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Ramadan is about moral enlightenment

Abdul Kadir Riyadi, Surabaya | Opinion | Fri, August 06 2010, 9:33 AM

The month of Ramadan has come. Muslims across the world will perform the obligatory worship in the form of fasting — abstaining from food, drink and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset, for the whole month. Muslims are also obliged to control their behavior, sight, hearing and speech if they are to perfect the rite.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan has been deemed a form of spiritual training for Muslims. Many have feel that amid the materialistic nature of our modern world, one does need a form of spiritual exercise so that material and spiritual needs can be kept in a good balance. Reconciliation between these two realms within oneself is crucial as a means of achieving — among other things — the personal integrity that can bring inner peace and, in turn, proper social behavior.

By fasting, one would be able to establish a viable relationship with God, but also realize the desired religious and social life.

In contrast, to the detriment of society, when one is diverted from religion by the influence of materialism, for example, the social conditions that flow from living in the presence of the divine can be interrupted. People become less able to engage in social interaction of any kind, including showing tolerance to others.

Intrinsic to the nature of fasting in our religion is indeed positive influence. By committing ourselves in performing this form of worship, one can be corrective of their deeds and attitudes. The hunger and thirst that one bears during fasting may open up a greater sense of sensitivity toward others.

In other words, fasting is a "hardship" in which a symphony of God's blessings and mercy resonate through this life-changing spiritual experience that results in compassion, love and piety.

At a time when the world has become like a big village and at a point when our society is on the verge of great change and transformation, if we are to establish a better world for all, the first thing to do is to implant a sense of love and compassion.



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That the Muslims should treat all people with great care and sympathy regardless of their religion is legally and theologically justified in the Koran.

The holy book often addresses various persons with such phrases as: "O people!" denoting therefore that they all are "people" who deserve to be treated as humans.

The Koran also addresses people of different faiths such as Jews and Christians as "People of the Book". Therefore Muslims would say "I respect Jews and Christians because I believe in their Prophets and Books".

A Muslim is both a true follower and "descendant" of Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus and he is therefore the loving brother of Jews and Christians.

The Prophet Muhammad himself is the fountainhead of the virtuous value of brotherhood. It was he who once said all people are as equal as the teeth of a comb.

Hence, Islam does not discriminate based on race, color, age, nationality, physical traits or even religion. The Prophet declared "You are all from Adam, and Adam is from the Earth. O servants of God, be brothers [and sisters]".

Those who stand against these values are beasts who have lost their humanity. The love and carefulness our religion has taught us through this holy month are values we have to restore should we have lost them, if we are to remain human.

Now, if one were to seek the true face of Islam from its own sources, history and true representatives, one would find that it contains no animosity, cruelty or fanaticism. It is a religion of tolerance, peace, harmony and brotherhood. The countless Koranic verses and prophetic sayings about fasting in particular indicate that this form of worship — when performed properly — may lead to the birth of a social dynamic, a dynamic that may revitalize long-dormant moral values.

Through fasting, moral values are meant to be established in our inner selves, first, such that we are at peace with God and with ourselves, then with the natural environment, and finally with the world and our surroundings.

Achieving harmony in our social life depends on how much we can realize our personal moral conduct. As Islam is a source of morality and ethics for both our religious and social life, a Muslim should aspire toward moral enlightenment from the teachings and rituals of Islam, such as fasting.

Fasting may be deemed as a divine method to establish moral conduct. Throughout the history of Islam, the month of Ramadan has always been synonymous with the spiritual education of



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Muslims. Committing corruption during Ramadan, for instance, means one has failed to benefit from the divine grandeur of this holy month.

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