

Eid finalizes month of fasting, contemplation

BY BETH FOCHT
The Battalion

For a month, millions of Muslims across the world, from all different backgrounds and countries have been refraining from eating and drinking. However, today marks the end of the month of fasting, Ramadan, and the beginning of Eid, a celebration much like the joyous atmosphere that surrounds Christmas.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, which began on December 19, 1998. During this month, Muslims fast, which is refraining from eating, drinking and sexual relations from sunrise to sunset. This is a time for Muslims to concentrate on faith and contemplation.

Noareen Islam, a sophomore civil engineering major, said during Ramadan, Muslims take the time away from the regularities of life to concentrate on God and his gifts to mankind.

"We fast as a constant reminder of the mercies of God," Islam said. "God is always on your mind because we cannot even have a drink of water during the day. Ramadan is also a reminder of how many things we can take for granted in our everyday lives."

Fasting during this month brings the awareness of the suffering of others and allows Muslims to explore the depths of kindness, righteousness and moral excellency in themselves.

Hisham Yousef, president of the Islamic Community of Bryan-College Station, said fasting is also abstaining from indecent acts.

"Along with the fasting of food and drink, there is to be no lying, cheating and talking bad about others," he said. "This fasting is so Muslims are able to gain control of themselves and so they are able to carry on the duties as a good and righteous person."

At sunset, the fast is broken with a prayer and a meal called iftar, following the example of Prophet Muhammad. Later in the evening, Muslims gather together to offer Taraweeh (optional) prayers and recite the Holy Qur'an in an attempt to finish it by the end

of the month of Ramadan.

Islam said it has become a custom for her family to join many other families at the Mosque for iftar, the breaking of the fast.

"We all have dinner together, and then every one prays together," she said. "It is very cool to see so many different types and races of people coming together to pray to God."

The end of the month is marked with a three-day celebration called Eid. Eid is known as the Festival of Fast-Breaking.

The main festivities occurring on the first day of Eid begin in the morning with a prayer, a short sermon, eating foods and visiting with friends and families.

Yousef said the reason for Eid is to celebrate the end of the month of fasting.

"Everyone is very happy during Eid," he said. "They are happy to complete the fasting, and they are happy to have completed the objectives of this fasting."

Eid is celebrated differently in other areas of the world. While one family in the United States celebrates one way, Muslims in another country do it differently.

Islam said in Bangladesh, where her family is from, the celebration is different because Bangladesh is an Islamic country and all the people are participating and celebrating Ramadan and Eid.

"The best comparison is to Christmas," she said. "Families get up early, before dawn, begin cooking and later you visit your neighbors and just celebrate. It is wonderful to have had the opportunity to celebrate Ramadan in a country where everyone is practicing the same religion and is enjoying the same holiday and experiencing the same emotions."

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