

Ramada

and the Shared Language that Sustains Ummah

By Xavier Villar

We are again in the blessed month of Ramadan, the month of Allah, the month of the Holy Quran, the month of prayer and piety. This month is significant for many reasons for Muslims.

This month marks the revelation of the Holy Quran to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The birth of Imam Hassan (AS), the second Shiite Imam, also falls in this month so does the assassination of Imam Ali, the first Shiite Imam and the leader of the believers.

This holy month, along with the significance of the Quran as the primary text of Islam, shapes what can be called the Muslim subject.

When discussing the holy book, it is important to recognize it as the foundational text of Islam that establishes the basis for an autonomous identity

built around the Islamic language. For Muslims, the reading and comprehension of the Quran hold a unique meaning that cannot be shared by non-Muslims, be it politicians, columnists, polemicists masquerading as academics, or even serious academics.

This does not mean that non-Muslims cannot approach the Quran or the month of Ramadan. The Quran is a complex text even for those who are not familiar with its structure.

For instance, reading the Quran with a mindset accustomed to a linear-chronological reading poses many difficulties. Yet, it is precisely these difficulties that make the text non-linear and, thus, a form of liberation in itself.

The organization of the Quran is in itself a form of liberation. The sudden shift from one story,

theme, or concept to another without any indication may seem strange, but it is precisely this lack of linearity that turns it into a place of liberation.

Consciously, it rejects compartmentalization, demanding to be considered holistically on its terms.

It is particularly relevant to note that the Quran opposes the compartmentalization imposed by Western modernity. This text cannot be tamed by any kind of power, nor can it be colonized, just like Islam itself.

According to the analysis of Muhammad Hussain Tabatabai in his widely-popular commentary on the Quran, known as Al-Mizan, and particularly in his commentary on Surah al-Ikhlās, the Quran's message is one of unity and rejection of any notion of hierarchy or

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superiority based on race or ethnicity. Surah al-Ikhlās states: “Say: He is Allah, the One and Only. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him.” This statement constitutes a critique against all forms of supremacy, particularly ontological difference, or racism in this case. Only God is ontologically self-sufficient. Any attempt to position oneself above others on racial grounds would fall into the Quranic category of taghut.

The term taghut comes from the Arabic verb tagha, which means to dominate or exceed limits. The Quran repeatedly warns against those who “exceed the limits of justice through the domination and oppression of others.”

The category of taghut can be understood as one that creates false gods. This category is responsible for creating the false idol of white supremacy, which implies a shift from a theocentric cosmology to an anthropocentric one where the white man replaces the divine. In addition to the revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad, the month of Ramadan also involves reflecting on the relationship between the sacred text and the Ummah, the Islamic community at large.

It also highlights the creation of a common language that enables Muslims to interact and debate with each other. Regarding the Ummah, it must be understood that there is no possibility of being a Muslim as an individual, as some liberals have falsely claimed. It is only possible to be Muslim through a connection to the Ummah.

We can clearly state that the Quran is a political and sacred text that continues to inspire Muslims in their struggle against the oppression of various forms and manifestations. It serves as a horizon towards which the Ummah, or Muslim community, tirelessly strives.

In the Shia context, the relationship between the Quran and the Muslim Ummah is mediated by the presence of the Imams and the Wali.

Professor Salman Sayyid explains that the Quran, at its fullest expression, offers an existential challenge to its readers, forcing them to reflect on the direction of their lives and how they can aspire to be rightly guided.

At this level, the glory of the entire Quran comes into play. All of its verses produce an effect on believers that goes beyond the linearity of its writing, the content of its stories, or the authority of its commandments.

The Quran rises above these moments and, in this way, provides a means of access to the transcendent.

The month of Ramadan, in which the revelation of the Quran is celebrated, serves to remind the Ummah of the common language created by the Quran that sustains the community in political terms.

This holy month is not just about fasting, but also about remembering that thanks to this divine text it is possible to form a political community that pursues justice in all its manifestations.

This month highlights the significance of shared Muslim identity and warns against divisions that only benefit those who are labeled as taghut.

