

SPOTLIGHT

The spirituality of a sacred month

With Ramadan finally here, the entire atmosphere is filled with a profound sense of spirituality, one that inspires people, and instills virtue. However, this spirituality is often felt and interpreted by different people in various ways, and Star Lifestyle decided to explore just that.

"I feel Ramadan is all about sacrificing, empathising and most importantly, gaining a greater consciousness and awareness of God. It does make me more spiritual. Maybe it's because of all the Islamic lectures people tune in to around you; maybe it's because of watching people flock to the masjid every time, or maybe it's just my upbringing that taught me how special and full of opportunity this month is," said Tahsin Mostafa, 22.

"Growing up, I've always been a practicing Muslim with a strong faith. However, this year, I felt my faith fading. At one point, I stopped praying and stopped believing in things that I once strongly believed in.

"That is until two months ago when I reminded myself that Ramadan is coming up and that it's the perfect time to bring back the old me. Ramadan has always been a great month for me. Also, I'm always excited for Eid. Altogether, Ramadan also fills a sense of festiveness in me," said Tashfia Zaman, 21.

"Ramadan brings families together. Usually everyone is too busy to make time for each other, but during Ramadan, they all meet for sehri and iftar. Watching my family unite like that is the biggest miracle of Ramadan," said Mrs Ahmed, 60.

"I think Ramadan is like seeing a motivational video, or getting immersing in a deep talk regarding religion from your friend, but on a larger and longer scale. Just like all the videos, initially you feel really inspired. But with time, it kind of fades for most of us. Some people are able to stick to the good practices months after Ramadan, and I think that is really laudable," said Fahim Ishrak, 18.

"Ramadan is the holy month to spiritually cleanse myself. Being a practicing Muslim, I know that the rewards for fasting are immense. So, I'm more motivated to do good deeds, such as giving to the poor, praying more, and reading the Quran more."

"As a result, I'm more at peace mentally. Moreover, it's a time to fix your conscience and take responsibility for your wrongdoings, and not blame others. With Eid to look forward to, I just love the whole essence of the month," said Nazmun Nahar Munmun, 45.

By Adiba Mahbub Proma

The spirit of adhan

The Bosphorus was shimmering in all its glory under the ripe full moon. On the other side, the monumental Blue Mosque stood with immense grandeur. Sitting in that rooftop restaurant at Istanbul that unforgettable night, I was taking in the overpowering beauty around me. And just when I thought it was overwhelming already, the mosque came alive with adhan:

"Allah is the Greatest... I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah... I bear witness that Muhammad is the

to me because I had heard one after many months.

When I was in Bangladesh, I have to admit, I often unknowingly took adhan for granted. It was only after I moved to a city where adhan was not given through loud speakers that I realised how much it meant to me.

But the Istanbul vacation refreshed my soul by hearing the adhan again. The muezzin continued:

"Come to Prayer... Come to success..."

An adhan is an invitation to

prayer, he gives us an additional nudge:

"Prayer is better than sleep..."

This part reminds me of my childhood days in Chattogram. During Ramadan, when the meal of sehri had been done with, I used to stand in the open terrace facing the hills where I played in daytime.

With the silence of the last hour of darkness and in the bitter cold, the adhans given from the several mosques in the neighbourhood and even those relatively far off, used to collectively create a mystical symphony - which moved me to remain awake for some time and perform the Fajr prayer.

Indeed, adhan is moving. Perhaps especially when one listens to it intently, it does not fail to strike a spiritual chord.

After all, many of us had our first experience of adhan very early in life — one we do not have any conscious memory of — owing to the custom of reciting adhan to a new-born baby.

Our relationship with adhan, therefore, may start very early.

I carried that relationship in my heart — sometimes knowingly and passionately, sometimes unknowingly and lightly — throughout the years and in my travels.

In Istanbul, for example, where I relished in the immense beauty of the Bosphorus that Allah had endowed it with that night, whilst listening to the mystical sound of adhan coming from Blue Mosque:

"Allah is the Greatest... There is none worthy of worship except Allah."

The adhan was over; an invitation made. I headed towards the mosque.

It was time for Isha prayer.

By Zane
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed/LS
Archive



Messenger of Allah."

The beautiful melody reinforced the beauty and ambience around me, stirring up my emotions further.

The adhan, or the call to prayer, is a beautiful reminder a Muslim may hear five times a day. It is a reassertion of my God, of His last messenger, and my duty (of salah) as a follower.

I shut my eyes and listened to the magnificent melody and the soothing words it carried.

The tune and the repetition of many of the verses in an adhan perhaps make it even more magnificent.

That night in Istanbul, the adhan probably sounded so special

prayer; a practical tool.

Sahih al-Bukhari's Book of Adhan narrates its origin: "When the Muslims arrived at Medina, they used to assemble for the prayer, and used to guess the time for it. During those days, the practice of Adhan for the prayers had not been introduced yet. Once they discussed this problem regarding the call for prayer."

The use of fire and the bell were considered, the book says. But instead, we eventually have been gifted with this soulful set of words.

The muezzin, through his invitation, speaks to us. He not only announces the oneness of God, but also urges us to pray to Him.

For Fajr, the early morning

Ramadan Kareem

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