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Ramadan: more than just fasting

By Shama Husain

Another Ramadan has ended and we have celebrated Eid ul Fitr. Muslims are blessed to have such a special month in their calendar. This is the month in which the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is a joyful time of family togetherness. We wake up while it is still dark to eat, pray, and make our 'intention' of fasting for the Almighty. We fast from before dawn till sunset.

Non-Muslim friends wonder how much of a hardship fasting is. In fact, to go without food or drink is only one aspect, and it is no sackcloth and ashes routine.

Looking inwards

What is important is this is a month of extra prayers and asking Allah's forgiveness. We cannot expect Allah's forgiveness if we are not aware of the pain and sorrow we may have caused others. Therefore this is a time of great introspection and of re-assessing our lives.

Our fasting teaches us self-awareness, patience and humility. It proves we have strength to adapt to a different routine (easier said than done; I certainly missed the caffeine input).

Looking outwards

We are more aware of the hardship others suffer when deprived of essential commodities and are eager to respond to their needs. Therefore during Ramadan Muslims are expected to give *zakat*, the money we give annually to 'purify' what we earn in the year.

It is wonderful to sit around the table waiting to break our fast. Our first morsel is usually a date, an instant pick-me-up with its sugar content. And of course I loved my caffeine-laden tea that followed.

Thirty days of fasting are followed by the celebration of Eid ul Fitr. It is wonderful to see all age groups and many different nationalities in their finery greeting each other at the mosque and praying together. It is a day of thanksgiving, gifts for children and visiting elders amongst family and friends, feasting and festivity.

Another Eid follows in two months and ten days time. But that, my friends, is another landmark in the Muslim calendar. Watch this space.

Behind the barricades

A politically passionate book taking readers behind the scenes of the Spanish Civil War is to be republished this month. *Behind the Spanish Barricades* is eminent journalist John Langdon-Davies's eyewitness account of the fighting that swept through Spain in 1936.

His experiences led the writer to establish the Plan International charity to provide displaced and orphaned children with food and shelter. Celebrating its 70th birthday this year, Plan now works with more than a million children in 49 developing countries.

Mr Langdon-Davies's daughter Debbie, who lives in Southern Road, off Fortis Green, said there had been a real groundswell of interest in her late father's work recently.

She said: "Many people have said that he should still be in print, and now one of his most politically passionate books will be read again by a new generation who will find that his observations are still relevant today."

Part of the proceeds from sales of the book will go to Plan International. It is available in hardback for £15.99.

The Archer needs a volunteer distributor for Kitchener Road & Beresford Road

Distribution takes place once a month. A typical round takes 30-45 mins to deliver. For details contact 020 8883 0433 or distribution@the-archer.co.uk



Rachel Kolsky on the Great Wall of China. Photograph by Brian Merison

N2 message spans the world

They were a long way from home but that didn't stop two sets of travellers proudly wearing their 'I ♥ N2' shirts.



The photo is of Mike, Rosie and Zack Solomon in Capetown Botanical Gardens. Photo by Hilary Solomon.

The Solomon family, of Bedford Road, wore theirs on holiday in South Africa. Mike, Rosie, Zack and Hilary got some funny looks as they drove along the main coastal highway between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth. The road is called the 'N2'.

While China is soon to bask in all the publicity surrounding the 2008 Olympics at least some of China is now aware that N2 itself has plenty to offer after Rachel Kolsky wore hers on a trip to the Great Wall, near Beijing.

Rachel was on a group trip, which included another East Finchley resident, Brian Merison, on a journey from Beijing to Tibet.

The N2 shirts and other items are part of the campaign to promote East Finchley, its shops, restaurants and arts and leisure facilities.

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