

Ramadan: Striving for Moral Excellence

The collective happiness of society rests on human behavior alone. Yet, despite amazing progress in just about every field of human endeavor, this quintessence of humanity remains completely dark. Man is mindlessly focused on selfish worldly aspirations at the expense of society's welfare. Escalating bloody violence is out of hand, threatening every community in modern times. Even schools and places of worship are not off limit. Devastation is allowed to continue and deepen as those in power turn a blind eye in self-interest to this madness.

Islam views all citizens of the world as members of one family. Discrimination, based on race, color, religion, and the like, is an enemy of humanity. The natural differences are meant for enrichment, not for warfare. Our origin is one, our natural distinctions are for collaboration, and moral excellence is the only criterion for judging people.

Thus, a peaceful co-existence with human dignity and respect for life is a moral imperative. Muslims must advance this imperative by conducting themselves responsibly at all times. The process that leads to the realization of this aspiration is built on a number of principles that must be adhered to for creating an environment of mutual understanding. Among them is the recognition of others' right to practice any religion and adopt any lifestyle. Islam respects religious and ethnic freedom for all.

Even in an ethnically and religiously diverse society, common grounds must be explored for working together in a spirit of cooperation. Shared concerns require collaborative effort in seeking practical solutions. Inter-personnel relations and basic human decency are essential in Islam for a global order. Whether as a majority or minority, Muslims are mandated to remain engaged in promoting peace, security, and the well-being of society. Such a character requires rational orientation, self-control, and trust in Allah; and can be cultivated only through intense discipline and training.

During the month of Ramadan, while abstaining from eating and drinking during daylight hours, Muslims engage in spiritually stimulating activities.

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

O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become Muttaqui (Pious, God conscious,)

The goal is to attain moral excellence through self-reflection, re-orientation, and reconnecting with the Creator. This discipline is essential to re-ignite a sense of responsibility in daily conduct to be observed in all social deliberations. Liberation from ill habits and regaining self-control is the most tangible impact of fasting on human potential in redirecting personal behavior.

Prophet's Ramadan Sermon

The following is an extract of the sermon delivered by the Prophet

Muhammad (ﷺ) on the last Friday of Sha'ban in welcoming the month of Ramadan:

O People!
Indeed ahead of you is the blessed month of Allah.
A month of blessing, mercy, and forgiveness;
a month that with Allah is the best of months.
Its days the best of days;

Its nights the best of nights;

And its hours are the best of hours.

It is the month that invites you to be the guests of Allah;
and invites you to be one of those near Him.

Each breath you take glorifies him;
your sleep is worship;
your deeds are accepted;

and your supplications are answered.

So ask Allah, your Lord, to give you a sound body and an enlightened heart.

Guard your tongues;

close your eyes to that which is not permissible for your sight;

close your ears to that which is forbidden to hear.

O People! One who gives Iftar to a fasting person during this month will be like one who has freed someone and his past sins will be forgiven.

One who has good morals (Akhlaq) during this month will be able to pass the 'Siraat'*...on the day that feet will slip...

Whoever performs an obligatory prayer Allah will reward him with seventy prayers [worth] in this month.

He who recites one verse of the holy Qur'an will be given the reward of reciting the whole Qur'an during other months.

* A bridge across Hell, thinner than hair and sharper than a razor.