

CELEBRATION TIME

RAMADHAN DEEPAVALI

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Two very special periods in the lives of the Muslim and Hindu communities are to be celebrated during the months of September and October. On 24 September, with the sighting of the new moon, the month of Saum (fasting) for the Muslim community commences, traditionally known as Ramadhan. And on 21 October the special festival of lights - Deepavali or Dipavali - celebrated by Hindus the world over follows - a festival that can last for several days. (See display on page 40.)

In a country with so many diverse cultures such as ours, it is only fitting that we all endeavour to learn more about each other's religions. Librarians are in the perfect position to create a deeper understanding and knowledge among library users - which in turn can only but ensure a more harmonious spirit among all. This information could also be used for school assignments.

RAMADHAN month of fasting

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Ramadhan is the ninth month of the Islamic Calendar. With the sighting of the new moon the month of Saum (fasting) must be observed. In Arabic the word Sieyaam (fast) means abstinence from indulgence, meaning to intend abstinence from food, drink, smoke and sexual relations from true dawn till sunset. Fasting has three rules:

- ☛ the Nieyah (intention) to fast that day
- ☛ nobody else can do it for you
- ☛ say the Nieyah (intention) before sunrise of the day.

Allah (God Almighty) says in the Holy Qur'ân, 'O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed on those before you, in order that you may attain righteousness.' (Sûrah 2 Al Baqarah Verse 183.)

The month of Ramadhan in which the Qur'ân was revealed, is a guide for mankind and gives the criteria for right and wrong. The person observing the fast should avoid food, drink, smoke and sexual desires with his wife and should not behave foolishly and impudently. Fasting also teaches one self-discipline, self-control and patience.

Fasting enables one to become humble and fearful of Allah's (God Almighty) punishment. It is also the best way to purify and correct one's inner self, as it not only cleanses the body, but also gives the organs a rest. During the fast one experiences a higher level of

consciousness and humility and a noble way of thinking increase. Fasting is an act of love for Allah (God Almighty) and shows that the followers of Islam are truly the servants as they obey his injunctions by caring for the poor and the needy. Fasting thus teaches the rich to become considerate, kind, gentle and merciful; brings people closer to their Creator and instils in their hearts respect for the favours of the Creator. Fasting builds one's character as one experiences the same pains as the poverty-stricken communities.

For those who fast the month of Ramadhan and follow it up with the six days of Shawaal, is as though he/she had observed the fast for the whole year.

The wonder of the month of Ramadhan is that it is being observed by all Muslims around the world.

By fasting one becomes aware that one's gaze must be lowered, to exclude all that is Garaam (forbidden). One must also refrain from idle talk, or listen to Fietnah (gossip). Fasting implies not only abstaining from food, drink, smoke or sexual activities, but also from lies, falsehood and evil talk. The observer of the fast is in the act of Ibaadah (worship) even if he/she is asleep. Those who fast will experience two types of happiness: firstly when they break the fast, they will be happy that they observed the fast, and secondly they will experience happiness on the day of judgment to meet the Creator, as only Allah (God Almighty) knows what the reward would be.

When one is ill or travelling, the same number of days which one did not observe the fast, has to be made up on other days, but need not be on consecutive days. Allah (God Almighty) does not intend to create hardship as one should magnify Allah (God

Almighty) for having guided one so that one may be grateful to Him.

If somebody argues with a fasting person, he should say to him, twice, 'I am fasting.' The Prophet Mogamat (peace be upon him) says, when one fasts with lemaan (character) then one submits oneself to Allah (God Almighty). The rewards of a fasting person of good deeds are multiplied ten times. (Sahih Al-Bukhâri, Hadith No 118, Vol 3.)

Types of fasting

Sieyaa-moel Mafrôod (Compulsory fasting)

Observing compulsory fast shows that one submits to the demands of Allah (God Almighty). For example, Month of Ramadhaan, Kaffaarôh - atonement for sin; Nather - oath that was made.

Sieyaa-moel Masnoon (Voluntary fasting)

There are great rewards in observing voluntary fast. For example, 10th Muharram, Arafat (not people on Arafat, but families at home to fast on that day), Mondays and Thursdays.

Sieyaa-moel Mugarram (Forbidden fasting)

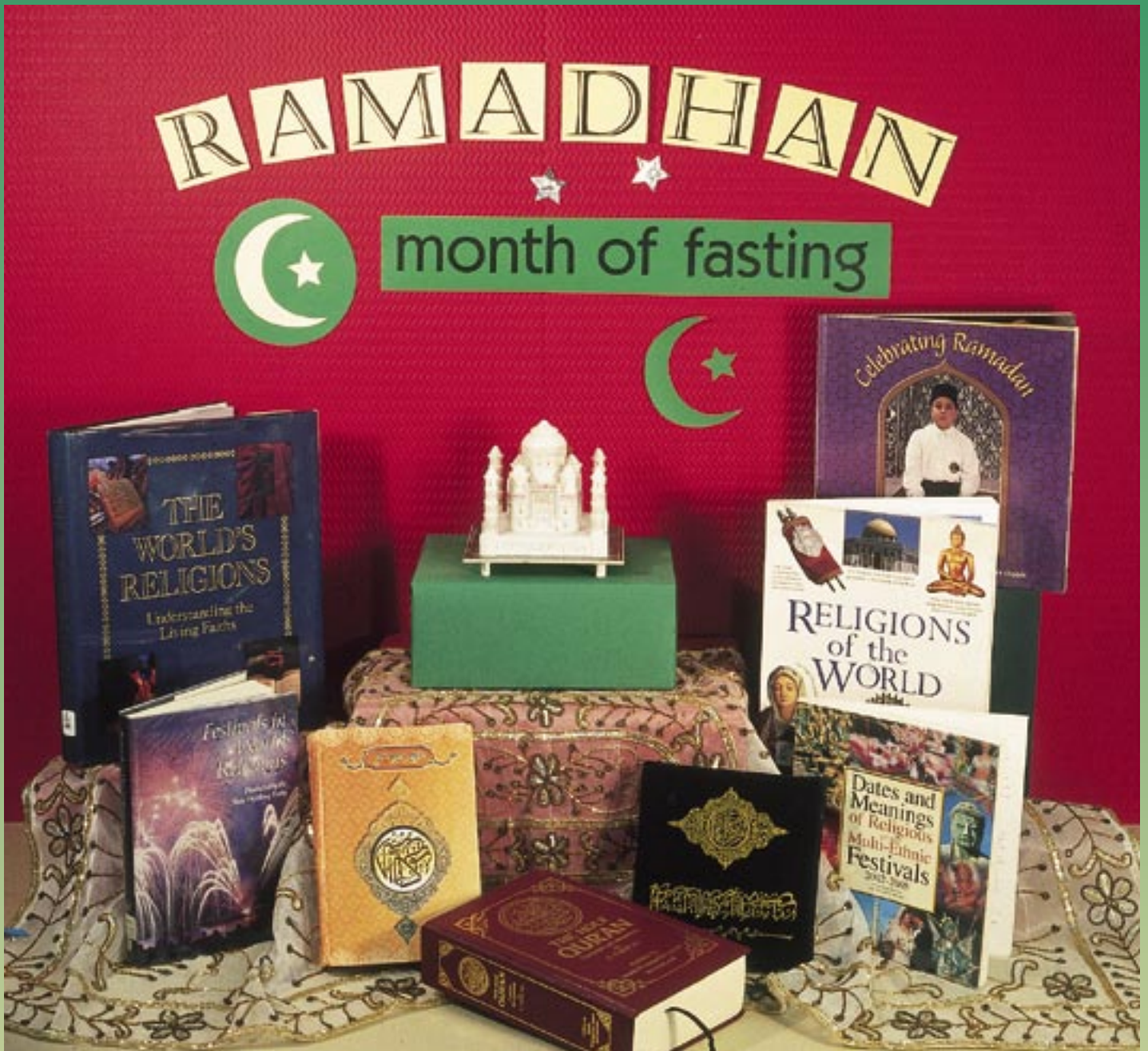
It is a sin to observe fast on these days. For example, Days of Eid (Celebrations of end of Ramadhaan and end of Pilgrimage) and Days of Tasreeq (for the people who perform the lasts day's Pilgrimage).

Sieyaa-moel Makroeh (Will be rewarded, but not punished if one doesn't)

Should one wish to fast on these days, one will be rewarded, but will not be punished if one doesn't. For example, fasting only on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Traditionally the month of Ramadhaan is a very exciting month for Muslims. At sunset when Muslims are allowed to break the fast at the call for prayer, it is a very spiritual moment. Nutritional foods and drinks are prepared as families all gather to spend time together while breaking fast. Afterwards, young and old, male and female gather at the different Mosques and religious institutions to observe prayers and recite the Holy Qur'ân. The intentions are to complete the reciting of the Holy Qur'ân as many times as possible within the Ramadhan period. Thereafter the Nieyah (intentions to fast that day) is mentioned by the lemaan (leader) and the congregation follow.

This is the lifestyle of all Muslims for a period of 29 to 30 continuous days.



DISPLAY GUIDELINES

We were fortunate to have had help from Najawa (author of the article on Ramadhaan on the facing page) with the selection of items for this display. She suggested a range of colours which are traditional for this festival.

We have used a deep red background which presents a good contrast for the cream background of the lettering plus the green and cream logo. Note the echo of the moon and star in green which are in fact the pieces cut from the green circle of the logo, which had the cream colour placed at the back. Extra stars were cut from tin foil to add a sparkle.

The Ramadhaan lettering must be cut to the same depth, however the width can vary due to some letters being wider than others. Note that the letters are placed in a semi circle to match the logo circle.

As a focal point we used a lovely white miniature mosque ornament supplied by Najawa, and placed it on a box covered in dark green paper to create more contrast. It is also customary for beautifully-decorated fabrics in gold, bronze and silver threads and sequins to be used at this time on tables. We have placed this over the large red central box and draped it amongst relevant books with a Qur'an in the centre front.

See templates and Deepavali display and article overleaf.