

## Ramadan

Anjum Mir



*There is an unseen sweetness in the stomach's emptiness. We are lutes. When the sound box is filled, no music can come forth. When the brain and the belly burn from fasting, every moment a new song rises out of the fire. The mists clear, and a new vitality makes you spring up the steps before you . . .*

– Rumi

This week marks the beginning of Ramadan in the Islamic world. In a year where the pandemic has necessitated social distancing, more than ever, it will be a celebration of reconnection—to family, to community, to humanity, to spirituality, and to self.

For 30 days, Muslims the world over, will observe daily fasting from the break of dawn until sunset. They will abstain not just from indulgences, but from the physical necessities of food and drink, including water. During the day, they will reach the point of hunger and thirst which they feel they may not be able to overcome, but they do, knowing that they have a good meal to look forward to and understanding that many in the world will not find relief at the end of the day. For one month, they will strive with Michaelic consciousness to rise to their highest selves. They will look inward, self-reflectively, to mediate their anger and impatience, refine the use of their language, improve the use of their time, and balance their temperaments. They will look outward to cultivate the quality of their relationships, give charity and service where it is needed, improve the environments that they occupy, and to nurture their empathy for the other. Ramadan is a festival of thinking, feeling and willing. During this brief window in the year, they will be renewed—consciously changing and refining physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual habits that throughout the year go lax. Learning in the process the true meaning of self-discipline, that change may be inspired outwardly, but ultimately comes from initiative borne of self-reflection and self-striving.

Each night of Ramadan is a festival. Homes are lit up with lights and lanterns that signify the warmth and illumination of the month. People go about business as usual in the day and spend their afternoon preparing a nurturing meal for their families. Each culture has its own rich culinary traditions for pre-



practicing with quarter days and half days, and everyone comes together in the evening, exhausted, stomachs empty, yet hearts and spirits filled with gratitude. In healthy times, families and communities gather at sunset to break their fast together with dates and water followed by a delicious meal, prayer, and a night devoted to reflection and spiritual connection. It is a celebration of the day's accomplishments and the blessing of health and sustenance.

Ramadan is an opportunity for individuals to reorient with a perspective of gratitude while renewing their physical health, their emotional being, and their relationships with others, themselves, and the Divine. This year, Ramadan is also a chance to close the social distance that has defined humanity this year--to break out of the self-focused isolation of the pandemic and extend our hands out to other human beings to share in their struggles and to celebrate the blessings that we may not acknowledge with abundance during the year.

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*For over 20 years, Anjum Mir has been supporting parents in establishing healthy home rhythms. Her teaching experience has taken her from public and private school to Waldorf Education, which she discovered while looking for an educational system that honored the development and spiritual well-being of her first child.*

*Currently, Anjum, a mother of four, works in pedagogical administration and teaches parent-child classes at the Westside Waldorf school in Los Angeles, offers prenatal, infant and toddler focused workshops and seminars and holds parenting classes for parents of children through middle school. She is on the board of WECAN and several other education-focused organizations and is involved in teacher education and training.*