

Eating shouldn't feel taboo during Ramadan

NAMREEN SHAIYAZ

Of the twelve months in the Arabic or Hijri calendar, Ramadan is the most important and religious month for Muslims all around the globe. Unless someone is ill, elderly, or in the middle of travelling, they are obligated to fast from dawn to dusk for the entire month.

For most people, this is where the understanding of Ramadan ends. They only assume that abstinence from any food or drink is the entire point of it, and do not look at the deeper reasoning behind why this is observed. Due to this, those who do not fast attempt to ease the lives of those who do, and this leads to a slew of issues.

As fasting is the only aspect that they focus on, they are worried about possibly offending the people who fast. Generally, they will try to avoid bringing up the topic of eating in their vicinity, or even feel pressured to censor themselves around fasters as they may feel guilty for being well fed while being around someone who is working just as hard but on less food and energy. This censoring, however, disregards one of the reasons why this fasting is done, and that is to purify the body and soul.

The act of fasting itself is known to have various health benefits, and is good



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for one's health. However, fasting in Ramadan is also a spiritual act. It teaches self-preservation, because even if they do see food in front of them, it is their responsibility to not be tempted by it, not anyone else's. This goes not just for food, but for any kind of action that is discouraged during fasting. Having someone else try to accommodate them is not only

demeaning, but also negating the whole point of why they are fasting.

Another thing to note is that fasters cannot avoid being around food completely even if they tried. The fasting duration is long as it lasts for around roughly about half the day, so they need a nutritious meal to break their fast with. Rather than buying it from elsewhere,

most people prefer preparing their own food to ensure that it is as healthy as possible.

Additionally, fasting forces them to break out of their usual eating habits, and so it is quite common for them to try out different meals that will suit their current situation better. This leads them to look up various recipes for ideas. In case anyone wishes to order food from elsewhere, chances are that the people making their food and delivering it are also fasting. Therefore, there is no point in attempting to be hush-hush about food around them, as they will need to be in its vicinity, and may even have to seek it on their own.

It is completely natural for someone who is not fasting to feel bad to sympathise for anyone who is as it is a natural human instinct to do so. But as mentioned, a fast during Ramadan is not the same as a regular fast. The best thing a non-faster can do is to remember that Ramadan is about all submitting to a higher power and forging a sense of empathy for the less fortunate, and they themselves may try to follow these ideals if they wish to.

Namreen listens to the five songs on loop. Send some song recommendations at namreen.shaiyaz@gmail.com

My frayed relationship with my hometown

SHIMIN MUSHSHARAT

All of my good memories of my hometown exclude people. When I think of my school, I think of the neem tree with white flowers, the spread of the krishnachura that painted half the schoolyard red from time to time.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

I remember the wintry mornings when I walked to school alone, a few minutes of calm before the madness of classes and gossip ensued. If I must recall something good about my home, it was the time when we left home for the holidays.

School for me was bitter. Kids can be cruel. You are fortunate if you have reason to disagree. I was incessantly bullied for being one of the bigger girls. The words I heard were subtle, but impossible to forget.

Our teachers taught us that we were competitors first, friends second. We learned to tear each other apart with smiles on our faces. Our mothers supplied us with the unkind words to say.

I did not realise the concepts of authentically building friends or clapping for a co-worker. Each time someone did well, I would be reminded of how I could not achieve what they did. We were fed hatred and prejudice with each meal we were given.

Our homes were scarcely any better than school. They were worse most times, made of fear and restrictions. To this day, I feel suffocated when I go home. The biggest reason is that the moment I set foot in my hometown, I have to wear clothes that don't even look like my clothes. I was denied the opportunity to experiment with fashion growing up. The reasons I was given were religion and modesty.

My younger brother was allowed to go anywhere without telling anyone. On the contrary, I was never allowed to go out alone except for school or coaching classes. The reason being the classic "What will people say?"

These people were aunts, relatives we rarely met, and our parents' colleagues. Looking back, it is comical how our interests were disregarded for their sake. This lack of support still makes no sense to me. Home should have been a safe place as a child. But it was where my privacy was neglected the most.

It has been some time since I moved out of this home. Now that I can look past the pain, I understand some things better. This makes me even more relieved that I got out of that toxic environment. In the present day, the saving grace of my hometown for me is my cat.

The idea of home is often glorified, especially by the people who have good memories to think of. But it's not sweet or nostalgic for everyone. It is quite the opposite.

We frequently hear "There's no place like home" being tossed around. True, no place resembles home. For some, their memories of home causes more nightmares than homesickness.

Shimin reads everything she can find, talks to cats, and writes a lot of letters. Send her a book at shim.mush@gmail.com