copy my parents because they were my role model and fasting was not too difficult for me as a child. So, for any other children if they start fasting half a day, or few days they get used to, then it is not cruel, but it is a training to be happy with a little or without at all. Every person needs that training to be content in his/her life. Fasting on children is not compulsory anyway, and parents do not force them to fast if the circumstances are not in favour of fasting for a child. For training, parents encourage children to fast for few hours or for half a day or if they can a full day and so on.
- **Work will be slow:** This is another misunderstanding. My employer was concerned about my work ability when I was fasting in hot weather. But he was surprised with the amount of work and called many more non-Muslims to talk to me about the fasting. They had good hearts with many questions, and when I explained to them, they were very happy to hear about Islamic fasting. During the fasting a Muslim does not pay any attention to tea break, lunch break or afternoon tea breaks etc. They can focus on the work, and the eventuality becomes more production.

Fasting to be righteous

In a human there are two states working against each other. Sometimes one dominates over another. Therefore, there is a continuous struggle going on in a human between inner opposite states. Each state is trying to dominate another to control and to make the opposite state its servant.

What are those two opposite states? One is evil side with all the bad characteristics, and another is righteous side with all good characteristics. In other words, one side is animalistic, and the opposite side is angelic. Animalistic side encourages a person to be cruel, and the angelic side encourages to forgive with kindness. The two sides are battling within humans and depending on which side wins, the personality becomes in favour of the winner. Fasting helps a person to defeat the evil force in him or her, and to help the angelic part to be winner. When the angelic side wins, inside it installs like a root, then from it springs out all the angelic actions, and we call those actions righteous actions.

If the evil side becomes dominant, then the human desires become slave of the evil in the person. Then human desires turn into evil wants, the human cravings turn into evil cravings, and inside will grow an evil root from which will spring out all the evil actions, gestures, and manners. Then those evil wants become the person's god, and without looking at right or wrong, the evil wants to run its course by hook or crook. Then, the defeated angelic side becomes weak, and cannot resist the evil without extra support with more power. Fasting is to help them with some extra power to fight back against inner evils, and to re-establish the angelic power.

When we see some people are reckless in their behaviour, or in anger, or in driving, we see their evil nature in action. Sometimes we wonder, can't this person use his common sense! That person cannot because his common sense is suppressed due to the excessive evil power. As a result, the evil actions turn a person into an evildoer, or wrongdoer, corrupt, or unjust and unrighteous. To turn that person around from unrighteous to righteous, there are no tablets or capsules available in this world. To defeat the evil mind in a person, there are no weapons available in this world. With weapons you can kill or injure people to win, but these weapons never work to defeat the evil nature in a person. To change the person into better, you must have something to subdue the evil nature to make the angelic nature winner. You must have something to inspire the mind and the willpower to uplift the angelic nature without damage. That is a super transformation that requires super method, and that super prescription only comes from the creator who knows everything about super creation (human). Allah is that creator, and it is Allah WHO has prescribed fasting to turn a person to be righteous.

The truth is, evil or righteous thought comes from inside of humans, and then that thought is expressed outside through the actions. Therefore, the change must begin from inside. The correction revolution must be from within, without any damage or harm. Allah prescribed fasting to achieve that. Fasting brings the change from within, and that's why, for fasting to work, the first requirement in the person is the Faith. Faith captures the mind and emotion and makes them to surrender to the Codes of Allah. Faith is the most powerful force; it is unseen yet the most effective tool to influence the mind and soul is to avoid evil and to do good.

For example, when a room is dark without light, all the insects make their nests in it. The mind and heart are like a house, and when it is dark without divine light (Faith), the evil nature can spread quickly. When that dark room is lighted, then the darkness runs away without any fight. Divine light does that too. The Faith in Allah is that divine light, and once it enters the mind, it allows all the angelic thoughts to re-establish. Faith in Allah, on HIS angels, on HIS messengers, on HIS Holy Books, on the next life with the day of judgments, and on fate completes the bright light into the hearts and souls in a believer. From that point takes place the most peaceful transformation of inner revolution.

The faith brings disciplines inside by making the mind and heart to surrender to Allah to obey HIS Guidance for salvation. That surrendering motivates the mind and heart to do what will save them from Allah's punishment. Soon they realise the evil actions that Allah has prohibited for them, will take them to Allah's prison in the next life, they quickly turn around and reject the evil thoughts and actions. With the power of faith, they decide with their willpower that they will only do righteous action for the pleasure of Allah. With this inner revolution, without any bloodshed or fight, the mind and heart become fully ready to be righteous. That was exactly what happened to turn the killer in to the saviour of life for those in the age of ignorance 1400 years ago. To change them from evildoer to righteous people, he taught the right faith, and that was all they required to start with.

What does faith do to people? It introduces love for Allah and offers a guilty feeling should he act in a way that Allah does not love. For that love, a believer does good actions to increase the love for Allah. Besides, the love for Allah motivates him to continue doing the righteous actions. The Faith also inspires him that for every righteous action Allah will grant reward for him and will grant him Paradise to be happy forever. That faith convinces the believer that doing righteous action is far better than cheating, stealing or robbing billions of dollars. That also introduces the fact that Allah will judge every action on the Day of Judgment. That gives the believer a fear of Allah's punishment; to avoid that punishment he does not commit any crime even secretly because he believes that Allah sees everything that he thinks, feels, and does. That fear from divine Faith acts as a shield against evil nature. Fasting initiates that transformation process from within the believer. Amazing, isn't it?

Again, how not eating or drinking can make me a righteous person? We need to understand it with simple examples. In fasting 3 main things work together. They are:

- **Faith:** The Faith is that Allah commanded me to not eat or drink from such time to such time. If I disobey HIM, then I must face HIS fair judgment to get punished. Faith is also reminding me that Allah loves me, and for HIS love for me, HE has prescribed Fasting for me to qualify for the Paradise.
- **Surrender:** For Faith, I am convinced that my salvation depends on surrendering myself to the codes of Allah. That makes me ready to receive Allah's prescription and my willingness to obey Allah.
- **Actions:** My faith is strong, I surrendered myself to the will of Allah, and now, I got the guiding command to avoid food, drink, and sex during the fasting period. Now, I find easy to follow Allah's commands. Even though I feel hungry or thirsty, but they do not bother me. My strong willpower drives me to follow Allah's codes throughout the day.

Now combine the above three and take these main three aspects of training in the month-long fasting. Then, I face my day-to-day life, and I exercise the same three aspects to separate evil actions from the righteous actions. For my faith, surrendering and loyalty to Allah, I find enough strength to face the temptations, and follow what is right. That way, I don't need a police force to reprimand me, or a court to convict me, or a prison to punish me for my change from evil to righteousness. My faith motivates me to perform righteous actions, and it makes me responsible for my actions. Isn't it amazing!

That way, fasting brings an opportunity to learn the righteousness. Every year it comes back for a believer to make more practice and do their best. When again and again a believer finds fasting month, it gives enough practice to develop habit of righteousness. Once again, how? Fasting defeats the evil desires inside believers and makes the angelic righteous side the winner. Otherwise, if people surrender to their evil desires, cravings, and lust, then they lose the righteous motivation and actions. Allah warns about it in the following verse in the Holy Quran:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا

“Do you see the one who takes for his god his own desire (Impulse or cravings)? Could you be a guardian of affairs for him?” [Al-Quran 35:43]

Righteousness from fasting.

We know the purpose of fasting is learning righteousness. Fasting increases the Faith in Allah and HIS Judgment in the believer, and that fear encourages the believer to practice righteous actions. The fear encourages the believer to act what is right, and to avoid what is wrong. Every worship has a soul, and the soul of fasting is Taqwa inside the believer because without that soul, righteous actions are not possible. What do I mean by that in practicality?

I mean, if the soul is weak, then a believer cannot be excellent in righteousness. Suppose a believer has more powerful soul (Taqwa), then he/she will learn more righteousness from fasting practice. But if the soul part is weaker, then a believer will complete the fasting with less achievement in righteousness. Again, righteousness from fasting there are two parts involved, and I shall highlight them for our better understanding:

- **The first part is fasting:** It is a perfect program prescribed by Allah. It is there to take benefits out of it. It neither forces the participants to learn everything against his/her will, nor it restricts the participants to take highest benefits from it. If we consider fasting is a university course, and students are those believers who practice fasting (that course), then fasting is a perfect course, but the course never forces its benefits on the students. It is the student's responsibility to work hard, to self-discipline, to persevere with earnest intention to learn and to practice. So, whether a student can excel or fail, the fasting course is not responsible. Or if the student can or cannot gain high grade of righteousness also depends on the students. That's why, one believer may learn more righteousness than other.
- **The second part is who is fasting:** Believers are students of Allah's perfect fasting course. But how much can they take depends on them. Suppose there are 80 students in a university class in the same subject. The teacher gives same lecture to all the students, but after the exam, do they all receive the same grade? Or the grades vary from fail to pass to excellent? Why is that variation in the grades? Why can't all the students get excellent marks? Similarly, after the month long fasting, all believers cannot get the same excellent grade. Some get lesser marks than others. That variation depends on how sincere they were, how strong their faith was, or how perseverant they were, or how committed they were for the hard work to perfect themselves, or what environment they were in, or what level of knowledge they had etc. The best thing in fasting is, Allah merciful did not prescribe this course once in life but has prescribed it every year to face again and again in life to learn perfection gradually. Another good news is, through fasting no believer fails, but the level of achievement varies. So, every year Allah gives another chance to achieve more, Alhamdulillah!

When believers welcome Ramadan month, they embrace it to achieve high grade of righteousness, but they face many obstacles on their way to achievement. Unless they are aware of the obstacles, and prepared to face them, then they might not gain the full success in achieving righteousness. What are those obstacles? Let us look at some of them:

- **Level of knowledge:** For example, fasting has a purpose. If a believer is well versed about that purpose, they can put maximum effort to fulfil the purpose, and to achieve the highest marks from those highest efforts. On the other hand, if a believer is unsure, or unclear about the purpose of fasting, then the efforts will not be focused on the right spot. Or if the believer has wrong idea about the purpose of fasting due to the lack of correct knowledge, then due to the misunderstanding, some efforts will be wasted. For example, if a fasting person takes the fasting as a cultural tradition from fathers, then he/she cannot focus on righteousness much because of the wrong perception regarding

the purpose of fasting. Therefore, if there is variation in knowledge, then the achievements in righteousness will also vary. Besides, one may lose the rewards because of wrong knowledge. Three types of knowledge are dangerous. One is no knowledge, another is little knowledge, and the last one is wrong knowledge. Believers must get on top on those to maximise the righteousness from Fasting.

- **Intention:** Again, often the intention can be faulty in some believers if they have poor knowledge. For example, the intention of fasting is to please Allah and to get close to Allah's mercy. But if someone is more worried of being reprimanded by the guardians if he did not fast, then that is a wrong intention, and for it the righteousness won't be achieved. The correct intention comes from the total surrendering of our heart and soul to Allah and devoting all the love for Allah. That requires maximum efforts, self-checking, and guarding against Satan. Depending on the variation in that area, the righteousness level comes in variation into the fasting believers.
- **Partial self-control:** If a believer takes fasting for the total self-control in him, then his efforts for self-control is far wider than a believer who limits his self-control from fasting in only food and drink. Again, if a believer thinks that he will control food, drink, and sex only in few hours of fasting, that is called partial self-control, and it may be due to his lack of Islamic knowledge. But Islam teaches that fasting is to learn holistic self-control such as anger control, manner control, heart control, mind control, tongue control, and to control every aspect in him to bring those within Allah's guidance. Now, if any believer targets total self-control (righteousness), then the level of righteousness he will receive is far higher than the one who has targeted only partial self-control for partial righteousness.
- **How much to sacrifice:** Fasting is a practice of sacrificing the evil desires and cravings. So, how much the fasting person is committed to sacrifice also determines the level of righteousness he will receive from fasting. For example, a believer is sacrificing the cravings of food or drink, but cannot sacrifice the backbiting habit, or quarrelling nature, or the out-of-control anger. As a result of the limited sacrifice, the result in righteousness will also be limited. For this reason, some Muslim may observe the whole month in fasting, yet their bad character remains same or little improved because their lack of efforts in sacrificing their bad character. Fasting is for total change, from bad to the best, but if one doesn't try to sacrifice the bad nature in him, how can he achieve high level of righteousness? Evil and righteousness are like the dark and light. When one comes, another goes away. To remove the dark, believers need to turn the light on. It means, they must sacrifice the evil desires for love and welcome the righteous desire.
- **Allah's Fair distribution:** Imagine! You are a fair teacher. Would you give full marks to a student who has only scored 50% marks? Again, would you give same mark for a student who worked so hard, studied so hard, sacrificed night sleep and other entertainments to do best in the exam that you gave to another student who was below average? Would that be fair? I am sure you would not. Allah is a Most Fair Lord. HE is fair in mark giving to HIS servants. If the servants work hard, HE grants them high degree of Taqwa (Righteousness, self-control), but if others work less then HE grants them accordingly. That is another reason, why every fasting Muslim do not receive the same level of righteousness from Fasting. [Allah Knows best].

To summarise, Allah has kindly guided believers with fasting to give them opportunity to achieve highest degree of Taqwa, self-control power to abstain from all the sins, and to adhere all the good (righteous) deeds. Now, it is the duty of believers to learn right, to make right efforts, and to act right to achieve the high level of Taqwa. But if they do not, then, they will lose. Holy Prophet (pbuh) has given that message clearly. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

" مَنْ لَمْ يَدَعْ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ وَالْعَمَلَ بِهِ فَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ حَاجَةٌ فِي أَنْ يَدَعَ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ "

“Whoever does not give up lying and lying nature, then Allah does not need his abstaining from food and drink.” [Bukhari]

Fasting is a special worship.

What do I mean by special? I mean some aspects in fasting that is not similar with other worships. What is worship then? Worship is a special way of performing the humility as Allah’s servants to Allah All-Mighty. In worship, a believer accepts that he/she is Allah’s servant, the purpose of his/her life is to serve Allah, as Allah has commanded. In a broad sense, following Allah’s commandments and avoiding what Allah has prohibited with sincere faith is called Worship. In an Arabic term, it is called Ibadah. To understand better, let us look at the basic components in worship below, and then we can see the difference between Fasting as a worship, and some other worships.

- **Intention:** The intention for worshipping Allah is, to please Allah only to receive rewards from HIM. For example, if a Muslim prays with the intention to be seen by others, then that prayer is not worship. Similarly, if a Muslim fasts to please his employer to get a job, then that is not a worship for Allah, and Allah will not reward for the fast that is not done to please or obey HIM. So, worship must be done with the intention to please Allah.
- **Prescription:** A worship must be prescribed by Allah. Own invention is not worship. For example, if a Muslim invents a different kind of prayer with the intention to please Allah, then that is not a worship because Allah did not prescribe it. It will rather be a sinful action. So, for worship, Allah’s prescription is essential.
- **Exactness:** Worship is exactly what Allah has prescribed. For example, fasting is prescribed from dawn to sunset. But if a Muslim fasts longer than the exact prescribed time then that is not worship rather it is exceeding the limit set by Allah. Or another example is, Allah never prescribed fasting on Eid day. If a believer fasts on Eid day to receive rewards from Allah, then that exceeds the exactness set by Allah. Exceeding exact limit set by Allah is not a worship.
- **Allowed actions (Halal):** Worship is an action that Allah has allowed. Those allowed actions are called Halal actions (Allah permitted). If Allah prohibited something, then doing them even with good intention is not worship. That is sin. For example, if a Muslim robs a bank to give charity, that is not a worship because Allah did not allow stealing. Robbing from a bank is Haram (Prohibited by Allah). Therefore, prohibited actions must not be accompanied in worship. Example of some prohibited actions are, lying, cheating, back-biting, jealousy, envy, breaking promises, abusing, oppressing, injustice, corruption, taking bribe, killing, and abusing all human rights.
- **Sunnah method:** In worship, believers are not allowed to follow their own method. Allah has selected only one method in worship, and that is HIS Method. HE sent that method through the Angel Gabriel to HIS Messenger Muhammad (PBUH) to practice and to teach his followers. So, following the method taught by Allah’s messenger is following Allah. Sunnah method is the practice of Allah’s messenger in worship, in day-to-day life actions. Islam is a complete code of life from Allah, and Sunnah covers the entire life from A to Z.

Now, we can go back to the main question, why fasting is a special worship, or how it is a special worship, and what is the main point of difference between fasting and some other worship. We must remember all the points above in any worship and they are also included in the fasting. It means, in terms of the above basic components, fasting has the same except with one specialty. One special component makes fasting in

the month of Ramadan a special fasting, and for that specialty Allah will also grant special reward for the fasting.

What is that special component that makes fasting as a special worship? That special component is “the sincerity in the intention in Fasting.” I shall give two examples to understand the difference between fasting intention and some other worship’s intention in the light of sincerity below:

1. **5 times prayer:** Intention is the main component of 5 times prayers for Allah. 5 times Salah is the 2nd pillar of Islam. It is a great worship, and Allah loves it. But if the intention in it is contaminated, then Allah never accepts it. Some worshippers can have the element of (RIA) of showiness in performing 5 times prayers. It means, the worshipper’s main intention is not to please Allah, nor praying for the love of Allah, but may be praying to be seen by others for some selfish reason. Therefore, there is a chance for RIA in a Muslim who performs Salah. Allah knows it and HE has warned about it in the Holy Quran:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ . فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ . الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ .

“So, warning to the worshippers, who are neglectful of their prayers, those who (only want) to be seen (by men).” [Al-Quran 107:4-6]

2. **Charity giving:** The 3rd pillar of Islam is charity. Charity is a great worship to purify the soul from selfishness, to appreciate the gift of wealth that Allah has provided, and to purify the wealth. The result of charity in society is multi-faceted such as removing poverty, bringing social cohesion by proper distributions of wealth, and nurturing one another as human brother and sister. In this great worship, there is also chance to have corrupt intention behind it. A Muslim may have intention to take advantage from a receiver of his/her charity, or to be popular to receive votes and so on. Allah knows about it, and HE has warned the believers about it in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ .

“O you who believe! Cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity, or by injury, like those who spend what they own to be seen by men but believe neither in Allah not in the Last Day.” [Al-Quran 2:264]

Now, the intention in fasting is purely sincere. It does not require to be seen by others because a Muslim can eat or drink secretly away from the sight of others. Why a Muslim would suffer from hunger or thirst when no one is around to see, or to criticise, or to punish? He knows that if he/she eats secretly, no family member will know, no police will arrest, and there won’t be any court process from him/her. One can only fast if he/she is sure that Allah is watching his/her heart and action. Therefore, he/she is determined to fast for strong faith in Allah’s judgment, and for the strong hope in receiving Allah’s rewards.

So, a Muslim fast only for the fear of Allah and for the pleasure of Allah only without any element of showiness. Fasting is a manifestation of total sincerity and pure intention to worship Allah. It does not have any room for showiness (RIA). That’s why Allah has promised special rewards for special fasting. We find that fact in a Hadith. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

كُلُّ عَمَلِ ابْنِ آدَمَ يُضَاعَفُ الْحَسَنَةُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا إِلَى سَبْعِمِائَةٍ ضِعْفٍ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَّا الصَّوْمَ فَإِنَّهُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ يَدْعُ شَهْوَتَهُ وَطَعَامَهُ مِنْ أَجْلِي

“Good deeds for Muslims are increased; each good deed is increased from 10 times to 700 times (For rewards). (But) Allah says: Except fasting (Fasting is different). Because fasting is (only done) for ME and I

will give its rewards (As much as I want to without any ratio). He (She) gives up own cravings and food-drink for ME.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

Fasting for obedience to Allah.

In childhood, I have seen open obedience and secret disobedience in many children. Living in a village was an advantage to have many children around to play in our big yard. Some children were very obedient in front of their parents or teachers, but in secret they were different. Many employees have the same divided obedience to their employers, and they can get away with manipulations and lying. But obedience to Allah is a total obedience. One cannot hide anything from Allah. Allah knows all the opens and secrets. Allah’s angels write down all the obedience and disobedience to Allah. The earth films all the actions of obedience and disobedience of Allah. Therefore, in the obedience to Allah, there is no room for cheating, manipulating, lying, or hiding. To get total obedience to Allah one must do the following:

- **Believe in Allah with all HIS qualities:** For total obedience to Allah, a servant needs to deepen the knowledge about Allah, all HIS qualities, HIS fairness in Judgment, HIS power to return everyone to HIS court etc. Without knowledge about Allah, one cannot be a strong believer, and without strong belief one cannot go through days with hunger. In fasting, a servant does not only obey Allah’s command openly but obeys Allah secretly as well. For the strong belief that “Allah is watching, and Allah will punish the disobedience servants,” are the secret motivation in fasting that keeps the servant obedient to Allah openly and secretly. Fasting trains a believer to be a total obedient servant before, during or after fasting month.
- **Fear of accountability:** A fasting believer does not fear to facing court for eating secretly during his fast, but he fears strongly to face Allah’s court in the next life. His faith of accountability makes him responsible to perform his duties that Allah has ordained in him during his fasting. He can’t sleep if he misses a prayer at night due to the fear of accountability. He cannot steal from anyone because he knows Allah is watching and will punish him. Fasting gives him/her the habit of reminding self about the accountability in Allah’s court for any disobedience to Allah in any time. This is a great training for total obedience to Allah.
- **Sincere obedience with heart and soul:** Fasting requires pure intention because the fasting believers knows that Allah knows what is in his heart or soul. That’s why, he/she uses all the sincerity to fast, and for that sincerity the willpower becomes very strong to obey Allah’s commands only during the fasting. That total sincerity training can turn the person to total obedience to Allah all the time. This is the aim of the fasting. Fasting is for the righteousness, and the righteousness in the total obedience to Allah to follow only the right things that Allah has commanded.
- **Hope in Allah’s Mercy:** In a fasting believer, one hand he/she fears Allah’s punishment, and on the other hand, hopes in Allah’s Mercy, blessings, forgiveness, and rewards. When the obedience accompanies with hope, the motivation for total obedience to Allah becomes a “love to obey Allah.” The connection between Allah and HIS servant becomes stronger and stronger day after day and the obedience to Allah also becomes sweeter. From month-long fasting training in Allah’s obedience contributes to the believers a permanent habit of obeying Allah with heart and soul, and the obedience to Allah brings the true peace and happiness in believer’s heart.

Obedience to Allah is the main achievement in a human life. This is the core part in Islamic Faith. Humans obey something, whether it is Allah, or a god, or father’s ways, or cultural traditions or own desires. Obedience to each thing leads human toward a particular destination. Those destinations could include name, fame, excellence in study or in jobs, positions in the society, prosperity in wealth, or doing well after this life. Obedience to Allah is to follow HIS Guidance, aiming to gain success in this life and in the next life.

Islamic Faith is around Allah as the only GOD, the creator, the provider, the owner of the death and life, and the owner of the Day of Judgment and so on. In other words, for a human from the beginning to the end in everything is around the GOD Allah, and without HIS obedience no guidance is available for the life journey from this end to the never-ending next life. To become a Muslim, one must accept to obey Allah and HIS Messenger. But to be a full Muslim, that obedience, submission to Allah must be 100%. Allah calls believers to be 100% obedient servant to Allah in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً

“O you who believe! Enter Islam (to submission with obedience to Allah) whole-heartedly (fully).” [Al-Quran 2:208]

Why did Allah create humans? Well, who can answer this question? You and I cannot because we are created and not the creator. According to the message in the Holy Quran, the creator Allah has answered that obvious question. I said obvious because, as a human I think, I must ask this question to myself that who created me and why? This is a fundamental question to know myself well for the right direction in my life. As a creator, Allah has answered all the basic questions for humans. Therefore, HIS answer is:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I (Allah) have only created Jinn’s’ and men that they may worship (to obey/serve) ME.” [Al-Quran 51:56]

How can a person serve Allah without being obedient to HIM? That obedience does not fall on me like rain. It is a quality that comes through practice. Besides, practicing Allah’s obedience is not limited to Fasting time only. This obedience must be in every aspect of my life because I am a servant of Allah for every second in my life, it is not limited to fasting period. Fasting trains me to be obedient to Allah openly, secretly, and sincerely. To be a full obedient servant to Allah is a big challenge. No one must think it is easy. It is a very hard training to be free from the slavery of one’s own bad desires and cravings, and lust. It requires special programs, booster doses to increase motivation, periodic check-ups, and continuous remedies to maintain the healthy balance in Allah’s Obedience. It is a booster dose once a year to maintain the constancy in obedience to Allah.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan boosts qualities in a Muslim to continue Allah’s obedience 24/7. Some of those qualities below:

- **Determination:** Fasting increases strong determination to obey Allah without food or drink. That determination is a must to face the challenges in life. The challenges try to demotivate a believer from the total obedience to Allah. Such as, Satan, corruption in society, anger, greed, poverty, jealousy and so on. Fasting is a training for determination for 14 hours a day to train the believer to gain it to obey Allah all other times.
- **Sacrifice:** You can’t love a thing until you sacrifice something for it. Why is a mother’s love so precious? It is because she sacrifices everything for her true love for the child. To love Allah, and to receive Allah’s love, we must obey HIM, and for that obedience we must sacrifice some comforts. Fasting for Allah through sacrificing food or drink is a true demonstration of total sincerity to obey Allah’s commands. The whole month that sacrificing practice makes the obedience to Allah easier and habitual. Then that sacrifice for obedience to Allah becomes a regular habit in all other times.
- **Patience and perseverance:** One must have a high degree of patience not to break the fast for hunger or thirst. Doing righteous deeds and avoiding wrong deeds, for the pleasure of Allah also needs that

high degree of patience. Fasting trains a Muslim to be very patient and perseverant towards the obedience to Allah, through sacrificing comfort from food, drinks and so on.

- **Self-control:** A person with self-control can control evil traits in him/herself. Those evil traits push a person to commit sins, to do non-righteous evil actions and so on. Fasting helps the person to gain control over wrong desires. Once someone has that self-control for him or herself then worshipping Allah, obeying Allah through doing good actions becomes easier. But those who give into temptations easily due to lack of self-control, or into selfish desires, can find it very difficult to obey Allah's codes in life.
- **Only to obey Allah:** Why does a rich person abstain from food or drinks? Why does a young man or woman stay away from sexual intimacy? Why does a thirsty believer suffer without drinking secretly? It is done only to obey Allah. Otherwise, if the believer lied to the family and said, "I am feeling sick and I need to break the fast," They family would not object to it. So, a believer does not lie about fasting? The obvious answer is, "For the obedience to Allah." Fasting trains the believer to obey Allah just like that in all times.
- **Longest time of obeying:** For other worships like Salah takes only few minutes to finish. Those few minutes a servant is constant in Allah's obedience. But in fasting that length of constancy is longer and it is about 12 to 15 hours a day. In some countries the length is even 18 hours day. In those 18 hours despite hunger or thirst a true servant of Allah practices the obedience to Allah in every second. The total obedience to Allah is also in every second in life.
- **Fear of Allah:** One needs to fear Allah's Judgment and HIS punishment for disobeying HIM. We call it a positive fear for motivation, and it is a common practice in our daily lives as well. For example, we explain to a child to fear the fire in the stove and to stay away safely to prevent from burning. For the fear of being burnt, I was careful in obedience to my parent's. Fasting is possible from the fear of Allah's punishment, and the same way, a believer can obey righteous action 24/7 to obey Allah from the fear of being punished.
- **Motivation for paradise:** With fear one needs hope as well. In fasting both fear of Allah's punishment and the hope to receive rewards from Allah motivate Muslims to fast, to be patient and to obey Allah's commandments. With same motivation for Paradise, servants of Allah find easier to work hard in obedience to Allah in other affairs of life as well.

So, the above mentioned are a few examples from many to explain how fasting prepares Muslims to be obedient servants of Allah for all the time. In terms of obedience to Allah, two main categories need to be mentioned, see below:

1. **Part time obedience:** It means obeying some rules of Allah and disobeying other rules of Allah. For example, Allah's command is to fast in the Ramadan Month, and pray 5 times daily. Now, if a Muslim fasts every day to obey Allah but does not pray 5 times daily. That is a case of part time obedience. Or another example, if a Muslim fasts whole day yet cheats his customer in his business, then that is another example of part time obedience. That is not the teaching of fasting. Fasting teaches to obey Allah completely (Al-Quran 2:208). Part time obedience to Allah has no value.
2. **Full time obedience:** It means obeying Allah happily in every aspect of life. Full-time obedient servants to Allah are full-time believers. Allah loves them and they love Allah with 100% obedience. For them, Allah promises full rewards. Fasting motivates a servant of Allah to be a full-time obedient servant.

Fasting on able or disabled Muslims.

What is the difference between the able or disabled Muslim in term of fasting? Someone may ask this question. The answer is the general disability is not the determining factor for fasting. For example, a paralyzed person such as a paraplegic is considered as disabled in terms of walking, but he may be perfect with his brain work. For his sharp mind he can be a clever physician. So, that paralyzed person is labelled as disabled in walking but able in mental work. The ability and disability are defined accordingly to the ability of performing the task.

Similarly, a paralyzed person who is generally labelled as disabled in walking, could be perfectly fine with fasting. He may have every capacity to go without food, drink for many hours without any health problems. His mind is strong, his emotion is balanced, his patience and perseverance are very high, his faith is pure, and his intention is correct, and his body organs are fine with fasting. In that case, he is not disabled in terms of fasting. He is able and fasting is compulsory on him in the month of Ramadan.

On the other hand, a believer is looking healthy, the appearance is nice, young, and energetic, but every time he tries to fast, after few hours he faints. This is just an example. He has some internal health problems, and he must breakfast to avoid fainting. In terms of fasting, he is disabled, needs to see doctors for treatment. The same way, a believer may begin fasting with good health but became sick from food infection. He ate rotten food by mistake, and now he is vomiting with diarrhoea. He is rapidly losing fluid, and in his emergency, he needs oral or intravenous fluid to be stable. In this situation, even though he was healthy before, but now he is disabled to carry on fasting. Islam made the rule simple, and no one can be deprived from the benefits of fasting.

With this clarity, you might be worried of falling sick. Maybe you are afraid what if you become unable to fast, and you will lose rewards. Your sister may fast to go ahead of you in Paradise! Do not worry yet. For your worry, I shall try to simplify the facts. Let me divide the fasting in two main categories and they are:

- **The compulsion part:** What is the compulsion part? It is about who must fast to avoid Allah's punishment. Suppose I am well during fasting month; therefore, fasting is compulsory on me. But if I become very sick during the fasting month, and my health is in risk if I continue my fast, then it is compulsory on me to break the fast. Why am I not allowed to fast during my severe illness? The answer is, my body has a right on me according to Allah's prescription, and it is Allah's command to break the fast when I am very sick. If I do not break the fast according to Allah's rules, then I will be a criminal in Allah's court in two counts. One count is not giving my physical right, and another count is for the disobedience to Allah. Allah outlined HIS rules clearly in the Holy Quran:

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

“So, every one of you who is present during (Fasting) that month should spend it in fasting. But, if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; HE does not want to put you to difficulties.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

- **The reward part:** The reward part is very important as well. About the reward part, Allah is Most Kind and Most Merciful to HIS Servants. HE grants the opportunities to gain the same rewards for the disabled, too sick, too tired, or too old people. Some servants of Allah with difficulties are allowed to make up their fasts later and others who cannot make up later, are allowed to give Fidyah (Food to the poor). As a result, they can also earn rewards from Allah, and they can also learn self-control, righteousness, and the motivation to be fully obedient to Allah all the time. Allah Merciful assures it in the Holy Quran as one example:

فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

“So, every one of you who is present during that month should spend it in fasting. But, if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (Should be made up) by days later.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ

“But with hardship, is a ransom, feeding one who is in need.” [Al-Quran 2: 184]

One thing we must remember, Allah loves all HIS servants. HE does not have two different mercies on HIS servants based on who is able and who is disabled. Allah does not give importance on the appearance, or the look, but Allah looks at their piety, sincerity and Taqwa in their hearts. Never think that a physically able person can earn high rewards and disabled cannot. The criteria of receiving Allah’s love, reward and mercy are what is in the heart and what are the action of a person as per his/her capacity. A sick or disabled person may have more Taqwa (Righteousness in the heart and in actions) than a perfectly healthy able person. Or the opposite could be true if the healthy person uses his/her good health to take the opportunity to practice Taqwa in heart and in action. Allah made it very clear in the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“Surely, the most honourable of you, in the Sight of Allah is (he, who is) the most righteous of you.” [Al-Quran 49:13]

Now, let us look at the ability and disability policy in fasting a bit further. Allah prescribed fasting in the Ramadan month on the following believers:

- a. Men or women.
- b. Rich or poor.
- c. Ruler or ruled.
- d. High educated or low educated.
- e. Young or old.
- f. Boss or employee.
- g. Businessman or businesswoman and so on.

So, the fasting order is on different categories of people but the qualification in all of them are the same. What is it? It is the ability for fasting. A boss may have more money yet not able to fast due to sickness. Or a poor man may have no money yet can fast. A ruler may have power but too old to fast. Or a rich lady may have wealth and health, yet she is in menses (lost the ability to fast until it stops). Look at the simplicity in Allah’s rules! No one can find it to understand!

Allah wants to test HIS believers with their ability. Do they use their full ability to be fully obedient servant to HIM? Or do they have half-heartedness in the obedience to Allah? From servant’s side, Allah expects the full sincere efforts, and from Allah’s part, HE does not expect more than the servant’s ability. That is why, a sick believer may arrive in Paradise long time before a healthy believer for her worship to Allah with her best ability and sincerity. Allah may multiply her good deeds thousand times more because of her fullest efforts. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

“On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear.” [Al-Quran 2:286]

Reasons for collective fasting

In voluntary fasting, a person may select a suitable day for fasting. For example, after the Ramadan month, in Shawal month 6 days fast is voluntary with huge rewards, but the day which one should fast is not fixed. So, one may choose any day or can fast on some holy days that Holy Prophet (PBUH) fasted. The point is that there is not compulsion in voluntary fasting, and there is no compulsion to fast collectively.

Is fasting in the Ramadan month same like voluntary fasting? The rule of fasting in the month of Ramadan is that all believers must fast together in the same month according to the Moonsighting in their regions. Allah has not given the freedom to choose Muslims to fast in another month rather than in Ramadan month. Allah has fixed the month for fasting for world Muslims, and all Muslims must fast collectively in that month. Allah says:

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ

“(Fasting in Ramadan month) for a fixed number of days.” [Al-Quran 2:184]

Those number of days are fixed by Allah and HE did not leave them with believers to choose. Those days are from the beginning of Ramadan month until the end of Ramadan month. Able Muslims in a family, or in a community, or in a country, or in the world, must fast in that month collectively. It is a rare practice in human race, that billions of people will observe month-long fasting. Do you see the uniqueness in it? That unique collectiveness in worshipping Allah brings the world Muslims together, in one platform, to be Allah’s humble servants. Should not we ask, why is this extra-ordinary collective practice from all Muslims worldwide? What does it mean for all of us?

I shall try to highlight a few points below of learning, and reminder from that insha Allah (Allah willing).

- **One identity:** Collective fasting teaches that before Allah all Muslims have one identity and that identity is that they all have volunteered themselves to be servants of One Allah. In other words, as Allah’s servant they are one identity, and that is, “They are one body in worshipping Allah.” It also means, whenever Allah calls them to fast collectively, they must be ready to do it together. Again, in opposite to that, if Allah guides them to fast voluntarily and individually in other times, then they must do that way. With that collective fasting, believers must remove their high or low ego due to richness or poorness, or for masculine or feminine, or for high positioned or low position etc. It also gives a powerful message about what is the most beloved thing to Allah. That is not the look of believers, or the money of the believers, or the social position of the believer, or the gender of the believers, but the hearts and actions of the believers. Fasting in Ramadan month collectively is a showdown of Muslim’s one identity that they must focus on, instead of separating them based on their ethnicity, language, colour, and nationality. It teaches and remind them about their identity, and that one is that they are all MUSLIMS (Those who surrendered to Allah).
- **Unity in faithful:** Fasting for every Muslim also teaches that they are united in faith, and they should be united in righteous actions as well. It teaches them that they should unite against evil, wrongdoing, injustice and so on that Allah has prohibited for them. Unity in faith brings unity in life and allows Muslims to work together for a peaceful world. It also can motivate other people to be inspired if Muslims maintain the unity in fasting, and in all other areas in life. They need to be role models in peace, human unity, and collective responsibilities to make the world a better place to live. Unity is strength, and disunity is weakness. Allah loves unity in good actions, and unity against bad actions. Whole fasting month, believers practice that to make the unity in good a regular habit. To save society from corruption, people with morality must unite against corruption, and they should oppose the wrong actions together. Crime flourishes when good citizens are silent or are divided.

Fasting teaches the social reforming formula as well and that is struggle against crimes and corruption unitedly to be successful.

- **Uprooting discrimination:** Fasting for all, teaches Muslims that they are all equally Allah's servants competing one another righteously in righteous works for Paradise. Other than that, no one is superior to no one. Collective fasting uproots the superiority or inferiority complex by facilitating a level playing field for worship without worries. It teaches that their colour, their language, their nationality, and worldly status does not create class in the sight of Allah. So, they should also give up vanity, ego, pride among each other. When one human tries to the Lord or Master of another by hook or crook, and to create upper and lower classes among humans based on power-position-wealth, then the result is nothing but chaos, injustice, class-struggles, dissention, fight, disunity, and exploitations. Fasting teaches the remedy for that by placing the king and the gate keeper fasting the same day, the same way, for the same Allah. Thus, it is a powerful anti-discrimination remedy.
- **Encouraging one another:** For one person practicing good deeds is harder than practicing as a group. It is so true that even we as children used to cry for fasting when our parents said to us not to fast for being too young. We used to cry because when we saw everyone was fasting, it used to encourage us to follow the majority. Allah Merciful prescribed fasting for all able ones to motivate one another. When everyone sees everyone is fasting, then it supplies strength to continue. Humans have energy that connects one another, and collective endeavour inspires each other to carry on without losing hope. The same theme we should apply in all other walks of life. In the family, or in the neighbourhood, or in the community, or in the world, all individuals, groups, or Governments should encourage one another for good, and in preventing bad. In sorrow or grief, we should team up to support the victims with love, consolations and helps. When the society practice good things together, as we all fast together, then the society will change for the better.
- **Combined efforts:** Fasting for all is also for the lesson that Muslims should take combined efforts for progress. Individual efforts do not go far especially when Muslims needs to build righteous society. When all extend their hands and support for good efforts, then success is obvious. Collective fasting contributes to good economy, social healing, reconciliation for peace, generosity to look after one another, helping the weak, poor, vulnerable, and to achieve good targets easily. As five fingers makes a strong hand, similarly, collective efforts give strength for success.
- **Favourable environment:** When every able person fasts in a community, society, or country, it creates an environment of righteousness. Satan runs away. People get motivated to do best things. People feel encouraged to donate, to feed the poor, to give medicine to the sick and so on. Fasting for all provides that favourable environment where everyone finds it easy to fast. Similarly, for all other righteous activities, Muslims should create a righteous environment to obey Allah's codes in life easily.

Finally, if we look at the Quranic Verse in which Allah prescribed fasting on the believers, we find that order is for all the believers as a collective body. Behind that collective prescription, there is wisdom and benefits. In that verse Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you: as it was prescribed to those before you that you may (learn) self-control (Taqwa=Fear of Allah’s punishment for sins).” [Al-Quran 2:183]

Chapter Two: Purpose of Fasting

Importance to know the purpose:

Suppose I am on a journey by boat. I must know where I am going. I must know my destination. That destination is called the purpose or the aim of my boat journey. But if I do not know:

- Where am I going?
- Why am I going?
- How do I get there?

Then I do not know my purpose of my boat journey. I will not know about my goal. I will just be wandering in the water. I will be lost and anxious. Even though I will paddle and will work hard to manage my boat, yet I will not be able to be successful in my journey. Similarly, I must know about my fasting:

- Why do I fast?
- What is the aim of my fasting?
- What do I have to achieve by fasting?
- Why has Allah made fasting compulsory on me?
- What makes my fasting successful?
- What makes my fasting a failure?
- How can I measure my success or failure in my fasting?

I must know the purpose of my fasting well. I must know it because I want to achieve the goal of fasting. I must know it because I don't want to miss my goal of fasting. I must know it to become successful in achieving my goal from my fasting. I don't want to fail in achieving my goal of fasting.

Would I start a study course without knowing what I should achieve at the end? Would I do it because some others are doing, and I just want to follow them blindly? Does any clever university student do that? Or would you run a business without a target of profit? No one does any important thing without objectives. Any organization begins its work with set objectives, and time to time, they assess how far they are towards achieving their objectives. Why do they do it? They do it to achieve their objectives for success.

Merciful Allah has prescribed fasting in the month of Ramadan with an objective as well. I must know what that objective is. A doctor prescribes a medicine with an objective. For example, the doctor prescribes Panadol to bring the fever down. Both the Doctor and the patient knows the purpose of the prescribed medicine. No doctor prescribes a medicine without a purpose, and no patient takes the prescription drugs without a purpose. Once, I asked a 6-year-old child, "Would you like any remedy?" She answered me without hesitation, "No. I do not want to because I am not sick." She knew that remedy has a purpose, and that purpose is to ameliorate the sickness.

Allah has informed about HIS prescription of fasting, and the objective of it in the Holy Quran. As a believer, this prescription from Allah is for me, and I must work on it. But if I say that I fast because I see other believers are fasting, and I do not know why I fast for, or I don't want to know the purpose of fasting, then is it good enough from my side? Not at all. That's why knowledge about fasting and its objective is extremely important.

Does Allah want his believers to be ignorant? Subhaanallah! Allah is pure from any weakness, and HE wants the believers to read, to study, and to be knowledgeable in Allah's guidance. Allah sent the first message of the Quran on HIS holy Messenger, and that was IQRA meaning Read, or understand, or learn. Islam teaches Muslims to know what they are doing it for. So, they can focus on the purpose, and they can be successful. Thus, I must know the importance of the purpose of fasting because it should be my priority step towards success.

Generally, as a Muslim, I must learn Allah's guidance and its purpose. Islam makes the learning to know all the basics as fundamental responsibility on me. If I remain ignorant, then Satan can deceive me, or even my own wrong desires and cravings can deceive me. If my target is to reach the city, would I like if I am going towards a suburb? If I fast and can't achieve the purpose of it, then am I successful? Even the common sense that Allah has given to us, demands to know the purpose of fasting correctly. In Worship, there must be no misunderstanding, or lack of understanding because we are dealing with the success or failure in life, death, and never-ending next life.

We learn what is right through knowledge, and Allah has made learning an essential thing for the believers. Therefore, every believer must have a clear understanding about the purpose of fasting. Allah has revealed it, and believers must understand it. Allah says about the importance of general learning in the Holy Quran:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

"Say: 'are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?'" [Al-Quran 39:9]

How many of us ask this question?

Ramadan month comes, and Ramadan month goes away from us every year. We Muslims observe fasting every year. We are very much used to fasting and taking it for granted. We just do it without any fuss or without any questions. Surely, that is a perfect sign of obedience to Allah, because we do it without hesitations. Obedience to Allah is very important in worship, but the question is, is obedience enough for reaping the enormous benefits from fasting that Allah wants us to achieve without knowing why is it for?

That's why, obedience must be followed by knowledge. When a person accepts Islam, he/she declares the obedience to Allah and HIS Messenger, but to follow Allah's guidance, how can one follow it without knowledge? Obviously, soon after the declaration, the next question arises, "Allah! What do I do to follow you?" Then comes the next question for perfection, "Why do I need to do it, or what am I going to achieve from it?"

When I started my fasting in my childhood, I did not ask my teacher, "Why do I need to fast, or what is the purpose of fasting?" I had wrong understanding about asking this question. I thought asking question would be a sign of disobedience from my part. So, I kept my question inside me. Many young people told me the same thing. They think asking questions about religion is a sign of disobedience. But it is not at all. Asking questions for defiance is not good, but asking question to learn is essential in Islam. Allah has asked questions and then answered in the holy Quran? What is the wisdom behind it? The wisdom is (Allah knows best) to grab the attention, to show the importance of the topic, and to implant the answer in deep mind. For example:

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالْإِيمَانِ ، فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتِيمَ

"Do you see the one who denies the Judgment (to come)? Then, it is such a (man) who repels the orphan (With harshness)." [Al-Quran 107: 1-2]

We also find in the Holy Quran, Prophet Ibraheem (PBUH) asked Allah question if HE can show him how HE gives life to the dead. He did that to increase his understanding, but not for defiance or disobedience. The Holy Quran states:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ ارْنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۖ قَالَ أُولَٰئِكَ تُؤْمِنُ ۖ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبِي

“And (remember) when Ibrahim Said: ‘My Lord! Show me how YOU give life to the dead:’ HE (Allah) said: ‘Do you not believe then?’ He (Ibrahim) said: ‘Yes! But to satisfy my own understanding’.” [Al-Quran 2:260]

Later in life, I realised that I should have asked more questions to my teachers to increase my own understanding about the purpose of fasting. If I had asked earlier, I would have gained three major benefits:

- **Perfection in fasting:** I would know my target, and I would have worked harder on it. How would I achieve better perfection without knowing why I fasted for? I wish that I was taught well about the objective of fasting. I wonder how many more Muslim children are like me grew up with fasting practices without knowing why! Should Muslims consider it as a priority in Islamic teaching?
- **Less regret:** I regret that I lost many years for not knowing the purpose of fasting in the Ramadan month. If I knew the purpose well, I would have achieved the purpose better than what I had due to absence of my knowledge. The biggest issue is the loss of time. Our life is with limited testing time, and wasting the opportunity due to lack of correct knowledge is really a loss. How can I not regret for losing so many chances in my life? Should not the same question be for all Muslims for strong reminder?
- **More rewards:** If I knew the purpose earlier, then I would have tried to achieve the purpose of fasting more. In my young days, I practiced more on getting used to staying away from food and drink, but I did less practice on overall self-control due to my lack of knowledge. If I knew better, I would have practiced more righteousness, and I would have earned more rewards. I am far from a perfect believer, and I have so many shortcomings, but the truth is, I found my understanding about purpose of fasting has grounded me more. Fasting and Eid has soul part and social part. I realised that my understanding reminds me sharply to focus on the soul part in fasting and in Eid. That understanding saves me from unrighteous actions in the name of joy or fun in fasting and Eid.

I wonder, if I did not ask myself the question about the objective of fasting in my earlier days, then how many more Muslims like me ask the same question to themselves? I want to be the only one in this ignorance, and I believe that every Muslim knows the purpose of fasting and they work hard to achieve that. But in case, if there is anyone like me, please be careful and do not neglect your time and opportunity. I did research on this on many Muslims, and all I can say is, we must emphasize more about the purpose of fasting in our Islamic teaching. The rituals, duties, rules and regulations are as important as the purpose. If we do not know the purpose, then we will not know whether we gained it or not.

If I am prescribed a medicine, I must know why I am taking it, and what result I should see after taking it. I should ask the doctor if I did not know. Similarly, I should ask, “Allah! What should I achieve with fasting?” Subhaanallah! Before even I ask Allah, Allah has given the answer in the same sentence, but I did not try enough to notice it. Allah is all-knowing, and HE knows what would be or should be our question, or what should we ask for our better understanding. That’s why, HE did not wait for me to ask, rather HE has outlined the objective in the Holy Quran when HE prescribed the fasting for the believers.

So, let us ask questions about fasting to increase our knowledge. Let us ask more questions to understand the objective of fasting better. Then we shall know what exactly Allah wants us to achieve from fasting, why to achieve that objective, how important to achieve that objective and what is the worst outcome if we don’t achieve the objective from fasting etc.

Purpose of fasting

What is the purpose of fasting? Is the purpose of fasting not eating, drinking, and not having sex? Many people in this world are doing that for different reasons. Does that mean that they are fasting too? Is the main purpose of fasting to practice hunger strike? Or to learn how to save money from abstaining from food or drink? Some organizations go without lunch to collect money for charity. Is that the purpose of fasting

then? Some people do not like to talk much during the fast fearing if they say wrong and sinful words. Is that the purpose of fasting that one would stop speaking for tongue control? Some people find hard to work with fasting, and they sleep a lot during the day to pass it quickly. So, is the purpose of fasting to stay lazy, not working, and to enjoy a sleeping holiday?

We can ask many questions for the clarifications. None of the above points is the purpose of fasting. Just imagine for a moment! Let's say, I do not know the answer, but I know what to do in my fast. Is that enough for me to achieve highest goal? If I am running in the Olympics, and I know how to run but do not know the purpose of it, will it give me enough confidence in my success? The truth is, if I know the real purpose of my fasting, then it will give me strong motivation to endeavour my best for best achievement. Without knowledge I might lose my motivation by getting bored with the rituals.

What is the purpose of fasting that Allah has prescribed it for? In this question, there are three main components below:

- **The fasting:** What is it? I know, but time to time, I need reminder. Especially, before the Month of Ramadan, I study the fasting verses in the Holy Quran, and the Hadis chapters on it to refresh the memory. That helps me not to forget the important things in fasting. Scholars, Imams, and teachers remind believers with special lectures on Ramadan month, the duties, and the rewards with rules about it.
- **The prescription:** Fasting is not only a ritual, but it is a special prescription from Allah. In our lives, when we hear about a prescription, it reminds us about the prescriber, patient and sickness, prescription, and the cure. The prescription is not an ordinary note on a paper, but it is a note from a knowledgeable prescriber who specializes in understanding the sickness and carefully prescribes remedy for the purpose of cure. As a believer, for fasting, I need to understand about the Prescriber Allah, and the sickness in me for which Allah has prescribed it, and the outcome of it as purpose.
- **The purpose:** Then, the last component is the purpose of Allah's prescription. The purpose is to purify my spiritual sickness in my heart and soul, to alleviate my high status to be honourable with best qualities to grant me a place beside the All-Honourable Allah. To do best as a patient, I must know my spiritual sickness, and I must know how to challenge it, and I must know whether fasting has cured me or not. Otherwise, I might think that I have done enough, yet my result is zero.

In my student life, especially in late primary years and in high school, I always used to get the top marks, but I always had a fear if I would score highest marks. So, I was quiet, shy, and always appeared to be not confident. On the other hand, many classmates were overconfident, and after each paper they used to boast that they have answered 100%, and they would pass with highest score. But in the exam result, many of them scored poorly or failed. This is an example of not fully understanding the questions and answers, and not doing well in the test. The same way, without understanding our spiritual sickness, and its cure, we may think that we have done fasting very well, but we might score very poorly in terms of purpose. There is an example in the Holy Quran about wrong notion of some people. Allah says:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا ، الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

“Say: Shall I tell you of them greatest losers because of their deeds? Those whose actions were wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works.” [Al-Quran 18: 103-104]

Even though this verse is not mainly for the believers, but believers must learn from the warning from this verse. They must not neglect learning about fasting and its purpose to be sure that they are not like those who think that they are doing brilliant, yet Allah knows that they are failing in the test.

Why did Allah prescribe the fasting? What is the purpose for which Allah prescribed it? In those questions, there is no necessity to theorize because Allah has clearly mentioned the purpose of fasting in the Quran. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may (learn) self-control (Taqwa)” [Al-Quran 2:183]

From this verse we find that Allah has selected the purpose of fasting and that purpose is “For learning Taqwa.” So as a sincere believer I am now bound to know about Taqwa. If I don’t know what is Taqwa then how can I learn Taqwa? Or how would I know whether I have learnt Taqwa from my fasting or not? Or without knowledge of Taqwa, how would I assess myself after the fasting month whether I have passed or failed in the exercise of Taqwa?

So, my duty now is asking more questions about Taqwa to understand it clearly. Some questions are:

- Do I understand what Taqwa is?
- Do I learn Taqwa from my fasting?
- How much Taqwa did I learn from my fasting last year?
- How much Taqwa am I going to learn from the fasting this year?
- How much more Taqwa I must target to learn?
- Do I have enough Taqwa as a believer?
- Do I have weakness in my level of Taqwa, and how can I overcome it?
- How much Taqwa must I have for my daily obedience to Allah?

These questions will help me to know exactly what I am supposed to do with fasting, and will help me to achieve my goal from fasting, and will assist me to prevent failure in my fasting mission etc. The most important issue for me that I don’t want to fail in my fasting mission, I want to win. That should be the spirit of every believer regarding the fasting and its purpose.

Understanding Taqwa

I want to know the simple meaning of Taqwa because I have a simple mind. Taqwa can be explained in many ways, but I shall try to make it easy here especially for myself. I memorized three easy points to understand Taqwa and I share it with you below:

1. Fear of Allah’s punishment.
2. Avoiding sins to avoid Allah’s punishment, and
3. Doing good deeds to receive rewards from Allah.

Now, I shall try to explain the three points in understanding Taqwa. We should remember that Taqwa is the purpose of Fasting in the month of Ramadan.

- **Fear of Allah’s punishment:** This is the main part in Taqwa. It is a state of mind filled with solid rock faith. The Faith is, I am accountable to Allah for each action whether it is intention inside me, or my action in every second in my life. The faith is that Allah created me to test if I obey HIM or not. For the testing HE has given two options to choose from. One option is righteous actions that HE permitted (Halal), and another option is bad actions that HE prohibited (Haram). The faith includes that Allah knows everything about me, and on top of that HE has appointed two angels with me to record my good or bad deeds for the Day of Judgment in the next life. Then, on that Day Allah will

judge me either to punish if I fail in the test with bad actions, or to reward me happy place if I pass the test with good deeds. So, my mind shapes itself during the strong faith in me, and when I do anything, this faith reminds me, "Don't do anything bad, Allah is watching, and the angels are recording."

That constant reminder creates a wall between me and the crime (Bad actions) and encourages me to obey Allah's guidance in doing the right or wrong thing. So, Taqwa is not any external force, fear of police, or fear of prison, but it is a permanent faith installed in my mind that is stronger than fear of police. It is a sure fear of Hell Fire that I never want to go near to that. This fear of Allah's punishment in my mind is called Taqwa, and I use it for every action in my life. Before doing anything, it reminds me, "Avoid actions that will bring Allah's punishment on you." It is the biggest safety device for me to control myself from bad desires, cravings, or actions. In case, I made a mistake, this Taqwa (Fear of Allah's Punishment) takes away my peace of mind until I repent, or I fix my wrong. With this Taqwa, I can tell myself off if I did not act in the best manner for self-correction without being humiliated by others.

- **Avoiding sins to avoid Allah's punishment:** Humans know what is right and what is wrong, yet they need reminders. Humans are forgetful, or they can get carried away at times. Even in the adults there is a childlike tendency, and parental tendency. With childlike tendency, people get carried away in the name of fun, game, enjoyment, power, position, and rich status. If they are not careful, they can get into bad habits without thinking if they have temporary fun. Children do not think far, and they do not take far-reaching decisions either. Sometimes, they get into a thing emotionally, and then they receive punishments by parents. That's why, in good parenting, constant reminder to the children is an essential requirement.

But the parental part in human is responsibility in thoughts, feeling, planning, carefulness in deciding, looking at the far-reaching results of the action. All adults do that, but without faith in unseen, the responsibility does not go far, and it stays within predictable immediate future. When, in an adult mind, faith is installed firmly, the responsible nature finds strong guidance to use itself thinking of the far-reaching result in this life, after the death and in the never-ending next life. Islamic faith guarantees the far-reaching picture in the future and shows two options of either punishment or happiness according to our actions. With that far-reaching picture, we can see the two destinations in our visions, and that vision becomes an automatic reminder to avoid the worst abode which is the destination of punishment for wrong actions.

Imagine! If I visualize the Hell Fire and the Paradise in my mind, can't I see them? Can't I see my house thousands of miles far away from me? Allah has given humans the powerful mindpower which can see some unseen from the description of them. Allah has described the terrible conditions in Hell Fire, and the most comfortable conditions in the Paradise. When I visualise them, and I use my responsible parental part in my mind, then the Hell Fire scares me, gives me chills, and every cell in my body screams and says, "Allah save me from the Hell Fire." That fear encourages me to avoid sins (Bad deeds, crimes, cruelty etc) to be saved from the punishment in the Hell Fire. My fear motivates me to be gentle, civil, righteous, and it does not harm anyone. Rather, it makes me a good human, and I become a valuable contributor with good actions in the family, in work or business, and in the society because good actions make a good society in which harmony, safety, love and peace are present. Therefore, avoiding sins is another part of Taqwa. In other words, Taqwa is a crime prevention device. Isn't it excellent! Do I have Taqwa? If I do, then I am the most fortunate person in this world!

- **Doing good deeds to receive rewards from Allah:** This is the 3rd part of Taqwa. If can say the first part of Taqwa is like the seed which fear of Allah is in the heart, then the 2nd part would be a tree without defects (Sins), and the 3rd part would be healthy tree with healthy fruits (Good deeds). See the connection. A healthy seed brings out a tree that has no defects, but healthy fruits. Taqwa has a healthy faith, and from that healthy faith the outcome is sinless healthy actions, and good healthy

righteous actions. All outward goodness goes into the good faith in Allah and HIS Fair Judgment in the next life. The stronger the faith is, the outcome in avoidance of evil and perseverance with good deed is clearly manifested.

Some translations translated Taqwa as righteousness because they have taken the finished part of Taqwa, because the inner faith makes them to control evil nature to flourish their best nature, the righteous actions. Some have translated Taqwa as self-control. They have taken the middle part which is the ability to control the sinful action, or the evil nature. If one can control evil nature, then there will one nature left which is the righteous nature. Some other translator has taken the meaning of Taqwa “Fear of Allah”, and it is the shortcut of the fear of Allah’s fair judgment and punishment. Therefore, three meanings are the part of the same stick. One is the bottom; one is the middle, and another is the end. They do not contradict one another at all.

One may ask a simple question, “How can I know that I have Taqwa?” The answer is, how do you know a tree is good or bad? You look at the tree and its fruits. Similarly, you can see your level of Taqwa by your deeds which is avoidance from sins and devotion in good deeds. If the tree has a defect, or the fruits are bitter, you must check the seed and treat the seed. Again, if the actions are bad and even though you are a Muslim, you need to check your faith if it is sick, faulty, weak, or insincere. That’s where, Fasting comes once a year to refresh the Taqwa which begins with the faith to cure its sickness, weakness, or impurity to produce sinless actions and the righteous deeds. Allah prescribes fasting as the medicine to cure the weakness in the faith. Because if faith is healthy and the actions become healthy as well.

Now, if we take the meaning of Taqwa, fear of Allah, then does it mean the negative faith in Allah? The answer is, there are two kinds of fear. One kind is negative to destroy, and another is to bring out positivity. Let us explain little more for better understanding:

- **Negative Fear to destroy:** Fear of death is a negative fear because from it, a person can experience heart palpitation, restlessness, hopelessness, crying with helplessness etc. Or if someone sees a hungry tiger in front of him and he cannot run away from it, then can panic, perspire, scream, and faint from negative fear. Negative fears are destructive. In these kinds of fear, Allah says many times in the Quran for not to fear any creations of Allah except fearing HIM for good actions for their ultimate success.
- **Positive fear to bring out positivity:** Another kind of fear we use in daily life for learning what is best. These fears are used to make someone careful, responsible, and to save from troubles for excelling in life. Such as, fear of accident from drinking and driving, fear of cancer from smoking, fear of being robbed if one keeps the door open at night etc. Like that Fear of Allah is for positive outcome, and it is a balanced fear. How is it a balanced fear? The answer is because this fear of Allah comes with clear instructions about what it is about. This fear is about controlling oneself from wrong deeds, and to do good deeds. A loving mother will say to her child, “Be fearful of the fire, do not go near it, because it will burn your finger.” Allah loves HIS creations very much, and HE wants them to be saved from punishment, and that is why HE calls them so many times in the Holy Quran to Fear Allah and not to do wrong and only to do right for their safe, sound, and everlasting happiness in the next life. Therefore, Taqwa is the name of balanced fear for the benefits only.

Again, Taqwa is a hidden device installed in the mind of believers that is very powerful. It is more powerful than Police, Court, or prison for correcting a believer. The believer with Taqwa fears Allah’s punishment and gives up any open or secret crime. It helps the believer to grow all the righteous traits in him/her to avoid Allah’s punishment, and to receive ever-lasting happiness in Paradise in the next life. Taqwa helps people to control their anger, rage, violence mood, cruelty, selfishness, greed, and jealousy because they believe Allah

knows their secret motives and bad actions. They become good parents, children, neighbours, fellow humans, and good citizens to make a righteous society with harmony and peace.

Taqwa prevents believer from crimes. Even bribes cannot buy them. They do not give up their morality for temporary gains, rather they fear Allah's punishment, and they look forward to the Paradise with patience, self-control and sticking to the righteousness that is far from the crimes. Whoever has this Taqwa in believers is called Muttaqeen. Allah loves them. Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Verily, Allah does love the Muttaqeen (Righteous)”. [Al-Quran 9:7]

Benefits of Taqwa

I have tried to explain the purpose of fasting in different ways. Here, I would want the reader to question one thing and that is, “Why did Allah prescribe fasting to learn Taqwa?” For my understanding, and yours, I want to know more about the reason behind this. When humans form organizations, takes a project, what kind of objectives or purposes they choose? When a university designs a course, what purpose do they choose? Purposes can be so many, but for fasting why is the purpose Taqwa? Why is Taqwa so important in the sight of Allah? Why Taqwa is the most beneficial thing for the believers? We need to understand that. If we understand the value of Taqwa, then we can appreciate why All-Wise Allah has prescribed fasting for no other purpose except Taqwa.

One point we all need to be clear about. That point is, Allah never does anything without best wisdom behind it. With our limited knowledge, we cannot understand everything about Allah's wisdom, but from Allah's message we can pick up something for our guidance and strengthening of our faith. Allah says,

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

“Then did you think that WE had created you for a joke, (without purpose), and that you will not be brought back to us.” [Al-Quran 23:115]

Surely, according to the above message from Allah, it is evident that in every prescription from Allah there is wise purpose, and the purpose is to benefit Allah's servants. In other words, Taqwa must be very beneficial for the believers in every aspect in this life and in the next life. I explained about the Taqwa and now, I can briefly discuss about the purpose of Taqwa before I describe some of the great benefits of Taqwa. The purpose of Taqwa is:

- **For guiding believers to the straight path**: in this life, we are in a journey. We have limited time in this journey. This journey in life is for us to prepare for the next life journey that has no end. If we prepare well, save enough for future happiness, then we shall have no fear or worries. How can we prepare for a next life that we cannot see? Or how can we know which way we must proceed to the best destination? Where are our road codes? Where is our safety plan? It is scary. For our straight path, and safe journey, Allah Merciful has sent guidance, and then to focus on the right journey, Allah has prescribed Taqwa for the believers. The purpose of that Taqwa is to keep them careful, dutiful, responsible from dangerous road (Sin, disbelief, joining partners, and criminal actions), and to encourage them to do only the right things to stay safely on the correct road to arrive in the best destination in next life. There is no other prescription medicine that can help believers to be rightly guided to arrive in Paradise. Taqwa is that divine prescription from Allah.
- **For saving believers from danger**: Believers have so many enemies. Some enemies are inside them, and some enemies are outside of them. The inside enemies are his/her own selfish desires, cravings and they are always trying to make him/her their slaves so they will forget about their real purpose

in life, and they will busy themselves with temporary worldly gratifications, and when they will arrive to Allah after their death, they will not be prepared. Then, their external biggest enemy is Satan, and because they do not see Satan, they think they are safe and out of danger. Whereas Satan is secretly inspiring into their hearts to divert them to dangerous rocky roads to keep them away from the safest high road of Allah to arrive in Paradise. Then their environment is alluring them to be naughty, irresponsible, greedy, lazy, angry, cruel, fighting, killing etc to take them out of safe road. Believers need the total safety from all sorts of dangers, and Allah Merciful grants them Taqwa. With Taqwa, Allah keeps them safe from troubles, crimes in the sight of people and in the sight of Allah. So, Taqwa for believers is with the best purpose. Allah wants to save HIS believers from sufferings in this life and in the next life.

- **For making believers successful:** Any kind of success is not easy. That can be small success or big success. The bigger success is the harder to achieve. For example, to achieve success in study, one needs to work hard and that is possible with tools to get discipline, to stay positive, to have hope and strong faith in success etc. What about success in this life test in Allah's court, and achieve Paradise for forever happiness? Is it easy? How can one discipline him/herself to focus on the success line all the time? There is nothing manmade that can be used for the success in achieving Paradise. Paradise is Allah's and only Allah can help with the key to enter it. That key is called Taqwa. Taqwa saves the believer from sins, encourages the believer to do right, and connects the believer with Allah and as a result, Allah grants success to the believer. Thus, getting success is another purpose of Taqwa.

Now, let us come to the next question, "Why is Taqwa so beneficial?" For our understanding, we should look at some examples. The examples below should give us a brief idea about the importance of Taqwa, and why believers must have it for their own benefit.

- **Taqwa is for moral purification:** Taqwa changes a person from bad to good, wrongdoer to right doer, unfair to fair, indecent to decent, cruel to kind, violent to peaceful, hateful to loving, disobedient to obedient to Allah, selfish to unselfish, greediness to generous, jealous to well-wisher, and from a sinner to a righteous servant of Allah. So, Muttaqi people are blessings for the family, relatives, societies, and for the world. If there are more Muttaqi people in this world, the world is bound to be peaceful. People will be safe from other people, and people will find harmony among them.
- **Taqwa is the best device:** Humans are doing their best to gain self-control to make the people right. Allah gave humans common sense and when they use it properly, they can learn good habits. But with divine training, if they learn Taqwa, then that is an excellent holistic quality that helps a person to change by their own thoughts, feelings, and actions. In this life, the root of all problems is immorality, and morality is its best medicine. Taqwa gives that morality, and that's why TAQWA IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SOLUTION FOR WORLD PROBLEMS. Thus, Taqwa is very important.
- **Taqwa for the receiving Allah's guidance:** Allah sent the Holy Quran with divine message for success, but if someone has no Taqwa, then would not be able taste the message. Allah says:

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

"This is the Book, in it is guidance, without doubt, for those who have Taqwa (Who Fear Allah)."
[Al-Quran 2:2]

- **Taqwa is the key to all goodness:** Allah promised all the goodness in this life and in the next life for those who have Taqwa. Allah promises:

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ، الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ، لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

“Look! Surely upon the friends and allies of Allah, no fear shall befall upon them, nor shall they grieve; (there are) those who believe and have Taqwa (Guard against evil from fear of Allah). For them is happy news, in the present life and in the hereafter.” [Al-Quran 10:62-63]

- **Allah's continuous support:** Muttaqi people receive help from Allah, and they feel belonged to Allah. Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

“Truly, Allah is with those who have Taqwa and those who do good.” [Al-Quran 16:128]

- **Allah protects Muttaqi:** Almighty Allah has all the power to be the best protector of HIS creation. Believers with Taqwa qualify to be protected by Allah Almighty. Allah says:

وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Allah is the protector (Wali) of the righteous (Muttaqun).” [Al-Quran 45:19]

- **Allah's love:** How can a believer receives Allah's Love? Well, with Taqwa he/she can gain that. Allah says:

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“Surely, Allah loves who have Taqwa.” [Al-Quran 3:76]

- **Respect in the sight of Allah:** What is the quality that makes someone respectful or Honorable in the sight of Allah? It is not wealth, or nationality or appearance. It is Taqwa. Allah says:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

“Surely, the most honorable of you, in the Sight of Allah is (he, who is) the most righteous (With Taqwa) of you.” [Al-Quran 49:13]

- **Guarantee for sustenance:** Whoever has Taqwa, and seeks sustenance from Allah, Allah guarantees a way out for that Muttaqi. Allah says:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ، وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ

“And those who have Taqwa for Allah, HE (Always) prepares a way out. And HE provides for him by (means that) he could never imagine.” [Al-Quran 65:2-3]

- **Safety from enemies:** Taqwa qualifies believers for the safety from the enemies by Allah's help. Allah says:

وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ

“But if you are constant (patient) and do have Taqwa, not the least harm will their cunning do to you, because Allah encompasses around about all that they do.” [Al-Quran 3:120]

- **Blessings from the heavens and the earth:** What is the remedy for all the calamities from the heavens and the earth? Again, it is Taqwa. Allah says:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْفُرَى آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“And if people of the towns had only believed and had Taqwa to Allah, certainly WE should indeed have opened out to them blessings from heavens and earth.” [Al-Quran 7:96]

- **Welcome to Paradise:** Taqwa is like a visa for entering Paradise. Muttaqi believers will be welcomed to enter Paradise. Allah says:

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ

“And those who have Taqwa to their Lord will be led to the Paradise in groups: When they arrive there, and its gates will be opened, and the keepers (of the Paradise) will say: ‘Peace be upon you! you have you done well! You enter here to live in there forever.’” [Al-Quran 39:73]

To summarize, why did Allah prescribe Fasting to learn Taqwa? The answer is, Taqwa is the most important quality for all the goodness in this life and in the next life.

Self-control through fear of Allah:

Allah prescribed fasting for learning self-control. I am keen to write about a few important aspects regarding self-control. They are what self-control is, why self-control is important, and how fear of Allah helps to gain self-control. Each aspect deserves some description to be understood better.

What is self-control? Self-control is an ability to control one’s emotions, impulses, and desires. It is necessary for every person. Rich or poor, old or young, male or female all need self-control to achieve goals in their lives. Within humans there are destructive desires, thoughts, cravings, or urges. If they follow their impulses without thinking well by checking the pros and cons, or if they do not assess the risk factors, or if they do not plan properly for the best result, then they may do something to regret later. The human brain has a part to control the planning, assessing and decision making with necessary information before the execution. Humans are gifted with willpower, and the ability by the All-Wise creator Allah to control their desires or impulses for the best outcome. For this power of control, humans are super being, Allah’s super creation. With this controlling power, humans can avoid something that they want to avoid, and they can go ahead with something they want. Humans have positive and negative desires, cravings, and impulses in them. Unless they utilize their self-control, they can do wrong things to borrow troubles for them and for others. That’s why as the responsible and honorable super beings, they must use self-control to direct their energy and effort into good actions. Every person should be aware of that self-control power within him or her to use it correctly. Otherwise, if it is not used, then a person can be a slave of bad desires, negative cravings, and harmful impulses and without realizing that person may damage his/her own integrity, honor, credibility, well-being, and prosperity. Self-control is like a control mechanism in an aircraft. With it, it can fly safely with passengers without crashing in the jungle or without dropping in the ocean. Self-control is for safety, security, and for the best outcome without damage.

Why is self-control so essential for every human? If we think of a car that can run fast or slow, why do we need to control its speed and direction? The answer is, we want to keep it under control. Otherwise, it may hit a pedestrian, or a cyclist, or the car before it, or can get into an accident. Controlling that car is necessary to arrive at the destination safely, without harming himself and others. Human desires can be faster than a car. It needs boundary considering the safety of the person and the others. Desire can drive a person faster than millions of miles to hurt someone. Or it can raise the anger in a person to the highest degree to burn self and others. Desire can turn a person into a robber due to the greed to become a rich person overnight. Out of control desires can make people killers, molesters, oppressor tyrants, disrespectful towards other’s honor, wealth, and lives. On positive note, self-control makes people patient, thoughtful, reasonable, followers of moral boundaries, balanced in personality, self-respectful and respectful to others, contributors

in the family or society rather than damagers, they become successful. Everyone human understands the immediate needs in this life in terms of the benefits of self-control.

But usually there is another area one may ignore without belief in GOD. That is the obedience to GOD, in a believer for the success in the never-ending next life. Unless the desire in a believer is under control, it cannot follow discipline, and it will be defiant, disobedient, and will drive the person towards failure in the life mission. That is far more dangerous than losing one's job in this world due to out-of-control anger, because one can get another job here, but one cannot return to this life from the next life after the death. That makes self-control in a believer the most important quality to avoid Allah's punishment and to gain Allah's rewards. Therefore, self-control in Islam is a big issue that every believer must master for his/her own safety and salvation.

How fear of Allah helps to gain self-control? One may say, "Can't I gain self-control without fear of Allah?" So many people in this world are using so many methods for self-control for immediate things. For example, to have self-control, there are anger management courses that benefit so many people. Or for self-control on one's diet, there are so many tips available for one to gain self-control. Or to gain control in blood pressure there are some medicines available. Or to achieve self-control over mood swings, one may take some prescription drugs, etc. So, to answer that question, I would say, yes, you can gain some level of self-control by many things that Allah has provided for HIS best creation, which is humanity. Allah has provided knowledge, common sense, mind, brain, abilities to think and generate ideas and so on. But on top of that, Allah has provided another super tip for self-control and that is the "Fear of Allah's punishment" through the Faith.

This special tip does not work on every human. There are preconditions for being qualified for it, such as belief in Allah, in the Judgment in the next life, in the punishment and reward in the next everlasting life, and all other things that Allah has asked to believe in. After the belief, the next pre-condition is to acquire knowledge on those topics one has believed in, and then the total submission to Allah with heart and soul, mind, and emotion etc. When all these preconditions are met, only then, a person can be afraid of Allah's punishment, and love for Allah's reward in him/her. Without these preconditions, fear of Allah will not make sense to a person. For that reason, Allah reminds the believers often in the Holy Quran to Fear HIM (HIS fair judgment). Allah calls the believers:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and let every soul look to what it has put forward for the future. Yes, fear Allah! Verily, Allah knows well (all) that you do." [Al-Quran 59:18]

In the above message, fear Allah is with specific context, not general. The general message to believers is that Allah loves them, and they love Allah. But when it comes to the context of Allah's fair judgment, Allah calls the believers to fear Allah's fair judgment in which HE will not let anyone go unfairly, or for favoritism. Allah wants HIS sincere believers to earn the good deeds to be qualified well for the award from HIM on the Day of Judgment. Allah calls them to be honest, responsible, and hardworking, and to do that they must have self-control. They must practice accountability through fear and action. Fear of being accountable to Allah's court for each deed is a deep moving fear that shakes the person internally. We know, a big person with fear inside can be very weak because outer shape does not determine the outcome of a person. Again, we know a small person can be very bold due to the fearlessness inside him. Our inner state is guided by our inner beliefs, inner fears, or inner hopes. A believer is equipped with hope in Allah's Mercy and for that after a mistake he repents and moves on without giving up. On the other hand, due the fear of accountability for each action, he fears Allah's punishment, and from that fear he can win against any odds. It means, he can

control himself against any sinful action. With fear of Allah, he can avoid lucrative bribe, oppression to followers, corruption to be rich, stabbing back to climb the ladder of power, killing for the rage, hatred from the hurt, stinginess from the greed, and inhumanity from the lowly desires and so on.

Luqman Hakim, a wise man, wanted his dear son to learn self-control. For that he taught his son the belief in accountability. That one simple yet deep acting remedy was widely prescribed by him as the best tool for self-control because what faith can do, nothing else can go that far. Allah has quoted his advice in the Holy Quran:

يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي سَمَاءٍ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ
“(Luqman said,) O my son! Even if there be (only) the weight of a mustard seed and it was (Hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth (in the open for judgment): Verily, Allah knows (even) the finest mysteries and is absolutely informed (Of them).” [Al-Quran 31:16]

Fear of Allah in believers is to remind them of the harm of disobeying Allah by exceeding fair limits set by Allah. Allah has outlined what is good, and what is bad or what is righteous and what is evil, or what is beneficial for everyone and what is harmful for everyone. HE wants HIS believers to obey HIM to achieve only benefits and success, and for that HE wants them to have strong self-control in them for their strong motivation to be righteous only for the benefits of selves and for making a better world. That self-control must be a rock-solid one, that can resist all temptations, and corruption. Allah prescribed fasting to learn that kind of rock-solid self-control. In life, we all understand the benefits of self-control, yet without practice we fail when we face impulses. For example, how many people can control anger when they are abused. How many people can control their greed when they are exposed to illegal money? How many people can forgive when they are traumatized by others? Many people can't control themselves when they face the calamity. Why can't they?

They can't because they do not have a deep faith that motivates them by controlling what will be beneficial to them and to others. They look for logic and often logic does not give them enough motivation because suddenly they do not see a better future. Whereas fear of Allah from a faith based on divine knowledge shows them the rewards from Allah either in this life or in the next life. That deep faith prevents self-control from collapsing, or from discouraging. If people in this world had that, then vendetta, revenge, abuse, killing, wars, corruptions, exploitation, and destruction could have been less due to self-control in people.

Fear of Allah to boost self-control does not cost any money, or time towards a long course. It is simply putting a faith device to monitor the boundary of right and wrong and if the person is exceeding the limit. Fear of Allah is like a security camera for 24 hours and seven days without any cost. Sometimes, even advanced security cameras do not work, or get broken but fear of Allah stays in the heart all the time. It only needs remembrance of Allah through the Quran, prayers, fasting, or hajj and listening or speaking about it more. As I mentioned earlier there can be many other ways to boost our self-control, but fear of Allah is the best, permanent, most effective, and an extraordinary tool to help boosting self-control for the believers, and that's why, Allah calls the believers to adhere to the fear of Allah all the time until they die for the ultimate success in this life test. Allah calls:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ
“O you who believe! Fear Allah as HE should be feared, and do not die except in a state of Islam (Submission to Allah).” [Al-Quran 3:102]

How does Fasting helps to learn self-control?

I explained before how “Fear of Allah” helps gain self-control. Now I shall try to discuss how fasting helps gain self-control in believers. To understand better we must keep in mind a few basics of fasting regarding self-control. They are:

- **Fasting with faith:** Fasting is a faith-based program. It is prescribed for the believers because they have faith, and they have the understanding about it, and they have surrendered to the faith in Allah and so on. Because of their faith, the training of self-control works in them. If any other person fasts like a Muslim fast without the faith as a Muslim, then due to the absence of faith, the self-control exercise will not be as effective as with faith. Of course, fasting will give so many benefits such as patience, determination etc. But faith takes the training to the deepest part in the soul to work best. Faith contributes the highest conviction, devotion, love, sacrifice, hope, and fear to build the highest level of self-control. Fasting is a specially designed course to learn self-control, and it is designed by All -Wise Allah.
- **Fasting with intention:** Intention plays a big part in human planning in achieving something. That achievement can be a small one such as passing the exam, or buying a house, or getting a job, or building a relationship. If there is no intention of what one wants to do or to achieve, then the outcome will be poor, accidental, and unpleasant. Again, if the intention is to achieve harder things like to be always a happy person, or to be an honest, reliable, peaceful, and righteous person all the time, then the intention must be solid to work for it. But if one aims to achieve the hardest thing in this life and in the next life such as righteousness in this life and paradise in the next life, the intention for it must be with highest purity with doubtless faith. Fasting in the Ramadan month require that kind of intention to exercise self-control for the faith in Allah, and to what Allah orders to be saved from the punishment of Allah. Now, if someone fasts without faith, and without the intention of fasting for Allah’s sake, won’t be able to taste the sweetness in practicing self-control from fasting. Intention to please Allah in fasting strengthens the self-control so high, that food, drink, sex, or other sins can hardly defeat the self-control in believers. The stronger the intention the stronger the self-control.
- **Fasting with self-controlled practice:** This is a big factor for self-control. Look! Usually, people know about self-control, it’s importance of being successful in life, or the consequences without it though study, listening to stories, or reading stories etc. As a result, mostly the understanding of self-control is a theoretical knowledge without much practice. Then, whenever people face calamities, traumas, odd challenges in life, due to the lack of practice they cannot follow self-control in dealing with those situations. That’s why practical training is necessary to develop habits in self-control.

All-Wise Allah has advised people in the Quran to guard themselves against wrong beliefs, thoughts, or actions. That advice is common to the mankind to come to Allah’s way. But Allah never forces anyone to take HIS course of guidance. When some people accepted Allah’s call, then HE prescribed a month-long fasting course to provide the practice of self-control. This self-control practice is for many hours every day for a month to build up the required habit of controlling the hunger, thirst, and lust for the pleasure of Allah, and with the fear if they did not control themselves then they may face punishment. That practice of self-control makes fast training unique and special. This practice involves faith, intention, and actions.

If there are still questions in our mind about fasting and self-control, I would like to address that to show the co-relation between fasting and self-control. Fasting itself is self-control. It overtakes the power of hunger, thirst, and lust in a person. When the stomach rumbles for food, the fasting says, “You won’t get the food as you want.” The fasting reminds the person, you are not the boss now, Allah is your LORD, and you must follow Allah. So be patient and control yourself.” That’s how, fasting doesn’t give any control on the desire

or craving, and places Allah's command as a controller. That's how, the desire fights for food in every second, but the mind and soul surrender fully to Allah by giving the full control in Allah's command. As a result, the body learns to accept not complaining because the mind and soul does listen to that complaint.

How does fasting helps? It reminds the person of the way Allah does not allow you to eat despite hunger, the same way Allah teaches you to abstain from eating Haram food all the time. Fasting reminds the person, the way Allah prohibits you from drinking during the fast, the same Allah prohibits you drinking Haram drinks. Fasting reminds the person, the way Allah has prohibited you in sex during the fast, the same Allah has prohibited you all types of illegal sex. Fasting reminds the person, follow Allah's codes despite it being hard, and control yourself from wrongs to obey Allah. That's how, second after second, minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day for a month, fasting reminds the person to practice self-control.

What level of self-control are we talking about here? I should highlight it for our understanding. For example, anger control. Fasting's objective for self-control includes anger control as well. Holy prophet (pbuh) said:

فَإِنْ سَابَّهُ أَحَدٌ أَوْ قَاتَلَهُ فَلْيَقُلْ إِنِّي أَمْرٌ صَائِمٌ

"If anyone scolds (Abuses) him, or wants to fight with him, he (she) should say, I am a person who is fasting (Fasting teaches me to control myself from anger)." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

Back to the question again. What level of control does one need through self-control? Is it the elimination of anger? Or getting rid of anger totally? No, anger-control from self-control does not teach that. The feeling of anger in a person is part of him or her. Allah never says to eliminate it because that is not possible. Allah wants believers to control it so that their anger will never get out of control, or reason to exceed their legal fair limits. An example is, we need fire for cooking, but we control that fire with guard plates to curtail its power from burning our house down. Allah loves HIS servants, and HE wants them to control their urges within the fair limit HE has given to them for their own good, and for the good of others.

To summarize, fasting helps believers to learn self-control in the following ways:

- **Self-control to obey Allah:** Fasting is a practice to obey Allah against own evil desires and actions.
- **Self-control by surrendering the desires to Allah:** Fasting is a practice to suppress own evil desires by surrendering own desires to the obedience of Allah in all issues in life.
- **Self-control with feeling Allah's presence:** Fasting prevents a believer to break Allah's commands even by secret eating or drinking to avoid evil actions in life from the same feeling (That Allah is watching me).
- **Self-control for fear of Allah's punishment:** Fasting also give practice to abstain what Allah prohibited so that the same way believer can avoid all evil thoughts or actions in life.

Self-control for noble character

What is noble character? Noble is excellent, and noble character is excellent, outstanding character. In it has all the best moral qualities without contaminations. When the good spirit and good action align in the same line then it is free from treachery, falsehood, and selfishness, and that is noble. Nobility in moral qualities is not limited to rich people, nor can it be produced and purchased. For it, one needs to submit to the Highest Noble GOD (Allah free from all shortcomings) and follow HIS guidance in moral character. Noble does not come from race or nations, but it is of having finest personal qualities. Noble character is high moral principles. Characters in humans can go in two ways. One way is bad moral character, and the another is good moral character. But noble is in superlative degree, which is the highest form of good character.

Noble character is admirable to everyone. It raises the honour of a person to the highest level. People find inspiration in noble character people. People follow their footsteps or feel worthy to follow the footsteps of

noble people. Noble character included all forms of best qualities that Allah prescribes for a human, and in the sight of Allah the honourable humans are those who have noble characters. Allah says in the holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

“O mankind! WE have created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another (Not that you may hate each other). Surely, the most honourable of you, in the Sight of Allah is (he, who is) the most righteous (with noble character) of you. Verily, Allah is All Knowing and Well-aware (of all things). [Al-Quran 49:13]

Allah sent HIS Messengers with exemplary character to be role models for mankind. Their noble characters were one way street, and that means only good and no harm. Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (Peace be upon them) had best moral character. Allah gives HIS testimony about the character of HIS Last Messenger Muhammad (PBUH) in the holy Quran in HIS own words as following:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And verily, you (are placed) on an exalted standard of character.” [Al-Quran 68:4]

Noble character is for role modelling, and it covers all best qualities. In humans, hardly the 100% noble character is found in a person. One can try, but often a person has bright side in his character, and with it, another side can be with darkness in character. But with Allah’s Messenger, his character is balanced, without any darkness, and that’s why Allah made him a role model for mankind to follow his conduct. Allah says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

“In the Messenger (Muhammad) of Allah, you have a beautiful (Pattern of conduct) and example for one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who Praises Allah much (often and deeply).” [Al-Quran 33:21]

Therefore, noble character is with best qualities, for honour and success, and to achieve it requires effort, following the best examples from Holy Messengers of Allah, and receiving Allah help to be protected from the bad qualities.

Why noble character is important? There is a saying, “If money is lost, nothing is lost. If health is lost, something is lost but if the character is lost then everything is lost.” Moral character is extremely important for humans to remain honourable. Allah made them to be honourable, and for it, HE gave human knowledge, consciousness, wisdom, commonsense, and the sense of prestige. On top of it, HE gave them guidance to be aware of their high status as a super creation, and tips how they should practice best moral characters. In humans, there is angelic and animalistic urges. Angelic urges are to increase best moral character in a person. Animalistic lowly nature drags humans down from the honourable position to the lowest of the low. The animalistic nature comes out through bad manners, behaviours, speech, and actions.

How does a human go lower than an animal? The example is killing. An animal kills for survival. When an animal hunts another animal, usually limits the hunt to one prey for relieving the hunger. But when a human gets angry, or becomes greedy, or lose noble character, there is often no limit. With bombs humans kill many innocent women, children, babies, the sick and vulnerable. The cruelty goes beyond reason, logic, and commonsense. But if humans can control their own anger, cruelty, destructive mentality, and use the opposite angelic qualities, he/she can be the life saviour. We see the everyday example in humans of their wonderful contribution in saving life, protecting vulnerable, spreading peace, and practicing generosity, and we gain hope from these. That is possible for noble character in humans.

Noble character is for the peace in the individual, and for others. For example, if someone helps others with nobility, generosity, unselfishness, and compassion, can be free from guilt, and can sleep well without anxiety. On the other hand, another person without noble character, cheats, takes bribes, exploits the poor, steals, robs, and does criminal activities, will have guilt, worry, something to hide, or something to be afraid of such as getting caught, and for that he may feel anxious, suspicious, and fearful without peace and serenity of mind. So, due to the absence of noble traits, he has no peace, and for his criminal, immoral, and inhumane activities he spreads the poison of unhappiness, insecurity, and instability in the society.

Another example is the relationship between a husband and a wife. If both have noble character such as unselfish love, unselfish mind free from greed, respect for one another, forgiveness for one another if one makes mistakes, calmness instead of anger, smile instead of rudeness, kindness instead of domestic violence, trust instead of mistrust, mutual consultation instead of arrogance or dictatorial, peaceful instead of threatening, and responsible with full honesty, then both will have peace and happiness in their marital relationship. Their children will taste the sense of peace and security from their lovely parenting, and the family will be a peaceful and loving home. This family can supply peaceful children to society to build the society to be peaceful. On the other hand, if the spouses have absence of noble character, and they fight, quarrel, argue, hate one another, cheat one another, dishonest towards one another and so on, then peace will say goodbye to them despite their huge money, wealth, education, and social high status. Their peace and happiness will collapse sooner or later. From this example, it is very clear that true peace and happiness comes and get secured from noble character.

Then, if we look at society, what makes the society flourish with peace and happiness? If there is huge corruption in officers, bribing is the foundation of getting work done, hijacking is the norm, criminals control the streets, police are dishonest, the court has no law and order, rape is common, the poor are exploited and so on, will that society be safe, peaceful, and happy for the people? It will not be, because noble traits are absent in there, human rights are absent there, and no one feels safe and secured in there. That society will face chaos, forceful disappearance, unjustified killing or judicial killing, and the society will have jungle law instead of fair law. Here again, we see clearly that it is noble character in a society brings happiness for all. This goes for world peace. Unfair wars, imposed wars, and unreasonable wars are the result of lack of nobility in humans. Otherwise, if humans practiced love among humans, compassion towards one another, and dutifulness towards the fellow humans, then any disagreement could have been solved peacefully. But alas! Absence of noble character can bring the world into chaos, and unsafe for the humans.

Why noble character needs self-control When we drive a car, our target is to drive safely. For safe driving we follow the road code. The Road Code is a set of instructions about what to do and what not to do. Now, a question is, we have road codes, driving training with proper licence, nice road, and nice weather, then why do we still cause accidents? Why do so many people with tough love end up in the hospital with some kind of accident on the road? Why do many drunk drivers end up either maiming self or maiming others? Why do all the rules fail? Why does the journey often bring suffering instead of joy?

One can say, it is due to careless driving, or another can say it is for drunk-driving, or another can say that it is irresponsible driving. But the main reason is the lack of self-control in the driver. A driver with self-control can exercise all the necessary duties in driving such as, carefulness, compassion, responsibility, thinking of self and others and the economy etc. Then again, if we think about a car that looks nice and posh, very glamorous yet the control mechanism is weak or faulty, and then it must go through rocky mountain road, what outcome comes to our mind? Safely arriving in the destination to make a successful happy journey? Or we feel the chill with the possibility that the control will fail, and the disaster will embrace.

How does fasting contribute to self-control for noble character? The objective of fasting is to learn self-control. But what is the purpose of self-control? How can we learn that a believer has learnt self-control, or another has not? Or how can we measure the level of self-control one has. Or what are the symptoms in a

person that confirms he/she has self-control? Unfortunately, the answer to those questions cannot be given with one word. It requires many words with analysis.

An analogy will be a seed and the tree. The seed is under the ground, and it can't be seen. From it, springs out a tree with branches, leaves, flowers, and the fruits. How do we know whether the seed is good or bad? Well, easy answer. We know the seed is good by the healthy tree with healthy fruits. Similarly, self-control is inside a person, it can't be seen by others, but we see it through the expressions, gesture, character, manner, and the actions of that person. If the person has good self-control, it will come out as best moral character in him/her.

Accidents contribute to mess in all possible ways. It results in destruction. But with proper control the journey brings happiness. Our life is a journey, and we are like cars. We have good desires and wild desires in us. The negative desires push us to face accidents for embracing disappointing failures and sufferings. If we do not control those negative desires in us, the result is immoral actions, manners, behaviours, and actions. These negative desires cost us in many ways. The cost is losing peace, honour, safety, good relations, comfort, straight path, balanced life, and ruining the success of Hereafter. If we do not control our own control mechanism, our self-control will be loose, faulty, weak, and we cannot put up strong wall between us and the danger or loss from grace. Due to the lack of boundaries, any harmful thing intrudes to guide us to the path of danger.

Noble is a high status in anything, and it is above ordinary. If you want to climb towards something above you, you must make effort to climb up with safety arrangements. The higher you want to climb, the more effort you need with stronger safety. That safety is self-control that prevent you to go up successfully without falling. Noble character is a safe status in the character ladder without falling into mean traits. If noble and corrupt mixed up in character, then the nobility goes away. That is why, noble character must be protected from mean character. How can you protect it without self-control? When we want a safe house, we must do two most important things. One is protecting the house from unsafe elements and flourish the house with nice safe things. Similarly, for noble character two things are necessary. One is to protect it from immoral thoughts, feeling or action and without self-control that is not possible.

How can noble character grow in a person if he/she cannot control the following temptations:

- Wrong desires
- Bad cravings
- Dirty look
- Sharp tongue
- Abusive talks
- Cursing
- Hot temper
- Rage
- Impulses
- Emotional outburst
- Jealousy
- Over suspicion
- Hatred
- Revengeful nature
- Aggressive gestures
- Selfishness and greed
- Cruelty
- Obsession for power and wealth illegally
- Excessive attraction for this temporary life

➤ Sinful thoughts and criminal intents

Divine guidance for noble character: Allah has given the reasoning power in humans to identify what is good and what is bad, or what is noble in character and what is not. That is called Aql in Quranic terms. For this Aql one person is different from another in character, because the Aql dictates a person to stay away from stealing, robbing, loving or raping, honesty or corruption, for peace or the violence, the compassion or selfishness. Some people are using it as best they can and becoming good, admirable people in the society. But the question is, is the Aql enough to gain noble character by itself, or it needs support to boost it by divine booster doses?

For example, Aql might say to the person to restrain himself from huge ill-gotten money when his greedy desire is saying to go for it. That brings the inner battle, and one must be defeated. The greedy desires argue, "Don't lecture me! I can manage without being seen or caught by police." Often, bad desires win over the reason (Aql) or suppresses the Aql and that's why despite knowledge or conscience many people are committing crimes and dumping the noble character into the dustbins. So, we see, Aql needs supports to win. Allah's guidance is that strong support. Allah's guidance provides faith-based strong reasons to gain strong self-control to proceed towards noble character through all the impediments. So, if the greedy desires argue, "I can do it without being caught by the police," the faith says, "But Allah is watching, and HE will punish me. I can't escape from HIS punishment." Or when the greedy desire says, "Don't be stupid, and don't lose this chance," the faith says, "If you abstain from corruption, Allah will grant you Paradise. Which one is better?"

Fasting is a divine guidance to learn self-control to learn righteousness (Noble character). It is Allah's great blessing to support our Aql to choose the right options all the time. When Aql is under pressure from wrong temptations, Allah's guidance assists the Aql to stay firm from the best outcome. The hope for the best outcome for noble character, and the fear for the bad character, always work in a believer to strengthen the self-control. That's why, divine guidance is extremely necessary for achieving and maintaining noble character.

Self-assessment on fasting's purpose

In self-assessment, how much I gained from the purpose of fasting, there are few things necessary to help me or you. I shall point out a few below:

What is self-assessment? Self-assessment is a process to determine one's strength or weakness against the goal of something that he/she worked for. Suppose I observe fasting in the month of Ramadan to achieve the purpose. It is Allah's blessing that HE has clearly outlined the purpose of fasting. In other words, HE said what I must achieve from my fasting, and that is Taqwa, or self-control, or righteousness, or the noble character. It means, fasting for me is not without aim, and not only a ritual that I do for the sake of doing without achieving the purpose of it. The simple analogy is if I go to market to buy something, and then I come back empty handed, then I have failed to fulfil my aim.

Self-assessment points me to my success or failure. Or if not full success, then how much progress I made or I did not make any progress. Without self-assessment I cannot know whether I mastered the purpose of fasting or not, or what degree. Fasting month comes and goes, and if I do not assess myself, then I would be at risk. Self-assessment requires determination to do well. One must care to achieve the purpose of fasting, and for it he/she should be determined to reach to the top. It requires courage as well. If one is afraid of looking at his/her failures or shortcomings, then self-assessment is impossible for that person. One must have humility for self-assessment to question himself/herself to find the truth, but if that person has ego or arrogance will not dare to look for his/her own faults. Egoistic people are like Mr or Mrs Right, and they dislike being corrected.

For self-assessment, a person needs wisdom as well. Wisdom guides the person to the direction of asking the right questions, to be far-sighted for greater benefits, and saves the person from illogical emotions, self-love, and misguidance. Self-respect is also a big requirement for self-assessment because an honourable person avoids being told off by others and looks at own strength and weakness to correct himself/herself. That way, they saved themselves from embarrassment. Allah loves that quality in HIS believers. HE wants them to assess themselves before they are assessed on the Day of Judgment and continue progressing in every aspect. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“O you who believe! Fear Allah (Allah’s fair judgment) and let every soul look to (self-assess) what it has put forward for the future. Yes, fear Allah! Verily, Allah knows well (all) that you do.” [Al-Quran 59:18]

Necessity of self-assessment? The importance of self-assessment is evident for its wide practice in this world. Assessment in businesses, organizations and government’s performances are a normal essential in today’s world. Self-assessment is a practice of wise people who make hard efforts to excel in their lives. Ambitious people use this practice because they want to evaluate their ability against their goal, and they want to identify the barriers to find ways to overcome them. Without it going forward in life is difficult.

To be successful, one needs to be confident about his/her own ability. Confidence makes things easy to do, and lack of confidence breaks the person down by making him/her feel incapable of doing. Many able people fail in their mission without confidence even though they can do it successfully. The purpose of fasting is understood better when a believer starts self-assessment about it. It allows the believer to focus on the purpose with full attention and with heart and soul. It is like, often people see things without registering much. Similarly, without self-assessment a believer cannot focus on the purpose of fasting as much as he/she can with self-assessment. It helps engaging a believer deeply around the purpose of fasting, what is it, why is it, and how to gain it, and how much is gained etc.

To err is human. No one is perfect. A believer is not perfect either. But a believer has the guidance, the role model, and opportunity for correction. Self-assessment opens a believer’s eyes, can see his/her own shortcomings and lacking, looks for remedy for it, and can start self-correction immediately. Life is very short, and the sooner a believer can realize where his lacking is, and the necessity of quick fixing, can fix the problem. For example, that can start with seeking forgiveness of Allah with repentance. It means, a believer is not perfect but able to repent quickly for self-correction and success. Allah says:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards asks for Allah’s forgiveness, he will find Allah often Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [Al-Quran 4:110]

The importance of self-assessment is like the importance for a chef his cooked food before he serves it to the customers. He tastes the salt and the flavour and the quality of food so carefully, and patiently, and for that he maintains his high reputation, secures his job, receives increases in his salary, customers are happy, the owner makes money, and everyone gets the share of success. Self-assessment about the purpose of fasting is also for self-correction to maximise the profits of reward from Allah, and to minimise the mistakes.

Some tips about self-assessment:

- **Know clearly about what the purpose of fasting is.** This basic knowledge is a compulsion on every believer. For it, one does not need to study in the university, but Allah made it easy to understand for the educated or uneducated believers. Allah says that the purpose of fasting in the Ramadan

month is learning Taqwa (Self-control to avoid sins, and righteousness to do good deeds with noble character to demonstrate it). If any fasting believer is not fully aware of the purpose of fasting, then he/she cannot pinpoint the main issue for self-assessment. In self-assessment, one must look for the success and failure but if he/she does not know on what issue must be looked at, then the self-assessment will be a waste of time.

- **Asking questions with courage.** Self-assessment means self-criticism, and the proper criticism is asking questions from left to right without hesitation. One must place himself in the court box and asks question as a prosecutor. The intention must be, “Allah! I am questioning myself for perfection for YOUR sake and grant me patience and wisdom to learn from it.” There is nothing to be shy about it because, in self-assessment, Allah does not take any judgmental role. HE knows our heart anyway, and HE loves our effort for self-correction. Therefore, one must not hesitate asking tough question about his own efforts, the quality of efforts, the sincerity in efforts, and the outcome of the efforts etc.
- **Personal grading.** Take each aspect of the purpose, and then grade it. For example, one aspect of fasting purpose is honesty. It is a righteous quality if it is done for the fear of Allah’s punishment. If honesty is only for more profits, and not for Allah’s obedience, then that is a good deed, but because it was not done for Allah, Allah will not give any reward for it in the next life. The reward will be limited to this life only. Then, write down different aspects in life regarding honesty. Such as honesty with spouse, relatives, job, business, politics, dealings, human rights, with believers or non-believers, with animals and in promises, etc. Then for each aspect, make grading from 1 to 10, and honestly look at yourself which grade you sit on. That way, you can use your own honesty for the sake of Allah, and you can see your own grade in honesty to work on to take the grade higher.
Is it an easy exercise? Trust me, at the beginning it is hard, but with continuous practice, it becomes easier. Soon after you will realise that you do not need to write down anymore, because you will be consciously aware of it whenever you are dealing with people, or when you are doing something, the automatic self-assessment would start in the back of your mind to remind you to stop right then if you went to the wrong direction. Alhamdulillah! When we try some good exercise and we persevere with it, then Allah makes it easier for us. Allah says:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And those who work and struggle (and continue to OUR cause), WE will truly guide them to OUR Paths: Surely, Allah is with those who are righteous (Righteous is the purpose of Fasting).” [Al-Quran 29:69]

- **A list for self-assessment:** We must remember, self-assessment is to be better, and successful in achieving objectives. The purpose of fasting is such an objective, that we are doomed without it. Righteousness is an essential trait that is a necessity for every human for peace, happiness, and success. In Islam, faith and righteousness are the two main requirements for the visa to enter Paradise. The everlasting happiness in the next life depends on the purpose of fasting which is righteousness. Considering this high importance, shouldn’t we self-assess ourselves about it?

The next question is, what kinds of questions should I ask myself for self-checking about the gain from fasting? Or what sort of result in myself should I expect from the self-control training from the Fasting? I should make a list with a few examples to remind myself about the changes I need to see in me from the righteousness training. See below some examples that I could put in my list:

- Change in my character!
- Change in my evil nature!
- Change in my bad habits!
- Change in my bad manners!

- Change in my responsibilities towards duties to Allah!
- Change in my duties towards human rights!
- Change in my immoral thoughts and actions!
- Change in my craving towards greed and selfishness!
- How much love have I gained for righteous actions?
- What is my grade in my righteous actions?

I must see change in me from the Fasting. If not, I am failing in the result. For example, I eat to gain weight but if I lose weight instead of gaining from food, then I have something wrong with me. I have a defective assimilation process in my body. I must check and check until I gain the required weight. Similarly, if I fast to learn righteousness, but I continue my lying habit, dishonesty, bribing, corruption, selfishness, out-of-control anger, fight, bad manners and so on, then I have something wrong in my faith in Allah and in the next life. I must fix it before my death, and because I don't know when death will approach me, I must start working on my righteousness right now without any delay. I must repent now, and seek Allah's forgiveness, and start fresh with whole efforts. Insha Allah! Allah will help me.

6 pillars of self-control in fasting

A building needs a main pillar. An organization needs a few main programs. Islam stands on 5 main pillars. Islamic faith has 6 main pillars. These examples show that the concept of pillars is there for better learning and better practice. Pillars guide the learners to better focus on the most important things, and they allow the followers to check if they are acting within the main frameworks. Pillars are there for strong foundations, and if the pillars are strong, the rest of the building is bound to be strong. Weak pillars cannot hold the building when there is strong shaking. Pillars have so many benefits.

Fasting is to learn self-control. The question is what are the aspects of self-control we need to target from fasting? The list will be very long, but we can pick up 6 main pillars in self-control. If we can master self-control on these 6 pillars, then the rest of the aspects will become easier to master Insha Allah. In this essay, I am going to point out those 6 main pillars of self-control during fasting. One may ask, what is the worst if I don't practice self-control during fasting? Or why is self-control so important in fasting? The answer is, a fruit plant without fruit has no value, and a fast without learning self-control has no value either.

One may ask another question and that is, "What exactly is my self-control from fasting?" Or "What is the aim for self-control?" The simple answer is self-control (Taqwa) is the ability to resist evil temptations (Sins) to do the right things (That Allah allowed). Now, you can see how important self-control (Taqwa) is! You submitted yourself to the will of Allah as a Muslim to gain Paradise. You accepted the condition from Allah that you will only do things that HE made Halal for you, and you will avoid things that HE made Haram for you. Then to test your obedience, Allah has provided all sorts of attractive things to divert you from your obedience. If you have a weak ability to resist those wrong attractions in life, how can you pass the test? How can you stand firm on Allah's obedience, if you have weak self-control ability in you to patiently persevere your journey on Allah's obedience? That's why controlling yourself from surrendering to evil is a must thing for you. That's why Allah has prescribed fasting for a month to gain self-control over lowly desires in you, in me and in all other believers.

Again, to start with, we must be aware that during fast we are trying to control 6 main things from Allah's disobedience. If we can do that, then we can continue the same practice for the rest of the year until we meet another Ramadan Month to practice more for more perfection. What are those 6 pillars of self-control for a believer?

1. **Tongue control:** We must control our tongues from disobedience of Allah. In other words, tongue control from sinful speech, talk, conversations, and communications. The tongue is talking constantly, and we must watch it. Allah has commanded us to control our tongues from Haram talking for example: Lying, cursing, abusing, back-biting, inciting, false witnessing, quarreling, scandal mongering, blasphemy, telling wrong things about Allah without knowledge, and all sorts of useless talking. On the other hand, Allah has commanded to speak in the best manner.

So, our tongues can on one hand obey Allah to earn rewards from HIM, but on the other hand, our tongues can exceed the limits that Allah has prescribed to disobey Allah to earn sins and punishment. Tongue control mission for us is every day in the year, but during Fasting it is an intensive training for control because the whole purpose of Fasting is to learn self-control from the fear of Allah's punishment. The way we abstain from eating for the fear of Allah's punishment, the same way we should abstain using our tongues from all the sinful, Haram, useless talks.

How important is tongue control practice related to fasting? It is very important. It is not separated from abstaining food, drink, or sex. Total self-control, or the holistic self-control of a believer, is the purpose of fasting. One can understand it from a Hadis below:

Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَدَعْ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ وَالْعَمَلَ بِهِ فَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ حَاجَةٌ فِي أَنْ يَدَعَ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ

"Whoever does not give up lying and lying nature, then Allah does not need his abstaining from food and drink." [Bukhari]

2. **Ear control:** We must control our hearing intensely during the fast. What does that mean? It means, we must avoid sinful things during the fasting. Such as shameless songs, hate speech, useless talks. With our tongues, we should not talk sinful talks, and with ear we should not be keen to hear sinful voices either. It means, we must not have bad habits of hearing gossips and indulging in gossips. If we have love for hearing useless talks, then we must put a break on it. Hearing is a great tool for our motivation or demotivation. For example, if we choose to hear Quran recitation during the fasting, it will surely increase Imaan (Our Faith) and will keep us connected with Allah. That will be a good self-control in hearing, and with it we can save ourselves from sinful listening. If not, listening to the wrong things reduces the rewards, wastes time and energy, and drags our Imaan down for which Allah will judge us on the Day of Judgment. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

"Verily, every act of hearing, or seeing, or of (wandering of) the heart will be questioned (on the Day of Judgment)." [Al-Quran 17:36]

3. **Eye control:** We must make effort to control our eyes. Why must we do that? Eyes are the cameras for the heart. If eyes see sinful things, then the heart receives it straightaway. Wrong sceneries then bring ill-thoughts in the heart to corrupt it. Eyes and heart depend on one another. Sometimes, accidentally the eyes watch something sinful, passes it to the heart, and then the heart starts loving it. In another time, the heart loves something wrong, and it encourages the eyes to see it constantly. We must take special cares of our eyes during the fasting to make a habit of seeing the things that motivates us to worship Allah, to obey Allah, and to avoid seeing the prohibited things. Allah will also question our seeing on the Day of Judgment according to the verse above in the Holy Quran (17:36). Allah commands the believer men and women to control their eyes:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ. وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard (control) their shyness (and looks). That will make for greater purity for them: Verily, Allah is familiar with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty (and looks).”
[Al-Quran 24:30-31]

4. **Heart control:** The heart is the most important organ in a person. If the heart is corrupt, then everything in the body is corrupt. This example fits both spiritually and physically. Physically if heart supplies contaminated blood to the body, then the rest of the body becomes sick. Spiritually, heart is the centre of Imaan. If the heart has no belief, then the rest of the organs do not obey Allah. A true faith (Imaan) spring out from the heart, and the heart must surrender to Allah for the total surrendering.

We must check our hearts intensely during the fasting. The easy way we can test our heart is by checking its feelings. If our hearts feel happy in obeying Allah, or in worshipping, or in Quran recitation, or keeping our tongues busy with Allah’s remembrance, then our heart is healthy with Imaan. Moreover, if our hearts feel sad from any disobedience to Allah, or from any sinful actions, then that is also a sign of healthy heart with Imaan. But the opposite is the sign of unhealthy heart with partial Imaan. It is a sick heart, and it requires urgent treatment.

Heart has secrecy that another human does not know, but Allah knows. On the Day of Judgment, for the Judgment, Allah can bring the secret of the heart out for justice. We know what is in our heart. If there is unfair anger, rage, jealousy, greed, selfishness, envy, cruelty, then our heart is sick, and we need to get rid of them from the self-control of fasting. Allah says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا . وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

“Truly, he succeeds who purifies it, and he fails who corrupts it.” [Al-Quran 91:9-10]

5. **Hand control:** We must control our hands from wrong actions. Any action that disobeys Allah, we must put a stop on it. We must remind our hands that they are Allah’s servants. We use hands quite a lot in our everyday activities. With hands we can do good things, and we can do bad things as well. What control we must have on our hands? It is controlling our hands from sinful actions such as, stealing, robbing, hitting others, fighting, taking bribe, white colour crime with pen, writing wrong stuff to incite fight, writing false stories to defame someone, grabbing other people’s property, snatching away money from old ladies in the shopping mall and so on.

Controlled hands and out-of-controlled hands differentiate a good person from a bad person. Believers must be the best people with their controlled tongues, eyes, hearts, and hands. They must be in control to maintain their honourable Human status that Allah has gifted them by upholding their high moral by controlling their bad morals. That’s why, Holy Prophet (pbuh) clearly stated the characteristic of a true Muslim that from him/her other people are safe. He (pbuh) has also pointed out the character of a true believer, that from true believer other humans are safe with their wealth, honour, and blood (life). Therefore, to become a true Muslim or true believer, one must control his/her hands from harming others, or from acting against Allah’s commandments.

The hands control exercise for a believer should be a regular thing, but during fasting the emphasis in it must be more. A believer must put control on his/her hands to avoid Allah’s punishment. On the Day of Judgment, Allah will make the hands to witness what they did. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their legs will bear witness (and speak out) against them about their actions.” [Al-Quran 24:24]

6. **Control in earning and spending:** We must control our earning and spending within the Halal options. We need wealth for our comfort, but we are not the servants of money. We must not surrender ourselves to ill-gotten money. For example, eating interest money, bribe money, stolen money, robbing money, income from corrupt business, income from killing innocent people, income from cheating, or selling Haram products, or from Haram professions are dangerous for the person who is earning it, and for other people.

People can be greedy if they have no self-control based on Allah's guidance about Halal (Permitted) and Haram (Prohibited). These prohibitions from Allah are for a peaceful world, and for the material safety, security, and fairness, but in addition, for earning the everlasting happy place in Paradise. Imagine! If a believer is fasting and taking bribe! Or another is eating luxury breakfast with bribe money! Or spending money excessively in luxury things that Allah has prohibited! These wrong earnings and spending are spoiling the fasting because that fasting is limited to only for few hours of food control, drink control or sex control. That does not serve the purpose of holistic self-control from Allah's disobedience from the fear of Allah's punishment. Allah commands:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُواتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

“O mankind! Eat what is lawful (halal) and good that is on earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan, Surely, he is to you an avowed enemy.” [Al-Quran 2:168]

On the Day of judgment, Allah will take account of earnings and spending. Submission to Allah as a Muslim is submission with everything including earnings in the way that Allah has permitted, and spending in the way that Allah has also permitted. If we fast to obey Allah, but do not obey Allah in earnings and in spending, then are we fully submitted to Allah? If we do not fully submit to Allah, then are we true Muslims? Holy prophet's teaching is that how can a person expect that Allah will accept his Dua (Supplications) when his food is haram, clothing is haram and so on. Therefore, we must gain self-control over our earning and spending. If our food is not Halal, then it will destroy our worship.

Chapter Three: Is fasting cruelty or mercy?

Is it a correct question?

In my young days I was not allowed to ask questions like this. It was a “No-go zone”, and we knew it because of the environment we were growing up in. But later, when I chose to teach Islam to other young people, I chose not to have any “No-go zones.” Instead, I welcome any questions if someone is sincerely looking for an answer to satisfy the soul.

I learnt from the Holy Quran that Allah is merciful towards the sincere learners. If they ask a question to deepen their faith and conviction so that they can then explain to others in a better way, then that kind of question is encouraged in the Holy Book of Allah. For example, Prophet Ibraheem (A.S) asked Allah:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۖ قَالَ أُولَٰمُ تُؤْمِنُ ۖ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي

“And when Ibrahim said: “My Lord! Show me how YOU give life to the dead:” He (Allah) said: “Do you not believe then?” He (Ibrahim) said: “Yes (I believe)! But to satisfy my own understanding (I would like to see).” [Al-Quran 2: 260]

Similarly, is fasting cruelty or mercy a sincere question for deepening our understanding? But any question about Allah’s decision that is made from mockery or out of some sort of disobedience is not allowed by Muslims. In the Quranic stories, we find in the history of previous people, they mocked at their holy prophets. Just because they disagreed with the prophetic message, they made fun of it, and they forwarded abusive comments against the messenger and even against Allah. Some asked weird questions such as, why angels did not accompany you? Or why did Allah not do this or that? In their questions there were demands, disbelief, hate, and defiance etc. They wanted to argue for the argument’s sake without reason. They wanted to make the true message cloudy, confusing, and controversial to people to turn people away from Allah’s message. An example of a defiant question is, the Quraish defiant people asked:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ ۖ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا

“And those who reject Faith say: ‘Why is Quran not sent to him all at once’?” [Al-Quran 25:32]

Therefore, whether a question is allowed or not depends on the three main things.

1. **The intention of the questioner.** Allah knows everyone’s intentions. If the question is with ill-intention, then it is not good for the questioner, because questions with obstinacy, anger and hate are not good for own soul. No one can harm Allah except damaging oneself.
2. **The gesture with the question.** If the question is with good intention but with rough, abusive, argumentative, and violent manner, then it will ruin the sweet relationship between people and it will ruin the good opportunity of learning or teaching. Gesture, manner, behavior, body language, smiling or rudeness also depend on the outcome of the question.
3. **The wording in the question.** If the wording is vulgar, abusive, offensive, offending, racist, hateful, inciting, and inappropriate, then it brings damage rather than remedy. A question must be like a problem, and the answer is like a remedy. Therefore, in question and answer, there must be present - wisdom, reason, logic, and peaceful manner.

In school, obedient students are encouraged not to ask unnecessary questions but are encouraged to ask any question if they do not understand the subject that the teacher has taught. When someone comes to Islam, is like a new student in Islam. They accept Allah’s decision without question, but they can still ask for answers to get a better understanding. To acquire more knowledge, one must ask more questions. The more knowledgeable people ask the more intellectual questions. Knowledge has no limit, especially the knowledge

of the unseen, or the knowledge of Wahi (Revelation from Allah). In the book of Hadith, there is a Hadith under Imaan chapter, and that Hadis is called Hadith Jibrail (angel). In that Hadith, angel Jibrael questioned Muhammad (PBUH), “Tell me, What is Imaan?” When Holy Prophet (PBUH) answered, angel Jibrail said, “You answered with truth (correctly).” From it, we find another etiquette of questioning is to rehearse the knowledge. Angel Jibrail knew that Holy Prophet (PBUH) knew the answer, but for rehearsal and to teach the prophet’s followers they exchanged the questions and answers. Therefore, in Islam, if the questioning is for the right reason, that it is encouraged, especially if it is to teach, or to learn, or to spread the teaching. My question here is to spread the teaching, and to remove misunderstanding in some people who misunderstand the Islamic fasting. Moreover, I was asked this question “Fasting in Ramadan – is it a cruelty or mercy of Allah” by a sister who came into Islam some time ago. She knew me and she chose me to conduct her **“Shahadah ceremony.”** I accepted her question with a sense of appreciation because her question made me think more and to learn more about Islam and I would like to share some of my thinking with respected readers of Islam.

First, I don’t like to be defensive when someone asks a question about my Faith in a different way than my way. My way is gentler, more polite with humility. I was trained that way, and my upbringing was that way. But after exploring people from different parts of the world, I realized that often people’s question style is different, but they mean well. For example, this generation of children are encouraged to ask any question to boost confidence in them. Teachers say to their students, “No question is a foolish question.” But in my childhood, it was the opposite. We were reprimanded if our questions were not culturally fit.

Therefore, nowadays, I like to focus on the main issue in the question, rather than the style or method of it. The main issue here is to understand the wisdom of fasting. If anyone is struggling in understanding the wisdom of fasting, I believe that I am responsible as a believer to answer the question as nicely and easily as possible. I would not argue, criticize, or discourage the questioner, but I would try my best to answer the question to spread the true message of Allah. Every believer has this responsibility to invite people to the truth and make extra efforts to answer nicely to quench the thirst who are keen to know the beauty of Islam, and here is about Fasting. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

“Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and holy teaching, and reason with them by ways that are best (and most gracious).” [Al-Quran 16:125]

To my understanding, receiving a question regarding fasting is better than not receiving it at all. A person asks if he/she feels interested in learning more about something. So, I believe, we should welcome questions, encourage people to think about fasting, and answer the questions with care. Many non-Muslims told me that they fear to ask questions to the Muslims because they think their questions may offend us. I felt sad when I heard them because the misunderstanding caused a barrier between Muslims and Non-Muslims. It is better to break the ice and communicate more to deepen our understanding for various benefits.

As a Muslim, I also feel that I should make effort to open communication with non-Muslims, I should make them feel that any question is welcome, and they should not fear asking any questions to me. For children or young people, I believe the same. I encourage Muslim children to ask me any question. In my experience, some of them ask me, “Are you sure that I can ask you any question?” My non-Muslim classmates asked me a few questions, but I could not answer, and my parents did not answer my questions too. I believe, to benefit one another with knowledge, asking questions for learning should be encouraged by all of us. If a question is very hard for me to answer, no worries at all. I can borrow time to ask someone who knows better than me. That way both my learning and other’s learning will be served.

The question we started with was, “Is it a right question?” Which question are we talking about here? The question is, “Is fasting cruelty or mercy?” My humble opinion is that it is a right question for learning. It

stimulates our investigation, searching, and looking for answers for the satisfaction of our minds. As a Muslim, it is a right question for acquiring my knowledge to make sure that I do not take fasting for granted blindly, but I take fasting dearly with knowledge, reason, logic in the light of Allah's guidance.

Is Allah cruel or merciful?

Due to their lack of knowledge, some people may think Fasting is a cruel practice. Then, from that misunderstanding they spell their doubt of Allah's Mercy. Someone who did not know well about fasting, made a comment to a child who was fasting, "You are following a cruel GOD." I shall dispel the misunderstanding about Allah, the One and only one Supreme GOD. It is fair to talk about HIM and understand HIM being cruel or merciful before we discuss the Fasting. If this part becomes clear, then the fasting part will be clear as well.

The following points will help wise people, or the people who are willing to accept the truth without obstinacy with an open heart, to understand about Allah:

- **Allah is Merciful:** How do I know Allah is Merciful? The first source of true knowledge about Allah is HIS own statements. How did HE introduce HIMSELF in HIS Message? and then, the expression of HIS mercy that we see in and around us. In Allah's message, for the reminder of people, HE has chosen two attributes about HIM most frequently. The moment one opens the Holy Quran, is stricken by the first verse, in which Allah has mentioned HIM. What are those two most frequently stated qualities of Allah? They are:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"In the name of Allah, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful (Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem). [Al-Quran 1:1]

What do we see? Cruel or Merciful? When HE is introducing HIMSELF as Merciful, then who else can blaspheme HIM? We find the same message in the Holy Quran. Allah has assured and reminded mankind about HIM:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا

"Surely, to you Allah has been Most Merciful." [Al-Quran 4:29]

Allah is the Most Merciful Lord of the Universe. HE is never cruel to HIS creation, but HE is the Most Loving Lord. HE disciplines where necessary, but HIS Mercy always exceeds HIS anger. We don't see Allah due to our inability to see HIM. HE created us this way with limitations so that HE could test our belief. But we can see Allah's Mercy in and around us.

- **Allah's mercy every day:** Allah has created us, then allowed us to grow step by step until maturity, then guides us with knowledge and power, and then provides for us all the sustenance, and then grants us a life to complete our test, and then take us back through death. Every bit of blessing for us is HIS Mercy. HE does not owe us anything, but we live every second surrounded by HIS Mercy. HE gave us body, heart, mind, oxygen, earth, food and fruits, sunshine, and enjoyment without any charge. Do we think of all these things in and around our lives? If we do, then, we can see HIS signs beyond doubt that HE is All Merciful. We cannot exist for a second without HIS Mercy.
- **Allah grants respite:** Imagine! If you are caught stealing from your workplace, you will be punished straightaway. If your boss is kind, may give you a chance, but your boss can never be merciful to allow you to rob his account to bankrupt his business. Soon, you will be sacked and punished. Allah is Merciful, and why is HE? Allah knows how many times we are showing our ingratitude to HIM, or how many times we are breaking our promises with HIM, or how many times we are showing our

disobedience to HIM, or how long we are showing our defiance to HIM. But does HE punish us every day, or every week, or every month? Why does HE give us a long life to make mistakes and to return to HIM? Why does HE forgive us if we truly and sincerely repent to HIM after so much mess we made? The answer is HIS Mercy.

- **Allah's Guidance:** We go to Schools, university, or private tutors for education, guidance, training, or advice and to get the service we pay money. Sometimes, the fee is too high that we cannot afford to pay. My question is, did Allah give us guidance to be happy in this life, and to be happy in Paradise in next life, and for that guidance how much did HE charge? How much do the messengers of Allah charge? The next question is, why would Allah send free guidance for the happiness of mankind if HE does not love them? Or what would we call this Extreme Generosity of Allah to Mankind? Cruelty or Mercy?
- **Allah's mercy on our ability:** Allah has given us the ability to do duties for HIM, and duties towards ourselves, families, and other humans. Did Allah ever force duties on us that we cannot carry? Did Allah ever force fasting on people who are sick? What about the children, old or insane? No, Allah showed HIS Mercy on duty distribution. That's why a sick believer can break the fast, and an insane person is not required to fast, and an old person can pay Fidyah instead of fasting. Is it the Sign of cruelty or Mercy? Because of Allah's Mercy, Allah will judge HIS servants depending on their ability.
- **Allah's facilities:** Allah made humans for this life to go through learning, practicing and to passing the test. This life is for the test, and this earth is like a school. In poor areas, schools are poor too. You won't find the best teachers because there is not enough money to pay for the best teachers. Then there are not enough funds to create all the study facilities and resources. As a result, some students are deprived of good education due to the lack of facilities. In Allah's earth, what Allah did not give? Allah gave all the facilities for all the people. Allah's messengers, the teachers for mankind offered free education for every human by Allah's permission. Allah provided food, drinks, oxygen, and sunlight, the night for repose etc. All these abundant free facilities are for the mankind and the testimony is in the nature, is it Allah's Mercy or cruelty?
- **Free fasting course for self-control:** Fasting is the divine self-control course. It is unique, and it is extremely valuable, yet Allah did not put a fee on it. It is free for all, anyone can take it without paying for registration fees, paperwork, and other official processes. What is the message it carries? It carries the message of Allah's Mercy.
- **Allah's extra generosity:** HE asks us to fast for our own benefit only. HE kindly gives us prescriptions for our own happiness. For some struggle in fasting from our side, HE grants us ability to fast, and on top of it countless rewards. HE always gives us more than what we deserve because HE IS MERCIFUL.
- **Allah's mercy to the loyal or disloyal:** If you defy your Government, would you be free or in prison? Or if you disobey your parents, how long would they wait before telling you off? Or if you are a disloyal party member, will the party support you or would they cut off their support? These examples are normal in this life because they are based on rights and responsibilities. It means, I give your rights, and you give my rights back or else I will stop my giving. Is Allah's support for mankind conditional? Does HE show Mercy only to HIS loyal believers? Or does HE cut off all the provisions to the disloyal disbelievers in this life? HE does give unconditionally and that is the true Sign of HIS Mercy. In this world, many humans are loyal to Allah. They believe in HIM, Love HIM, Worship HIM, supplicate to HIM. Does HE then only provide life, water, food, drink, and oxygen to HIS loyal servants only? Due to HIS Mercy, HE provides for everyone in this life. HE says:

كُلَّا تُمِدُّ هَؤُلَاءِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا

“From the gifts of your Lord, WE give freely to all-These as well as those: The gifts of your Lord are not limited (to any).” [Al-Quran 17:20]

Every command of Allah is mercy:

I explained before that Allah is the Most Merciful Lord of the Universe. Now, I would like to move into the next stage to explain that every prescription Allah prescribes for you, me or for mankind, is like a mercy. Let me begin with Allah’s words on this issue. I don’t want to theorize on it rather I want to be sure what Allah says about it. Allah says:

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“And of the Quran, we send down what is healing and a mercy to those who believe” [Al-Quran 17:82]

What is the Holy Quran? It is full of Allah’s commands. Whom is the Quran Allah sent for? Allah sent the Quran for the guidance of mankind. Again, these are not my words. These are the words from Allah. Let us look at that as well:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ

“The month of Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran as a guide to mankind.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

What I am trying to say is that Allah has sent HIS commandments in the Holy Quran for mankind, and every command is HIS MERCY. How can we grasp that statement without some practical examples? So, I think I should give a couple of examples.

- **Allah’s command “to do”:** Allah commands humans to do good things, such as to tell the truth. This command came on the first man and women from Allah. Adam (pbuh) was the first human and Allah’s prophet to teach the command from Allah to tell the truth. The command is to speak truth, to give witness truthfully, to do business truthfully, to give proper weight truthfully, to make promise truthfully, to sign in peace treaty truthfully, to report to the office in truth, to spread some news with truth, to judge between parties with truth, and to be truthful in the promise of Faith in Allah and so on. Can anyone say that truthfulness is a command of cruelty? Or can anyone think truthfulness is harmful? Any cruelty brings chaos, hurt, destruction, sadness, and loss. The opposite of truth does that. The opposite of truth is lying. If a spouse lies to the other spouse about secret extra-marital affairs, then that destroys the sweet relationship. When an engineer lies about the wrong materials that he is using to build a bridge, that lie brings destruction to the bridge sooner. If the world runs on lies and falsehood instead of the truth, everything will collapse and will become dysfunctional. But for Allah’s Mercy, the mankind received the concept of truth, and the benefits of truth. Is it not an example of Allah’s Mercy in HIS commands for the mankind?

We need truth in everything. Truth in relationships, in jobs, in business, in court, in agreements, in marriage, in teaching, in learning, in politics, in ruling, in faith, in charity, in promises, in dealings, in every aspect of our lives. As Allah says in Quran,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“Be careful of your duty to Allah and be with the truthful.” [Al-Qur’an [9:119].

- **Allah’s command for “not to do”:** Now, let us look at a command from Allah with prohibition, and that prohibition is also a Mercy from Allah for the mankind. An example of prohibition in the Holy Quran is:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it (in bribery) to the rulers in order that (They might aid) you (to) consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know (it is unlawful). [Al-Quran 2:188]

In the above verse Allah commands not to do few things. They are, consuming other's wealth illegally, exchanging bribes, injustice, and the violation of the human rights. Are these prohibitions for the welfare of mankind? Or aren't they not against cruelty of people against other people? Aren't those commands from Allah as Mercy to save people from corruption, injustice, and sufferings? If Allah did not put the sense of the right and wrong into human souls and did not command them what to do and what not to do, then lowly cravings in human would have taken them to the lowest of the low. Allah gives commands for our own good. Therefore, every command from Allah whether it is a prohibition, or a permission is HIS Mercy on us.

Finally, if we look at the worships that Allah has commanded to the mankind, in them we also find Allah's Mercy for the mankind. Allah's command comes with reasons for it, and the reason is Allah's Mercy to the mankind. An example is, Allah invites mankind to Worship HIM, and in that invitation, HE gives the reason for it as well:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you people (mankind)! Worship (and pray to) your Guardian-Lord, WHO created you, and those who came before you, that you might have the chance to learn righteousness.” [Al-Quran 2:21]

In the above command, Allah doesn't ask for money or wealth from mankind, instead HE prescribes worship for them to learn righteousness. If they learn righteousness, then they will be honorable, wise, pure, happy, dignified, and they can attain paradise. So, again, we see Allah's command is a Mercy for us. I believe, with those examples above, one can understand beyond doubt that every command from Allah on the believers is also a Mercy. As believers we see Allah's commands on us like that. For example, fasting, or 5 times Prayers, or charity etc. are not burdens on us, but Allah's Mercy. That's why we pray to Allah to grant us life to receive another fasting month as another mercy for us, and we welcome this month happily. The spiritual joy overwhelms us. May Allah continue bestowing HIS Mercy on us.

Why is fasting in Ramadan a mercy from Allah?

What is mercy in a common language? If we discuss about the meaning of it, then we can appreciate Allah's Mercy on us through fasting in the Month of Ramadan. Mercy is giving that is beyond any equation. What do I mean by that? Let's say, you gave me chocolate, and I gave you \$4 dollars for it. It is fair because your chocolate price is \$4. That was a fair exchange. But if I give you \$400 dollars for your chocolate, then that extraordinary generosity is a mercy. With that concept, let us ask, how is fasting in Ramadan month is a mercy from Allah.

Allah has made fasting easy for believers with HIS mercy. HE considered all the necessary aspects of the conditions of HIS creations – from the tiniest aspect to the greatest – because, as the Creator, HE knows the exact condition, capacity, problems, and solutions of HIS creations. As a result, HIS prescription for fasting was not a burden for anyone. Some examples are below:

- **Age:** Allah considered the age for fasting prescription for HIS MERCY. HE did not make fasting compulsory for children. HE knows the need for regular food for the children for their healthy growth. With HIS mercy, HE will not judge the children on the Day of Judgment for their childhood part until maturity.

- **Too old:** When people become too old, they become like children. They start losing their memories, and they become food and drink dependent for their day-to-day survival. They lose their strength for fasting. One day when they were young, strong, and full of energy, they loved fasting, but now they feel sad that they had lost their ability at too old an age. Allah Merciful made it easy for them for the old age and gave them the option to pay Fidya.
- **Health:** Allah showed HIS Mercy to healthy and unhealthy people. Allah gave good health to some people and that is a Mercy from Him. With good health they can enjoy life and can thank Allah profusely. Allah has also blessed the unhealthy ones with HIS Mercy. Unhealthy ones can earn huge rewards with their Sabr (patience), and their sins can be removed for their sufferings. Regarding fasting, they can fast later, or they can pay Fidya instead of fasting if their sickness is permanent. Unhealthy ones are not disadvantaged from Allah's Mercy either.
- **Women:** Allah is very Merciful on women. As the creator HE knows well about them. HE showed HIS Mercy to them with flexible options. On one hand, HE did not deprive women from the blessings of fasting, on the other hand, HE gave them options in their difficulties. We must remember, Allah Merciful gave same rights to men and women to attain rewards from Allah, and to be in the Paradise. Allah showed HIS special Mercy on pregnant women, women in menstruation, nursing women and so on. They can break the fast in difficulties and can make up for the missed days later.
- **Travel and tiredness:** It is Allah's Mercy that HE did not make fasting compulsory when someone is tired in a difficult journey. HE made it easy by not depriving them of all the blessings from fasting, and by not making fasting too difficult for them.
- **Believers:** Again, Allah is Merciful to all humans. HE gives time for all to ponder, to look for the truth, and gives freedom of choice to test them. HE gives chances every day, every moment for the human to turn to HIM. But those who turn to him (Are believers), HE gives them fasting as a vehicle their journey to Paradise.

Let us look at again the words of Allah on HIS Mercy:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

“Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

The unlimited reward from Allah for the few hours of fasting is beyond fair exchange. It is due to HIS Mercy. Imagine! If I work as a cleaner for 10 hours a day, and the hourly fair rate is \$30 an hour. So, you should pay me \$300 for 10 hours cleaning. But you paid me thirty thousand times more, then that is a Mercy to me because you gave me too much more than what I deserved. Now look at a couple of examples on how much reward Allah pays for fasting, and for the worship in fasting month:

- **Unlimited rewards:** How much unlimited reward will be, Allah didn't reveal it. HE kept this information secret to surprise HIS believers in Paradise. Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) said that Holy Messenger of Allah said:

كُلُّ عَمَلٍ ابْنِ آدَمَ يُضَاعَفُ لَهُ الْحَسَنَةُ بِعَشْرِ أَمْثَالِهَا إِلَى سَبْعِمِائَةِ ضِعْفٍ . قَالَ اللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ إِلَّا الصَّوْمَ فَإِنَّهُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ

“For humans their good deeds are increased. Each good deed is increased from 10 times to 700 times. Allah said: except for the fasting. Because fasting (believers) observes for ME, and I WILL GIVE ITS REWARD (as much as I want to).” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Thousands of rewards for one:** In this month there is one night, which is better than a thousand months. If anyone worships Allah on that night, the rewards will be multiplied by thousands and thousands. Allah says:

“The night of power is better than a thousand months.” [Al-Quran 97:3]

It is Allah’s Mercy for HIS guidance to us to control our lowly desires to save us from destruction, humiliation, loss, and punishment. Even when every parent advises his/her child to control anger, greed, and selfishness, many people say it, but self-control does not come only from advice. For an effective method, Allah Merciful has prescribed fasting for our learning, for our righteousness, and for our gain. Let us look at few examples of the bad habits that Allah wants the believer to control through self-control in fasting:

- Drug addiction.
- Pornography addiction.
- Gambling addiction.
- Lying addiction.
- Jealousy addiction.
- Bad gossip addiction.
- Laziness addiction.
- Dependency addiction.
- Arrogance addiction.
- Egotism addiction.
- Stealing addiction.
- Alcohol addiction.
- Corruption addiction.
- Cravings addiction.
- Lust addiction.
- Bad desire addiction etc.

With numerous addictions, humans are suffering in this world. A large part of the economy is being spent on undoing those with limited results. Whereas, Allah has prescribed easy fasting with the purpose of learning self-control for coming out of addictions. Is it not a Mercy from Allah? Of course, it is.

Fasting is like a business with Merciful Allah.

The term “business with Merciful Allah” may surprise you. It is a metaphor, and Allah has mentioned same terms in the Holy Quran that humans are familiar with. Allah has used metaphors to guide mankind. Let us look at couple of examples:

- **Loan to Allah:** Allah has used this term to the believers to encourage them to give charity for the pleasure of Allah. Whereas Allah does not need any loan from HIS creations. HE is “All-Rich” and to HIM HIS creations are beggars. Allah says:

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقرضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً

“Who is he who will loan to Allah a beautiful loan, which Allah will double to his credit and multiply many times?” [Al-Quran 2:245]

- **Business with Allah:** Allah has mentioned “Tijarah” means business. But it is not about worldly material business. Allah says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ

“Verily, those who recite the Book of Allah, and perform regular Prayer, and spend (In charity), from what WE have given to them secretly and openly; the Hope for a sure trade (the reward) will never fail.” [Al-Quran 35:29]

What is business? It is an act of exchange. You give something to receive something. Exchanging goods for good of money for money, or labour for wages are familiar to humans. With Allah how do we do business? Well, we exchange our loyalty to Allah with HIS rewards. That is what I call a divine business, or business with Allah. I shall give another example from the Holy Quran about the term “Business or trade” that Allah has used for our understanding. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ. تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ.

“O you who believe! Shall I guide you to a trade that will save you from a painful penalty. That you believe in Allah and HIS Messenger, and that you strive very hard (to your best) in the cause of Allah, with your property and your persons: That will be best for you, if you only knew.” [Al-Quran 61:10-11]

In worldly business one may make profit or may suffer from loss. But business with Allah is totally different than the business in this world with worldly goods. Let us see how that is with few examples:

- Business with Allah (fasting) has no loss. What must one lose by fasting? It is not a do or die effort. It is a practice on healthy people. Lots of people are dieting, controlling their eating pattern in this world without feeling any loss. Fasting is to gain good health, to curve cravings, to discipline eating habits, to moderate eating and drinking attitudes and so on. What is loss in it?
- Business with Allah (fasting) never makes anyone bankrupt: In any business there is risk involve. The risk of losing both the capital and the profit. In fasting no risk is involved. One would not die from fasting! If one feels sick, he can break his fast. Financially fasting does not cost you money either. Healthwise people do not lose health either. Spiritually fasting never make people immoral. So, what is the risk in fasting? None basically!
- Business with Allah (fasting) has guaranteed gain. In fasting no loss but the gain is there for sure. Believers fast for Allah and through it they gain only. They gain good eating habit, they gain good self-control, they learn patience from it, they learn to behave well, they learn how to control their hot temper, and they become a better husband or wife, a better child or parent etc. So, there is guaranteed gain in fasting. Besides, they gain spiritually a lot. They gain rewards, they receive forgiveness, and they go closer to the Paradise and so on. So, they only gain in fasting without losing.
- Business with Allah (fasting) brings gain that never ends. The good effect of a good habit never ends. Its goodness travels generations after generations. Moreover, gains from proper fasting is Paradise. The happiness in Paradise never ends. So, fasting brings such a gain that cannot be compared with any other material temporary gains in this world. Fasting is for learning self-control. Is there any end in benefits from self-control and righteousness? Not at all.

What do we give up with fasting?

Fasting is not undoable, but it doesn't mean that it is too easy. It is hard work. It takes all our mental, emotional, and physical energy to fast properly. It requires the patience to deal with hunger and thirst. It requires strong determination to carry on despite the struggle. The willpower needs to be strong to determine that the person must obey Allah despite thirst in hot days. The mind needs constant effort to guard the thoughts, feelings, desires, cravings to make sure the 6-point self-control is constant. In case, one of the self-control points is weak, the mind must be strong enough to pull the chain back for establishing self-control again.

Surely, one cannot complete a fast without giving something or sacrificing something for the pleasure of Allah. Why a rich person needs to fast when she has fridge full of food, or she can order food from any best restaurant? But for fasting she would sacrifice her hunger and will give up her food to be a loyal servant to Allah. With fasting, we give few things away for the pleasure of Allah, and of course we get more Mercy from Allah. For our reminder, I shall make a short list of few things that we need to give up for the fasting. They are:

- **Giving up normal daily routine:** With Fasting we lose our normal daily routine. We adjust our eating timetable and make more time for prayers at night. We get up early before dawn, pray and then eat for the day, but dinner time remains same. After dinner we rush again for the prayers. This adjustment is not a big deal, and we do not lose anything out of it. It's like a certain routine in a training camp, or during travelling. For necessity in our life, we always adjust with the time and routine in our lives.
- **Giving up a little leisure:** That is not a bad thing either. For example, after dinner in Fasting month, we don't get much time to sit lazy to watch TV, or any other relaxing thing. We go to the prayer in which we can get super relaxation through forgetting about all the anxieties and connecting ourselves with the source of ultimate peace Allah. After that prayer, we sleep better without any sleeping pills.
- **Giving up food or drink:** But that is not for too long. We eat and drink enough before dawn to last for the whole day until sunset. Then, we resume our eating and drinking throughout the night. That way we don't give up our eating and drinking but we only change the timing. We don't lose anything significant from that change of timing.
- **Sacrificing some sleep:** Yes, we lose a few hours of sleep at night for long prayers, but that is within ability, and not compulsory as fasting is. It is for those who can manage for greater gain. Praying extra at night is very beneficial spiritually. One can go to sleep soon after evening prayer without wasting time and can get up after a good sleep to perform Tahajjud. It is a matter of disciplining the time, and it does not impose big sacrifice for a believer.
- **Sacrificing some energy:** With fasting we feel hungry and to some extent we feel weak, but we can regain energy at night by eating yummy food, can't we? On the other hand, we also get more energy from fasting. For example, during fasting, our minds are switched off for food and drink, and we can continue working without disruption. I find fasting time the energy flows, and I can achieve more than other non-fasting days. Again, we don't sacrifice energy for fasting.
- **Giving away some money:** With fasting we pay Sadaqatul Fitr to share our Eid joy with poor. That giving away of money doesn't make us poor. It is for the people who can afford it. The poor people are the receivers of the Sadaqatul Fitr. This giving and receiving is to stabilise the social relationship as a sign of caring for one another. We need a happy society for our own happiness, and for the happiness, we need to spend for others to support them and to help them getting out of the poverty. So, that charity is not a big sacrifice to make due to fasting, and it does not impose any hardship on the givers.
- **Giving up of complaining:** With fasting we lose the tendency of complaining about hunger, thirst etc. This giving up is a best quality we all need to gain. We have tendency of complaining very easily about what we don't get more than appreciating, acknowledging, and thanking for what we have. Whereas, in family, relationship, friendship, and in society, if we can practice less complaining, then we could enjoy more happiness. Fasting trains to complain less. Therefore, that giving up is for the best and it does not disadvantage anyone in any way.

- **Giving up some freedom:** With fasting we lose the freedom of reckless speaking or reckless uses of hands. Is that a bad thing? Not at all. In life, we need to give up over freedom to respect one another and to act responsibly to one another. The society we live in is plural, and we need to live together in peace. For the peace, we need to control our speech, manner, and actions to accommodate everyone with respect. So, giving up some freedom for the best is a good thing from fasting, and it does not cause any loss except gain.

From all the examples above, we give up few things in fasting to gain better things. It is like a business. You give away a good thing, and in return you receive profit. Therefore, you are not giving away anything for loss. What we give away in fasting is for an investment for the next life. We give away our time, effort, habit, comfort, wealth, and loyalty for the pleasure of Allah to receive enormous benefits in Paradise. Therefore, it for a profitable business. Allah says in the Holy Quran: 61.10-11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ. تُوْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ.

“O you who believe! Shall I guide you to a business that will save you from a painful penalty? That you believe in Allah and His messenger, and that you strive very hard in the cause of Allah, with your property and your persons: That will be best (Beneficial business) for you, if you only knew!” [Al-Quran 61:10-11]

Some spiritual gains in fasting:

The gains from the fasting are not limited to one area only, but it spreads in every part of our lives. Such as, gains in health, mental-emotional well-being, self-satisfaction with peace of mind, self-control in tongue, hearing, seeing, hands, heart, earning, spending, sex, honour in life, pure life, happy relationship, peaceful human existence, and spiritual and so on. Below are some examples of spiritual gains from fasting.

- **Unlimited rewards:** For every worship, Allah grants rewards. In normal cases, the ratio of rewards is 1:10 to 700. That means, for one good deed, Allah grants 10 to 700 times more rewards. But only in the fasting, that ratio is not there. Allah did not put any number for the reward in fasting because Allah wants to give much more than any number. This is a special unlimited reward from Allah for the fasting. Allah is the Greatest, and when HE decides to gift someone, obviously it is a Great gift, and how wonderful that gift is for fasting, Allah did not reveal it either. In a Hadis Qudsi, Allah says,

فَإِنَّهُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ

“Fasting is for ME, and I will give reward for it” [Mutafaqun A’laih]

- **Fast will request:** The Day of Judgment will be the toughest Day. Everyone will be desperate to do well in Allah’s court to gain Paradise. In that court, there will be no solicitors to request for another because every person will attend Allah’s court by himself or herself. Allah will question directly. Allah All-Knowing will know all the secret and open actions of that person. On top of that, angels will present the deed book that they had recorded about the person. In that situation, any request for anything will be like catching the Moon with two hands. Allah All-Merciful, has provided things to request for HIS loyal servants, and fasting is one of them. Holy prophet (pbuh) said:

الصِيَامُ وَالْقُرْآنُ يَشْفَعَانِ لِلْعَبْدِ، يَقُولُ الصِّيَامُ : أَيْ رَبِّ ! إِنِّي مَنَعْتُهُ الطَّعَامَ وَالشَّهَوَاتِ بِالنَّهَارِ، فَشَفَعَنِي فِيهِ، وَيَقُولُ الْقُرْآنُ : مَنَعْتُهُ النَّوْمَ بِاللَّيْلِ، فَشَفَعَنِي فِيهِ ؛ فَيُشَفَّعَانِ

“Fast and the Quran will request to Allah for HIS servant. Fast will say, O my Lord! I have stopped him from food (and drink) and the desires in the day. So, accept my request for him (her). And the

Quran will say, "I have deprived him (her) of sleep at night. So, accept my request about him (her). Therefore, the requests from both will be accepted." [Bayhaki Shua'bul Imaan]

- **Love of Allah:** Believers love Allah without seeing HIM, and they worship HIM for HIS Love. Therefore, if any worship brings Allah's love for them, then that is the greatest achievement of all. If a believer gets Allah's love, then he/she has nothing to worry. Allah will take care of him/her in this life and in the next life. Fasting guarantees Allah's love. It is not too hard task yet because of total sincerity in it, it is very much loved by Allah. Holy prophet (pbuh) said:

وَلْخُلُوفُ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مِنْ رِيحِ الْمِسْكِ

"Surely, the smelly breath (due to fasting) in the mouth of that who fasts to Allah more beloved than the smell of musk." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Cleansing of sins:** Sin is disobedience of Allah, and it is like a stain that makes spots in the heart (Soul). It is unseen, and nothing can clean it except Allah's medicine. People can clean the dirt with detergent, or any other cleaning agents, but no one knows how to clean the heart of the sins. Whereas, with a sinful heart, one cannot enter Paradise. It has got to be cleansed. Here again, Allah Merciful has offered opportunities during the fasting month to feed others with kindness for cleansing hearts from sins. Holy prophet (pbuh) said:

مَنْ فَطَّرَ صَائِمًا كَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِهِ غَيْرَ أَنَّهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ مِنْ أَجْرِ الصَّائِمِ شَيْئًا

"In that Month (Ramadan) whoever will feed another fasting person meal for breaking fast, will be the for him (her) an expiation from sins." [Bayhaki Shua'bul Imaan]

- **Meeting with Allah:** Allah is unseen. In this life no one can see Allah. Prophet Musa (Pbuh) wanted to see Allah, but his request was declined by Allah. But he can see Allah in Paradise. Meeting Allah will be the happiest thing for all the believers. But what a believer would do to meet Allah for sure. What deed will confirm the opportunity to meet Allah? I want to know and so do you. Insha Allah, fasting for believers will bring that opportunity. Holy Prophet (Pbuh) said:

وَلِلصَّائِمِ فَرْحَتَانِ فَرْحَةٌ حِينَ يُفْطِرُ وَفَرْحَةٌ حِينَ يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ

"There are two (major) happiness for a fasting believer. One happiness is (In this world) during breaking the fast and another is (in the next life) during the meeting with Allah in the Paradise." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Super protection:** The soldiers need shields as protection in the war. Due to advanced technology, nowadays, protection materials are available in plenty. But what kind of shield must one protect himself (herself) from the Hell Fire? That is beyond human capacity. For those who believe that there is a Hell Fire, for them it is a constant worry. They believe in it because Allah has warned them about it, and they are seriously afraid of it. That's why they control themselves from sinful actions (Disobedience of Allah), and they cry in their supplications to Allah to save them from the Hell Fire. Allah has provided good news for their crying in their prayers and has made fasting as one of the shields (Protection) for them for their protection from the Hell Fire. Holy Messenger (Pbuh) said:

وَالصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ

"Fasting is like shields (protection from the Hell Fire) for people." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Special welcome in Paradise:** In this world, special guests receive a special welcome in countries when they visit. The hosts make nice gates with decorations and lighting to show their honor to their guests, and they happily spend all the money to provide protocols for the dignitaries. But the leaders, countries, and Governments will have no role on the Day of Judgment. Everything will be different there, and everything will be according to Allah's hosting. In HIS Paradise, HE will also organize a special welcome for HIS Guests. For those who observe fast, there will be a special welcome to Paradise. Holy Prophet (pbuh) said:

فِي الْجَنَّةِ ثَمَانِيَةُ أَبْوَابٍ، فِيهَا بَابٌ يُسَمَّى الرَّيَّانَ لَا يَدْخُلُهُ إِلَّا الصَّائِمُونَ

"There are eight doors in Paradise. One of their names is Ar-Raiyaan. No one can enter through it except those who fast (in the month of Ramadan." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Forgiveness of previous sins:** Believers are not angels. They are humans with limitations and shortcomings. When they make mistakes (sins), it weakens their Imaan and their motivations. Every sin is like an obstacle to reach Allah's pleasure and Paradise. They often need forgiveness from Allah. They always pray to Allah for forgiveness for their sins, and they do their best to increase the good deeds to get closer to Allah. Allah Merciful has provided for them many worships to cleanse their sins and has given them fasting months with many opportunities to get forgiveness from their sins. Holy Messenger (pbuh) said:

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ. وَمَنْ قَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ. وَمَنْ قَامَ لَيْلَةَ الْقَدْرِ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

"If a believer fast with Islamic faith (Imaan) and with the hope of receiving rewards from Allah, then his (her) all previous sins will be forgiven, and if a believer spends the night in Ramadan month in worship with Imaan and hope of receiving reward from Allah, his (her) previous sins will be forgiven. And if a believer will spend the night of power in worship with Imaan and hope of rewards from Allah, his (her) previous sins will be forgiven." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Rewards of thousand month in a night:** There is a night in Ramadan month that is called "Lailatul Qadr." It means the night of power. The Holy Quran was revealed that night. There is a chapter in the Quran in it. Worshippers' deeds on that night are increased by thousands of times like the deeds earned in 83 plus years. It is a bonus deal from Allah to earn more in a very short period. The meaning of that chapter is:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ. وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ. لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ. تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَكِ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ. سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ.

"WE have indeed revealed this (Quran) in the Night of Power. And what will explain to you (O prophet) what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. In it come down the angels and the Spirit {Angel Jibrail} by Allah's permission, to perform every task. Peace! (Be in) this (Night) until the rise of dawn!" [Al-Quran chapter 97]

- **Rain of Allah's Mercy:** In this fasting month (Ramadan), Allah sends more mercy on HIS Servants than any other month. Allah sent the Holy Quran in this month as a Mercy as well. Holy Quran guides people towards receiving Allah's Mercy in both lives. In this month, the doors of mercy are opened. We learn that from the teaching of Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh):

إِذَا جَاءَ رَمَضَانُ فَتُحْتُ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ

"When Ramadan month comes, the doors of mercy ore opened." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Satan is chained:** Satan always misguides people to do wrong. He always pushes the bad desires button in humans like an anger button to make them angrier to do wrong, or to say wrong things. Unless, they are protected from the Satan by Allah's protection, they may misuse their desires committing sins. Satan is a big obstacle to deal with in every second to be loyal to Allah. Out of 12 months of year, due to the test of loyalty, Satan is set free but not in the fasting month. In this month, Allah gives the believers the highest opportunity to learn to be loyal to Allah. How does it happen? Allah chains the Satan in this month to allow the believers to be enemy free to practice Taqwa, and to learn self-control. Holy prophet (pbuh) said:

وَسُلِّسَ الشَّيَاطِينُ

"When Ramadan month comes, Satan is chained." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

In summary, fasting brings only gains without any loss. Fasting month also comes with full of gain and believers must take the opportunity to maximize the gains from it. Fasting is not a cruelty, but it is Allah's Mercy.

Chapter Four: Fasting is a divine prescription.

Fasting as a divine prescription:

What is a divine prescription? It is prescribed by GOD (Allah). In divine prescription there are some specialties such as:

- **Perfection:** When Allah prescribes anything, it is perfect. But if human prescribes something the truth is, “To err is human.” Allah is Perfect, and HIS prescription is perfect too. For a perfect prescription, the prescriber must have knowledge, accuracy, absence of mistakes, and only Allah has all these qualities. Allah is the creator of humans, and HE knows about their past, present, and future. HE also created their needs, and HE knows what can fulfill their needs perfectly. HE also knows what their shortcomings are, and HE knows which prescription will help them to fulfill their lacking. HE also knows their spiritual sickness and HE alone can assess and prescribe accurately to relieve their spiritual sickness. HE is the owner of this worldly life and the next everlasting life. So, HE knows exactly what prescription can equip them to achieve success in their next life as well.
- **No side effects:** Any sort of human prescription can go wrong or may not suit every individual. It may work on someone and not on another. So many people in this age suffer from suicidal tendency due to taking anti-depressants. Even though Allah has given human ability to be a prescriber for physical, mental, or emotional health, despite their sincere efforts, they cannot guarantee zero side effects. In divine prescription, side-effects are zero because it is from the All-Knowing and All-Wise GOD, Allah.
- **Holistic:** For physical health, we go to the eye specialist for eyes, and heart specialist for ailments of the heart. Sometimes, if one side is better the other side is not. But the trouble is, one person does not know everything. If there was one medicine for all the ailments in a person to benefit holistically, the best health target would have been higher. Then, when we think of Allah’s prescription for spiritual well-being, it is holistic. One prescription target for greed, cruelty, selfishness, and jealousy in all of them.
- **Works for all:** GOD for the mankind prescribes things for all the mankind. Anyone can benefit from it. With Allah’s divine program there is no shortage of places, no problem with accommodating all, and no difficulties with age, culture, or ethnicity. One program suit everyone. Allah’s program has all the considerations of different mentality, unique personalities, emotional needs and so on, because Allah has created all of them.
- **Free of charge:** Allah’s divine prescription doesn’t cost any money. Or no one needs to purchase the prescription drugs from any pharmacy. One can accept it, and practice it without any barriers, or without any cost. Allah prescribes for everyone and makes it easy to follow the instructions and can achieve high success without high qualifications. It’s easy to get and easy to practice.

Now, let us look at the verse in the Quran regarding fasting:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for the people before you, so that you may learn self-control. [Al-Quran 2:183]

It talks about fasting as a prescription from Allah. Whenever we hear the word “prescription”, we think of three main things. They are:

1. **Prescriber:** Someone with a good knowledge of the problems and can offer a prescription to solve the problems.

2. **Prescription:** It is a problem-solving suggestion or medications to be used by patients, or who are in trouble.
3. **Patient:** Someone who needs help to be better, healthier, to get out of sickness or trouble.

We think of the above in the light of immediate physical or mental sickness. Allah has used a word in the Quran "Prescribed" for mankind to understand easily. It means, the way we need prescription drugs to cure our flu or cough, the same way we need Allah's prescription to cure our spiritual sickness. Allah has prescribed fasting for something that pharmacy drugs cannot cure, whereas that thing is necessary for all the humans. Allah's prescription is to increase Taqwa (righteousness) in people to be the best moral people. HIS prescription is to transform humans into the most honorable beings with lofty character and morality to become the best servants of Allah, and to become peaceful inside and outside.

Therefore, for immediate physical sickness, Allah has granted knowledge to Adam (The first man) and Adam's children to earn knowledge to be able to prescribe. Then, Allah provided plenty of ingredients in the environment for them to use them to make medicines. Also, Allah created humans and given them different kinds of sicknesses and encouraged them to get treatment. But the sickness in them should teach them that they have limitations, and they are not God. GOD never feels sick, and GOD is above all the sicknesses. Allah is that GOD. To make this simple fact realized, Allah prescribed Faith, and many more worships for humans to understand and accept who they are and who the Allah is, or why they are sent here by Allah and where is their return. Fasting is one of those divine prescriptions.

Divine prescription with divine arrangements:

When a rich ruler organizes something, the arrangements are also very rich. Most powerful nations organize their special events with special arrangements. The event becomes full of surprises, extra facilities for honorable guests, spectacular environment amazes the world and so on. They spend so much money and hard work to make the event as memorable as possible.

Just imagine now! Allah is the Lord of the universe. The heavens and the earth and everything between them belong to HIM. When HE arranges a special event, what special arrangements will accompany it? Allah's arrangements are such, that is beyond HIS creations. Humans cannot organize such things. Allah prescribed Fasting in the Month of Ramadan, and with that comes extremely special arrangements. Let us look at a few of them for our understanding:

- **Allah makes fasting easy:** Fasting is hard work. It requires strong willpower, perseverance and patience, and strong determination. We expect adults to have those qualities but in children, we do not expect those qualities. But I started fasting as a child, I found it was very hard from a hungry point of view but was very easy in my mind. Honestly, I enjoyed the hunger and the hardship and didn't break my fast even though it was not compulsory for me. Then, as an adult, I found the same. The same things other believers say about their experiences from their fasting. Why does it happen only in fasting? The answer is simple. Allah prescribed fasting, the hard discipline course, and at the same time, Allah made it easy for them in their mind, and in their hearts. That is a special psychological inspiration from Allah that makes the believers stronger in their mind to fulfill their duty in fasting. Any hard task Allah prescribes for His servants He also makes that easy for them to carry. This is Allah's universal rule. HE does not only prescribe, but HE grants the ability to carry on the hard tasks in it. HE pours AS-SAKINA (the tranquility) in the heart of HIS sincere servant to feel happy and satisfied with the hard task. Allah says:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ

“Allah intends every facility for you; HE does not want to put you to difficulties. (HE wants you) to complete the prescribed period.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

- **Special arrangements in the heavens:** Human cannot arrange something in the heaven because the heavens are too far from us, and they are out of our control. But they are under Allah’s control, and only Allah can arrange something in there to welcome the blessed month of Ramadan. The other reason for arranging special things in heaven is related to the objectives of the Holy Month. The objectives are not to get more money in this life, or to receive more crops from the fields, but the objective is to attain high status in Paradise. Paradise is in heaven and fasting month brings opportunities to attain High Moral Qualities from Taqwa to achieve higher status in Paradise. Another reason for arranging facilities in the upper world is that through fasting, servants of Allah increase love for Allah through closer bond, and Allah is up above the heavens. Allah wants HIS servants to attain Taqwa to be admitted to Paradise above the heavens, and for that reason HE arranges special arrangements in the above heavens to encourage the believers to observe fasting with full spiritual power. Let us look at a news that Allah sent for the mankind through HIS beloved messenger (pbuh):

إِذَا كَانَ رَمَضَانُ فُتِّحَتْ أَبْوَابُ الرَّحْمَةِ وَغُلِّقَتْ أَبْوَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَسُلِّسَتْ الشَّيَاطِينُ

“When Fasting Month comes the doors of heavens are opened, the doors of Paradise are opened, the doors of the Hell are closed, the Satans are chained, and the doors of Mercy are opened.” [Muttafaqun A’laih].

- **A special gate in Paradise:** A special gate to welcome those who fast for the pleasure of Allah. This is to honor Allah’s servants for their struggle through fasting to achieve honorable traits. The honorable traits are honorable in the Sight of Allah such as Taqwa (righteousness). Allah’s creations also honor the honorable traits in humans. That’s why, when a righteous person dies, the surrounding environment and other humans cry for them. When a righteous believer dies, even fish in the water cry for him/her. The world loves moral people and righteous people because for their peaceful and fair contributions, the world gets peace and happiness. If their numbers are bigger, the world will enjoy a bigger scale of happiness and peace.

For Allah, HE not only loves HIS servants with self-control and righteousness, but HE offers them permanent honor and honorable places in the next life. That’s why, special gate in Paradise is arranged to welcome HIS beloved guests. Holy Prophet (pbuh) said,

فِي الْجَنَّةِ ثَمَانِيَةُ أَبْوَابٍ مِنْهَا: بَابٌ يُسَمَّى الرَّيَّانَ لَا يَدْخُلُهُ إِلَّا الصَّائِمُونَ

“In Paradise there will be eight magnificent gates. But there will be one special gate named “RAIYAAN” and only those who fast will enter Paradise through that gate” [Muttafaqun A’laih].

- **Special way of cleansing them:** Allah’s paradise is for the people who are pure and clean from the sins. Paradise is an ever-clean place in which even cough, nasal discharge, urine, stool etc. will be absent. For the companions of paradise, physiology will be changed to be clean and to stay clean forever. Sin is like spiritual dirt, and with-it admission to Paradise is impossible. Whereas, Allah has prescribed fasting and worship to attain access to Paradise. How can these sincere servants of Allah receive cleansing then? Well, Allah has special arrangements to cleanse their sins too. Allah will use their fast and worship to purify them from the stains. Holy Prophet (pbuh) said:

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

“Whoever fasts for Allah in the month of Fasting with Faith and with the hope for getting reward from Allah---then his/her previous sins will be forgiven” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

- **Special gifts for fasting:** Who can expect an ordinary gift from the Greatest Lord! Allah is All-Rich. His gifts for His ambassadors got to be huge as well. What is that gift from Allah? HE did not reveal it to HIS servants who refrained from food and drink and so on for their love for HIM. HE will surprise HIS loyal servants with special gifts in Paradise. Holy Prophet (pbuh) said:

فَأَنَّهُ لِي، وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ

“Allah said—my servant fast for me and I will give the reward by myself” [Muttafaqun A’laih].

To conclude, fasting is a special divine prescription from Allah Almighty, and with it also comes many more special arrangements to show how valuable fasting is. Its goodness goes beyond any benefits that we can perceive. May Allah accept us for those special rewards from our fasting and worships for Allah in the month of Ramadan.

Divine prescription to solve world problems:

Allah is the GOD for mankind. HE wants humans to be happy, healthy, and peaceful all along. HE did not create humans to suffer or to rot in problems. HE created them as honorable, and HE wants them to maintain their honor. HE gave them the biggest honor and that honor is their freedom of choices. Allah could have forced all humans to be believers, or to be loyal to HIM. But HE did not dishonor them. HE gave the freedom to choose peace over violence, compassion over cruelty, morality over immorality, and fair over unfairness. To choose the right thing, Allah has gifted humans Aql (Intellect), reason, commonsense, knowledge, and wisdom, and on top of that divine guidance and divine prescription like fasting. Allah assured human honor in HIS own words:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

“And indeed, WE have honored the children of Adam; And WE have provided them with transport on land and sea; And WE have provided them with good and pure things for livelihood; And given them special favors, over and above a great part of OUR Creations.” [Al-Quran 17:70]

Therefore, every divine prescription from Allah to mankind is for the benefit of the world, and for all creations. For example, when Allah sends rain down on the earth from the heavens, it doesn’t only help humans, but it also benefits the entire creation like insects, animals, fish, plants, grasses etc. Then, it grows produce to solve hunger problem for the entire mankind. Fasting is also prescribed to benefit individuals, communities, and the whole world. The question here is, how divine prescription like fasting can solve world problems? I shall try to explain it with a few examples below.

1. The Fasting message is to AVOID what Allah prohibits. As a symbol of avoidance, believers avoid food, drink, sex, and all other sinful activities during the fasting. As a result, they save themselves from harming others or they can avoid scolding, fighting, abusing, cheating, lying, immoral activities due to self-control to save others from harming. That avoidance results in human happiness, peace, and progress. Self-control does not harm anyone, oneself, or others. Now imagine for a second! Don’t we want a world in which people should avoid hurting one another for peace and happiness? What are the world problems in relation to avoidance? Well, the problem is, many people are not avoiding lying, cheating, unfairness, greed, selfishness, cruelties, killing, hate, anger, and rage etc. If people in this world could avoid wrong actions as the fasting prescription from Allah teaches, then the world problems would have been solved.

2. The fasting message is to learn self-control. The question again is, self-control on what kind of things? Well, fasting is to teach self-control to stay away from evil actions, unfair actions, non-humanitarian actions, fighting and destruction etc. Self-control to continue righteous actions as opposed to evil actions. If we now look at world problems, what is the main problem in this world? Let us say, hunger problem. But is it a symptom rather than a problem? Is there really a shortage of food on this earth? The earth has plenty of food to share, and no one in this world can spend a day without hunger. The real problem is greed, and for it, many people do not want to share it with others. For greed, the want for more has no control (Absence of self-control in greed), and when some people want too much, then they deprive others of their due rights. For greed, nations are competing to have more and more than others. That is creating two classes, one having too much and another without having their basic needs. So, what is the main solution for this greed? Can we solve it with killing machines, with wars, and destructions? We can't. When rich and powerful nations impose war, they also suffer from low economy due to the sky-rocketed spending in killing fellow humans.

What is greed then? It is an evil act of the heart. Fasting is prescribed to learn self-control to prevent surrendering to greed. Greed and generosity are in human hearts side by side. With self-control one can subdue greed to allow generosity to grow. Fasting trains self-control and gives the message to mankind to practice self-control to subdue evil traits to solve world problems. In a family, if a member can control excessive anger (An evil action), then that family will enjoy peace, happiness, harmony, unity, and strength to work together for prosperity. The same way, it can be extended to the neighborhood, community, society and to the world. If humans can control their evil desires and actions, then the world will be a peaceful place, and they can solve any problems peacefully.

3. The fasting message is to learn righteousness. Kindness and forgiveness are an aspect of righteousness. This aspect can solve small to big problems in this world. I shall give an example of fighting between two spouses. When they got married, their love overflowed, and they were happy. Their marriage was safe from problems. After a while, one found another cheating on the other. That dishonesty from one part started the nest of mistrust, then from mistrust to arguments, from arguments to separation, and both are fighting for their rights of possession in the court. If we consider the world as a family, then we can see how unrighteousness (Cheating, lying, breaking promises, dishonesty) plays a dangerous role in unhappiness, and bring fights to increase the problems in this world?

Now, back to fighting spouses. What is the main problem they have? Is it money, wealth, or other possessions? The main problem was unrighteous action. And the simple solution is righteous action. What is an example, in their case, to solve the problems that arose from unrighteous action? The answer is, not fighting, or anger, not revenge, but kindness and forgiveness which is righteous action. What have we found out from this example? We found out that the root of the personal or world problems is unrighteous actions, and the solution of the personal or world problems is righteous actions. Fasting comes with the messages of learning righteousness. Allah prescribed fasting for learning righteousness because Allah knows that the main problem in this world is the lack of righteous practices. Again, we shall look at the verse in which Allah prescribed fasting and outlined the purpose of fasting:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may (learn) self-control (Righteousness, Taqwa)” [Al-Quran 2:183]

Finally, the world today is full of problems. Leaders, stakeholders, active members are working hard to find solutions. The easy solution is practicing righteousness. We find all good qualities in righteousness like human rights, fairness, justice, practicing what is right and avoiding what is wrong, self-control, avoidance of evil,

and kindness, forgiveness to wipe out past grudges, vendetta, chain of retributions to come together in love and live side by side in peace like different flower plants do in a garden to make a happy and peaceful garden. Fasting gives exactly that message to solve personal or world problems.

Fasting as remedy to unhappiness:

Every human is Allah's creation. Allah loves humans most because HE created this human race with care. HE created the world with just saying, "Be" and then "It became." But HE created the first man Adam with best care and breathed on him and ordered angels to show honour to him. By doing that, Allah made all the children of Adam his very honourable creation. Allah says in the Quran:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ. فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ

"And remember! Your Lord said to the angels: 'I am going to create man, from dried sounding clay from mud cast into shape; so, when I have fashioned him (Adam the first man) in his proper measures and breathed into him (Adam), the soul that I (Allah) created for him, then you (angels) fall down prostrate (In a show of respect) for him.'" [Al-Quran 15:28-29]

Then, Allah did not leave HIS most beloved humans in the darkness. HE gave prescriptions with guidance, so that they will find divine guidance to excel in honour, and happiness with success. Fasting is one of those prescriptions that any human can take by submission to Allah. There is no hinderance for anyone if he/she wants to take Allah's guidance. Allah's guidance is free for all and beneficial for all. If people follow the teaching of fasting like self-control to be righteous, then happiness will embrace them, and problems will be bound to say goodbye. I shall break down some of the problems that is shaking our happiness and with fasting message of self-control with righteousness we can overcome those problems:

- **Unhappiness in marriage:** Unhappy marriages do not come down from the sky as rain. They are humans' own earnings from their wrong practices from wrong beliefs. When spouses believe that they can get away from jealousy, hatred, selfishness, cheating and corruptions in their marriages, and they practice those lowly traits, then one day they get caught. Then, they find themselves drowned in the swamp of ugliness with disputes and unhappiness. If they can follow the message of fasting for self-control with righteousness, then easily they can prevent problems and unhappiness in their marriages.
- **Unhappiness in children:** Some children are taught selfishness to expect anything, and to get anything by hook or crook. Some of them learn to be possessive, and after receiving so many gifts they simply say, "Is that All?" Their wrong attitude places them on the unhappy seat because there is nothing in this world than can be enough to give happiness to a greedy child. My mother always used to remind me to be happy with whatever I had. Later, I realized fasting was teaching me exactly like that. It taught me to be happy without food or drink. In modern age, some young people commit suicide because they didn't get something that they wanted. Patience is a part of fasting practice, and it can help children to be happy with what they have as it helped me.
- **Domestic violence:** Domestic violence is the by-product of immorality. Often, there is an absence of sincere love from one or both parts. Or selfishness regarding money sharing, or bad habits. Alcohol or drugs can also play a role in shortage of money for basic needs, and then anger, and frustration takes over. Basically, due to the immoral practices the harmony breaks, violence kicks in, and the suffering extends beyond limits. Fasting message is to be loving, caring and responsible in love relationship for themselves and for their children and relatives, and for the society. If spouses learn self-control through the lesson of fasting, can avoid domestic violence. Fasting can teach them to control their greed, irresponsibility, anger, and aggression to make a loving home and they can enjoy happiness in marital relationship.

- **Teenage suicide:** teenage suicide is on the increase in modern societies. What are the main reasons behind it? Out of so many, feeling of abandonment, or forsaken feeling, absence of love at home, domestic violence, abused, bullied, no hope in life and so on play big role behind the suicidal thoughts. All these maltreatments to our young people are due to immoral practices either at home, or outside of home. The opposite treatment is righteous treatments such as loving, respecting, admiring, inclusive, compassion and supporting. When righteous practices decline, the unrighteous practices increase and that contributes to unhappy mistreatment to one another. Fasting gives the message of hope. It reminds a person that Allah forgives your mistakes and promises you the best happiness in Paradise. So, you have nothing to be hopeless about and you should control your impulses to think positive and stay alive to contribute better things in this world. Fasting trains you to feel happy without food when other people are enjoying their food. That unstoppable happiness is the key to push back hopelessness and suicidal actions.
- **Addiction problems:** So many people suffer from addictions, and many of them are young people. Many want to get out of it but cannot. They are taking therapies, spending money in prescription medicines, or going through painful side effects etc. When I was a child in my primary school years, a naughty friend introduced cigarettes to me. I finally got out of it because of my strong self-control. Fasting taught me self-control and made me realize how powerful my mind was over my cravings. In summer days, due to fasting, I used to feel very hungry, but strong will power helped me not to surrender to my craving for food. After a while, I realised that I could take anything, or I could reject anything. Many times, I was offered lucrative bribes, but I pushed them away happily because of my self-control in righteousness. Fasting teaches self-control in a person, and its message is that every person should learn self-control to break away the bad habits including addictions of all sorts.
- **Accidents:** A lot of accidents happening on roads and damaging healthy lives and costing the society huge amount of money. What is the main reason behind most accidents on the road? It is out of control driving, drunk driving, careless driving, and impatient driving. Lots of people are losing life, or being disabled, or going through loss of income, grief and suffering just from someone else's out of control behaviour. I was hit by a drunk driver and that made me permanently disabled. But if the drivers are more careful, patient, responsible, mindful about others due to kindness, then accidents would have been much lesser. Fasting teaches patience, and consideration about others. Fasting makes a person go without food to understand the pain of hungry people in this world. If every driver drives with the love and empathy for other humans, would drive within control to save himself, and to save others.
- **Wars and destructions:** Why war breaks out between two nations? Greed for power or wealth, or for ego trip, or for anger to take revenge, or due to injustice etc are the main reasons behind wars. Fasting trains to get rid of all of them because they fall into unrighteousness actions. Allah does not love unrighteous actions and calls mankind to practice righteous action with one another. Allah calls mankind to compete with one another in fairness, love, kindness and with all other righteous actions. Because righteous actions never bring fighting, bloodshed, or killing or destructions. Righteousness protects people from sufferings from fear, worries, and life losses. If the world could learn self-control, and could practice righteousness, then the world could have avoided wars.
- **Living on credit:** Due to out-of-control desires and wants, some people cannot control them in overspending. They have nice set of clothes, yet they want the new design. But they can't afford it. They know that they do not need another new dress because their old sets are good as gold. They also know that they should cut their coat according to their clothes. But due to out-of-control desires, they would buy the new clothes in credit. So many people have this same out of control nature, and for that they can't save money, and they are tied with the chain of borrowing. Fasting can offer them

the training of self-control to stop living over the basic needs and to help the poor who do not have any clothes at all.

- **Depression:** Many people suffer from depression because they can't control their emotional desires. Many can't appreciate what they have, but they look at what they do not have and feel sad about it. Many people, when they lose something in this life, they lose their hope, and they do not find the replacements of that loss. Fasting trains people to feel happy without many things they avoid during fast and gives them hope for huge rewards and happiness in paradise. For everlasting gains in Paradise, they feel happy when they lose little things in this life.
- **Careless about divine duties:** Many believers are not as careful in worshipping Allah as much as they should be. That is because, they can't control their obsession with the temporary gains in this world. Fasting is to set them into their most prioritised duties. Fasting month brings worship during the day and during the night to make them into habits of putting Allah's worship as number one priority in their lives. Then, they begin to feel happy with the worship of Allah Merciful.

Happiness is a fundamental need in humans. Everyone wants to be saved from unhappiness. But we earn unhappiness without own wrongdoings. Unless we control our wrong doings, and replace the wrong doings with righteousness, we can't buy happiness from anywhere. For this, we need to practice self-control to avoid wrong, and to practice right. Fasting is a divine training for that. It is a free prescription from Allah, and anyone can accept it to find happiness.

Fasting for a better world.

Fasting teaches good qualities, motivates to control evil nature, and encourages to do good deeds. It trains the person to have self-control through faith. It never forces an idea, or an action on someone, but it guides with faith to stimulate the person to discipline from within. The faith part is, "Allah is watching me and will judge me," motivates the person to become responsible for their own actions, and the actions part in the individual follows caution in what they do. Then faith and actions combine to follow self-control in what a person thinks and does. That way, they develop a mind to self-correct their inner world of desires and cravings, and they take the control on them to direct themselves towards the good actions.

If people take their guardians, community, police, court, and prison as the correction tools, they rely on them, and they try to avoid wrong actions for the fear of getting caught by them. But from the fear of police or prison, they cannot discipline their inside because police or judge cannot see their inside. Nor they cannot correct themselves in their secret actions that police or judge cannot see. Therefore, the correction system in our societies have limited effect on people for self-correction. I am not saying that it is not necessary, but I am only comparing between the two methods for human self-correction.

Fasting is a practice to avoid things for the Fear and Love of Allah. Fear is that any secret or open actions are being watched by Allah and HE will judge about them. Love is to obey Allah with their heart and soul to be under HIS love and protection forever. That fear and love is very deep in the heart and soul and very powerful to change a heart for the better. That's why people fast to please Allah not for the fear of police, court, judge, or prison. For the same fear and love, a person can give up the crime, corruption, violence or killing, not for the fear of imprisonment, but for the fear of Allah's punishment. The love for Allah becomes a strong barrier between morality and immorality. Love for Allah motivates the person to avoid wrong things that disappoint Allah, because Allah loves those who do good, and Allah does not love those who do evil.

Keeping these points in mind, if we need a better world with less crime and killing, with less corruption and more peace, we can see how fasting for self-control or fasting to learn righteousness is important. It is such a program that anyone can take and can learn from it for a better world. Let us make a list of areas that we need for a better world to see how fasting can help:

Training for good citizens: If a sincere believer cannot eat or drink secretly during fasting due to the fear of Allah's punishment, then how can that believer steal something from his neighbour? How can he be a criminal in the society? How can he harm his people for his selfish reasons? How can he/she be bad parents to abuse children or practice domestic violence? We need good citizens for a better family, neighbour, community, society, and the world. Training for righteous citizenship is very important through social environment, education and motivation, and fasting plays huge contribution in achieving that. I know many poor people who are extremely honest, and they avoid criminal activities. They maintain their honesty for their faith.

Crime prevention: People get into the crime world most often when they are desperate for something. They often look for belonging and get into any group to feel belonged. If the group is practicing unlawful things, they also slowly give in to their unlawful practices. For these people, self-control is essential with fear and hope. They need to learn the serious consequences of their wrongdoings as well as the hope for the future. If they can be convinced in their mind that they belong, and they have hope, then they can decide to stay away from the crimes. For example: a group of children dragged me to steal a cucumber from my grandmother's garden in the dark. But I could not steal her cucumber, and I ran away from them. What prevented me from that petty crime? I was in fear of Allah's punishment at that time. I was shaking inside me that my grandma would not see it, but Allah was watching me. That fear comes through the training of fasting.

Accident prevention: Drinking and driving is causing many accidents to maim people or to kill people. Fasting teaches to put a break on drinking choices. It prevents a person from addictions. For example: if someone is addicted to alcohol, he cannot follow the fasting rules. Fasting rule is one cannot drink anything at all during the fasting and cannot drink alcohol after the breaking of fast because it is prohibited by Allah. Therefore, fasting and drink-drive do not go together. When someone loves fasting, and learn self-control from the fasting, can get rid of addictions. Imagine! If the world had more people to learn self-control to avoid drinking and driving, how that would help to prevent accidents and life loss on the road.

Saving taxpayers' dollars: Out of control behaviour, bad habits, addictions, greed etc are causing domestic violence, child abuse, women abuse, family break ups, stealing and robbing, corruptions, and crime etc that cost money to deal with court, police, prison, counselling, medical cost, loss of income from loss of work. As a result, tax rates go high, citizens struggle financially, the average well-being gets compromised because of not enough money in Govt treasury and education, health sectors suffer. If we could follow faith to be responsible and compassionate towards one another, then we could save huge amount of money and we could invest that saved money to invest for the prosperity of the nation and for the world. We can learn righteousness from fasting to save ourselves and to save others from financial struggle.

Fasting month helps economy to grow: Fasting month has many festivities. It motivates Muslims to spend to have good foods for breaking fast. They are also encouraged by fasting to feel for the hungry people, and to feed them. Every night for breakfast there is a feast. End of Fasting month comes with bigger feast, celebration, gifts exchanges and so on. Muslims spend lots of money to celebrate all these occasions. It brings joy, mental well-being in the society, but more than that, it contributes to a robust economy in the society with cashflow and with sharing the money around.

Removing poverty in society: Fasting is like a voluntary hunger strike for the pleasure of Allah. Through it, one can feel the pain of hunger. Why does Allah want people to feel the

pain from hunger? The answer is that Allah wants people to learn sympathy and compassion for other hungry people around them. Allah created them to share and care, and to make sure that every human gets his/her rights. Poverty is not prescribed by Allah. Allah gave plenty food on this earth for everyone. But it is some humans who are crazy to have more by depriving others. That's why, poverty is a manmade problem and humans should solve it. Fasting teaches to be compassionate, to share foods with the poor people, not to show sympathy but to pay for their GOD-GIVEN rights.

Above are only a few examples to show that how Islamic Fasting benefits everyone directly or indirectly in worldly terms. The spiritual benefits are enormous. I believe more work needs to be done in analysing the socio-economic benefits of Islamic Fasting for every human on this earth so that those studies can be shared with mankind in a simple term that they can understand better.

Divine prescription for hope

Fasting is a divine prescription for hope. It is a gift from All-Wise Allah for HIS servants. HE knows that HE created humans to work hard in this life to pass the test, and they will face numerous challenges in their lives to pass the tests. Those challenges will try to wear them down, or break them down mentally, emotionally, or physically, and to maintain their good level of motivation they need hope. HE knows, especially HIS believer will have to live without many things to obey Allah, and to stay within the boundary that Allah has instructed them with permission and prohibitions, they need unshakable hope.

What is hope? In the light of Islam, it is a gift from Allah, and it is only from Allah, and in its creation, there are no partners with Allah. Hope is unseen yet very powerful. Allah is also unseen, but HE is Almighty. HE has created hope and kept it unseen for us, and HE has installed it within us with two polarities. One polarity is hope, and another polarity is hopelessness. Then, to maintain the balance, Allah has given knowledge and guidance for humans to work on it. Allah did not give us anything without the guidance of how to manage it well. If we follow Allah's guidance, we can maintain good level of hope to face our life challenges successfully to pass the test insha Allah.

Why do we need hope in life? We need hope for several reasons such as:

Like oxygen: We need oxygen to stay alive, and we need hope to survive. Without oxygen, we will die, and without hope our inner strength will die. Oxygen helps us to breathe well, and hope helps us to function well. Oxygen is for the best physical health, and hope is for the best mental-emotional health. Therefore, Allah has made the hope an important part in our lives.

Reason for living: People go through sufferings, but hope supplies them a continuous positive feeling that one day better things will come. That's why, people find reason to live and struggle with the hope. If you take the hope out then you see nothing good in the future, and you question, "What is the point of living?" After my accident, when I was told by the doctor that I would not walk again in my life, for that moment all my hope stumbled, struggled to stand up, and I had the same question in my life, "What good can I do if I stay alive?" Soon after I found hope, and I decided to live if Allah grants my life with best hope.

Safety tool: Hopelessness kills the motivation in people. Even though they have money, wealth, abundance in life, but they become hopeless for losing a simple thing, then their entire castle collapses. Their inner sight changes completely, and they see only the darkness without seeing any light at the end of the tunnel. They do not enjoy anything in their lives, and they live like in hell. Some cannot handle it anymore, and suffer from deep depression, some of them commit suicide out of desperation to get out of the sufferings with a wrong notion that they will be happy after the death. The truth is, they do not know for sure what

is waiting for them after the death. The opposite is hope, and it works as a safety tool to save us from suffering, depression, and suicide etc. Hope saves us from wasting time with negative feeling and thinking and motivates us to be busy with positive things.

For faith: Hope is a part of Islamic Faith. Without it one cannot be a full believer. Allah prescribes hope and prohibits hopelessness. Believers' life journey has more struggles because to obey Allah's guidance they must walk extra miles, they must live life without many things, and they must struggle to pass the test for Paradise. Without hope in Allah, they cannot persist their journey. We should look at a verse in the Holy Quran that's says:

وَلَا تَيْأَسُوا مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَيْأَسُ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

“Never give up hope of Allah’s (Gift of) Mercy. Truly, no one feels sad for Allah’s (Gift of) Mercy, except those who have no faith.” [Al-Quran 12:87]

For peace of mind: Hope gives us peace of mind. We often anticipate bad happenings and suffer from fear and anxieties. That takes away our peace of mind. We feel restless inside as if something was going to go wrong to disadvantage us. When we remind ourselves with hope for the best, then hope calms us down. On top of that, when a believer remembers Allah's promises about all good rewards, then the hope goes to the high level which brings peace of mind. With the dependency in Allah [Tawakkul], we find peace and tranquillity in our hearts.

Without hope, people become desperate. They don't care. For example, when people lose a loved one, they see only loss, and for it they may think that they have lost everything. Then, they may become suicidal or homicidal. Lots of people end up in the crime world because they have lost hope, and they say, “Why should I care?” Many criminals do not want to come out of prison because they have lost their hope of integrating with the normal society. ‘Who will give me a job? I have no hope that anyone in the civil society will respect me again.’ You may hear these types of comments from people who are in prison. From loss of hope, some people take the path of revenge to destroy and to be destroyed because they have no hope that they could gain something better than what they have lost.

Islamic teaching on hope comes with better solutions to give hope in every situation. It does not limit the hope in material gains in this life only. Or it does not limit the hope in this life only. For example, my wife was unjustly killed by a gunman in the Mosque. She was innocent and did not harm the gunman or anyone. She lost her life, lost her child and husband, her enjoyment in this life. So, what is her hope? Then, I lost my dear wife. It gave me pain, suffering, trauma, and grief. So, what is my hope in it. Nothing can bring her back. So, what do I hope to receive in this life? That's how, in many cases, the hope of receiving something is limited, and if anyone depends on the hope to expect something better in this life, might suffer from hopelessness.

Islam comes with Allah's divine prescription of hope. It says, there next a never-ending life, and in there surely Allah will judge everyone fairly to give the proper good or bad reward. So, believe in it and never be hopeless about justice. Be sure, justice will be served in Allah's court. Now, you see, I lost my wife, but I have hope in Allah for my future (After my death in the next life). Again, for my wife, Allah assured that she will be under the hospitality of Allah because she was innocent, and she will receive the martyr status to be happy forever in Paradise. Now, look at here again, has she lost or gain? She gained and for her she can hope for the everlasting happiness. What about me then? Do I have hope for me? Yes, even though my wife cannot come back, but Allah has promised that HE will reward me for my patience. Even, HE will reward me for my forgiveness. So, Allah's divine prescription of hope is never ending, and it may be in this life, or it may be in the next life.

Now, if we discuss about hope from Fasting, it will make sense. I shall give examples about how fasting gives us hope for better achievements in this life and in the next life. They are:

Hope in this life: Fasting is prescribed for the believers to learn self-control. How does it give hope to receive better things in this life? There is plenty. If I learn self-control, I cannot be a criminal, corrupt, evil, hot headed, violent, abusive, jealous, greedy, cruel etc. As a result, I find hope to be loved and respected by others. With self-control I will be a better husband, father, employer, neighbour, citizen, friend, and a human. I find hope that I will be out of troubles, and I won't create troubles for others. I get the hope that I will be in peace, my family will be happy with me, and they will love me more because of my love for them, and I can prosper in anything because of my good principles, honesty, dedication, righteousness, and for my love and respect towards humans. So, in this world, I can hope for many good results. Fasting trains for all the best qualities in believers so that they will get cash benefits in physical, emotional, and mental levels in them, and good treatment from others because of their good qualities. They don't have to suffer from despair that people will hate them for the stealing, robbery, or tamper problems etc.

Hope in the next life: This life is too short in compared to the next life. The comparison is like a drop of the water from the ocean is this life, and the rest of the ocean is like the next life. The next life will never end. So, for the hope in our everlasting happiness in next life, we need to earn or invest for it. To earn that everlasting happiness, fasting comes with hopes. That hope is solid, true and brings joys, motivations, positive energy, and hardworking attitude in believer with full enthusiasm. Holy prophet (pbuh) said that when Ramadan month comes, the doors of Paradise are opened. It is opened to assure believers with hope that for their sincere fasting they will enter it, and by opened doors they are being welcomed towards it. It is a great hope, and for it, believers love fasting. Again, Holy Prophet's message is that Allah forgives the previous sins from fasting with sincere intention with the HOPE of rewards from Allah. Fasting here is teaching for the hope in Allah. Then again, Holy Prophet (pbuh) taught that the fasting believer has two joys, one during breaking the fast (Iftar), and another during the meeting with Allah in Paradise. Meeting with Allah in Paradise! It is such a hope that is better than any other hope.

In conclusion, Fasting brings hope for this life and in the next life. In our life difficulties, we must not stop doing good deeds due to hopelessness. We might face disappointments from families, friends, relatives of other humans, but we must not lose hope in Allah's Mercy. Allah will send HIS Mercy to the good doers, and that must be our hope. So, no matter what bad things that happens to us, or whatever bad things other people inflict on us, we must continue good actions with HOPE that Allah will reward us properly. Fasting is a challenge, a hardship, a hunger, and thirst struggle, yet we do not feel weak (Hopeless) to give up, but we feel strong in our minds to carry on for HOPE of receiving Allah's rewards. Let us, practice the same hopefulness for the rest of the year. Insha Allah, HOPE in Allah will help us to succeed in both lives.

Why fasting message should be shared?

Fasting is with great messages. Those messages are from the creator of mankind. It doesn't harm anyone for giving the fasting message or to receive the fasting message. If we focus only in one message of fasting that should be shared with others, that would be self-control for everyone. Self-control is a requirement for each human. People from every culture, ethnicity, nationality needs self-control. Self-control is needed for a happy family, or a happy neighbourhood, or a happy relationship between close friends or the relationship with other humans.

For the sake of benefits to one another, good messages need to be out there to remind one another. We live in the plural society, and whatever can complement for building the good society, we should remind that to one another. We have many religions existing in our societies, and they also have many good messages that we find similarity or common ground with. Without undermining one another, we can complement one

another with good messages. Fasting gives the message of self-control to train a person to be patient, and tolerant with others.

The universal message from Allah addresses the basic needs in humans for personal and social happiness. A person can taste the happiness by self-control. The secret of happiness is to separate the soul from greed and from unlimited wants. When a person surrenders his/her soul to greed, becomes a slave of it. As a result, it cannot get everything it wants and that results in unhappiness. Fasting teaches to feel happy for spiritual greater achievements without food, drink, or sexual gratification. This simple message about the secret of happiness we all can share as humans. We all can agree in common grounds, and in fasting messages, many things are for the common ground and anyone or everyone can be benefitted from that.

Who must get priority for receiving the message? Are you thinking of people who do not follow Islamic teachings? Not at all. The message must start from the home, and we need to share the true message of fasting from us as Muslims. We should ask, do nearly 2 billion Muslims understand the true message from fasting? If not, then we should take responsibility to pass it on to them. What about our children or young Muslims? Is not it our responsibility to pass the right message of fasting to them for their success? Then, if all Muslims do understand the message, are they following it? If not, the true message must be continued. Fasting message is to produce righteous citizens, best humans, and the best moral charactered people with best dealing for a peaceful world. Muslims has a big stake in human race; therefore, Muslims have huge responsibility to pass the true message from fasting for benefitting the whole mankind.

How can we share the fasting message from us to wider humankind? In this modern age, people are using the following mostly:

Media: All sorts of media can be used to spread the message of fasting. It is a troublesome world, and people are looking for comfort. In this world, people are seeking peace, guidance, self-control tips in the material prosperity, but they are not getting the tranquillity. The message of fasting can be offered to them. If they like, they can take the benefits for their own.

Speaking: Speaking always has been the oldest traditions for effective communications. All the messengers of Allah spoke to people. They spoke to win hearts by expressing their loving hearts. The true message always accompanies the loving message. GOD is loving, HIS message is with love for HIS creations, and prophets of Allah did that with speaking to spread the good message of fasting. We should organize more talk to explain the message of fasting for Muslims in Mosques, educational places, here and there as much as possible. Why more speaking? Well, if we do not explain through speaking, to relate the fasting message with every aspect of life, then many Muslims will take the fasting only as a ritual. They will not relate the fasting with their lives. For the harmony and peace, and for the peaceful co-existence, we should also talk more about fasting message with non-Muslim friends.

Sharing food: In fasting month, Muslims organize Iftar (breaking fast dinner). They can share it with neighbours, friends, and relatives. But if they only do the food sharing for the sake of filling up their bellies, then that will not serve the purpose of spreading message well. Food sharing should combine with message sharing. Muslims should be reminded that fasting is for control on food as well. We should not waste food, nor should we eat up to the throat with an unhealthy health practice. Also, food sharing should not be limited to food only, but it should be love sharing as well. Holy prophets were the symbols of love, their words were loving, and they passed their message in a lovely and wise way. Our message should carry the love to be seen that we genuinely care for all. Food can bring people together, but love can keep them closer as a friend, and friends listen the message from loving friends eagerly.

Writing: Muslim community needs to encourage their young people to be best writers. Writing is a best way to spread messages. Good writing is a special skill to reach the message directly to people's mind. A good piece of writing is more than long disorganized talk. People may not retain everything from a speech, but they read a writing again and again until they understand. For me, I read slowly, but I take notes to remember the themes for very long time. So, writing books, in newspaper etc are good vehicles to spread the messages.

Gatherings: It allows to speak in targeted audiences to speak to their level of understanding. Seminar, symposium, and public gatherings are good ways to bring people together, to exchange messages, and develop the message sharing techniques further. If the groups, or organizations plans from the beginning of the year, and dedicate teams to work on this issue, then they can plan well ahead of each fasting month to organize as many gatherings as possible to spread the messages of fasting.

Kind actions: Action speaks louder than talking. Fasting is to go hungry to feel the pain for the hungry people. So, fasting message is to be kind and compassionate to other people. If each Muslim, or Muslim groups take little bit of extra kind activities in fasting month, then it will be noticed by people all over the world. Kind speaking, kind charity, kind projects, kind activities of all sorts are the best way to spread the true message of fasting.

Muslims or Islam is not a cult that is only limited to few people. Islam is a humanitarian common-sense way of life. It includes every human need, and it offers guidance for every need for every person. It relates to the reality in life, and it should be spread nicely and peacefully. If people reject it or accept it, it must be their choice, but there is nothing wrong to offer a solution to our worries and fears in this life with care.

In my experience, whoever I meet, most of them start talking about my fasting. I encourage them to ask me any question about fasting, and they are keen to understand why we fast, and how we manage it, and what benefit do we expect from it. I love talking about fasting, particularly to explain the purpose of it. No one so far have I talked to disagreed about the benefits of it.

Allah's message sharing is the best action. Every Muslim is an ambassador of Allah, especially the ones that Allah gave them high education, and ability to deliver speech and so on should take up this best job of Allah's message sharing. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“And who is better in speech than the one who calls (men) to Allah, and works righteousness, and says, “I am one of the Muslims.” [Al-Quran 41:33]

Allah is All-Wise. His message is full of wisdom. HE wants HIS message to be shared with wisdom as well. So, the speakers or organizers must remember the following instruction from Allah. (Al-Quran 16:125)

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

“Invite (mankind) to the Way of your Lord (i.e., Islam or message of fasting) with wisdom and fair preaching.” [Al-Quran 16:125]

Finally, why should we share the fasting message with others? Why can't we oil our own machines? The answer is simple. We should love the same thing that we love for ourselves. This is the teaching of Holy Prophet (pbuh). So, is it fair that we only capture the benefits from fasting and its message without sharing with others? We should show our love and care for the humanity. Passing the fasting message is for the love and care for others.

Chapter Five: Holy Month of Ramadan

Month of Ramadan in the Quran:

Fasting and Ramadan is not the same thing. Some people are confused with the two different things. So, let us see the distinction between the two terms. For fasting the Quranic term is “Saum.” It means abstention from few things like mainly food, drink, and sex from dawn to sunset. The plural of Saum is Siam. On the other hand, Ramadan is the name of a month in the Islamic Lunar calendar. So, what is the relationship between fasting and Ramadan month? Well, in this month Allah has prescribed fasting for the believers. It is clearly stated in a verse in the Holy Quran:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

“The month of Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs for) guidance and judgment (between right and wrong): So, every one of you who is present (at his home) during the month should spend it in fasting. But if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later.” [Al-Quran 2:186]

In the above verse Allah said, “Shahru Ramadan [The month of Ramadan].” Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) says, “Do not only say RAMADAN. It is a name of Allah. Say SHAHRU RAMADAN.” [Tafsir Ibn Kasir]

If Ramadan is a name of a month, then one may ask, how many months in a year according to the Holy Quran? The Holy Quran answers:

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“Verily, in the sight of Allah, the number of months (in a year) is twelve—so decided by HIM, the day when HE created the heavens and the earth:” [Al-Quran 9:36]

From the above verse some facts need to be made clear. One fact is that Allah has decided 12 months in a year. Another fact is that Allah decided it since HE created the heavens and the earth. Allah has created the Sun and the Moon to be used for time calculations. Then, HE gave people knowledge and guidance to develop calendars. Now we have Sun calendar and the Moon (Lunar) calendar. In Islamic worships, the months begins and ends according to the Lunar calendar. Let us now have a look at the Islamic 12 months, and point out exactly which month the Ramadan month is:

1. MUHARRAM is the first month of Hijri calendar.
2. SOFOR,
3. RABIUL AWWAL,
4. RABIUS SAANI,
5. JUMADIUL AWWAL,
6. JUMADIUS SAANI,
7. ROJOB,
8. SHA'BAN,
9. **RAMADAN,**
10. SHAWAL,
11. JULQADA,
12. JULHIJJA.

So, we see, month of Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. Fasting in this month is one of the five pillars in Islam. The Month of Ramadan is mentioned in the Holy Quran because it has closest connection

with the Holy Quran. That connection is the revelation of the Holy Quran took place in the month of Ramadan. Other months have significance for other reasons, but the month of Ramadan is very significant due to the connection with the Quran in which contains Allah's own words for the guidance of mankind.

Why Ramadan month is so honourable?

What is honour? It is a high respect for good qualities. In a society people receive honourable status for the noble deeds or qualities. In the light of Islam, the true honour can come from Allah. The worldly honour can be biased, or based on who knows who, or who recommended who, as well as can be genuine. But in the Sight of Allah, true honour is due to true and genuine nobility. For example, Allah says to the mankind:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ

“Sure, the most honourable of you, in the Sight of Allah is (he, who is) the most righteous of you.” [Al-Quran 49:13]

Again, in Islamic Faith, the true honour comes from Allah. When Allah grants honour to someone or something, it becomes honourable. Similarly, when Allah loves someone, HE expresses it to Angel Jibrail, then angel Jibril expresses it to other angels, and then the wave expression touches human hearts to love the same person. It is Allah Who can give true honour. Allah says:

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۚ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ۚ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Say: ‘O Allah! Lord of Power, YOU give power to whom YOU please, and YOU take away power from whom YOU please; YOU bless with honour whom YOU please, and YOU bring down whom YOU please. In YOUR hand is all Good. Surely, YOU can do all things.’” [Al-Quran 3:26]

Allah is the source of real honour because HE is All-Honourable as the Supreme Lord of the universe. Hypocrites in Medina were saying that they were honourable, and Messenger of Allah and HIS righteous followers were not. Allah revealed the message as following:

وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“But honour belongs to Allah and to HIS Messenger, and to the believers; but the hypocrites do not know.” [Al-Quran 63:8]

Now, let me take myself to the main question, ‘Why is the Ramadan month so honourable?’ The answer is not limited to one point. It can be answered in couple of points.

1. Allah has made it honourable, and when Allah makes something honourable, it cannot be taken away by any other power. Allah made this month to celebrate the righteous actions. In this month believers will practice the angelic qualities. For example, angels are pure, and they do not eat, and they constantly remember Allah. In Fasting believers remember Allah in every second of their fasting because that remembrance of Allah keeps them away from food, drink etc. In this month, Allah's glory is expressed more, and the inhabitants of heavens and earth join in that celebration together. In this honourable month the gates of the Hell are closed, Satan is chained, and the doors of Paradise are open. In this honourable month, Allah sends HIS Mercy like rain on HIS beloved servants. So, this month is so honourable because Allah has blessed the Honour on this month.
2. The month itself is not so honourable, but for another most honourable thing it has become honourable. For example, a piece of iron has no high value but when it comes close to the magnet

then it becomes magnetized to be as valuable as the magnet. The Ramadan month has become so honourable for the Most Honourable Holy Quran. Holy Quran was revealed in this month. What is Holy Quran and why the Holy Quran is Most Honourable? The Holy Quran is the word of Allah, and because Allah is the Most Honourable Lord of the universe, HIS Words are most honourable too. Because of the Holy Quran, this month will be respected until Dooms Day. Believers will respect it, take care of it, will be looking forward to it, will burn their sins in it through their fasting, will receive forgiveness for their fasts, Quran recitation in prayers, and worships. Allah has chosen this month to reveal the Holy Quran. Allah says:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

“The month of Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs for) guidance and Judgment (between right and wrong):” [Al-Quran 2:185]

Holy Quran is very honourable. Anything that has come close to it has received the honour. For example:

Ramadan Month: Allah sent the whole Quran to the first heaven in one night in the Month of Ramadan. That place is called “Baitul Izzah” and the night in which it was sent is called, “Lailatul Qadr”. Then from the first heaven Angel Gabriel (a.s) brought down the Quran bit by bit whenever it was necessary on Holy Prophet (s.a.w) over the time of 23 years. [Tafsir Ibn Kasir, explanation 2:185]

One night: Allah made one night better than thousands of months because of the Quran. That night is called in the Holy Quran “The night of Power.” There is a whole chapter on it in the Quran and the name of the chapter is Al-Qadr (Chapter 97).

Honourable Messenger: Holy Quran was sent down to Muhammad (pbuh). Allah made him the Honourable Messenger to receive the Quran, and to recite it for the mankind, and to purify them with it, and to spread the message of it to the mankind, and to practice according to it for receiving the Most Honourable Place in Paradise.

Honourable believers in the Sight of Allah: Whoever will follow the teachings of the Holy Quran, will receive the High Honourable seats under the shade of Allah’s Throne on the Day of Judgment. For the Quran, Allah raises the honourable status for some people.

Month of Ramadan and Holy Books:

Holy Quran is not the only Book that Allah has sent. It is the final version of all Holy Books. We should remember a few facts regarding the Holy Books:

- **Who sent them?** It is Allah Who sent down all the Holy Books.
- **On whom Allah sent them?** Allah sent them to the messengers that HE had chosen from time to time.
- **With what message?** The message from Allah was the same in all the holy books. Allah never sent message to divide humans into arguments and to divide them to many religions. The main message was from Allah was to worship HIM only.
- **Why the Holy Quran?** As the final Holy book, in it the summary of all the Holy Books that Allah sent down before, because after the Holy Quran Allah will never send any Messenger and will not send any more Holy Books. In the past, people have changed the main teachings in the holy Book, or its originality is not intact. That’s why, Allah has decided to protect the Holy Quran from getting lost or getting changed. Millions of Muslims have memorized the Quran all over the world, and the memorization will continue without changing a letter or a sign. Allah’s promise is:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“Without doubt, WE have sent down the Message (The Quran), and WE will surely guard it (Protect it).” [Al-Quran 15:9]

- **Should we believe in all Holy Books?** Yes. Believing in all the holy books is the essential part of Islamic faith. Islamic Faith has 6 pillars, and one of them is, “Believing in all the holy books.” That belief is not in the added or removed parts, but in the original message that Allah sent. Today, we do not exactly know which part is edited and which part is original. So, without arguing, we simply believe in the original message in the Holy Books from Allah. Holy Quran describes a pillar of Faith which is:

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

“And (for those) who believe in the Revelations sent to you (Muhammad) and sent before your time.” [Al-Quran 2:4]

- **Four main holy Books:** We believe that four main Holy Books were revealed on the four honourable messengers of Allah. They are:
 - Joboor (Psalm) on Dawood (pbuh),
 - Tourat on Musa (pbuh),
 - Injeel on Isa (pbuh) and
 - Quran on Muhammad (pbuh).

According to the Holy Quran, Fasting was also prescribed for the people before. It means, fasting was prescribed on other holy books for the messengers, and their followers. In between all the prophets, they also had to practice fasting. So, the main practice such as fasting was same, but the methods were different in different times considering the circumstances. Therefore, fasting is something we can see as a common thing to all the prophets and their followers. What about the time of revelation for other holy books? Do we find any connections or commonality with the month? Yes, in Musnad Ahmed, there is a Hadis, in which Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said (the following):

- “Allah sent Saheefah (Small form of Holy Books) on Ibrahim (pbuh) in the 1st night of Ramadan,
- Allah sent Tourat on Musa (pbuh) on the 6th of Ramadan,
- Allah sent Injeel (Gospel) on Isa (Jesus-pbuh) on 13th of Ramadan,
- Allah sent Joboor (psalm) on Dawood (pbuh) on 12th of Ramadan (Another narration).” [Tafsir Ibn Kasir, explanation 2:185]

That shows, the month of Ramadan is a chosen month for so many good happenings. Allah has chosen it not only for the followers of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) but also for so many other blessed believers. May Allah bless them all. Ramadan month unites the believers in spirit, and it remains honourable in all ages by Allah’s permission. We should increase the message of unity more in this month. Dividing humans is easy, but uniting is hard and rewarding. Unity effort in Ramadan month also has multiplied rewards.

We should remember one thing about the revelations of other holy books. All other holy books were sent at once. The only exception is Holy Quran. It was sent all at once to the first heaven but from there it was sent on Holy Prophet (s.a.w) over 23+ years. That was for wise reasons. Holy Quran is not with few pages, and it was the seal of all holy books. Allah sent it a bit by bit when it was necessary to reform the society. People without faith in Mekkah complained about it. Holy Quran states:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً ۚ كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ ۖ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا

“And those who reject Faith say: ‘Why is Quran not sent to him all at once?’” (Allah says that it is sent) like this so that WE may give strength to your heart with it, and WE have made it known to you in slow well-ordered stages, little at a time.” [Al-Quran 25:32]

Special welcome to the month of Ramadan:

Whom do we give special welcome? Surely, not to the ordinary people like me. Special people get special welcome. Allah has given some people more honour than others. Allah has given them special quality which makes them above ordinary, and through them Allah benefits general people. For their special talents and contributions people respect them, love them, and admire them. When one of those people visit people or country, then they receive special welcome.

One example is that Allah sent many holy messengers, and gave them some specialties with their role, contributions, and duties. As a result, everyone was unique, yet some were given special status on something by Allah. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَّنْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ ۚ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ

“Those messengers: WE preferred some of them, some above the others: To some of them (Moses), Allah spoke directly, others (David) HE raised to degree (Of honour); To Isa (Jesus) the son of Maryam (Mary), WE gave Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit (Jibrael).” [Al-Quran 2:253]

Allah made 12 months in a year since HE created the heavens and the earth but given every month some specialty. Holy month of Ramadan has specialty on some areas and that's why it receives special welcome. When I say special welcome about the Ramadan month, I mean a special welcome that is not only by the believers, but in areas that is beyond human capacity. Some examples will explain it better:

Welcome in Paradise: When this month enters the year, the doors of Paradise are opened until it ends. For welcoming the Ramadan that is a special welcome indeed! Humanly it is not possible.

Welcome in the heavens: When this month enters, the door of heavens is opened to welcome it. Allah's special Rahmah (Mercy) is sent down through those doors. Special welcome like that is also not possible humanly. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

إِذَا جَاءَ رَمَضَانُ فَتُخْتَفُتُ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ وَغُلِّقَتْ أَبْوَابُ النَّارِ وَصُفِّدَتِ الشَّيَاطِينُ وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ أُخْرَى وَقُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُ الرَّحْمَةِ

“When Month of Ramadan arrives the doors of heavens are opened. In another narration, the doors of Paradise are opened, and the doors of Hell Fire is closed, and Satan is chained. In another narration, the doors of Mercy are opened.” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

Again, why there is special welcome for this month? The answer is, it is the month of the Holy Quran, and Holy Quran is Allah's words to guide the mankind. So, special welcome to this month means the special welcome to the Holy Quran. Quran is referred as HOLY, and a holy thing deserves special welcome. Holy Quran brought the prescription for success, to build right relationship between the Lord and HIS servants, and the good news for the righteous people.

When special welcome is organized in the heavens and in the Paradise, how should the believers welcome this Holy Month? What kinds of things should we do as believer on whom Allah has prescribed fasting in this month. I shall try to include few tips in the following:

- **Fast few days in Sha'ban:** If possible, fast few voluntary fast in the month before Ramadan Month. Holy Prophet (pbuh) used to fast.
- **Make dua:** Make supplication to Allah to reach to the Ramadan Month. Holy prophet (pbuh) used to make supplication.

- **Sight the Moon:** Try to count the days in Sha'ban Month, and then make yourself available to sight the moon. Encourage your family and friends to try to sight the Moon because it is a Sunnah of prophet (pbuh). If the Moon is sighted either by you or another, say the Dua for Moon Sighting.
- **Be ready for it:** How to be ready? Repent for the sins and start fresh like a new chapter in life. Clean the heart from greed, hatred, selfishness, sinful thoughts, and give up bad habits etc. Think that this month could be your last chance for Allah's forgiveness and Paradise and start the month with strong devotion.
- **Learn the rules:** Before the Ramadan month, learn all the rules about fasting. Your knowledge will help you to maximize the rewards and minimize the mistakes. Learn the Holy Quran.
- **Make plan:** Don't start without proper planning. Plan for the whole month for worship, Quran Study, and include your family in the planning as a team.

Night of honour in the Month of Ramadan:

Among all the nights in the year, there is one night that is extremely honourable. That night is in the holy month of Ramadan. The 97th Chapter has self-explanation about it. The meaning of the chapter is in the following:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ. وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ. لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ. تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ. سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ.

“WE have indeed revealed this (Quran) in the Night of Power (Honour): And what will explain to you (O Prophet) what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months, in it come down the angels and the Spirit (Jibrael) by Allah's permission, to perform every task: Peace! (be in) this (night) until the rise of dawn!” [Al-Quran 97]

Why is this night called the night of power? Some reasons are I below:

First: That night changed the fortune of mankind that was not possible in thousands of months. Holy Quran was revealed in that night to remove thousands of years darkness, ignorance and it brought the divine light to guide mankind towards Paradise. Before Holy Quran came, people were living in ignorance. The Arab society had no law and order, human rights, unity, and freedom from violence. That ignorance and absence of a clear-cut divine path was absent for thousands of years until Holy Quran came in the Month of Ramadan. From that perspective, that one night in the month of Ramadan is better than thousands of months. With that night by revealing Holy Quran, Allah removed the thousands of years darkness from the mankind. In that night Allah sent the most powerful message namely “HOLY QURAN” to empower mankind with moral power, spiritual power, and the power of righteousness to turn their misfortune into fortune.

Second: The rewards of worships in that night are multiplied in thousands of months' time. Because of the Honour of Holy Quran, Allah has granted bonus in that night's worship. So, if a servant sincerely does one act of worship in that night, Allah will give thousand months' time more reward for it.

Which night is that Lailatul Qadr? There are many Hadises on this. But the easiest concept is that the Night of power falls any night in last 10 nights of the Ramadan month. Holy Prophet (s.a.w) used to seclude himself (I'teqaf) in the mosque in the last 10 days to make sure he spent that night in worship for receiving all the rewards in that night. Let us look at a couple of Hadis about it.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا - قَالَتْ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا دَخَلَ الْعَشْرُ شَدَّ مِئْزَرَهُ، وَأَحْيَا لَيْلَهُ، وَاقْبَضَ أَهْلَهُ

Ayesha (r.a) said that **when last 10 nights of Ramadan month used to come, Holy Prophet (s.a.w) used to worship vigorously. He (s.a.w) used to pass whole night in worship without sleeping and He (s.a.w) used to wake his family up as well.** [Muttafaqun A'laih]

عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا - أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " التَّمَسُّوْهَا فِي الْعَشْرِ الْوَاخِرِ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ

Ibn Abbas (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said: **"You shall look for it (Night of power) in last 10 nights of Month of Ramadan---**" [Bukhari]

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا - أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " تَحَرَّوْا لَيْلَةَ الْقَدْرِ فِي الْوَتْرِ مِنَ الْعَشْرِ الْوَاخِرِ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ

Again, Ayesha (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said: **"You shall look for Lailatul Qadr in odd nights in the last 10 nights of the month of Ramadan."** [Bukhari]

What happens in this honourable night? Some special things happen are such as:

1. The principal angel: The Hon Angel Jibrael comes down to the earth with other angels in this night. They visit every place where Allah's servants are worshipping HIM.
2. Allah's special permission: Allah permits the group of angels to visit HIS worshippers led by other angels from the upper world.
3. They make dua: Dua is for Allah's mercy and forgiveness for the believers. They continue doing it until the end of the night.

وَمَنْ قَامَ لَيْلَةَ الْقَدْرِ إِيْمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

4. Allah forgives: Holy prophet (pbuh) said: **"And if a believer will spend the night of power in worship with Imaan and hope of rewards from Allah, his (her) previous sins will be forgiven."** [Muttafaqun A'laih]

What is the main message from the Night of Power? The main message is that Allah is the Most Powerful Lord. HIS words (Quran) are also most powerful. Anything becomes honourable if it comes close to Allah. In this case, due to the revelation of the Quran in this night, it has become known as "Night of power or honour." Similarly, if anyone wants to become spiritually honourable, should accept Holy Quran as his/her best companion, and must serve Almighty Allah. Allah is the Most Powerful and if we can get HIS protection, then we have nothing to worry. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ. الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ. لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ

"Look! Surely upon the friends of Allah, no fear shall befall upon them, nor they shall grieve. (They are) those who believe and guard against evil, and fear Allah. For them is happy news, in the present life and in the Hereafter." [Al-Quran 10: 62-64]

Month of kindness:

Kindness is a part of human nature. It is there in everyone, in every creation of Allah. All-Merciful Allah has 100% Mercy, and from that whole Mercy, HE has distributed only 1% to HIS creation. That's why we see parent birds are kind to their baby birds, or a mother chicken is very protective to her baby chicks due to her love and kindness to them. In my life, I have seen many animals that were very kind towards me. Fish, insects, animals all have kindness. Allah has given more kindness in human hearts than any other creation. For this kindness a mother goes through difficulty after difficulty to conceive, carry, giving birth and to rear the children. For this kindness, a father protects his family even with difficulties.

But this kindness can be suppressed if it is not used. Like a computer screen, when one page is active, another page goes into hiding, and until you click on that page, it will not appear on the screen. Human mind is like a computer and if we do not use the kindness then we forget about it. Humans are forgetful. They remember things when they are reminded. Forgetfulness in humans is a sign that they are with limitation, and they are not GOD. Prophet Adam (pbuh) forgot about his age, and prophet Musa (pbuh) forgot about his promise he made with Khidr. That beautiful example is in the Holy Quran:

قَالَ لَا تَأْخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا

“(Mosa) said: ‘Do not be angry with me for forgetting, nor make me sad by causing difficulties on my part.’”
[Al-Quran 19:73]

Due to humans’ forgetfulness, they need reminders. Even without reminder from Allah, human can’t remember that they made promise with Allah in their soul state, in the soul world that they would worship none but Allah. All the holy books, and the messengers was to remind mankind that they should remember their promise to Allah.

Month of Ramadan is another reminder for the believers to be kind. There are two kinds of reminders, one is verbal with speech or in written form, and another is reminder by action. We know, reminder by action is the most effective reminder. One may not understand the written form, or another may not remember what he/she has heard, but if that person is acting according to reminder, then he or she cannot forget it. Fasting is a practical reminder for kindness by hunger and thirst for a month. Hunger is a reminder about the hunger pain in other humans, and it reminds believers why they should show their kindness to people who do not have.

A poet wrote:

“How can a happy person realise the pain of unhappiness? How can a person feel the pain of poison if he was never bitten by a poisonous creature?”

Allah prescribed fasting month for the believers as a reminder to feel pain of the hungry people. As a reminder, Allah made the compulsion on able Muslims to fast, to feel hungry, and to feel thirsty and so on. So that they can feel the pain of starvation, and they can feel the suffering of thirst of millions of people in this earth. Fasting makes Muslims realize about the sufferings of disadvantaged people and motivates them to extend their helping hands for other needy ones. Fasting reminds them that hungry humans are their brothers and sisters too because they all share the same parents. Fasting makes them realize some of the following things:

- **Appreciation:** They feel the suffering of starving. They realise how fortunate they are. They realise how much favour they are enjoying. They realise how far better they are than too many hungry people in this world. With that realization they learn to appreciate the favour of Allah to them, and they learn to express thanks to Allah with heart and soul. Without going through practical hunger, just reading, or hearing advice never makes one realise how hard passing the day without food is. Many people take Allah’s favour for granted, but for the believers Allah prescribed fasting so they will not take Allah’s favour for granted. They will feel the suffering and they will become better grateful and kind servants of Allah.
- **Pain of others:** When believers suffer from hunger and thirst, they realise how exactly poor people are suffering every day. That suffering makes them kind towards the needy and disadvantaged people. That’s why during fasting month believers donate more than any other month. They develop more kindness in this month. In this month they also practice kindness and generosity through providing food for other fasting people. They feed others, they give charity to the poor and needy people.

- **Month of kindness:** Holy Prophet (s.a.w) used to exercise kindness in the Month of Ramadan more than any other months in the year. Abdullah ibn Abbas (r.a) said:

أَجُودَ النَّاسِ بِالْخَيْرِ، وَكَانَ أَجُودُ مَا يَكُونُ فِي رَمَضَانَ

“In donation (Giving) Holy Prophet (s.a.w) was the kindest hearted than any human. And his kind heartedness used to increase most in the Month of Ramadan.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

So, Ramadan month is considered a month of kindness. Allah rewards believers for their kindness. This is Allah’s universal rules. If HIS servants are kind towards HIS creations, then Allah becomes kind on them too. For example, if they kindly provide food for others in Iftar (Breaking fast) then Allah also reward them back. Let us look a Hadis. Salman Farsi (r.a) narrated that once Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said in a speech in the end of Sha’ban month:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ أَظْلَكُمُ شَهْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ، شَهْرٌ فِيهِ لَيْلَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ، جَعَلَ اللَّهُ صِيَامَهُ فَرِيضَةً ، وَقِيَامَ لَيْلِهِ تَطَوُّعًا ، وَمَنْ تَقَرَّبَ فِيهِ بِخَصْلَةٍ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ كَانَ كَمَنْ أَدَّى فَرِيضَةً فِيمَا سِوَاهُ ، وَمَنْ أَدَّى فَرِيضَةً كَانَ كَمَنْ أَدَّى سَبْعِينَ فَرِيضَةً فِيمَا سِوَاهُ ، وَهُوَ شَهْرُ الصَّبْرِ ، وَالصَّبْرُ ثَوَابُهُ الْجَنَّةُ ، وَشَهْرُ الْمَوَاسَاةِ ، وَشَهْرٌ يُزَادُ فِيهِ رِزْقُ الْمُؤْمِنِ ، وَمَنْ فَطَرَ فِيهِ صَائِمًا كَانَ مَغْفِرَةً لِدُنُوبِهِ وَعَقَقَ رَقَبَتَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ ، وَكَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِهِ

“O people! Over you spread the shade of a month, blessed month, such a month in which is a night that is better than thousands of months. Allah made the days of that month compulsory for you to fast..., this month is the month of showing sympathy (Kindness)... Whoever will provide Iftar to another who fasts, for it his/her sins will be forgiven, and it will be a reason to be saved from Hell Fire! Besides, he/she will receive same reward of the one who fasts (and fed) without reducing the fasting rewards of the one who was fed...” [Bayhaki Shua’bul Imaan]

Month of unity:

Unity is a very powerful tool for progress. It is an essential thing for growing, thriving, and reaching to the pick of success. Allah has provided so many signs in and around us to learn the importance of unity. In us, Allah made five fingers to function unitedly to make a strong hand. In our body, Allah made all kinds of organs to co-ordinate with one another unitedly for proper functioning. Our nervous system, digestive system, respiratory system, blood circulation system and so on are working in harmony to keep us healthy. If one system is out, we feel sick. We have two eyes, yet they function in unity. Do we learn from it?

Then, around us, birds fly in unity, fish swim in unity, sheep graze in unity, flower plants co-exist in the garden with unity, the Sun and the Moon travel in unity, the stars move around in unity, and the angels of Allah do their duties in unity. So, Allah has provided signs in and around us to learn to be united as humans. We need unity in Faith, unity in peace, unity in social cohesion and unity in family, neighbourhood, societies and in the world. Humanity needs unity as one large family as they are all created by One Allah, and they are from the same parents Adam and Eve.

Having unity quietly or privately is a good thing, but becoming the role model of unity is the best thing. Some people in this world must take the role-modelling role to inspire others. That is not an easy job. It is indeed a hard job, but role-modelling is the most honourable job. What is role-modelling? Role modelling is to be saying and acting both. Talking about unity is not hard, but acting on unity is hard but honourable. Allah wants the believers to be role models of unity. HE wants believers to invite others to unity, and they will show that unity by their actions. That’s why, Allah has prescribed unity in believers a compulsion as HE prescribed fasting in the Month of Ramadan as a compulsion on able people. Allah commands:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُوا إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ. وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۚ وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا

“O you who believe! Fear Allah as HE should be feared, and do not die except in a state of Islam. And hold fast by the Rope which Allah (Stretches out for you, Al-Quran), and do not be divided among yourselves; And remember with thanks Allah’s favour on you; for you were enemies and HE joined your hearts together in love, so by HIS grace you became brethren:” [Al-Quran 3:102-103]

Allah did not only prescribe unity on believers but has provided practical training for it. As we know, in good training you need theoretical and practical courses. For the practical training, Allah has bestowed HIS Mercy on believers by giving them a month of unity. Yes, Ramadan Month is a divine training for unity. Let us look at a few examples below for our better understanding Insha Allah:

- **United response to Allah’s call:** When Allah calls believers to fast this month, the response is united. Believers in the east or in the west, in hot weather or in cold weather, in longer days or in shorter days, in Arab or in Azam, all welcome it unitedly without any question or any hesitation. This is truly the role modelling in unity.
- **Unity in intention:** There are billions of Muslims on this planet. Is it not astonishing that all of them make same intention for their fast in the month of Ramadan? All of them fast for the pleasure of Allah. What else can join billions of hearts in unity in intention? It is a perfect role-modelling of unity under the slavery of One Allah.
- **Unity in fasting:** All believers in this world fast unitedly in this Holy Ramadan Month. One country doesn’t decide to fast in one month, and another in different month. They follow Allah’s guidance unitedly. So, in Saudi Arabia, believers fast in the Ramadan month, and in New Zealand the believers fast in the same month. It is an extra-ordinary show of unity.
- **Unity in the method:** All believers follow the same teachings of Allah’s messenger in observing this month. They follow the same method for Iftar, Sahur (meal before Fajr), Qiyaamullail (night prayer), and practice of self-control. No one adds or removes anything, and not allowed to do that. That united practice even extends to the detail in practiced (Amal’s) in this Holy Month. That is also extra-ordinary practice of unity. It is indeed a role-modelling in unity.
- **Unity in giving charity:** After the end of Ramadan month, believers pay charity called Sadaqatul Jariyah. No one wants an exception if they are able. That generates lots of money or food for the poor and needy to give them share of joy as well. What is charity? It is a love sharing practice, and a practice of kindness. Thus, we see unity in love sharing and kindness. Isn’t it wonderful?
- **Unity in Eid prayer:** All believers in this world celebrate Eid. They say Takbir to glorify Allah’s Greatness. They perform 2 Rakah Salah in congregation. They make supplication for one another. What a beautiful show in unity. All the believers pray to One Allah and ask all the best things in this life and in next life only from HIM. What else can be a best example, and practice in unity?

All these above and more reasons show that month of Ramadan is a month that brings “Unity Course” for the believers. It teaches the believers that if they can stick to the unity for the sake of Allah in all other areas in their lives, then they can be the best role-model of unity for the mankind. Ramadan month reminds that their job is not only doing but taking more responsibility to be role-modelling unity for the peaceful, harmonious world. Allah has placed higher responsibility on them to contribute best things for the mankind. Allah says:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

“You are the best of peoples ever evolved from (Mankind and for Mankind) enjoining what is right, preventing what is wrong, and believing in Allah.” [Al-Quran 3:110]

Muslims must not be confused with different days of moon sighting and celebrating the Eid on different day. That is not the difference in unity, but that is the flexibility in method only. But in all objectives of Fasting

there is no difference at all. Therefore, Muslims must focus on the objectives and stay united. Let us learn lesson of unity from the Holy Month of Ramadan and practice it in every aspect in our lives.

Month of Allah's special Mercy:

Allah is Merciful all the time, but there are special times HE bestows HIS Mercy on HIS devoted servants. For example, Allah is Merciful 24/7, but towards the end of night HE bestows more Mercy on those who worship HIM without sleeping. Similarly, HE is Merciful in all months, but HE sends HIS Mercy more in Ramadan month.

It is like a special sale in the business. Some businesses offer best quality sale with cheaper price. They want to sell more, get more customers, make little profit from each customer to end up in making more profit for more customers, and to promote their business. That's why, there are Eid sales, Puja Salse, X-Mas sales, Easter sales and so on. For Allah, HE does not need any customer, or any return, and not any profit. For Allah, HE grants HIS special Mercy for the benefits of HIS servants. They need it for their eternal success. From Allah, it is a Mercy for HIS sincere servants. By choosing special times or season, Allah calls the servants to take the opportunities and achieve salvation.

If Allah was not Merciful, HIS servants would have been in a very difficult situation to pass the test in this life. Allah does not want difficulties for HIS servants, and with the special opportunities, HE wants them to catch up their loss. The previous people had longer life. Some lived a thousand of years to worship HIM. In this age, people live shorter. Most people cannot reach to 100 years. So, they have less time in life, and less energy to serve Allah. So, HE gave special opportunities for earning thousand years of reward in one night or in one Month. For example, if anyone worships Allah in the night of Power, will get 83 years plus of reward. Or in the Ramadan Month, Allah has provided so many opportunities to go ahead very far in so little time. Let us look at few examples in below:

- **Forgiveness from fasting:** To go ahead in spiritual journey, sins are the biggest obstacles. Unless these obstacles are removed, or cleansed, the spiritual growth slows down. That's why Allah's forgiveness is the easiest and most short cut road. In this month, Allah forgives extremely generously. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

"Whoever fast with belief (Imaan) and hope to receive rewards from Allah, his/her all previous sins will be forgiven." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Forgiveness from worship at night:** Fasting is during the daytime. Allah forgives believers for the fasting. So, what about the night of Ramadan month? Is there any opportunity at night as well? Yes, sure there is. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

مَنْ قَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا، غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

"Whoever worship at night in the fasting Month with belief (Imaan) and hope to receive rewards from Allah, his/her all previous sins will be forgiven." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Forgiveness from worshipping in Night of Power:** Allah did not limit the option for HIS Forgiveness during the everyday fast and night prayer but has extended it further and made a night to worship for receiving HIS Forgiveness as well. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

مَنْ قَامَ لَيْلَةَ الْقَدْرِ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

“Whoever worship at night of Lailatul Qadr with belief (Imaan) and hope to receive rewards from Allah, his/her all previous sins will be forgiven.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

- **Increased rewards for fasting:** What about if a servant can’t live long enough, and got one Ramadan for fasting in life, how can he/she can go ahead in terms of rewards? That is not a problem for Allah Merciful. HE has kept an incredible option that is beyond any equation or ratio. And that one is, Allah can give as much as rewards as HE wants to for the fasting believer. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

كُلُّ عَمَلِ ابْنِ آدَمَ يُضَاعَفُ ؛ الْحَسَنَةُ بِعَشْرِ أَمْثَالِهَا ، إِلَى سَبْعِمِائَةِ ضِعْفٍ ، قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى : إِلَّا الصَّوْمَ ؛ فَإِنَّهُ لِي ، وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ

“For children of Adam the rewards for good deeds are increased from 10 times to 700 times. Allah says: Except fasting. Because fasting is for ME, and I will give its reward (As much as I want).” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

- **Visa to meet Allah:** One needs visa to travel to another country. What about travelling to the heaven to the Paradise to meet Allah? Yes, one must have visa for that. That visa is Allah’s permission. Money, wealth, or worldly power or position cannot get a visa from Allah. Only Allah’s loyal servant can get Allah’s Permission for meeting HIM in the Paradise. Here again, Allah will give permission to those who fast for HIS sake in the Ramadan Month. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

لِلصَّائِمِ فَرْحَتَانِ يَفْرَحُهُمَا: إِذَا أَفْطَرَ فَرَحَ ، وَإِذَا لَقِيَ رَبَّهُ فَرَحَ بِصَوْمِهِ

“For those who fast (In the month of Ramadan) has two happy moments. One is during breaking fast, and another is meeting with Allah in the Paradise.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

- **Month of blessings:** In this month Allah increases the Barakah more. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

أَتَاكُمْ رَمَضَانُ شَهْرٌ مُبَارَكٌ

“O Muslims! A blessed month has come to you-it is the month of Ramadan.” [Ahmed. Nasaee]

- **Month of Mercy:** In rainy season we get more rain. Allah’s blessings are like rain as well. Rain comes down from up, and Allah’s Blessings come down from HIM, and Allah is above the heavens. In the Ramadan month the doors of heavens are opened for Allah’s Mercy to come down on those who are fasting. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

فِيهِ لَيْلَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

“For Allah’s special Mercy, in the month of Ramadan there is a night which is better than thousand months (83 years 4 months).” [Ahmed. Nasaee]

The above examples are messages that Allah has chosen the Ramadan Month as a special month to give HIS servants more. As believers, we must appreciate it and take advantage of these opportunities. Similarly, we must show our love, kindness, and forgiveness to our families, neighbours, relatives, and to the fellow human. We must not forget to thank Allah for HIS special mercy on us.

Month of dua (Invocation):

Dua is another worship. It is asking Allah with sincere heart for all the best things. It is part of the promise that we made with Allah with our total submission to HIM. In that promise, we say that we shall only worship Allah, and we shall ask for any help from Allah. Part off the promise is that we shall not ask anything from false gods. Allah has revealed what to promise in every prayer:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“YOU (only) we worship and (only) YOUR help we seek.” [Al-Quran 1:5]

Dua is not just simply asking Allah to give something. It has huge philosophy behind it. Such as:

- **Acceptance:** Accepting that I am weak, dependant, and with limitations. I cannot fulfil my needs without help. Then, accepting Allah as the Provider of all the sustenance that I need, and the well-being that I need in this life and in the next life.
- **Humility:** With acceptance I feel humble, and I pay my highest respect to my LORD Allah. With that feeling, when I make dua, I beg for it, and with my swelled emotion I shed my tears begging for Allah’s love, Mercy, and Forgiveness.
- **Strong bond:** In dua I feel a strong bond between me and my Lord. I feel that HE listens to me, and I receive comfort after the dua. That comfort helps building more bond. I asked my parents many things because I felt they were my guardians, but when I asked Allah for something, I feel HE is the All-Rich, All-Mighty Guardian. The more I ask HIM the more I feel bonded to HIM.
- **Belonging:** I feel a sense of belonging. Allah taught me to say, **“To Allah we belong and truly, to HIM is our return”** (Al-Quran 2:156). Dua makes me feel that I am never alone, and I always have Allah with me to listen. I can make dua in any moment. With that belonging feeling, I find strength in me, and I feel that I am always close to the Almighty Allah to receive support whenever I need.
- **Hope:** Dua gives such a hope that never breaks. Because my family or friends might not be there when I need help, but my LORD is always there for me. Everyone dies except HIM. I can depend on HIM anytime, and I can seek help anytime. That gives me peace of mind every day and every second.

Moreover, Dua can be done in any time, any day, or in any month. Then, what do I mean by Ramadan month is the month of dua? Does it mean that only in fasting month we make dua? Or in other months we do not make dua? No, it is not like that. It means, in fasting month, the environment is more suitable for dua, and we should make use of them. Let us identify a few points to understand how Ramadan month creates a favourable environment for dua:

It makes a real beggar: When a real beggar cries out, “Please help me,” we look out and see the beggar. A real beggar appears hungry with dark face without glowing, a sad face without smile, and the poor appearance attracts your heart towards him. You feel the pain in his face, and you think he is a genuine beggar. Your compassion swells up and you can’t hold yourself without helping the poor beggar out. A fasting servant of Allah is a true beggar to Allah. When Allah’s beggar goes to HIS door with hunger and thirst, and asks for something, Allah’s Mercy swells up. Allah knows that HIS servant is not eating or drinking for receiving HIS Love and Mercy. HE appreciates (Ash-Shakoor) the poor condition of HIS beggar and accepts his dua with Mercy. That real beggar situation happens only in the Ramadan month, and Allah accepts dua really in that beggar state. That’s why Month of Ramadan is the month of dua.

It cleanses a heart: Why do we feel for one another? Do we see other’s heart? Without seeing other’s heart how can we be sure that someone loves us? We feel the true love even when we do not see it. Especially, if someone has love with a clean heart, it touches another heart easily. How is that possible? It is possible because there is energy between us, an unseen energy given by Allah that connects us if it is genuine, and it

disconnects us if it is corrupted. If the love is from the clean heart without being corrupted, then it resonates easily. Now, during the fasting month, love for Allah in our heart is clean and uncorrupted because in this month, who (Satan) corrupts our hearts is chained. That allows the servant of Allah to have an incorrupt love for Allah, and Allah knows it all. Now, Imagine! How loving Allah will respond to a dua from a loving incorrupt heart from HIS beloved servant! This special opportunity is only in the Ramadan month made available by Allah to provide special opportunity for HIS servant to make lots and lots of dua to receive answers from Allah. That is another reason for which we say, “Month of Ramadan is the month of dua.” Believers should make lots of dua in this month.

Rain of Mercy in this month: If we want to store the rainwater, the pure water for our future security, then we must wait for the rain. Rain does not come down all the time. One must be prepared for the rainy time and must work hard during the rain to collect lots of water. Before raining or after raining, no matter how much we try, the opportunity is lost. Now, in the 12 months of the year, there is no month-long rain of Allah’s mercy except in the Ramadan Month. In this month, the doors of Allah’s Mercy in the heavens are opened to send Allah’s Mercy of rain on HIS fasting believers. When Allah’s Mercy is dropping as rain, isn’t it the time to ask for it, to collect it and to store it for the future? That unique opportunity Allah has provided in Ramadan Month, and believers should ask and ask, again and again to receive Allah’s mercy more and more. This is another reason to say that Ramadan Month is the month of Dua. In other words, Ramadan month should be the month of more dua from the believers.

Final point: Imagine! An Olympic runner is running and running to reach to the final line to win. He struggles, loses breath, stumbles, and gets up to continue running. He gives his everything, and with all his sacrifices he reaches the winning line to complete his job. The cheers from the supporters, prizes from the organizers are followed by that. It is the unique point, that if one can cross then definitely, he is awarded. Similarly, a believer is fasting without food and drink minutes after minutes. As the day passes the hunger is reaching the peak, or the thirst is reaching its peak, but he does not give up. He gives his best shot to win the reward from Allah for his hard work. Then when he completes his day and thanks Allah for granting him the ability to complete his fast, and make dua for something, Allah accepts his dua. In the month of Ramadan servants should do lots and lots of dua. It is stated in a hadith, narrated by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) that Holy prophet (s.a.w) said:

ثَلَاثَةٌ لَا تُرَدُّ دَعْوَتُهُمْ الْإِمَامُ الْعَادِلُ وَالصَّائِمُ حِينَ يُفْطِرُ وَدَعْوَةُ الْمَظْلُومِ

“Three person’s dua is never returned. Dua of the person who fast, when he/she does Iftar (Breaks the fast), dua of a just ruler and dua of the oppressed.” [Tirmidi]

In the Holy Quran where Allah commanded about fasting in the fasting month, with it, Allah has added the following information regarding dua:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أَجِيبْ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

“When MY servants ask you concerning ME, I am indeed close to them: I listen to the prayer of every (humble) caller when he calls ME: Let them also listen to MY call and believe in ME, that they may be led to the right way.” [Al-Quran 2:186]

Allah loves HIS humble servants to be admitted into Paradise. That’s why Allah has given them special seasons of earning huge rewards with very little efforts. Ramadan month is one of those seasons for Allah’s mercy so that wise believers can make use of that opportunity and can gain huge mercy from Allah through their dua (supplication) from heart and soul.

Special worships in the Month of Ramadan:

What is special? It means something above ordinary. It is applied only for the positive actions. Every good action is ordinary, and receiving good reward for good deed is ordinary. But special is different. How? The answer is below:

- **Special deed:** It means rare and that does not happen usually any other time. Or if that happens in other times, then this time is with more intensity. Or this time it is with other special deed that does not happen in other times. In the Ramadan month the good deeds are done for the pleasure of Allah is special in this sense.
- **For special reward:** It means, other times if a good deed is done, then the reward is not that high. Special means here a special deal. In special deal, one does the same thing as other times, but due to the special deal, the ordinary worship earns very high reward. It is like a special bonus, and someone looks forward to it.
- **Special fixed time:** A special sale for example is for a specific time. It is not always available. One must take the opportunity in the fixed period to earn special reward, or special sale. In that sense, Ramadan Month is for a fixed number of days, and in those days, Allah has given special opportunities to do certain worships, to receive special rewards.

Therefore, worship, reward, and the timing, all together, the Month of Ramadan brings special deal for the believers. Allah has offered these special deals for HIS servant due to HIS kindness. We thank Allah for that and praise HIM, “Alhamdulillah!”

The question is, what are those special worships that believers can do in the Ramadan Month to receive Allah’s special rewards? Let us make a list below for our better navigating:

- **Fasting:** This is a worship specially prescribed by Allah in the month of Ramadan. In any other month, fasting is not compulsory. In other months fasting is voluntary. It means, if anyone wants to fast, he/she can for reward but if not, then there is no blame (sin). But in the month of Ramadan, it must be done. Allah commanded:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ ۚ فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ ۖ وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

“So, every one of you who is present (Gets this month) during that month should spend it in fasting. But, if anyone is ill or on journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

For fasting a special time has been prescribed. One cannot change it, edit it, or reduce it. Because, the exactness comes from Allah, and it is not selected by humans. All the worship to Allah has been prescribed by Allah with details of what time, how, when to begin, and when to finish etc. So, fasting is from dawn to sunset (not at night).

- **Prayer at night:** An extra prayer at night is not compulsory, but the reward is exceptional. Believers are encouraged to do Qiyaamullail, to spend longer in prayer with Quran recitation. It does not happen in any other month. It is so special that for believers it becomes like a celebration. They go to the Masjid to pray Isha, and then after they love to pray together to listen to the Quran. Imam recites the whole Quran over the nights in the month. Even though it is not compulsory, but the special attention to it from the believers is special. In this month, Allah chains the Satan, and believers feel more love to worship, and that is even at night by sacrificing their sleep. In Tahajjud prayer at night, they love to recite Quran and pray to Allah with heart and soul. For this special worship, in the nights of the Ramadan month, Allah also grants them special reward. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

وَمَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

“Whoever spend the night in worship in the Ramadan Month with Imaan (Islamic Faith) and hopes reward from Allah, his (her) previous sins will be forgiven.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

The special benefit is not limited in that. It brings another special request. The question is by whom the request comes? To whom the request is forwarded to? Let us find the answer in a Hadith. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

الصَّيَامُ وَالْقُرْآنُ يَشْفَعَانِ لِلْعَبْدِ، يَقُولُ الصَّيَامُ : أَيْ رَبِّ ! إِنِّي مَنَعْتُهُ الطَّعَامَ وَالشَّهَوَاتِ بِالنَّهَارِ، فَشَفَعْنِي فِيهِ، وَيَقُولُ الْقُرْآنُ : مَنَعْتُهُ النَّوْمَ بِاللَّيْلِ، فَشَفَعْنِي فِيهِ ؛ فَيُشَفَّعَانِ

“Fast and the Quran (On the Day of Judgment) will request to Allah for the servant. The fast will say, O Allah! I have deprived him (her) from food and cravings during the day. So, accept my request for him (her), and the Quran will say, I have deprived him (her) from sleep. So, accept my request for him (her). Therefore, both of their request will be accepted (by Allah to grant for them Paradise).” [Bayhaki fee su’abul Imaan]

- **Worship in the Night of Power:** The Night of power is only once in the year, and that is in the Ramadan Month. It is the night that Allah sent the Holy Quran down to the first heaven in a special place called Baitul Izzah. Thus, for the Honourable Quran, that Night is very honourable, and Ramadan month has this night. In this night, worship is also highly honourable due to the Holy Quran. Therefore, worshipping in that night is special, and the reward for it is also special. How special is that night or how rewarding the worship is in that night? Allah says:

لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ

“The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.” [Al-Quran 97:3]

One night’s worship can change one’s life because thousand months is over 83 years. So, if a believer receives 83 years’ time rewards, then, it must be special. Holy Prophet (PBUH) also said:

مَنْ قَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا، غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ

“Whoever spend in the worship in the Night of Power with Iman and hope of receiving rewards from Allah, the previous sins will be forgiven.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

- **Providing Iftar:** In this month, providing food for breaking fast is considered a special worship. Even if it is with dates, or a little drink. The main spirit is to care and share of love and kindness. Allah made it easy for rich or poor believers to earn that special reward. A poor believer can offer some water to other fasting believer to get the special reward. That special opportunity is not available in any other month. It shows, how much Allah rewards believers for having a loving and kind heart. Allah wants believers to avoid cruelties, and selfishness. So, other people will be saved from their harms. How rewarding providing the Iftar is? Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

مَنْ فَطَّرَ فِيهِ صَائِمًا كَانَ لَهُ مَغْفِرَةٌ لِدُنُوبِهِ وَعِتْقَ رَقَبَتِهِ مِنَ النَّارِ

“Whoever will provide Iftar to a fasting believer, it be a cause for receiving forgiveness from Allah and a cause to be freed from the Hell Fire.” [Bayhaki]

- **Dua before Iftar:** Dua is a great worship. It is necessary all the time. But for fasting believer, Allah made a special provision that dua before Iftar will be accepted. This special deal must not be missed by anyone. Believers should not miss that time with gossiping or being busy with food preparations. They should prepare the Iftar food well before and should spend last few minutes of fasting with remembrance of Allah, and dua. Holy prophet (PBUH) said:

ثَلَاثَةٌ لَا تُرَدُّ دَعْوَتُهُمْ الْإِمَامُ الْعَادِلُ وَالصَّائِمُ حِينَ يُفْطِرُ وَدَعْوَةُ الْمَظْلُومِ

“Three persons dua is never returned. Dua of the person who fast when he/she does Iftar (Breaks fast), dua of a just ruler and dua of the oppressed.” [Tirmidi]

- **I'teqaf:** It means isolating oneself in the Masjid for last 10 days and nights to worship Allah. It cuts off the believer from the worldly things as much as possible and connect the believer with Allah. Men can do it in the Masjid, and women can do it at home. I'teqaf gives the believer freedom to worship Allah intensely, and the chance to get the Night of Power. The Night of power falls in one of the last nights in the Ramadan Month. What a special opportunity to connect with Allah! Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his wives had done it. Hon Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

كَانَ يَعْتَكَفُ الْعَشْرَ الْوَاخِرَ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ حَتَّى تَوَفَّاهُ اللَّهُ، ثُمَّ اعْتَكَفَ أَزْوَاجُهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

“Messenger of Allah always did I'teqaf in the last 10 of the Ramadan Month until Allah had taken him, and then, his wives also have done I'teqaf.” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Revising the Quran:** Month of Ramadan is special because in it came down the special message from Allah called Holy Quran. Therefore, this month is also called “The Month of Quran.” In this month reciting, studying, listening to the Quran is highly rewarding. For every good deed in this month, the reward is multiplied. Quran should be recited every day by the believers, and they do at least in the 5 times Prayers. But, in Ramadan Month, Allah offers special rewards for it. Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to rehearse it with Angel Jibrael in this month. Abdullah Ibn Abbas (R.A) said:

وَكَانَ جِبْرِيلُ يَلْقَاهُ فِي كُلِّ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ فَيَدَارِسُهُ الْقُرْآنَ

“In Ramadan month, every night, Angel Jibrael used to meet him (Holy Prophet), and holy prophet (PBUH) used to recite the Quran for Angel Jibrael (May Allah send peace on him).” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Giving charity:** The Arabic term for it is Sadaqah. It is a voluntary giving for the sake of Allah, and for receiving reward for it from Allah. It is not the compulsory Zakah. Zakah is compulsory on wealthy people. Zakah has special calculation and rules, but Sadaqah has no rules like Zakah. Sadaqah can be anything or any amount. Such as smiling is a Sadaqat or giving away anything to particularly to the poor and needy. It is encouraged highly in the Quran and in holy prophet's practice. Specially, Sadaqah in the Ramadan Month is highly encouraged. Abdullah Ibn Abbas (R.A) said:

أَجْوَدَ النَّاسِ بِالْخَيْرِ، وَكَانَ أَجْوَدُ مَا يَكُونُ فِي رَمَضَانَ، حِينَ يَلْقَاهُ جِبْرِيلُ

“In terms of giving charity. Holy Prophet (PBUH) was the most generous among humans. And that generosity used to extend mostly in the month of Ramadan.” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- Finally, the above examples are not all worships. These are few examples only. In this month doing Umra Hajj, repenting, seeking Allah's forgiveness, and praying voluntary prayers etc. are highly recommended.

Month of Quran

I have mentioned before in this book about Ramadan Month as being the Month of the Holy Quran. One may ask, what is the main reason for calling this month as the month of Quran. The answer is evident in Allah's Words:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

“The month of Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs for) guidance and judgment (between right and wrong).” [Al-Quran 2:185]

There is another reason for which this month can be called as the Month of Ramadan. That reason is how much attachment of the believers with the Quran in this month. It is mind blowing that Allah made this month so blessed that in this Month the Holy Quran is recited more than any other month. It is as if, believers and the Quran become close friends in this month and this friendship is extremely beneficial for the believers. Believers should make the Quran their best friend or companion. Quran is a best friend, and it does not leave its friend in danger. It requests for its friend to Allah for forgiveness and for the Visa to Paradise. I have included the evidence on another chapter but let us look at it again. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

الصِّيَامُ وَالْقُرْآنُ يَشْفَعَانِ لِلْعَبْدِ، يَقُولُ الصِّيَامُ : أَيْ رَبِّ ! إِنِّي مَنَعْتُهُ الطَّعَامَ وَالشَّهَوَاتِ بِالنَّهَارِ، فَشَفِّعْنِي فِيهِ، وَيَقُولُ الْقُرْآنُ : مَنَعْتُهُ النَّوْمَ بِاللَّيْلِ، فَشَفِّعْنِي فِيهِ ؛ فَيُشَفِّعَانِ

“Fast and the Quran (On the Day of Judgment) will request to Allah for the servant. The fast will say, O Allah! I have deprived him (her) from food and cravings during the day. So, accept my request for him (her), and the Quran will say, I have deprived him (her) from sleep. So, accept my request for him (her). Therefore, both of their request will be accepted (by Allah to grant for them Paradise).” [Bayhaki fee su'abul Imaan]

Quran reciters will be the ones who could reach the higher status in the Paradise. Quran will be the reason for promotion for the reciters. It is a rare promotion. So, believers must make the Quran their best companion. Holy prophet (PBUH) said:

يَقَالُ لَصَاحِبِ الْقُرْآنِ اقْرَأْ وَارْقَ وَرَتِّلْ كَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْتِّلُ فِي الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ مَنَزِلَتَكَ عِنْدَ آخِرِ آيَةٍ تَقْرُؤُهَا

“(On the Day of Judgment) the Quran reciter will be told, keep reciting, and keep climbing up. Keep reciting with clear letters and words as you used to recite in your life in the world. Because your place in Paradise will be when your last verse will be recited by you.” [Ahmed, Tirmidi, Abu Dawood & Nasaaee]

Now, I shall give few examples how much relations between Muslims and the Quran in this month. As I mentioned before, the relationship between the Quran and the believers is at the peak in this month. Some examples are in below:

- **Tradition of Holy Prophet (PBUH):** In addition to the usual recitation daily, when Fasting Month came, Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to recite more in Ramadan month. Abu Huraira (r.a) said:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يَعْتَكِفُ الْعَشْرَ الْأَوَّلَ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ حَتَّى تَوْفَاهُ اللَّهُ، ثُمَّ اعْتَكَفَ أَرْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

“Quran recitation used to be recited to Holy Prophet (s.a.w) once in each year (Ramadan); but the year he (s.a.w) passed away, Quran was recited to him twice.” [Bukhari]

- **Quran recitation in Tarawih:** After Isha prayer, believers perform long Salah every night in the Ramadan month. In Tarawih, most places all around the world, believers complete the whole Quran recitation in congregation. Imams who have memorized the Quran recite the Quran in Tarawih Salah, and the followers enjoy listening to the Quran. Someone, who does not know how to recite, or even children get the chance to listen to the whole Quran in Fasting Month. Any other month does not bring that opportunity or the celebration mood. After finishing the whole Quran there is special Dua takes place, and Muslims make their maximum efforts to join the Dua.
- **Individual recitation:** Individually Muslims plan before the Ramadan month about how many times they will recite the Holy Quran in Ramadan month. I find Muslims tell me, “I completed the Quran once or twice.” When they tell me, I find joy in them. They feel good that they have recited that much in the Ramadan Month. It does not happen in other months in the year.

Muslims make a close bond with the Holy Quran in this month. Some of the activities they do are:

- **Reciting Quran for rewards:** They recite Quran every day and night in the fasting month for multiplied rewards.
- **Reciting Quran with meaning:** They try to understand the message of the Quran. That effort helps them increasing the knowledge about Allah’s code in the Holy Quran.
- **Quran lessons:** In Ramadan month, some adults make extra effort to learn how to recite Quran properly, and Imams or Quran teachers are there to help them.
- **Lecture sessions:** In this month, Mosque goes increase in number. Imams offer their services to explain the message of the Quran with explanations to the Muslims.
- **Study circles:** Some Muslims study Quran in this month as a group. They make groups based on the level of the knowledge.
- **Listening to Quran in night prayer:** Muslims join Tarawih Prayer to listen to the Quran. They also recite Quran in Tahajjud Prayer more than other months in the year.

With all these examples above, it is substantiated that The Ramadan Month is a month of Quran from two perspectives. One is, it was revealed in this Month, and another is, believers recite, study, and research more about the Quran in this month.

Month of protection:

Safety and protection are a vital need for human. Any little unsafe situation makes people worried, anxious, and unhappy. Even a baby feels the need to be protected and that’s why a baby always clings to their mother. For best health, people need protection from bad weather and from sickness too. So, every human naturally understands the need for protection. But that natural feeling is for material protection, or physical protection. Allah has given this instinct in human.

We will not be in this life forever. One day, we shall face death, and the death will introduce to us another reality and that is the next life. This life has an end through death, but the next life has no end. So, the question is, how can we get protection in the next life as well? Specially, from sad situations, harsh judgment, and Allah’s punishments are serious issues that we need protection from. We need protection from the Hellfire because that is the worst place to be in. How can we guarantee our safety in the next life? Or how can we get protection from the Hellfire?

Well, Allah has promised that protection if we obey HIM. HE has prescribed fasting for a month to build up that protection. Through fasting, we can build a solid wall between us and the Hellfire. Yes, that is the

message from Allah through HIS holy Messenger. This message is in a Hadith. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy prophet (s.a.w) said:

الصوم جنة

“Fasting is for people a protective shield.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

Now, to understand better, we need to analyse a bit more about how fasting works as a protective shield for the believers. It is not a literal armguard as a shield used by army to protect him in the war. The shield here is used as a holistic protection that covers the wide ranges of issues and protection in those issues together create an unbreakable shield to save a believer from the Hellfire. I shall make a list of issues regarding protection from fasting in the Holy Month of Ramadan:

- **Protection from selfish desires:** People eat, drink, and seek comfort for their selfish desires. Fasting brings a control on that by following Allah’s commands. As a result, a fasting Muslim learns to protect himself/herself from own selfish desires to please Allah. They can protect themselves from Haram foods that damages their spiritual protective shields. They can also protect themselves from their out-of-control desires that makes them vulnerable to sins and from sins to destruction. For example, they can use the fasting lesson to protect themselves from greed, because greed is a sin and sin is unprotected from Allah’s security facilities. Sins removes the chance of Allah’s protection from the Hellfire.
- **Protection from stinginess:** Fasting motivates people to donate for the needy people. Fasting also trains Muslims to be generous to feed others who fast in this month. For the hope of reward from Allah, fasting removes stinginess from people. For getting more and more, many people are taking bribes, occupying other’s land by force, imposing fights and wars, destroying human rights, and those sins will push them closer to the Hellfire. Fasting on the other hand, puts a wall between stinginess and the believer, to save them from sins, and to push them towards paradise. Therefore, fasting protects believers from bad desires, saves them from crimes, and protects them from Allah’s punishment in the Hellfire.
- **Protection from own anger:** Our own anger is like fire inside. It is a mini hellfire if it is not within control. It burns the heart, mind, and the body, and it burns all the good deeds as well when people do injustice due to excessive anger. Fasting trains Muslims to control their anger and not to retaliate even if wrong is done against him or her. Fasting teaches one to walk away with a smile and dignity from others who wants to inflict fight on him or her. That way, it saves a believer from doing wrong, unjust actions and exceeding fair boundaries. So, they can save them from injustice and that can save them from beings punished in Allah’s court. As a result, they will be saved from Allah’s punishment.
- **Protection from humiliation:** Fasting trains Muslims not to talk bad, not to make silly noises, or not to misbehave with others. With this kind of self-control, one gains respect and gets protection from humiliation.
- **Protection from sins:** Fasting trains Muslims to avoid eating or drinking for certain foods and drink for the fear of Allah’s punishment should they disobey Allah. That fear protects them from disobeying Allah thus from committing sins.
- **Protection from the Hell Fire:** Through fasting Muslims receive forgiveness from Allah. They receive unlimited rewards from Allah. Fasting cleanses, them from sins and that protects them from Hell Fire. Those who receive forgiveness from Allah will not be admitted into the Hell Fire. Because for them will be Paradise, Insha Allah.

So, fasting protects Muslims from short term and long-term sins, Allah's punishments in this life and in next life. Therefore, Islamic fasting is like a protective shield for Muslims. This protective shield building opportunity comes in the Month of Ramadan.

Month of training righteous people:

Why training is necessary for making righteous people? The answer is, it is not only necessary, but it is essential. There are trainings in various fields available such as, training for skills, speech, body building, sports, swimming, leadership and so on but what are the trainings available to make good people? Yes, some trainings from families, Schools, societies, and religions are available to help make good people for the society, but they are not as widespread as training to learn skills for the material achievements in this life.

Righteous people make righteous societies. Happy people spread happiness in the society, and peaceful people build peaceful society. Happiness and peace of mind is not the product we can purchase, but they are attributes in a righteous person. So, the next question is who is a righteous person? How do we determine who is a righteous person? Can we measure it in a scale, or can we find it out through people's education, or from their position or family background? Is there a race or nationality that is called righteous people? No, these are not the signs of righteous people.

Righteous people need two main qualities:

- **Pure heart with control:** Heart is the main source for righteousness. If the heart is corrupt, the expressions and actions will be corrupt as well. If a heart has hatred, his tongue will say hateful words. If a heart has jealousy, then the tongue will make sarcastic remarks. If the heart is full of anger, then the tongue will throw fire out, and the hand will make a fist to attack. Without a good heart a person cannot be a good person. Therefore, to make a good person, the work must begin from the heart. Fasting is to purify the heart through Islamic Faith. When the heart accepts Allah as its Master Lord, fears the accountability to its Lord on the Day of Judgment, and controls its corrupt desires, then it becomes pure from corruption and from exceeding limits. Fasting trains the heart with month long training to make a clean heart from sins and guilt. Allah says about the heart in the Quran:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ. فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“And for those who had felt the fear of standing before their (Almighty) Lord and had restrained (their) souls from lowly desires, their home will be the Garden.” [Al-Quran 79:40]

- **Righteous actions with control:** When the engine is ok, the rest of the machine runs smoothly in most times. Then, time to time it requires a little bit of repairing and fixing to get going. Similarly, when the heart has pure intention, righteous sinless feelings, and cravings, then the rest of the person acts righteously. The example is a loving heart will smile. Love is from the heart, and the smile is physical expression of the love. Or a generous heart will donate money for the vulnerable people because the heart is the main motivator to motivate the person to dig into his pocket. Often, in the present system, law and order, police action, court or prison motivates the people to give up criminal actions. But again, often despite all the encouragement, the offenders reoffend again and again. Why do they do that? They do that because their hearts were not purified, and they feared the law to suppress their actions for a while, but when the opportunity to commit crimes came again, they could not control their desires. So, to control one's action he/she should start from controlling the heart. Fasting does both. It installs the fear of Allah punishment in the heart, then the mind decides to avoid crimes, and focuses on righteous actions. The deep faith motivates a fasting person to avoid what Allah has prohibited (All bad moral characters), and to do what Allah has commanded (Righteous

best moral characters). This training is month-long and very effective to produce righteous people through faith-based training. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you: as it was prescribed to those before you that you may (train yourselves) righteousness 9Through self-control).” [Al-Quran 2:183]

Again, why did I say that training for righteousness is not optional but essential? The answer is, without righteousness the world will be a hell. The honesty, sincerity, promise keeping, peace keeping, harmony, human unity, human love, generosity in looking after one another, respect for the elders and affection to the youth, safety in the neighbourhood from stealing/robbing, safety from rape, freedom from oppression, loving home and neighbourhood, fair distribution, human rights, and justice are all righteous actions. Imagine! If these righteous actions are absent in the society, how terrible the human conditions are going to be! There will be chaos, mayhem, violence, and killings and the society will be flooded with immoral actions. That is why, humans follow a moral code which separates the bad actions from the good actions for the best living. Every society has moral boundaries and bases on that they introduce law and order to maintain safety, security, peace, justice, and happiness in the society.

But that moral boundary does not go deep enough to train the people to be righteous, and that's why some people are always breaking the rules, abusing the law, and sometimes they are caught but many times they get away. But the righteousness goes deeper because it is about sinless, guiltless, harmless good actions that combines the efforts in a person holistically. It only happens when the heart and actions both in a pure state. Fasting is the training for heart and actions to produce righteous people with righteous actions. Righteous feeling does not maintain its purity due to the fear of police, but it fears All-Knowing Allah's Judgment from which no one can get away. Therefore, for a happy, and peaceful world, divine training to make righteous people is essential. Alhamdulillah! The creator of Humans has prescribed fasting to train for that purpose.

Why righteous people are so honourable in any society? They receive honour from people because Allah places them in the honourable position. Allah placed in human minds to dislike wrong unrighteous actions like raping, killing, hating, and robbing etc. That's why, society never respects greedy leaders, officers who take bribes, court judges who are corrupt, rulers who are oppressors, businesspeople who cheat their customers. This dislike is automatic and spontaneous in every society, race, ethnicity, or nationality. On the other hand, Allah has placed a likeness in human hearts towards all righteous actions such as love, kindness, selflessness, generosity, compassion, forgiveness, peace, and justice. Some people, who suppress their default feelings, they commit crimes and unrighteous actions, but when their true human feeling is not suppressed, they feel terrible guilt because they also dislike bad actions deep down themselves. Allah has made the righteousness actions to deserve honour. HE says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

“O mankind! WE have created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another (Not that you may hate each other). Surely, the most honourable of you, in the Sight of Allah is (he, who is) the most righteous of you.” [Al-Quran 49:13]

Moreover, Allah has made humans to live together. That's why humans are social beings. They depend on one another, and in that interdependence, righteous and unrighteous actions affect one another in happiness or in sadness. For this reason, everyone likes to have a righteous companion. Let us do a checking with few following questions:

- Do you like an angry husband or wife?

- Do you like a greedy family member?
- Do you like to be hanging around with an abusive person?
- Do you like a friend who is very sharp tongued?
- Do you like a husband who beats his wife?
- Do you like an impulsive person to work with?

On the other hand, would you like a person who is calm, composed, polite, not greedy, gentle in talking, peace maker, thoughtful, and generous etc? I am sure you would like that person because I also like that kind of person.

Besides, Fasting is to train a person to have best moral character with a faith based month-long training. It prepares the person with deep faith to motivate for self-control from all the immoral actions such as:

- The loss of controlling the tongue,
- The loss of controlling the eyes,
- The loss of controlling the heart,
- The loss of controlling the hearing,
- The loss of controlling the sexuality,
- The loss of controlling the greed,
- The loss of controlling impulse,
- The loss of controlling anger,
- The loss of controlling the hot temper,
- The loss of controlling your patience,
- The loss of controlling the hands,
- The loss of controlling the mind and emotion,
- The loss of controlling the behaviour, etc.

For successful righteous training, one must learn to control the above things. Fasting has the faith philosophy behind it which is the most powerful motivator in the person to find ability and strong willpower to control all the negative aspects in his/her life and to be able to avoid wrong and to do the right. It is a wonderful training; it takes place only once a year in the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Best month for I'teqaf:

I'teqaf is a worship as well. In it, one isolates himself or herself for the worship to Allah. In the Month of Ramadan, holy prophet (PBUH) used to do I'teqaf for last 10 days and night in the Mosque. I'teqaf can be done in any other time in any other month, but the point to discuss here is that Ramadan month is the best time for I'teqaf. Why is it the best time then? Let us point out a few points to understand the answer:

- **Free from Satan's influence:** As I have described before that Satan's are chained in this month. That creates a favourable environment for the believers to take opportunities to be closer to Allah as much as they can. I'teqaf allows them to maximise their prayers without Satan's disturbances in this Holy Month.
- **Best preparation:** I'teqaf is like going closer to the Ruler of the mankind, GOD of the mankind who knows all our secrets and open things. HE knows how ready our souls are to go closer to HIM. In the Holy month, the souls are best in preparation because through fasting a servant gets close to the state of an angel. Angels do not eat or drink. Besides, through fasting and night prayers, and the close connection with the Words of Allah (Al-Quran) in this month, the believer's sins are forgiven by Allah to prepare their souls with purity to get closer to Allah. With that preparation their hearts are cleaner, softer, filled with more love for Allah, and they can enjoy the spiritual connection with Allah in their I'teqaf.

- **Night of power:** in the last 10 nights comes the night of power. That night is in the Holy Month of Ramadan. In that night Allah sent the Quran down in the Month of Ramadan. Worshipping in that night is like worshipping in a thousand months. The reward is mega multiplied in that night. What an opportunity I'teqaf brings for the believers. They do not miss the blessings of that night. Believers' hearts become filled with motivation to worship more, with higher hope of receiving Allah's Mercy, and the peace of mind! What a feeling! I did I'teqaf few times in my young age which changed me a lot towards better wellbeing. I'teqaf has been a worship that is mentioned in the Holy Quran. Even in old ages Muslims used to do I'teqaf. People used to do I'teqaf in Baitullah four thousand years ago, in the Holy House in Makkah. Allah commanded Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) and Prophet Ismael (PBUH) to look after the Holy House for worshippers including for those who used to do I'teqaf in that Holy House. Holy Quran describes:

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ۖ وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ

“And WE took the promise from Ibrahim and Ismael, that they should cleanse MY House for those who circle it round, or use it as retreat (I'teqaf), or bow, or prostrate themselves (in there in prayer.)” [Al-Quran 2:125]

I'teqaf is a great training for Muslims. It has so many benefits including some of the following:

- **It trains to detach:** It trains Muslims to detach from the worldly affairs for a while. Too much attachment with this world is not ideal for Muslims because they know for sure, they are only travellers in this world. They must leave this world one day and they will face a never-ending next life for which they need to be ready. They need balance in between this life and in the next life. If they attach themselves too much with this temporary life, and neglect the hereafter, then they will lose big time. They don't want to lose and that's why they need to practice leaving the worldly things behind to focus on the next life. I'teqaf is a practice for that.
- **It trains to attach:** I'teqaf trains Muslims to attach with Allah. They detach themselves from worldly affairs as much as they can to replace it with attaching with the next life. Busy life is a disruption to that. Sometimes, we need to go away to be alone to reflect, ponder and to seek guidance. Many people do that in meditation forms. I'teqaf is an attachment with Allah's Love, to feel belonged, and to receive peace of mind about the safety and security in the next life. Next life is out of our control and only with Allah's protections and love, we can have total peace of mind about it. I'teqaf is a practical training to receive all of these.
- **Medicine for loneliness:** Human nature does not like to be lonely. People like to be with company to feel good, or to feel secured. I'teqaf trains Muslims to be with the protection of Allah. If they can connect themselves with Allah during the lonely period of I'teqaf then they find the best remedy for loneliness. They train their mind in I'teqaf that Allah is with them all the time, and Allah never leaves HIS servant unprotected if the servant chooses Allah as his/her protector. Through I'teqaf a believer can develop a strong belonging feeling with Allah that can save them from depression, helplessness, and hopelessness.
- **Strong independent mind:** Believers must manage alone in the I'teqaf. It makes their mind strong, and they feel independent all the time because they rely on Allah. During I'teqaf people rely on Allah. They stay away from spouse, friends, and families to learn to rely on Allah only. Once they learn to rely on Allah, nothing can break them. When they bring that strong independent mindset outside the I'teqaf, they can use it in their daily lives. They may face calamities, but their mind reminds them about Almighty Allah WHO will take care of them. They do not surrender to wrong things, nor do they feel discouraged easily.

- **Love for Allah:** In seclusion during I'teqaf, a believer can find all the time to reflect Allah's Mercy and Love for him/her, and express huge thanks for Allah's Love. The believer can remember Allah in every second or can speak to Allah alone with open heart when no one is there, or others are sleeping. When the servant remembers Allah, Allah remembers HIS servant. When the servant feels love for Allah, Allah loves HIM more. When a servant walks towards Allah, Allah starts running towards him/her with HIS Love and Mercy. I'teqaf is a great platform to increase bond with Allah. A believer must try to take this opportunity.
- **Night of Power:** Meeting the night of power is the best of the best opportunity. Then, meeting it in the state of I'teqaf is a bonus. Imagine! A believer who is doing I'teqaf in the Mosque is already in the state of worship for 24 hours a day over 10 days. He is already in a blessed place. Even if he sleeps in there, that is also considered his worship. Therefore, he will not miss out the night of power because in that night he is in the state of worship. The principal angel Jibrail (PBUH) and other angels will find him in the worshipping state in that night. What an Honour! What a benefit!
- **Dua accepted:** They are constantly in the service of Allah during I'teqaf which increases the chance of their dua to be accepted. What a best time, place, and occasion to make dua to Allah Merciful! The best dua is from the heart, not just saying few sentences from the memory. Dua is a best form of healing, because one can say everything without hiding from Allah with the faith that HE Listens and Grants comfort. Believers find comfort from dua, and dua at night is done with quietness with full concentration, and I'teqaf gives best time, and place to open our hearts to beg for Allah's Mercy, love, blessings, and forgiveness.
- **Easy rewards:** Even if they sleep during I'teqaf, they receive the same rewards as those Muslims who are doing good deeds outside I'teqaf. Ibn A'bbas (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said about those who do I'teqaf:

قَالَ فِي الْمُعْتَكِفِ " هُوَ يَعْكَفُ الذُّنُوبَ وَيُجْرَى لَهُ مِنَ الْحَسَنَاتِ كَعَامِلِ الْحَسَنَاتِ كُلِّهَا

“He saves himself from sinful actions and for him good deeds are written like the person who is doing good deeds (Outside I'teqaf).” [Ibn Maazah]

At last, Month of Ramadan has so many benefits. It comes to us as an Honourable Allah's guest with so many opportunities. The most important things of all are the Holy Quran that has come to guide the mankind from the darkness to the light, from unhappiness to the happiness, and from the anxieties to the peace. Overall, it guides mankind to the everlasting peace abode in the next life. If we can respect the divine guest with proper respect, then the gain is ours! From Allah's part, HE did not leave anything to offer for our best, and it is us who must choose the best things for our salvation. May Allah grant us that ability and wisdom.

Chapter Six: Some basic rules in fasting.

Who do not need to fast?

According to the agreement of Islamic scholars, in relation to Islamic knowledge, the following people are not required to fast, and no pressure can be applied on them either. I am going to make a brief list without detailed references. (This book is not aimed to discuss about the Fiqh rules, so to cover the basics, I am touching some basic information for our reminders. Please, to know more about the rules, contact your nearest Islamic scholars or Imams)

- **Non-Muslims:** Islam never compels its ruling on those who do not voluntarily believe in it.
- **Immature Muslim:** Until maturity fasting is not compulsory on a Muslim. But for practice they can try for hour(s), to get used to gradually without getting sick. That gradual practice is to train to fast after maturity without any problem.
- **Insane Muslims:** Insanity is a sickness and the insane do not know what to do. So, if they are insane fasting is not applicable on them.
- **Sick Muslims:** Fasting is not forced upon sick persons. Once they are healthy, they can make up the lost number of fasts later.
- **Too old:** Some Muslims are too old to fast. They lost the ability completely. For them paying Fidyah can compensate their fasts.
- **Women in menstruation:** It is also considered a sickness. If they are in it, they should not fast and once it is over, then they can make up lost days in later days. But as soon as it is over, they should start fasting the remaining days in the Month of Ramadan.
- **Women after childbirth:** During bleeding after childbirth Muslim women should not fast. Once the bleeding is stopped, they can start fasting again and they shall make up the lost days of fasts in later days.
- **Pregnant women:** If they find fasting is difficult or will be harmful for the babies then they should not fast and make the lost days in later time. But as soon as it is over, they should start fasting the remaining days in the Month of Ramadan.
- **Nursing mother:** If it affects the baby's health, then no fast and can make up in later time.
- **Travellers:** If someone is tired from travelling, then should not fast and should make up the lost days later. Or during travelling, they can either fast or not fast, but if they break the fast, they must make up the missed day(s) later.

The above list is a summary of three main rules of Allah about worshipping HIM. They are:

1. **No force on non-believers:** Islam invited mankind to believe in Allah and worship Allah, but it does not force Allah's religion on others due to the freedom Allah has given to test humans. For example, fasting is not prescribed for the non-believers and was not forced on them. Allah says:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

“Let there be no force in religion.” [Al-Quran 2:256]

2. **Consideration of ability:** Allah is Very Kind. HE does not place any burden on HIS servants that he/she cannot carry. For too old, or terminal sick people fasting is not applicable, but the alternative is prescribed to pay Fidyah for compensation. Allah says:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

“On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear.” [Al-Quran 2:286]

3. **Allah wants to make it easy:** This is Allah’s plan. HE never wants to put difficulty on HIS servants because HE loves them too much, and HE helps them to succeed. Allah says:

وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

“But if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

Finally, from the above guidelines, we can learn another rule, and that is, some people must not fast, or if they fast then it will earn only sins, no rewards at all. Who are those believers? Well, if fasting makes one sick, faint, danger with health, or causes fatal condition even to the possibility of death, then fasting or no fasting is not an option, but the only option is to break the fast for saving the life. We must remember! Fasting is not to destroy but to train. Allah does not prescribe fasting to make HIS servants suffer by becoming too ill. Therefore, overdoing in anything is not allowed in Islamic worship. Islam teaches us moderation in everything including in fasting. We must remember, the purpose of fasting is to learn Taqwa but not to take unbearable sufferings. That is why, Allah has given options with HIS Mercy.

What breaks the fast?

Again, this essay is to describe the basics in brief. The list is in the light of Quran and Sunnah, the Islamic scholars have come up with for the easy guidance for the believers. If you have any further query, please check with your nearest Islamic scholar.

The main actions that break the fast is eating, drinking, sexual action, and sickness. The following verse in the holy Quran has guidance about eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse. Allah says:

حَلَائِلُ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفْتُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ ۚ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ ۚ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۚ فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ۚ ثُمَّ أَتِمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ

“Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts, is the approach to your wives, (So daytime it breaks fast) Eat and drink until the white thread (Light of dawn) of dawn appears to you distinct from its black thread (darkness); then complete your fast till the night appears. (So, eating and drinking is allowed only at night, daytime it breaks fast).” [Al-Quran 2:187]

Then, the following verse has guidance about the sickness. Allah says:

وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

“But if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

Besides, for easy remembering, I think, I should break down what breaks the fast in the following list:

- Eating food,
- Drinking any drink,
- Food injection,
- Intoxication,
- Smoking,

- Sexual intercourse,
- Semen discharge for male,
- Menstruation for female,
- Bleeding after childbirth,
- Voluntary vomiting,
- Rejecting belief (Becoming a Murtad),
- Blood giving (difference in thoughts. Some scholars say it does not break fast and others say it does)
- Toothpaste using: (difference in thoughts. Some scholars say it does not break fast and other say it does),
- Cupping. (Difference in thoughts. Some scholars say it does not break fast and others say it does)

What breaks fast is a very important thing for every believer for two main reasons:

1. **Not to lose:** It is unfortunate to do something without knowledge that breaks the fast. It disappoints the person who is fasting, loses a day for which one day adds to make up later, and loss of rewards. No believer should go through that. Therefore, learning about basic rules for worship is a compulsion on each Muslim according to the teaching of Allah's Messenger. We must make sure that before every Ramadan month, we rehearse the rules with Imams, teachers, or scholars.
2. **To be on the safe side:** If we know that Scholars are giving two different opinions about an action that may or may not break the fast, then we can always take the safest option. We do not want to fast on doubtful ground rather on solid ground. So, if we avoid the doubtful actions for the sake of safety of our fasting, and to maximize the rewards from Allah (Insha Allah), then following the caution is wise. Allah knows the best.

What does not break the fast?

We should also know about the actions that do not break the fast. Knowledge saves us from worries and from unnecessary fears. Knowledge is like the light that guides us throughout the dark road and helps us to reach the destination safely. Without knowledge, we can be like blind people who are hovering in the darkness without any sure direction.

Some Muslims that I have seen in my young age, had practiced hardship during their fasts and later I learnt that they did not know the proper rules. For example, spitting the saliva during the fast was common in a village, and the saliva was everywhere looking yucky. Their reasoning was that if they swallowed the saliva, that would break their fast. One simple misunderstanding caused them to suffer much. Another example was nocturnal emission. I found some young men were too shy to ask about, and they thought it would break the fast. When I asked my religious teacher in the class, they were shocked that I could ask the question in front of many students in my class. But the wise teacher quickly pointed out that for learning Islam we must not feel shy, and we should ask questions to be sure.

Islamic rules are not based on our guess, culture, or common sense. The rules are from Allah, and Allah revealed the rules on HIS Messenger Muhammad (PBUH). So, we must learn our religion without hesitating or feeling shy, and we must follow the Sunnah (Practice and teaching of Muhammad PBUH). With correct knowledge we can avoid loss and only gain rewards in fasting.

Let us now look at few actions that do not break the fast. Alhamdulillah! For making fasting on us without difficulties.

- **Forgetting:** Forgetting is involuntary. If one eats forgetfully and stops as soon as they remember, that does not break fast. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

من نسي – وهو صائم، فَأَكَلَ أَوْ شَرَبَ ، فَلْيَتِمَّ صَوْمَهُ؛ فَإِنَّمَا أَطْعَمَهُ اللَّهُ وَسَقَاهُ

“Whoever has eaten or drunk anything due to forgetting, let him/her complete the fast. Because it is Allah WHO allowed them to eat or to drink.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

- **Involuntary vomiting:** If the vomiting is involuntary then it does not break the fast. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy prophet (s.a.w) said:

من ذرعه القيء فليس عليه قضاء، ومن استقاء عمدا فليقض

“Whoever vomited during fast does not need to make it up later (Fast did not break), but whoever vomited willingly, needs to make it up later (Fast is broken).” [Tirmidi. Abu Dawood. Ibn Maazah. Daremy]

Note: Tirmidi said it is weak hadith. Imam Malik, Shafee, Ahmed, Muhammad’s opinion is that fast does not break. Imam Abu Hanifa and Abu Yusuf’s opinion is, if vomit is not full mouth, then fast does not break, but if full mouth then it breaks and making up is necessary. Allah knows best!

- **Miswak:** For cleaning teeth and it is not a food nor a drink. A’mir ibn Rabe’ah (r. a) said:

قَالَ رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَسْتَاكُ وَهُوَ صَائِمٌ . زَادَ مُسَدِّدٌ مَا لَا أَعُدُّ وَلَا أَحْصِي

“I saw holy prophet (s.a.w) using Miswak many times while fasting.” [Tirmidi. Abu Dawood]

- **Pouring water on head:** It is not drinking so it does not break the fast. One of the companions of Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

لَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِالْعَرَجِ يَصُبُّ عَلَى رَأْسِهِ الْمَاءَ وَهُوَ صَائِمٌ مِنَ الْعَطَشِ أَوْ مِنَ الْحَرِّ

“I saw holy prophet (s.a.w) in a place called “A’rj”, due to heat he was pouring water on his head.” [Malik. Abu Dawood]

- **Semen discharge in sleep:** That is not wilful but involuntary. That does not break the fast. Abu Sayeed Khudri (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

لَا يُفْطِرُ مَنْ قَاءَ وَلَا مَنْ اخْتَلَمَ وَلَا مَنْ اخْتَجَمَ

“3 things do not break the fast – cupping, vomiting (Involuntary) and semen discharge in sleep.” [Tirmidi: He said it is Shaj hadith]

- **Own saliva:** Swallowing own saliva does not break the fast. Tabe’yee A’taa (May Allah’s mercy be on him) said:

“..... remaining saliva in mouth, if anyone swallows it that does not break his fast.” [Bukhari in Tarjoma Baab]

Some other actions do not break the fast. According to the studies of Quran and Sunnah, Muslim Scholars have suggestions such as:

- **Tasting food:** Just a little on tongue and then wash off with water. That will not break the fast.
- **Tasting salt:** Just a little on tongue and then wash off with water. That does not break the fast.

- **Postnasal discharge:** If some of it goes to throat it does not break the fast
- **Phlegm of cough:** Does not break the fast.
- **Dust from storm:** That is also involuntary and does not break the fast.
- **Injection:** In muscle as medicine and not as liquid food, does not break the fast.
- **Asthma inhaler:** It is also not food; it is to allow lungs to breath better. That does not break the fast.
- **Pre-semen prostatic fluid:** It is not semen discharge, so it does not break the fast.

Qada, Kaffara and Fidyah.

To err is human. Believers are humans too. They can make mistake or mischief. Allah knows that because HE is the Guardian Lord for humans. HE created them, shaped them, allowed to grow them, step by step HE guides them, and HE provides correction methods for them if they make mistakes or mischiefs. Mistakes is less severe than the mischief. Satan inspires them to make mischief. Then, some believers also have compromised ability, and they are unable to perform their duties as they want to. Allah knows that as well.

So, for mistakes, inability or mischief, believers need remedy. Allah prescribes fasting for them, and to correct their shortcomings Allah has provided remedies for them as well. Those remedies are called Qada, Kaffara or Fidyah. These three Arabic terms are well known to believers, but I would like to offer a brief discussion on those. I hope, no one is required to take those remedies for their perfect fasting, but there are always some difficulties for some believers, and Allah Merciful has made the provisions to come out of the deep loss.

One point needs to be made clearly here, and that is, “Allah wants the best for HIS servants.” Allah has never put a stop on people for their correction. If Allah wanted to stop it, then after mistakes or mischief no one would have chance to be winners again. Instead, Allah made HIS universal rule, that no one must lose hope in Allah’s Mercy. One must try again, repent again, and mend the way again to receive forgiveness from Allah to start again with a fresh chapter. Allah says:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۖ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Say: ‘O servants (Of Allah, those) who have transgressed against their souls! Do not feel sad about the Mercy of Allah: For Allah forgives all sins: Truly, HE is Often Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [Al-Quran 39:53]

Therefore, giving chances for missing the duties in Fasting, or giving opportunity to mend the mistakes, or inability, is due to the Mercy of Allah and HIS generous forgiveness. Now, let us go through the three terms to understand how they are there to remedy the lacking in fasting from the believer’s part. They are as following:

Qada - It means to make up. For example, due to sickness if a person misses a day of fasting, then making up a fast for a lost day is called Qada. So, if a person missed one day of fast, the believer would make Qada for one day but if he missed 6 days then he must make Qada of 6 days to make up the missed 6 days. The question is when to make up? If a believer missed a day, then after that day (or days) should continue the rest of the Fasting in the Ramadan Month to complete the month. After completing Ramadan month, then in other months the missed day (or days) should be made up. There is no restriction about what month that would be. Sooner is better unless there are genuine problems, and one must not neglect about it. This is the ruling of Allah:

وَمَن كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ ۗ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

“But if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties.” [Al-Quran 2:185]

Kaffara - It is like a penalty to compensate the sin. It becomes compulsory when a person wilfully have sex with his wife. If she was willing to then she also must do Kaffara. But if wife was forced into it, then he must do Kaffara. It allows the person to take some responsibility for own wrong and work hard to compensate it. From that hard work, it also allows the person to learn the lessons. The next question is, what are the things to be done for Kaffara? In Kaffara, there are 3 options given, and a person can take out one of those three. Those three options are according to a Hadis narrated by Abu Huraira (r.a):

قَالَ وَقَعْتُ عَلَى امْرَأَتِي وَأَنَا صَائِمٌ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " هَلْ تَجِدُ رَقَبَةً تُعْتِقُهَا ". قَالَ لَا. قَالَ " فَهَلْ تَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ تَصُومَ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ ". قَالَ لَا. فَقَالَ " فَهَلْ تَجِدُ إِطْعَامَ سِتِّينَ مِسْكِينًا ". قَالَ لَا

“A man came to Holy Prophet (s.a.w) and said that he had sexual intercourse with his wife while fasting. Holy Prophet (s.a.w) gave him 3 options of Kaffara, (1) Freeing a slave, or (2) Fast 2 months continuously, or (3) Feeding 60 poor persons.” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

Note: For further query, please find out from knowledgeable ones near you.

Fidya - Fidya is substituting to fasting for those who are too sick or too old and have lost the ability to make up later as Qada. Their poor health condition is not returnable to the good health. They want to fast, but they are not able to. Should they miss the rewards then? No, they should not. That's why, Fidya system is Allah's Mercy for people with disabilities. They are also special in the Sight of Allah because their hearts are full of Allah's love, and they have surrendered themselves to the obedience to Allah. How much is the Fidya? Fidya is the same amount of money or food for each missed day of fast that one must pay for Sadaqat ul Fitr. So, for example if Sadaqatul Fitr is \$15 per day, then Fidya is also the same amount for each day of fasting. Fidya is mentioned in the Holy Quran:

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ

“A ransom, the feeding of one who is in need. But he who will give more (Than the Sadaqatul Fitr amount), by his own free will, it is better for him.” (2:184):

Finally, how will I know how much is the Sadaqatul Fitr amount? Knowledgeable persons in Islam, or Imams, religious ministry, or organizations work out the amount. So, one can find out easily from those sources. Remember, the cost of food is not same all over the world. Therefore, you need to find out from your own locality about how much they have decided to pay as Sadaqatul Fitr. That way you won't need to pay less or more. There is no fixed amount for every year. It depends on the market price which may go up or down. But if one can afford, should pay more to the needy. Allah loves the charity we give to share our love and care for HIS beloved creation.

Rules in manner.

Fasting is not only about controlling eating, drinking or sexuality, but it aims to control everything in a person holistically. In a person, there is spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical state. Fasting is to train every state in harmony, and for a total change in the person. For example, peace of mind with fasting in a person does not only depend in a balanced feeling in the emotional sphere, but peace of mind comes through harmony in every state. Another example is, if the weather is turbulent outside, then the aircraft passengers do not feel peace of mind inside the plane. There must be a harmonious environment both inside and outside to feel relaxed.

Inside humans, the spiritual state is the boss. It is the soul. When we feel hungry, we lose the peace of mind, and the best remedy for hunger is eating food. Similarly, the soul needs food for peace. But the soul doesn't take petrol, or any other soft drinks, or the meat or vegetables. So, what is the food for the soul to relax for

peace? Well, our body needs growth from the earth because the body was originally made of earth. Similarly, our soul needs connection with Allah because HE has created them in a special way. Fasting connects the soul with Allah, the soul finds happiness in submitting to the command of Allah. That's why, the soul enjoys the fasting spiritually. Then the soul spreads this peace to the emotional and mental plane. The mind and emotion also surrender to Allah and adjusts the thinking and feeling. The faculty of rationing advises everything else to relax, feel happy and enjoy peace, and act to bring out the inner happiness through manner and conduct. Therefore, fasting is a mind and manner project in which mind, heart, rationing, wisdom, and the outer expressions (manner) are all involved.

When, every state in us works in harmony, submit to Allah's commands during fasting, then the mind and body all coordinate together to follow any rules. But if, there is any loose connections in that harmony, it could be weak faith, lack of understanding, or faulty willpower, then the coordination is not there, and the fasting rules cannot be observed properly. Therefore, in fasting rules, there are rules for everything inside us and outside us. The innermost end is the soul, the spiritual highest end, and the lowest end is our physical expressions, gestures and manners or behaviours. We do not see our inside, nor other people see our inner states, but our outer expression is seen. For example, anger is an emotional state inside us, but we see it through outer expression. When anger and hands become partners to punch another person in the fasting period, then that outer expression is the lowest end. In fasting, we need coordination and peace from the top end to the bottom end. That's why, in fasting rules, we find teachings to control from the top end to the bottom end for peace. Let us look at a Hadith from the teaching of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

وَإِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ صَوْمِ أَحَدِكُمْ، فَلَا يَرْفُثْ وَلَا يَصْخَبْ، فَإِنْ سَاءَ لَهُ أَحَدٌ، أَوْ قَاتَلَهُ فَلْيَقُلْ إِنِّي امْرُؤٌ صَائِمٌ

“..... So, when fasting days comes to any of you, let him not talk indecent talks and let him not do unnecessary noises (Shouting, quarrelling). If anyone scolds him or wants to fight with him, he should say, “I am fasting.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

From the above hadis, we find the required outer expression, at the bottom end, during the fasting. I repeat again, this bottom end, the outer expression cannot come out until and unless, the inner state dictates it. Now, we shall highlight few rules of fasting in manners that are mentioned in the above Hadith Insha Allah.

Rules for talking: Fasting is abstaining from. Here, we see the abstaining from eating, drinking and sexual activities is expended to the talking as well. The rule is that a fasting believer must abstain from wrong talking. Fasting rule is to talk the best talk. For example, Allah commands:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

“Speak kindly and justly (In the best manner, with love and respect) to the people.” [Al-Quran 2:83]

Talking has relation with mind and emotion as they all relate to one another like an electrical wiring. If any connection is lost in the wiring, then the outer light will not be turned on. For example, if someone talks hate speech (As an outer expression), that person has hatred in his heart, and that heart is guided by a mind that justifies hatred, and then that wrong mind is linked with a soul that has not fully surrendered to the commands of Allah (About which Allah has commanded to speak with love and respect) to other people.

Therefore, the fasting rule is to talk the best, and to avoid all the talks that are considered as bad or useless. In other words, a fasting person must practice speaking like a gentle person with polite words, respect, and care, and not speak in a manner that can incite others, abuse others, curse on others, or backbite behind others, or spread scandal against other innocent people, or criticise others for the sake of arrogance, jealousy or envy, and that are sinful.

Nice talking makes other people happy, and wrong speaking can bring disaster in relationships, friendships, workmanship, and so on. Good speaking is a sign of self-control on one's tongue, and fasting rule is to practice tongue control during fasting to carry on that practice for the rest of the year. Can we do that? Have we got control on our tongues? Do we try hard to control our tongues during fasting? Or are we abstaining from food and drink successfully and not yet able to abstain our tongues from bad talking? These are the questions that Muslims must ask themselves today for their fasting self-assessments.

Rules of manner: Why some people become noisy, or make noises in their talks, or express foolish gestures? What goes on inside a person to make noises? If you consider about a noisy thunderstorm, behind it is no peace, serenity, or calmness. Or think about a noisy volcano. Why it is noisy? The reason behind it is the lack of peace inside it, and something is ready to burst. In humans, noisy expression outside shows some disturbances inside the person that is hindering him to feel calm, and peaceful. That's why, some people, they will start shouting at others with little provocation and their excuse is that they are hungry during fasting. I have seen many people in my youth, how they shout, or argue, or try to fight one another during fasting for trivial things. I could not understand, why fasting made me calmer, yet they were the opposite. Later I understood, the main reason for an outburst behaviour is their unsettled state of mind and emotion.

The rule of fasting is to practice wise manner, and expression. For that we must develop a wise mind, and with wise minds we must guide our emotion wisely to produce wise gestures. We must do special work inside us through understanding the true philosophy of fasting for the pleasure of Allah, and then having a balanced psychological state to become calm people inside and outside. Shouting for silly reason is like, "Empty vessel sounds much." It means, the person is empty in knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge and wisdom make people heavier like ripe fruits. The perfect exemplars were Allah's Messengers, and their companions. The last prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never talked loudly or immoderately. He used to smile gently and quietly due to his knowledge, wisdom, and thoughtfulness about everything. Hon Ayesha (May Allah be pleased with her) said:

مَا كَانَ ضِحْكُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِلَّا تَبَسُّمًا

"I have never seen Holy Prophet (PBUH) smile in a way that I could see his mouth cavity or thorn palate; rather he only smiled gently." [Bukhari]

Rules about responding: In general cases, some people are well behaved unless other people provoke them. In return of abuse some people think they have right to return eye for an eye and abuse for an abuse rule. But Holy Prophet (s.a.w) is advising Muslims to be even better than that. In the Holy Quran, Allah has outlined the best response from a believer should be:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

"And good deeds and evil deeds cannot be equal. (So) give up (evil) with what is better." [Al-Quran 41:34]

In other words, the best response to evil is not to copy the evil but to have the inner strength to control oneself, and abstain from the evil action, and deliver the good action. So, if anyone incites me with abusive language, then Allah's guidance is that I must not respond with abusive language because Allah has prohibited the abusive language. Therefore, my appropriate righteous response must be non-abusive, and gentle. This is the general rule but in Fasting it is with more intensity to practice self-control.

During fast, Muslims must not respond bad for bad, cursing for cursing, abuse for abuse, rather they should respond with calm, gentle, polite, controlled, peaceful manner. If they can do that then that will be a clear symptom that they have learnt some self-control with inner peace, and happiness. Again, as a Muslim, am I

returning the same way an abuser is abusing me? Am I justifying fighting with another one who is inciting to fight me? Am I using foul language because someone else is using against me? If I am, then I am not practicing the manners that fasting teaches me to do. I must work hard on it.

Rule about anger control: To run a car you need fuel, and to fight you need fire behind it. Without fire or fuel, one cannot suddenly become hot from cold. Anger is a fuel for hot temper, and with hot temper one can fire up for a fight. What is behind the anger then? Anger comes from the emotional state, and it spreads throughout the whole body to fire up the person for a fight. Then the body follows the inner command, and the tongue utters the worst language, and the hands extend towards the opponents. So, what is behind the emotion then? Behind the emotion is the mind, and the mind loses its reasoning. If the mind could think properly about the short or long-term bad consequences of the anger and angry actions, then, that mind would never allow the emotion to be the boss to make massacres. That is the work of intellect, and we all have a free one in us gifted by Allah as a great blessing. We must use it to be wiser and peaceful.

There is a ruler in the mind, and its name is willpower. Reasoning in the mind is like the adviser (Intellect). When the adviser advises the ruler (Willpower) according to the guidance of Allah in right and wrong, in beneficial or loss, then the ruler (Willpower) makes a firm decision and commands the emotion and body to follow it. Fasting is to make the intellect, the willpower, and heart and the soul to surrender to Allah, to obey Allah's guidance to control the anger inside and outside. According to the above Hadith, who can say despite being abused, without fighting back that "I am fasting, and I don't want to fight." That person will be the one who can control his/her anger. Fasting rule is to practice patience rather than anger and angry outburst. That's why in this Hadis the recommendation is that even if someone wants to fight them, they should say, "I won't fight back. I don't want to be angry. I don't want to be violent. I must control my anger and develop my patience. Because I am fasting, and I must practice self-control in my fasting." In general, Islam teaches us to control our anger. Abu Huraira (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

أَنْ رَجُلًا قَالَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَوْصِنِي، قَالَ لَا تَغْضَبْ فَرَدَّدَ مَرَارًا، قَالَ لَا تَغْضَبْ

"Once a man said to Holy Prophet (OBUH), please give me advice. He (PBUH) said: do not be angry. He (The man) asked the same questions to the Prophet few times, and each time Prophet (PBUH) answered: "Do not be angry." [Bukhari]

Rules around Moon Sighting:

What is the Moon in terms of fasting? Well, the fasting month begins and ends on the Moon Sighting. The Islamic calendar is the Lunar calendar. It is called the Hijri Calendar, and the calculation of months and year is based on the Moon Sighting. So, the Moon has inseparable connection with the Fasting Month. When Muslims sight the crescent, they begin the Ramadan Month, and then they sight the new crescent to end the month to celebrate the Eid. Allah made the Moon a natural tool for time calculation. With or without technology, Moon indicates the simplest calculation for Muslim's worships. There was a time without modern technology to calculate the time, but the Moon had served the mankind without any charge, because it is Allah's gift. And in this era, with modern technology, still Moon is the best reliable tool that never becomes dysfunctional, and all educated or non-educated people can use it. Allah says about the Moon in the Holy Quran:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهِلَّةِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ

"They (the people) ask you (the Prophet) concerning the new moons. Say: 'They are only Signs to mark fixed periods of time in (affairs of) men, and for Pilgrimage.'" [Al-Quran 2:189]

There are few recommendations regarding the Moon Sighting in Islam. For easy step by step following, I shall list some of them below:

1. **Follow the Moon in the month before Ramadan:** Muslims should maintain their counting right for every Lunar Month. It will allow them to calculate properly, always aware of which month is running and which month is next, then specially awareness of Shaban Month just before the Ramadan month to reach the Ramadan month correctly. It is not only recommended for a good practice, but it is also rewarding from Allah. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

أَحْصُوا هِلَالَ شَعْبَانَ لِرَمَضَانَ

“For determining the Ramadan month (correctly), count the Moon in Shaban (Month).” [Tirmidi]

2. **Begin and end the Fasting month with Moon Sighting:** It is the simplest method, and even if the Moon is covered with clouds, then still the rule is made very easy for the Muslims. Some Lunar months can be 29 days, and other times 30 days. So, the maximum days for Ramadan month (and other months) is 30 days. If the Moon is covered with clouds and could not be sighted on 29th then Muslims can complete 30 days to finish the month and then begin fasting Month. This simple method is to avoid confusion. This is the teaching from Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Ibn Umar (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

صُومُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ، وَأَفْطِرُوا لِرُؤْيَيْهِ، فَإِنْ غُبِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَكْمِلُوا عِدَّةَ شَعْبَانَ ثَلَاثِينَ. وَفِي رَوَايَةٍ أُخْرَى "إِنَّ الشَّهْرَ يَكُونُ تِسْعَةً وَعِشْرِينَ يَوْمًا"

“You must not fast until you sight the Moon. Like this you must not break your fast (End fasting month) until you sight the Moon for Shawal Month. If the Moon is covered due to the cloud, then complete 30 days in Sha’ban month (Month before Ramadan). In another narration, sometimes month is with 29 nights. [Muttafaqun A’laih]

3. **Dua after the Moon Sighting:** One may sight the Moon or may hear that other(s) has sighted. In both cases, there is a recommended dua from Holy Prophet (PBUH), that believers should say. It is as following:

اللَّهُمَّ أَهْلُهُ عَلَيْنَا بِالْأَمْنِ وَالْإِيمَانِ وَالسَّلَامَةِ وَالْإِسْلَامِ وَالتَّوْفِيقِ لِمَا يَحِبُّ رَبُّنَا وَيَرْضَى رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكَ اللَّهُ

“O Allah, let the crescent loom above us in peace and faith, safety, and Islam. Our Lord and your (Moon’s) Lord is Allah.” [Tirmidi]

4. **Trustworthy believer Moon Sighter:** Muslims need to make sure that the person who has sighted the moon is trustworthy and righteous. If many people sight the Moon, then it is evident without doubt, but if a person sighted it, caution is necessary to avoid mistake. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with them both) said:

جَاءَ أَغْرَابِيٌّ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ الْهِلَالَ - قَالَ الْحَسَنُ فِي حَدِيثِهِ يَعْني رَمَضَانَ - فَقَالَ " أَتَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ " . قَالَ نَعَمْ . قَالَ " أَتَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ " . قَالَ نَعَمْ . قَالَ " يَا بِلَالُ أَتَدْنِي فِي النَّاسِ فَلْيَصُومُوا غَدًا "

“A Bedouin came to Holy Prophet (PBUH) and said, I have sighted the Moon for Ramadan month. Holy Prophet asked him, do you give witness that there are no other gods but Allah? He said, yes. Then, Holy Prophet asked him again, do you give witness that Muhammad (PBUH) is Allah’s messenger? He said, yes. Then Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: O Bilal! Announce to believers to fast from (from tomorrow).” [Abu Dawood, Tirmidi, Nasaaee, Ibn Mazah and Daremy]

5. **No debate about the age of the new Moon:** If the moon is not sighted and Muslims complete 30 days in Shaban, and then begin Ramadan month, some Muslims sometimes may spread doubts and confusion around the age of the moon. I have seen that in my young age. They do it without

knowledge and finds something to talk or gossip about. They may think that they are trying to be sure if they had lost a day, but they create suspicion, doubt and confusion which is sinful.

I had seen, some of them used clothes to see through it to look at the Moon and made comments like, "The Moon is two days old, or three days old, so, we might have lost a day etc." This practice is wrong, sinful, and harmful in the Muslim society because it brings disunity and malpractice about the Moon sighting rule. Holy Prophet (s.a.w) taught the simple way which is if Moon is not sighted then to complete 30 days of Sha'ban and then to begin Ramadan. He (s.a.w) made it clear so why Muslims should look for confusion? A Hadis on this issue will be appropriate to mention. Tabe'yee Abul Bakhtari (May Allah send mercy on him) said:

"Once we got out to perform Umrah Hajj. When we arrived in Batne Nakhla (A place between Makkah and Taeef) we began to sight at the Moon. Some of the people said it was a 3-day old Moon and some said it was a 2-day old Moon. Then we met Hazrat ibn Abbas (r.a) and said to him: 'We have sighted the Moon for the Ramadan month! But some of the people say that the moon was either 3 or 2 days old.'"

Ibn A'bbas (r.a) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَدَّةُ لِلرُّؤْيَا فَهُوَ لِلَّيْلَةِ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ

"Holy Prophet (s.a.w) used to count day of fasting from the night he used to sight the Moon. So (this time) the Moon is as old from the night you have seen it!" [Muslim]

Few rules around fasting:

As I mentioned before, fasting has rules, and these rules are not made by humans, or an advisory board. Fasting is a worship, and every worship is for Allah only, and Allah has made the rules for fasting and for all other worships. Why Allah made the rules? The answer is as following:

Who else would know? Except Allah who is there to know what exactly Allah wants in worship from HIS servants? There are no gods except Allah. HE is the One and HE knows what the things are HE loves in worshipping HIM. That's why, Allah has prescribed how HE should be worshipped. HIS decision was revealed on HIS Messenger to teach the mankind.

What would HE accept? Servants may do many things, but the worship must be accepted by Allah for the rewards. HE knows only what HE wants from HIS servants and what HE would accept happily. In this, human has no knowledge to theorize, their job is to follow HIS commands and methods only. That's why Allah has selected what should be fasting rules.

Who else has perfection: Worship to Allah is not a messy thing. Subhaanallah! Allah is All-Perfect, and HIS worship method is also all-perfect. HE only knows what perfect things is in fasting, and that's why HE has prescribed all the rules.

Unity in simplicity: Allah has made simple rules to making them easy to follow by HIS believers. HE made easy rules to save the believers from adding more rules, or leaving any rules, and suffer from confusion and loss in rewards. HE appointed one person, not many, to guide the believers to follow the rules unitedly. That appointee is HIS Messenger Muhammad (PBUH). That's why we follow the messenger of Allah's teachings without question unitedly.

I hope, from the above introduction, we understand clearly that we should know fasting rules properly, and we must follow them exactly as it is because without doing that our fasting might not be accepted by Allah and HE may not grant us the rewards. So, now I shall list few rules regarding the different aspects fasting for our reminders. If we try to reflect on the philosophy behind every rule, then we can see the huge ocean behind it. Allah's knowledge is endless, and HIS prescriptions are unlimited in benefits as well.

Rules around Iftar:

What is Iftar? It is the breaking of the fast after whole day of fasting. One may break fast just with water or dates, or some other foods. There is no compulsion in what food one must choose. Some believers eat dates or water according to the recommendation from Holy Prophet (PBUH) for more rewards. But Holy Prophet (PBUH) never said that there was compulsion on eating certain foods. Therefore, one can eat whatever Halal food or drink is available, and he/she is used to considering the health issues.

But there is one burning issue about Iftar, and that is, should one breakfast on time, or should we wait a bit longer. Someone may use the logic that I have fasted the whole day, and to make sure the Sun is fully set, I should wait for another 5 to 15 minutes. Then I shall get more rewards from Allah, or Allah will be happy with me for my devotion. In fact, I have seen some people do that, and they decided to breakfast after Magrib Salah. So, what is the correct rule on this issue?

Let us find the answer from Holy Messenger of Allah. Holy prophet (s.a.w) said in a Hadis narrated by Hazrat Sahl ibn Sa'd (r.a):

لَا يَزَالُ النَّاسُ بِخَيْرٍ مَا عَجَّلُوا الْفِطْرَ

“People will be in goodness if they will break their fast (Iftar) soon (after Sunset).” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

Again, Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy prophet (s.a.w) said:

قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أَحَبُّ عِبَادِي إِلَيَّ أَعَجَّلَهُمْ فِطْرًا

“Allah says, ‘Among MY servants those who break their fast (Iftar) soon (after Sunset) are most beloved to ME.’ [Tirmidi]

The main philosophy behind the two Hadis is:

1. **Obedience to Allah:** The whole worship in fasting is to test who obey Allah. Allah has given rules, and a believer must obey Allah as Allah wants him/her to obey. In the obedience accuracy is important, and adding or reducing is the obedience and is not allowed. That's why Allah has made the rules. Fasting longer than Allah's rules doesn't bring any rewards but it is considered the disobedience.
2. **Follow the teaching of Allah's Messenger:** To explain the Quran, Allah sent HIS Messenger Muhammad (PBUH). So, a believer cannot make his own rules or explain a rule of Allah in his own way. Here again, Allah's messenger has explained the rules as Allah wanted, with accuracy and exactness.

Rules about Sahur:

What is Sahur? It is the eating before dawn in the fasting month. Before starting the fasting from dawn, eating and drinking is recommended in Islamic teaching. For a month Muslims must change their eating time around to adjust their fasting during the day. Usually, all the year round, they do not eat breakfast so early in the morning, but for their worship, they happily change their habits. One may ask, what is the goodness in eating Sahur? The answers are as following:

1. **For the well-being:** It is easy to miss the eating so early if one is not careful. In my young age, despite putting our clock alarm on, most nights I missed the alarm. My father was our alarm in the family. He used to get up early to pray night prayer, then he used to call us to wake up for Sahur. One night, he was sick, and he woke up 10 mins later after the Sahur time, and we all missed our Sahur. Without Sahur we did our fasting, and it was too hard for all of us. From that episode, I realize, how important

the Sahur is for passing the fasting hours easily. For our fasting we need good health, good wellbeing, and energy to do it properly. Therefore, the Sunnah (Tradition) of Sahur is a blessing.

2. **For following Sunnah:** Holy Prophet (PBUH) has recommended the believers to eat Sahur. Whatever the Holy Prophet (PBUH) did or recommended is called Sunnah. Muslims are required to follow the Holy Prophet's teaching without question. This is Allah's order to the believers in the Quran in chapter 4 verse 65. So, if we follow the Sunnah of holy prophet (PBUH), then we get rewards for it as well. Anas (r.a) narrated that Holy prophet (s.a.w) said:

تَسَحَّرُوا فَإِنَّ فِي السَّحُورِ بَرَكَهً

"You should have Sahur because in Sahur there is blessing." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

To begin with Sahur could be hard for some reasons for some believers. One reason is not used to it. Changing habit can be a challenge for some people. Another reason is, it brings a change in sleeping pattern and that can be a challenge for some others. Then, another reason can be laziness in waking up. But the philosophy behind this is:

1. **Worship is hard work:** For hard work the reward is high too. Fasting is not easy nor impossible. It is in moderation. Allah tests believer's degree of loyalty to HIM, and according to their degree of devotion HE grants them rewards. Without some hard work the test won't be fair, and who had worked hard or not cannot be determined. Sahur may be challenging but not for the high achiever Muslims. They take every opportunity, no matter how hard it is or how challenging it is, for Allah's pleasure, and for right rewards from HIM.
2. **Training for sacrifice:** There is no gain without going through some pain. Allah wants believers to get used to struggles with perseverance to win against the odds. Allah will not grant Paradise for anyone who doesn't struggle for the sake of Allah. That struggle includes getting up at night for Sahur, and then pray in the early morning sacrificing some comfort. For example, Allah has prescribed Fajr (Early morning prayer) Salah every morning. A believer cannot say, "I want my morning prayer at 10 am so I can have a good sleep in the morning." Here, the right thing to say is, "I will pray at any time that my Lord has prescribed on me."

Therefore, every small or big duty in worship is a test, training, and struggle to achieve high reward by proving the love, obedience, and loyalty for Allah. The fact is, Allah never places responsibility on HIS servants that is considered excessive on them. Allah loves moderation and HIS prescription is in moderation. One example is, fasting without Sahur. If a believer thinks that if he fasts without Sahur, then he may receive more rewards from Allah? What is the rule about that?

I mentioned before that in Allah's worship there are guidelines, and they are with accuracy, exactness, moderation, and the teachings from Allah's Messenger Muhammad (PBUH). Allah doesn't need more loyalty than what HE has prescribed for, nor does HE ask for less. HE prescribed fasting during the days, not at night. Now, if we fast during the day and the night, then we are practicing against HIS rules. Even if our intention is to earn more rewards, we will earn sin and HIS dissatisfaction because we are practicing excessive things that HE has not commanded for. Fasting without eating or drinking for days is called "Saumul Wesaal". Abu Huraira (r.a) said:

قَالَ نَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنِ الْوَصَالِ فِي الصَّوْمِ

"Holy Prophet (s.a.w) had forbidden the Saumul Wisaal (for the believers)." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

Rules of fasting during sickness & travelling:

When Allah prescribed fasting in the month of Ramadan, Allah has expressed HIS wise consideration for human weaknesses. HE created humans and HE knows their limitations. HE prescribed fasting to learn Taqwa but not to harm HIS servants. Therefore, HE made the rule that healthy and adult Muslims should fast. Allah made it clear in the Holy Quran:

فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ

“But if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later.” [Al-Quran 2:184]

Now, let us look at sickness. Sickness can be divided into three main categories:

1. **Minor sickness:** For example, very mild headache, cold, flu etc. It does not bother the person much, and with it he can work, read, study, run business, talk, or travel. Should he break fast for this type of minor sickness? The scholar's opinion is to fast without breaking.
2. **Moderate sickness:** Some sore or pain that is controlled by medications, and they can do everything without problems. For example, arthritis pain which is a chronic pain and with medication at night it is bearable and within control. This sickness does not prevent the person from fasting, and the person feels even better with fasting. Some diabetic patients with their medications, feel good with fasting. Should he/she break the fast? The scholar's opinion is that they should fast.
3. **Serious sickness:** Any sickness that is serious, and fasting with it is dangerous, and will have bad consequences is the sickness that is referred to the above verse. In that sickness, one must break the fast, if not he/she will commit sin for imposing suffering on him/herself. Allah is fair, and HE wants HIS servants to be fair to themselves too. The body has right on us, and we must not make our bodies suffer willingly. That's why, Allah Merciful has given option to break the fast and to make the missed number of days later to follow the moderation.

Now, let us look at the rules for fasting during the travelling. Every travelling is not the same. Some travelling is too easy, and some not too easy nor too hard, and some are very hard. According to these different conditions, fast or not fast during travelling has different recommendations. They are below:

1. **Too hard:** If the travelling is very tiring that fasting will make the traveller Muslim weak, sick, unable to do the required duties, faint, or life threatening etc, then breaking fast is compulsory. In those cases, fasting does not bring any rewards because it goes Against Allah's rules. Zahir (May Allah be pleased with him) said that once Holy Prophet (PBUH) was in a trip (Travelling). He (PBUH) saw people were crowded (in a place) and saw shade was given over a person. He (PBUH) asked, “What is this?” People said: This man is fasting! Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

لَيْسَ مِنَ الْبِرِّ الصَّوْمُ فِي السَّفَرِ

“Fasting in travel is not rewarding.” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

2. **Moderate, not hard nor easy:** If the travelling is not too hard and one can manage comfortably then should one break the fast? Let us find the answer from a Hadith. Ayesha (May Allah be pleased with her) said: Hamza Ibn Amor Aslami (May Allah be pleased with him) used to fast a lot. Once he asked Holy Prophet (s.a.w): O Messenger of Allah! Can I fast during my travelling? Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

“If you want you can and if you do not want then you don’t have to.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

3. **Easy travelling:** If the travelling is very short, comfortable, and one has the full confidence to do it, then should he be deprived from fasting during his easy traveling? The word deprived is significant to me. In my young age, if I had missed a day, I used to cry, and I felt deprived from the spiritual joy of fasting with everyone in the Holy Month. What is the answer then? Let us find the answer from a Hadith. Salama ibn Muhabbaq (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ حَمُولَةٌ تَأْوِي إِلَى شَيْعٍ فَلْيَصُمْ رَمَضَانَ حَيْثُ أَدْرَكَهُ

“The one who has such transport which takes him to home comfortably, he should fast wherever he finds fasting day.” [Abu Dawood]

Rules of fasting in doubtful day?

What is a doubtful day? Suppose Muslims try to sight the Moon in a night and could not see it. Then after that night the day comes is called doubtful day. Why is it called doubtful day? The reason is, may be in another part, Muslims had sighted the moon and had started their fast on this day whereas in this country moon was not sighted last night. So that day is a doubtful day. In Islam exactness is essential in Worship. Confusion, disunity is prohibited in Islam. So, when moon sighting is confirmed then all Muslims in that area should begin fast or should wait together because fasting in the month of Ramadan is a collective worship and unity and clarity is essential in it.

The collective fasting should be according to the areas. Moon cannot be sighted in the whole world at the same time. Due to the time difference, different countries or regions can sight moon in different times. So, in each region, Moon sighting should follow the rule of unity and should not fast in doubtful day. What is the worst in fasting in doubtful day? Well, it creates confusion, divides Muslims, and brings disunity. Holy Prophet (s.a.w) had strictly prohibited to fast in doubtful day. That means it is not rewarding at all to fast in a day that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) had forbidden to do so. Abu Huraira (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

لَا يَتَقَدَّمَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ رَمَضَانَ بِصَوْمٍ يَوْمٍ أَوْ يَوْمَيْنِ، إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ رَجُلٌ كَانَ يَصُومُ صَوْمَهُ فَلْيَصُمْ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ

“No one among you should fast one or two days before Ramadan, except that person who fast on such days regularly.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

So, exception for those people who fast regularly, such as one person fasts every Monday and Thursday and if the doubtful day falls on either Monday or Thursday then he or she can fast in that day. Why is this person allowed to fast on doubtful day? The reason is this person is not fasting with the intention of fasting for Ramadan Month in doubtful day but is fasting as his/her regular weekdays fasting. It means this person is not fasting to confuse others or to create disunity or to disobey holy prophet’s recommendation. In each region, when the Moon sighting is confirmed, then everyone should begin the fasting for the Ramadan month together.

Rules of fasting in Eid day:

What is Eid day? Eid day is after the completion of Ramadan month. Eid day never arrives if the Ramadan month is still on. We know that Allah prescribes fasting in the Ramadan month. Once moon is sighted on

either 29th or 30th night of Ramadan then next day is Eid day. It is called Eid-ul-Fitr. It means, festival on breaking the fast. In Islamic calendar, Eid day comes twice in a year. Once after the end of Fasting month and another one is on 10th day of 12th month (10th of Julhijj).

The question is, is fasting allowed on the Eid day? What if someone thinks that he fasted for 30 days, and if he fasts on Eid day as well, will he receive more rewards? The answer is one cannot decide what to do about worship. The decision comes from Allah and HIS Holy Messenger passes Allah's rules to the believers. So, let us find the answer from a Hadith. Abu Sayeed Khudri (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

قَالَ يُنْهَى عَنْ صِيَامَيْنِ، وَبَيَعَتَيْنِ الْفِطْرِ، وَالنَّحْرِ

“In two days, there is not fasting—In Eid after Ramadan and in Eid for Sacrifice (Qurbani).” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

Therefore, fasting is not allowed on the Eid day. Eid day is for worship, to glorify Allah's praises, to eat and drink and to thank Allah etc. When Allah says to believers to fast, they fast, and when Allah says to the believers that they should eat, then they must eat. In between there are no other ways.

Rules for I'teqaf:

What is I'teqaf? It means secluding oneself in a place for worshipping Allah. In terms of Islamic ruling, I'teqaf is to seclude oneself in the Mosque for a certain period. Female Muslims can do it at home. I'teqaf in the last 10 days and nights of the Ramadan month is Sunnah. Holy Prophet (PBUH) did it, and recommended believers to do it. It has huge benefits, and I shall describe some of the benefits in another part of this book. Like every other worship, I'teqaf has rules, and those rules must be followed for gaining maximum benefits. Last 10 days of Ramadan Month, Muslims do I'teqaf because Holy Prophet (s.a.w) did it all the time except once. I'teqaf is not like common meditations. It has specific rules, and I shall highlight some rules for I'teqaf in below:

- **Specific time for I'teqaf:** One must start I'teqaf for Fasting month on 20th day before Magrib Salah and should end it after the confirmation of Moon Sighting after Magrib at the end of fasting Month.
- **During I'teqaf:** If no other worship is going on, then should keep busy doing righteous things like reciting Quran, studying Quran, praying voluntary Salah, learning, or teaching Islam, praising Allah as Zikr etc.
- **I'teqaf for women:** Women can do I'teqaf at home. They will receive same reward. Allah made it easy for women, Alhamdulillah!
- **Some rules:** Hon Ayesha (r.a) said that the person who does I'teqaf must follow these rules:
 - Must not go out to visit a sick person,
 - Must not go out to join any Janajah (funeral prayer),
 - Must not have sexual intercourse with spouse,
 - Must not mingle with spouse,
 - Must not go out unless it is essential (Like if toilet is outside) and
 - Must fast in the fasting month to do I'teqaf. [Abu Dawood]

Rules for Sadaqatul Fitr:

Sadaqatul Fitr is the name for Zakah for fasting. Normal Zakah in Islam is to purify the wealth and the Zakah for fasting is to purify the Fasting from shortcomings. When servants fast in the month of Ramadan, they try

to do it perfectly, but for the imperfection, Allah has provided the Sadaqatul Fitr to remedy the imperfection. Allah is so kind to HIS servants!

Some rules for Sadaqatul Fitr are as following:

- **Who needs to pay:** Abdullah ibn U'mar (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

فَرَضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ صَدَقَةَ الْفِطْرِ صَاعًا مِنْ شَعِيرٍ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ تَمْرٍ عَلَى الصَّغِيرِ وَالْكَبِيرِ وَالْحُرِّ وَالْمَمْلُوكِ

“Holy Prophet (PBUH) fixed Sadaqatul Fitr on All Muslims slaves, free men, women, children or adults.” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **When need to pay:** Abdullah ibn U'mar (May Allah be pleased with him) said:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَمَرَ بِزَكَاةِ الْفِطْرِ قَبْلَ خُرُوجِ النَّاسِ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ

“Holy Prophet (s.a.w) advised to pay Sadaqatul Fitr before going to Eid Prayer.” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Whom should be paid?** Ibn A'bbas (May Allah be pleased with both) said:

قَالَ فَرَضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ زَكَاةَ الْفِطْرِ طَهْرَةً لِلصَّائِمِ مِنَ اللَّغْوِ وَالرَّفَثِ وَطَعْمَةً لِلْمَسَاكِينِ

“Holy prophet (PBUH) fixed Sadaqatul Fitr to purify fast from useless talk and indecent manners and to provide food to the poor.” [Abu Dawood]

- **What to pay:** Abdullah ibn U'mar (May Allah be pleased with both) said:

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَرَضَ زَكَاةَ الْفِطْرِ صَاعًا مِنْ تَمْرٍ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ شَعِيرٍ، عَلَى كُلِّ حُرٍّ أَوْ عَبْدٍ، ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى، مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“Holy Prophet (PBUH) fixed Sadaqatul Fitr on Muslims slaves, free men, women, children or adults all one ‘Saa’ dates or oat.” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

Note: Every Muslim country calculates in their region the amount of food or money considering the local economy. So, follow your nearest Islamic authority.

- **Who is responsible to pay:** The guardian of the family [All Imam's recommendation]
- **Who does not need to pay:** The poor and needy who can't afford even their own foods in Eid day. [All Imams]
- **Who must pay:** If a guardian has more than enough food for him or family on the day of Eid, he must pay Sadaqatul Fitr on behalf of him and his family. [Imam Shafee]

Rules for follow up voluntary fasting after Ramadan Month:

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is a compulsory duty on able Muslims. Ramadan month comes with Allah's endless Mercy, but does it stop there? Does it mean that for the rest of the year Allah does not give other opportunities for the believers? No, that is not the case. Allah has provided many other fasting options for the best reasons. Some reasons are as following:

- **To keep the momentum:** If I have 100 dollars, I want it to grow to thousand, then hundred thousand and millions. To keep the continuous growth, the momentum must continue. After Ramadan month, in the month of Shawal, Allah has given 6 more days of fasting option to keep the growth in the reward.
- **Overcoming the shortcomings:** To err is human. Believers are not perfect, but their aim is to be perfect. When they try yet can't get there, Allah has provided different support systems to grant them forgiveness and rewards. One of those options is fasting 6 days in the Shawal Month. It helps the growth in rewards for believers' deed books.
- **Multiple opportunities:** One opportunity is not enough for the imperfect believers, and Allah grants them with HIS Mercy multiple opportunities to catch up in the run to be Allah's best servants. One of those multiple opportunities is fasting 6 days in the month of Shawal after Ramadan month.

But the two fasts are different. Fasting in the Ramadan month is compulsory. The able people must observe fasting, and sick or the tired travellers will make up their missed days after Ramadan month. But the 6 days fasting in the Shawal month is voluntary. What is the main difference between them? The difference is that one must fast the compulsory fast, and if not, will face the judgment. The voluntary fast is different because one may fast or may not fast. If one does not fast then no sin for that, but if one does fast, then there is reward for fasting. Why then is voluntary fast important? Some reasons are as following:

- **Rewards:** The rewards are very high. I shall give an example here. Abu Sayeed Khudri (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

مَنْ صَامَ يَوْمًا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، بَاعَدَ اللَّهُ وَجْهَهُ عَنِ النَّارِ سَبْعِينَ خَرِيفًا

“Whoever will fast a voluntary fast in the path of Allah (or for the sake of Allah), Allah will keep his face seventy thousand years of pathway away from the Hellfire (Very far away).” [Muttafaqun A'laih]

- **Maintaining Taqwa:** To maintain the high level of Taqwa, voluntary fasting is very beneficial. When a believer fasts compulsory fasting in the Ramadan month, and then voluntary fast in other times, it keeps the high level of Taqwa in the person. For high level of Taqwa, believers receive high rewards as well.
- **Increasing love for Allah:** How can a believer go through without food, drink, and sexual pleasures without strong love for Allah? The voluntary fast helps to increase the closeness to Allah throughout the year. Allah love HIS servants when they love HIM, and HE bestows all the help for them.

Now, let us look at the special reward for 6 days voluntary fast in the month of Shawal. The huge rewards motivate us to fast for those 6 days. Abu Ayyub Ansari (May Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَهُ سِتًّا مِنْ شَوَّالٍ كَانَ كَصِيَامِ الدَّهْرِ

“Whoever has fast in the month of Ramadan and then fasts 6 days in the month of Shawal, it will be for him/her equivalent to the fasting of whole year.” [Muslim]

The very important point to note here is that, to receive whole year rewards one must fast in the Ramadan month followed by 6 days fast in the Shawal month. Fasting in the Ramadan month is 4th pillar of Islam, therefore fasting in the Ramadan month is compulsory. Therefore, one cannot hope to receive whole year fasting rewards from 6 voluntary fasting by skipping the compulsory fasting in the Ramadan month.

Chapter seven: EID UL FITR

What is Eid UL FITR?

Eid is a happy celebration, and Fitr is breaking of the fast after Ramadan month. Muslims fast in the Ramadan month daily from dawn to sunset, and the Eid Ul Fitr ends that month-long fasting. When the moon is sighted after the completion of Ramadan month, then the first day of the next month (Shawal) is the Eid day. On Eid day fasting is not allowed, and it is a day for glorifying Allah, praising Allah, and performing prayers for worshipping Allah, and sharing food, meeting relatives and many other things.

Why did Allah prescribe happy celebration for the believers? Well, happiness is a feeling that humans need. The opposite is sadness, and no one likes sadness, and we wish we had no sadness at all. But for the test in this life, Allah has provided happiness and sadness in humans. Let us look at a few wisdoms of having happiness and sadness in this life:

- **To understand both sides:** If no one knows what pain is, will not know the importance of painlessness. Allah gave both options for humans to know the difference, because knowledge guides people to perfection, and give them the balanced understanding. The knowledgeable ones know the consequences of each option and can select what is the best. A child does not understand about the harm of fire and extends the hand into the fire. But an adult has knowledge what fire can do, and as a result, he/she stays away from the fire safely. For the knowledge of happiness and sadness, Allah did not make mandatory for humans to study in the university but has placed these two feelings in them. So that every human can understand it with his/her basic common sense.
- **To make the right choice:** When people are careless about their actions, or self-control, then they can become like a loose cannon. What a loose cannon does? A loose cannon has no control, and it can fire anytime to cause tremendous damage. If humans lose their self-control, their tongue can be sharper than the knife to cut other's hearts into pieces. Without self-control their hands cannot make the right choices and can punch someone with little provocation to cause sadness. Because everyone knows about happiness and what makes them happy, and about sadness and what makes them sad, that knowledge helps them to make the right choices. Our time-to-time sadness should turn us to sympathetic souls, to choose words and actions to make ourselves happy and others happy. Humans relate to unseen energy, and if we choose right feelings and actions for one another, we align ourselves with that unseen energy to make one another happy.
- **To appreciate happiness:** Happiness makes us feel good, and we want to feel happy forever. In children's stories, writers teach them to fantasize for the happiness for example, "After marriage the prince and princess lived happily ever after." Even babies smile when they feel happy, and they cry when they feel sad. Many adults, due to excessive sadness, or prolonged sadness develop depression and from that they may feel bitter, angry, hopeless, and so on. From the suffering of sadness, one must appreciate the importance of happiness and must work for the happiness. Happiness and sadness are two sides of the same coin yet without activating the happy side with right feelings and actions, sadness can attack any time. Happiness must be earned, and it requires right philosophy and right actions.
- **Happy abode:** In this life, everyone is given the happiness and sadness feelings. With that, Allah has given the guidance how to choose for everlasting happiness in the next life, and to achieve that how to work for it. If Allah did not give both feelings in this life, and sent guidance to avoid sadness in the next life, then humans might have said, "What is sadness from which we must work hard to be saved from? We do not understand it because we have never felt it." Allah is All-Wise, and HE gave both feelings to humans, and to have an experience of suffering from sadness, so that they will know for sure why they need to choose happiness in their everlasting next life. Besides, Allah has made happy abode for the next life called Paradise and has guided people to work hard for it. Allah has also sent guidance about

sad home in the next life and asked people to avoid it at any cost. Allah assures that those who will believe in happy abode, will work hard with righteousness to achieve it, and will go through struggles without losing the focus on it, HE will grant them the everlasting happy abode:

يُسِّرُ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَّهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُّقِيمٌ

“Their Lord gives them the happy news of Mercy from HIMSELF, of HIS good pleasure, and of Garden for them, where there are joys that will last (forever).” [Al-Quran 9:21]

Now, Eid is prescribed in Islam to feel happy and to be joyful in this life, and to hope for the everlasting joy and happiness in Paradise in the next life. Eid doesn't represent the joy in this life only, but it is part of the joy in the next life. That's why it is a unique celebration. It brings spiritual joy for the spiritual achievement, and the joy travels through mind and body and with others. The four main aspects of happiness in Eid are:

1. **Spiritual happiness:** Eid ul Fitr is related to spiritual actions. Fasting the whole month, reciting the Holy Quran by the nights, worshipping Allah, prayers with hope that Allah will grant rewards are the main features behind the Eid. We must remember, if there is no fasting in the Ramadan month, then there is no Eid ul Fitr because Fitr means breaking the month-long fast. After a month of spiritual hard work, comes Eid day to celebrate the graduation day. It is a joy of achieving spiritual degree of Taqwa (Self-control), and every achiever deserves celebrating that joy with others according to spiritual codes taught by Allah's Messenger Muhammad (PBUH). Eid is not an individual celebration, but it is a collective celebration, and the reason is to celebrate the joy openly to make it infectious to all. It enhances to come together and pray for spiritual unity, love, and harmony. When everyone joins to the celebration, not in one part of the world but in the entire world, then the wave of happiness becomes very strong. Eid is Allah's plan, and HE teaches us to feel happy when we learn righteousness. HE never prescribes to feel happy for committing crimes, for violences or for cruelties, rather HE teaches us to feel sad for doing wrong, to feel remorseful and to self-correct quickly because crimes or wrong actions may bring permanent sadness in this life and in the next life. A criminal suffers in the prison, gets deprived from normal joyous occasions and cannot enjoy the happy life as other good people are enjoying. From that, we learn to be happy with our good deeds, and to feel sad if we do something wrong. From this happiness and sadness, we can learn self-control to save ourselves from bad actions and to encourage ourselves to good actions. Eid is a wonderful spiritual training to be happy with worshipping Allah, and practicing righteousness to be good humans, and to be optimistic in life to continue doing good deeds for happiness in Paradise in next life.
2. **Happiness for mental and emotional wellbeing:** Allah knows human feelings because HE created them and placed all the feelings in humans. HE knows why people feel sad, and why they feel happy. HE also knows, how happy feelings helps them to enjoy a sound wellbeing, and how sad feelings destroy their wellbeing. HE prescribed two Eid in a year along with many other things to exercise happiness. Eid is a great exercise to feel happy. One needs preparation for the Eid which takes at least a month. In that month, Muslims are motivated to look forward to the joyful Eid, to plan for it, to cook for it, to buy nice garments for it, for inviting friends and relatives in it etc. All that time with preparation, believers mind and heart are pumped up with joy, happiness, and that is a strong deterrent to their sadness and depression. That is the exercise believers are doing, often without realizing that Eid is contributing best mental and emotional health for them. Happiness and happy occasions are the best natural remedies for best wellbeing. All the thanks and praises to Allah for providing believers Eid occasions to celebrate the happiness that we desperately need in this stressful life. So many things are going wrong around us, so many sad things are trying to drag us down, but no, Allah does not want us to be dragged down with negative notes. Allah wants us to

focus on the positive notes through Eid to cheer up, to enjoy, to bring joy around and to be better with our wellbeing.

3. **Social cohesion for happiness:** Eid is a collective worship with righteous actions. Eid never allows to be wild with joy, and break houses or engage in fighting or to show pride and arrogance over one another. Why aren't these wrong things allowed in Eid celebration? The reason is, Islam represents peace and harmony, and all its programs are righteous that makes the society united, harmonious, and peaceful. That is why, happy Eid brings only the good traditions that brings humanity together. For example, Eid prayer cannot be performed alone because that does not make a cohesive society. If you and I become good people individually, that is not good enough in the sight of Allah. Allah wants us to be happy as a society because Allah has made us social beings and made us dependent on one another. Until we come together, the real happiness will not come. Congregation in Eid prayer is a symbol of social cohesion in which many believers will come from many different ethnicities, yet they will blend into one under the service of Allah. From there, Muslims can spread that cohesiveness to their neighbours, fellow citizens as brothers and sisters in humanity. On Eid day, Islam allows gatherings, good fun, good games to bring people together in harmony.
4. **Happiness through compassion:** For believers, after fasting for whole month, they are required to pay a charity called Sadaqatul Fitr. That charity is a love sharing compassionate action from the able one to the needy one. It is to remind that poor people are not to be blamed, looked down upon or burdens, but they have rights on the well-off ones. This charity must be distributed before the Eid prayer so that poor people can have a plan to purchase good food or other required things to participate the joyful Eid happiness episode. Allah is the Most Compassionate and HE asks HIS servants to be compassionate to one another for a better world. Human unity should be in compassion to avoid destructions. Without compassion, this planet will be full of sadness not happiness.

Happiness in Eid:

Who gets what in the happiness in Eid? What do I mean by this question? I mean that in Eid there is some happiness for everyone but not the same in degree. Everyone feels joy in the society directly or indirectly. For example, Eid festival brings joy for the poor people, joy for the rich people for feeling good through sharing, joy for businesspeople for good business with profits, joy for the employees for getting extra earning for Eid festival, and in some Muslim countries joy for Muslims or Non-Muslims for Eid holiday etc.

Eid has the universality as well as the specialty. The universal part is joyful for everyone. It is good for the friends, relatives, neighbours, fellow human and for the country and the world. For eating, joyful activities, visiting homes and with new clothes who can afford to bring an environment for joy and happiness. So, Eid has something for everybody, but when it comes to the spiritual joy, everyone does not get the same happiness. For example, one has post-graduation ceremony, and another has graduation ceremony. Are they the same? Why not? They are not same for two following reasons:

1. **Feeling:** The feeling of joy can be same from the receiver's part or may not be. If the receiver feels happy with whatever he/she has achieved, then the happiness could reach its peak. But if the receiver compares with others such as how many marks, he/she has scored, was it below than other or higher than others, with those thoughts feeling of joy may vary. Or if the receiver is ambitious, then will think of achieving highest degree to feel happier. Or the post-graduate one may feel happier for climbing to the top of the education ladder. What I am trying to say is that both post-graduate and graduate may feel same or have different levels of happiness. No one will be deprived from happiness at all.
2. **Value:** Feelings can be same but the value of what two people have achieved is not the same. For example, a baby is very happy with beautiful smile if you give her a colourful toy that costs you only

2 dollars. If you give the baby a 2-million-dollar toy, will not be same happy for the toy. So, I am saying that the feeling can be same from the Eid happiness but what value Allah will grant in the Paradise is not the same. Therefore, some joy can be as far-reaching as trillions of miles, and another can be for a million miles only.

Why is this difference? It is different because of Allah's fairness. When Allah grants wages to HIS servants, HE considers the following things:

How much faith in it? Allah knows the inside and outside about HIS servants. HE does not consider their faces, but HE considers their hearts and their actions. HE can see how strong faith or weak faith one has about Allah and in the next life etc. About servant's faith, HE knows the exact degree of depth, degree in strength and in weakness. For HIS Fair Judgment, HE will reward HIS servants exactly according to the degree in their faith. As a result, the facility and comfort level in the Paradise will differ because the degree of servant's faith will be different. The servants will receive according to their score in their exam. What is my level? I must ponder about it.

How much love in it? One can worship to be seen by others, or one can worship for the love to Allah. When a believer serves Allah for love, then, in that love, Allah knows the right level or degree in it. No one else can know it except Allah All-Knowing. HE never does any unfairness in rewarding HIS servants. Therefore, two people may be fasting, but the degree of love for Allah might be different, and Allah looks at those degrees. HE is subtle and does not miss anything in HIS fair Judgment. That's why Allah's judgment is the supreme in fairness and perfection, and HE is Ahkamul Hakimeen (The ultimate Judge for all Judges). How much love do I have in my fasting for Allah? I must ponder.

How much pure intention in it? Intention is what is behind the action. That part also human judges do not know but Allah does. No one can hide their secret intention from Allah. Servants can have different intentions and devotions. That plays a big part in receiving rewards from Allah. Holy prophet's (PBUH) teaching is that the reward for the action depends on the intention. If the intention is purely to please Allah, and not for name fame or slightly selfish reasons, then one is free from contaminated intention. In the worship of Allah, Allah brings the heart and action together to give it the proper weight for granting the fair rewards. Is my intention pure? Or do I need to work on it before expecting a happy reward from Allah?

How much perfection in it? Even if everything else is ok, but the method of worshipping Allah is not exactly HIS messenger's teachings, then that is an imperfect worship. If anyone includes innovated thing in the worship, then it becomes like poison added to the pure milk. For example, for happy Eid occasion there is prescribed duties that Allah wants from HIS servants, and then HE revealed that method to Holy Prophet (PBUH) to teach the believers. If a believer does not follow that divine method, then the rewarding part from Allah will change. Am I so happy on Eid day? Did I ask myself how perfect my fasting was? With happy feeling, I should also check with myself to mend myself to overcome my shortcomings and seek Allah's forgiveness. I cannot take only the happiness for granted. Can I?

Considering, those above facts, I began this essay with the question, "Who gets what in the happiness of Eid?" The answer is, there is some happiness in Eid for everyone, but not necessarily in the same degree. Suppose, two students, one worked harder and score 89% marks to pass the exam. Another worked less and scored 50% marks to pass the exam. Both will be graduating at the same day, but are their results similar? Will one get better chance of getting a job than another? Will not that harder worker likely to prosper more?

Eid day is a graduation day after hard work during the fasting month. If I spend the night sleeping, and you spend part of your night in night prayer sacrificing your sleep, is it fair that you and I get the same rewards in the Paradise? I wish Allah forgives me and gives me a promotion but that is my wish not the hard work. If I wish and work hard then I am doing fair thing from my part. Or another believer did more compassionate work by giving charity or feeding fasting people more than me, should he receive the same reward as me?

Allah knows best but we should think about this issue to uplift our level of good actions. We must not take Eid for granted and must not expect huge rewards without working hard for it. Or on Eid day, I do haram actions in the name of happiness in Eid, and you control yourself from Haram actions to be obedient servant of Allah. Is it fair that I receive same level of reward from Allah as you with sins? Allah may forgive me but will never give you less because HE appreciates your righteous work.

Who gets the best happiness in Eid?

Fasting month is like the cultivation season and Eid day is like the harvesting day. One is related to another. Without proper cultivation the harvesting will be poor, and without harvesting the joy after hard work in cultivation will not be ripened. The main question is, why one works hard for cultivation? The answer is to grow enough for safety, security for a happy living. So, one is the course of action, and another is the objective. We need both good cultivation and good harvesting.

Similarly, fasting is like a course with Allah's University and the objective of it is to learn Taqwa. If we work hard with fasting but we cannot harvest the Taqwa enough, then how can we be fully happy? Will any farmer be happy with poor harvesting after all the hard work? Similarly, is there true happiness in my Eid if I did not learn good righteousness after fasting month? I must not forget about my harvesting, because my level of happiness in Eid depends on the level of my level of righteousness that I achieved from my Fasting course. Do I think that way or do I take Eid happiness for granted without doing my account properly? After doing business whole day, do I celebrate the day with joy without counting my losses or gains? What am I trying to explain here? I am trying to explain that as believers, we must get used to accounting our own deeds. For good deeds we must feel happy, and for bad actions, we must feel sad to repent to Allah, and we must have hope in Allah's Mercy. We must not take Eid happiness for granted.

Again, the grade in happiness is according to the grade of Taqwa a fasting person achieves after hard work in fasting month. I have written about Taqwa in another chapter, and here without writing more about it, I would like to say that Taqwa has many levels, and the rewards will be at different levels as well. Allah made it clear that the objective of fasting is learning Taqwa, and the reward of fasting is according to the degree of Taqwa one has achieved, and the ceremony of that achievement is on Eid day.

Let us be reminded again that Taqwa is strong faith in Allah and in HIS Judgment, and the righteous actions (That avoid sins, corruptions, and crimes). In other words, the true expression of Taqwa is through good actions, and the highest degree of happiness from Eid goes to those who did or does best actions. These best actions have two aspects, and they are:

1. **The rights between the servants and Allah:** This aspect is related to Allah, and a servant worships Allah through fasting, prayers, charity, and supplications and so on. In this, Allah has rights to be worshipped without joining any partner with HIM, and for this worship, the servant has rights on Allah for a reward in Eid. Allah grants rewards on Eid day that makes the servant happy. Part of that worship on Eid morning is saying Takbir to glorify the praises of Allah Almighty, Eid prayer in congregation, listening to the advice from Imam in the light of the Quran and Sunnah, and the dua (Supplication for reward such as Allah's Mercy, blessings, forgiveness, and Paradise). In this part, the degree of rewards is different according to the devotion, humility, focus, and the depth of love for Allah. Therefore, Eid happiness and worshipping Allah are closely connected. One cannot exist without another. If a believer is lacking in worship, that believer will not receive the high degree of spiritual happiness or will not achieve the rewards from Allah as much far-reaching for happiness as another who is a more devoted worshipper to Allah. For example, we learn from Holy Prophet's (PBUH) practice how much worship he used to do especially in the last 10 nights in the Ramadan month. He (PBUH) used to maximise his efforts and encouraged his family to do so. He showed that hard worker has more rights to beg to Allah for higher rewards, and Allah is perfectly fair in

rewarding. Therefore, the point here is, if any Muslim expects high reward in Eid regarding happiness, then he/she must make more effort in worshipping Allah. The summary is the humblest worshipper that gets the highest happiness from Eid.

2. **The rights between the humans:** Allah has prescribed human rights as well for human happiness and peace. When they look after one another properly, treat one another fairly, pay each other's due rights, respect one another's needs, support one another, when necessary, feed one another to combat poverty, love one another for comfort, and act compassionately with one another for happiness, then they follow Allah's prescription in human rights. A big part in Eid happiness is kept by Allah on human rights. That includes compulsory payment of charity (Sadaqatul Fitr) to the poor believers before Eid prayer. With that prescription, Allah has made Eid happiness dependant on giving charity. Holy prophet (PBUH) explained two main reasons for that charity. One reason is to purify the fasting, and another reason is to feed the poor. In both issues Allah made happiness conditional. It means, if the fasting is not purified by charity (Love and happiness sharing), then fasting reward won't bring happiness for its imperfection and, if the charity is not paid to share love, then the reward for happiness will be limited too. If we think deeply, how Allah has interrelated the spiritual happiness with human happiness, then we can comprehend how important human rights is in the Sight of Allah, and how our spiritual happiness depends on our generosity towards human rights. For example, it makes clear that, despite prayers if a Muslim does not give human rights, parent's right, children's right, neighbour's right, poor's rights, and other Muslim's right, then will lose the degree of happiness through rewards from Allah. On the other hand, the one who is most practicing in human rights for the sake of Allah, will get the bigger share of happiness in Eid through Allah's rewards. Allah knows best.

Now, let me repeat the question again, "Who gets the best happiness in Eid?"

1. Is it the believer who prepares best food on Eid day? Or
2. Is it the believer who makes lots of fun on Eid day? Or
3. Is it the believer who wear best clothes on Eid day, etc.?

Hon, Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Eid (happiness) does not come for those who wear new dresses, but the real happiness of Eid comes for those whose hearts are afraid about the Hereafter." Fear of Hereafter makes people sincere, devoted worshippers, with best moral character, and compassionate to Allah's creations. So, Eid happiness has best qualities attached to it, the best conditions attached to it. The more righteous we are the more Eid happiness is for us. We should focus on the deeper necessity around Eid, and that is to worship Allah and giving human rights to please Allah, rather than one day treat. Allah knows the best.

In summary, who gets the best happiness in Eid? To find the right answer, let us look at a Hadith:

Anas (r.a) narrated that Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said:

فإذا كان يوم عيدهم – يعني فطرهم – باهي بهم الملائكة ، فقال يا ملائكتي : عبيدي وإمائي قضوا فريضتي عليهم ، ثم خرجوا يعجبون إلى الدعاء ، وعزتي وجلالي وكرمي وعلوي وإرتفاع مكاني لإجيبينهم فيقول : ارجعوا فقد غفرت لكم ، وبدلت سيئاتكم حسنات ، فقال : فيرجعون مغفوراً لهم

".....Then when come the Eid day, Allah expresses HIS pleasure about HIS servant with angels and ask the angels: O MY angels! Tell ME, what can be the rewards for the hard-working servants? They answer: O our Allah! The proper wage for the person is to give full wages. Then Allah says: O MY angels! MY men and women servants have fulfilled the duties on them properly. Then, today they have come out to Eid prayer making dua to ME. I swear by MY Honour! I will accept their dua (Supplication). Then Allah says to HIS

servants: Go home MY servants! I have forgiven you and I have turned your sins into good deeds. Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said: “At last the servants return home with forgiveness.” [Bayhaki Shu’abul Imaan]

So, who gets the best happiness in Eid according to the above Hadith? The ones who receive Allah’s forgiveness, earns good deeds, and gets rewards from Allah are the ones who receive best happiness in Eid. They receive happiness in this life and in Hereafter, and for it they work hard for the pleasure of Allah. That is the true happiness in Eid, we must pursue our efforts mainly after this. The rest are complementary if they are within Allah’s codes and Holy Prophet’s Sunnah.

Why Eid is the best celebration?

Eid celebration is combined with best things, and those best aspects makes it the best celebration. Usually, celebrations in this world have good and bad in them. But Eid celebration has no bad side in it. If we look at a few aspects of Eid celebration, we can see how perfect and best it is. Some best aspects of it below:

- **The founder is the best:** The founder of Eid celebration is Almighty Allah. When it comes from the Almighty Lord of the universe, then its status goes to the top. Allah is all perfect, and his prescriptions are perfect too. In HIS guidance impurities, or human weakness does not get included. Eid is not innovated by any culture, or organisations, it is a gift from Allah, a guidance on how to celebrate and enjoy from a celebration with meaningful beneficial faith and gestures.
- **The aim is the best:** The aim of Eid is the best as well. It is not only best but noble too. In it there are no sins, no selfishness, and no harms. The aim of it is to glorify the Praises of the Almighty Allah for HIS guidance and guardianship. With HIS guidance, he has showed mankind the path of eternal success and that is to be qualified as the inhabitants of the Paradise. With that noble and best aim, Eid becomes a best celebration as well.
- **The best programs:** The program starts by giving charity that symbolises the human love, compassion, and looking after the vulnerable. It gives the universal message of human unity and human rights. Then the Takbir which is the glorifying the praises of Allah. It is a pure program that gives the message of Allah’s right on humans. Then the next program is getting together to perform 2 rakah Eid prayer. Prayer is the purest form of the program. It cleanses heart, connects the servant with Supreme GOD, raises the spiritual status higher, and brings peace in the heart. It does not harm anyone except benefits. Then it goes further to seek forgiveness from one another, unity in love, sharing and caring, and making efforts to bring smiles on each other’s face. Wonderful programs make Eid the best celebration.
- **Most peaceful celebration:** Everything on Eid day is to practice peaceful co-existence, praying for the peace abode in the next life, and receiving peace in the heart. For Eid prayer there is no shouting, no loud screaming, and no programs that encourages noise. But every participant comes peacefully, sits beside one another peacefully, prays peacefully, and listens to the sermon peacefully and supplicates to Allah peacefully. There is no fear from one another regarding safety, but there is heart to heart connection between the worshippers. They stand shoulder to shoulder, and then end their prayer wishing well for one another saying, “Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah: Peace be upon you.” The whole Eid prayer is in peace that gives message to the humans that all humans need to live in peace, and they need to act peacefully.
- **To achieve the best thing:** Eid celebration achieves unity among Muslims, it removes disunity, nationalistic differences, racism and brings all Muslims from all nationalities together as humble servants of Allah. Eid celebration achieves forgiveness from Allah and takes Muslims one step closer to Paradise.

The examples above shows that Eid celebration contains noble aim and noble outcome through noble actions. That’s why, it is fair to say that Eid is the best celebration.

Inspiration from the Eid

Eid is like a one-day conference. What does a conference do? It sets some agenda for the rest of the year. The participants discuss many things, learn many things, and get inspired with many things and they go out with those inspirations to practice in their lives. Eid is like that special day to inspire the Muslims for the future. It is not a meaningless happy occasion with short lived memory to forget about it by the next day. Two Eid days in a year come to inspire Muslims in certain ways.

Here, I shall give a few examples from Eid ul Fitr about its inspiration for the believers:

- **To keep momentum in Taqwa:** Eidul Fitr is the happy graduation ceremony for learning Taqwa. This Eid ends the Taqwa training from fasting. In the Holy Quran in chapter 2, verse 183 Allah has clearly outlined that purpose of fasting is learning Taqwa. What is the reason to learn Taqwa? Is it to learn and forget like eating and then vomiting it out soon after? Or is it to practice in daily life? Eid is to celebrate the achievement in Taqwa to practice it in life to avoid sins and to do good deeds as we practiced during the fasting. It inspires the believers to hold onto Taqwa until the last breath they have in their lives. In the Holy Quran Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O you who believe! Fear Allah (Have Taqwa for Allah) as HE should be feared, and do not die except in a state of Islam (total submission to Allah).” [Al-Quran 3:102]

- **To continue friendship with the Quran:** Eid ul Fitr arrives after a month-long Quran recitation practice. The whole Ramadan month, believers spend a considerable amount of time either in reciting or in listening to the recitation of the holy Quran with love. Especially, at night, believers spend time on standing to recite and listen to the Quran in Salah. They become bonded with the Quran as friends in love. Eid never inspires Muslims to cut the tie with the Quran and to forget about it. Rather, in Eid celebration, it reminds Muslims that they must recite the Holy Quran in Eid Salah. What does it signal to the Muslims? It signals the inseparable bonds between the believers and the Quran. Without Quran recitation in Eid Salah there is no celebration. So, Eid inspires to continue the bosom friendship with the Holy Quran for the rest of the year and for the rest of the life. Allah did not send the Quran to be forgotten, but to remember through recitations, reading with meaning, learning, and teaching and to do research for the guidance etc. Holy Quran is Allah’s guidance and without continuous relationship with it, how can believers get continuous guidance? Allah says:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

“The month of Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Quran as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs for) guidance and judgment (between right and wrong).” [Al-Quran 2:185]

- **Continue the compassion:** Allah prescribed hunger on the believers during fasting month to feel the pain of hunger and poverty, and to learn to be compassionate towards the poor and needy people. With that Allah gave the message that poor people are part of rich people, and the rich ones are part of the poor ones. Then, Eid happiness comes with a compulsion on the rich ones to practice compassion towards the poor ones. A compulsory charity called Sadaqatul Fitr the well-off Muslims must give to the poor Muslim before the Eid prayer. What does it inspire in Muslims? Does it teach that after Eid day they should forget about compassion and to practice afterwards selfishness, greed, cruelty, and discrimination? No, Eid inspires the opposite. It inspires the ongoing compassion to remove the manmade poverty, to remove the class system in the society, and remove the crimes due to the discriminations. Allah says:

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ

“(The righteous deeds are including) to spend from your (own) wealth, in spite of your love for it, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in Prayer, and Practice regular charity (Zakah)....” [Al-Quran 2:177]

- **Continue practicing the best moral character:** The fasting is a faith-based training program for the best moral character. The root of all crimes, wrongdoing, inhumanity, fighting, killing, corruptions, bad human relationships, and the absence of peace is the immorality. If the immorality is replaced with morality, then humans can practice moral actions through their feelings, thinking, speech, actions, gestures, and behaviours. Fasting trains believers to fear Allah’s punishment to gain self-control to practice best moral actions. Then Eid comes to celebrate it and to inspire to continue it, because best moral character is the key to all kinds of success. Abdullah Ibn Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

إِنَّ مِنْ خَيْرِكُمْ أَحْسَنَكُمْ أَخْلَاقًا

“The best one among you who is best with moral character.” [Muttafaqun A’laih]

- **Never give up Salah:** Eid celebration consists of many worships and the best part of that is Salah. On Eid day, Muslims gather to celebrate their happiness for the spiritual gain, and that is done mainly through 2 rakah Salah with sermon (Spiritual advice). Why Salah is the part of happy celebration? Why a baby after birth is welcomed by Azan (Call before the Salah)? Then why the funeral prayer after a believer’s death is an Islamic practice? It means, Salah is the part and parcel in a believer’s life. Muslims begin their morning with Fajr Salah, and end their day by Isha Salah at night, and then perform Salah in their Eid celebration. It is to inspire believers to make Salah as part of their lives because Allah loves it, and Allah has commanded for it. Allah says:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

“And be steadfast in prayer: Practice regular charity: And bow down your heads with those who bow down (in worship).” [Al-Quran 2:44]

- **Always stay united:** The entire Ramadan month is a training for unity among believers. They follow unity in fasting rules such as to begin fasting in own region by sighting the Moon, and to celebrate the Eid by sighting the Moon again. They practice unity in fasting and in fasting rules. They practice unity in prayers with congregation, and then in the principle of giving charity. When Eid day comes, again, they come together in unity to stand side by side in solidarity to face Allah as Allah’s servants. In that unity in prayer, they lose their other identity such as who is rich and who is poor, or who is the ruler and who is the ruled, and who is from which nationality, language, or ethnicity. This unity is a symbol, a role modelling how Muslims always must stay united for strength and to avoid weakness. Allah wants Muslims to stay united, and for that training HE has provided so many reminders including in Eid celebration to inspire for unity. Allah says:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

“And hold fast, all of you together by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and do not be divided among yourselves (Being Muslims).” [Al-Quran 3:103]

Holy prophet's (PBUH) practice on Eid day:

How did holy prophet (PBUH) celebrate Eid ul Fitr? He (PBUH) is Allah's messenger to be the role model, and we must know what he did, and how he did, or what he did advise or permit for Eid celebration. For our reminder, I shall briefly list down few actions without explanation. For further knowledge, I encourage every reader to study more and ask questions to your nearest scholars.

- No Fasting on Eid day: He (PBUH) said: "There is no fast in two days, in Eid ul Fitr and in Eid ul Adha." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

نهى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم عن صوم يوم الفطر والنحر

- Sadaqatul Fitr to pay before Eid Salah: Abdullah Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with both) said that Holy Prophet (PBUH) has set Sadaqatul Fitr one Saa dates or oat on Muslim slaves and free men and women, young and old, on all of them and asked them to pay before going towards the Eid prayer. [Muttafaqun A'laih]

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَرَضَ زَكَاةَ الْفِطْرِ صَاعًا مِنْ تَمْرٍ، أَوْ صَاعًا مِنْ شَعِيرٍ، عَلَى كُلِّ حُرٍّ أَوْ عَبْدٍ، ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى، مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

- Breakfast with dates: Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) said that Holy Prophet (PBUH) did not go out for Eid ul Fitr until he ate dates, and he used to eat in odd numbers. [Bukhari]

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا يَغْدُو يَوْمَ الْفِطْرِ حَتَّى يَأْكُلَ تَمْرَاتٍ، وَيَأْكُلُهُنَّ وَتَرًا

- Used different pathways: Jaber (May Allah be pleased with him) said, Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to change his ways on Eid day (Going to the Eid prayer in one road and coming back with another road). [Bukhari]

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْعِيدِ خَالَفَ الطَّرِيقَ

- 2 Rakah Eid Salah: Abu Sayeed Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to go out on Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha day, the first thing he used to do was Salah. Then, He used to stand facing the crowd and the crowd used to remain sitting on their lines. He used to advise them (Sermon) and used to direct them (about duties)." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَامَ يَوْمَ الْفِطْرِ فَصَلَّى فَبَدَأَ بِالصَّلَاةِ قَبْلَ الْخُطْبَةِ ثُمَّ خَطَبَ النَّاسَ

He (PBUH) always prayed 2 Rakah Eid Salah without Azan or Iqamah. [Muslim]

خَرَجَ يَوْمَ أَضْحَى أَوْ فِطْرٍ فَصَلَّى رَكْعَتَيْنِ

He (PBUH) prayed 2 Rakah Salah with extra Takbir in first and second Rakah. [According to Hadis in Tirmidi, Ibn Mazah, Daremy and Abu Dawood.]

- Encouraging Muslim women to attend Eid prayer: Umme A'atiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "We were advised to bring out women in menses and women in hijab to two Eid day (For Eid prayers), so they could join (either) in prayer congregation or in Dua; but those in menses to sit bit far aside from congregation." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

عَنْ أُمِّ عَطِيَّةَ، قَالَتْ أَمَرَنَا - تَغْنِي النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - أَنْ نُخْرَجَ فِي الْعِيدَيْنِ الْعَوَاتِقَ وَدَوَاتِ الْخُدُورِ وَأَمَرَ الْحَيَّضَ أَنْ يَعْزِلْنَ مُصَلَّى الْمُسْلِمِينَ

- Permission for innocent fun: Ayesha (may Allah be pleased with her) said that Holy Messenger of Allah said: "Leave them (Two little girls who were singing innocent songs) Abu Bakr! Every nation has a happy day, and it is (Eid day) our happy day." [Muttafaqun A'laih]

أَنَّ أَبَا بَكْرٍ، دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا وَعِنْدَهَا جَارِيَتَانِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَنَى تُغْنِيَانِ وَتَضْرِبَانِ وَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مُسَجًى بِنُوبِهِ فَأَنْتَهَرَهُمَا أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَكَتَفَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْهُ وَقَالَ دَعُهُمَا يَا أَبَا بَكْرٍ فَإِنَّهَا أَيَّامُ عِيدٍ.

- Praying Eid salah outside: Allah's Messenger (PBUH) usually prayed Eid prayer in congregation outside in wider space in sunny day. Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, one day it was raining there. Then Holy Prophet (PBUH) prayed Eid salah with them in the Masjid. [Abu Dawood. Ibn Mazah]

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّهُ أَصَابَهُمْ مَطَرٌ فِي يَوْمِ عِيدٍ فَصَلَّى بِهِمُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ صَلَاةَ الْعِيدِ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ

- Advised to make Eid ul Fitr prayer bit longer: Abul Huwairis (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, Holy Prophet (PBUH) wrote to Amr Ibn Hazm in Nazran, "Make Eid ul Adha Salah short, and Eid ul Fitr prayer bit longer, and give people advice." [Shaafi'ee]

Conclusion:

This book, "The philosophy of fasting in the month of Ramadan" is mainly to deepen my own understanding about Allah's Divine prescription. When I began writing, I quickly realized how little I know about the Wisdom behind Allah's prescription for fasting in Ramadan Month. Then, I made up my mind and decided, "I shall continue my learning until my death, Insha Allah." May Allah grant me the ability to fulfil my wish. May Allah forgive my shortcomings in my writing, and grant me pure knowledge, Ameen!

But I have hope on knowledgeable Muslims. I request them to use their knowledge to take the philosophy of fasting message further for the benefits of mankind. I believe! If any person thinks deeply about Allah's message, can't resist from accepting it, practicing it dearly, and from passing it to others. May Allah accept this little effort from me for Da'wa! Ameen!

For this book, so many brothers and sisters have contributed their time and talents for the pleasure of Allah. They have volunteered to it for receiving rewards from Allah. May Allah grant them rewards! Ameen! For those, who will be a part in publishing, in reading, in passing to others, and in developing it further, for them also my prayer to Allah to accept their efforts, Ameen!