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Ramadan | special

**Date with
Dates**

Ramadan tradition

Uzma Shabnam

In the holy month of Ramadan, a unique tradition of joint recitation of Quran is observed at various mosques and shrines across the Srinagar city. Every year, Muslims in Srinagar take part in a collective recitation of the Quran for 30 days finishing each chapter of the holy book per day.

In Alamgari Bazar area the practice was initiated by a religious cleric Agha Syed Aijaz Hussain Rizvi, hailing from Nabdipora area of Srinagar, in 1997 at Haji Syed Hassan Rizvi's Shrine in Nabdipora.

"I was a student in Iran back then, when I witnessed this tradition of joint recitation of Quran there. I returned to Kashmir, and saw there is no such practice in our locality. Then I decided to start this tradition through Baqiyatullah Quranic Centre," Rizvi said.

Baqiyatullah Quranic Centre is an Islamic institution which provides education and training in Quranic studies and Islamic theology to students from different parts of the region.

"The main objective of the Quranic Centre is to increase peoples' engagement with Quran and make them recite the holy text more and more," he said

Another prominent place where joint recitation or Khatm-e-Quran is observed is the Imambara Hassanabad, Rainawari where around 700 people recite the Quran every year in the holy month of Ramadan, under the guidance of Islamic scholars.



Most of them join the daily recitation routines to complete the recitation of whole Quran in 30 days.

Maulana Fida Hussain, a renowned religious scholar, praised the joint recitation of Quran held at many places. He said that reciting Quran together is a source of both spiritual and as well as social benefits, as it strengthens the bond between the believers and increases their awareness of the divine guidance, especially among children and females who often get less chances to access the classes or gatherings where Quran is recited.

Every evening, before breaking their fast, hundreds of devotees gather in the spacious hall of the Imambara at Hassanabad and recite the Quran in unison. The pleasing sound of their voices creates a serene atmosphere of devotion and spirituality.

"Listening to the recitation of Quran fills my heart with peace and gratitude. I come here every day and I feel a deep connection with Allah. The Quran is a source of guidance and mercy for us. It is a blessing to be part of this tradition," said Haleema Bano, a local resident.

The joint recitation of Quran is a way of seeking blessings and forgiveness from Allah, as well as enhancing one's knowledge and understanding of the divine message. According to Islamic scholars, completing the Quran in Ramadan is highly rewarding

and meritorious, as it is the month in which the Quran was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

"Joint recitation of Quran is a great way to connect with Allah and His words, especially in the blessed month of Ramadan. I feel very fortunate to be part of the joint recitation of Quran at Imambara Hassanabad, where hundreds of people gather every day to complete the Quran in 30 days," said Riyaz Ahmed, a local resident and regular attendee of the recitation sessions.

Tiffin Man of Kashmir: 'Aaj iftaar meri taraf se'



Iqra Qyoom

Rayees Ahmad, a 31-year-old man from Srinagar, had been running an advertising agency for 15 years when he received a call from a friend who hadn't eaten since morning. Rayees went to the kitchen in the dark, foggy, and chilly night and managed to pack a tiffin for his friend. When he returned home, he got an idea and set out to start a startup to deliver tiffins on February 3, 2020.

Rayees called himself the Tiffin man of Kashmir and promised to deliver 100% home-prepared food with no additives, taste producers, or synthetic colors.

He did research on the rising number of stomach cancers and discovered that unclean and adulterated food is to blame for 90% of the cases. He was determined not to follow in the footsteps of other food businesses and prioritize quality over sales.

"In the Sacred month of Ramadan, I distributed more than 1300 free food parcels on iftaar in various hospitals," says Rayees.

He also guarantees that 90% of his customers are doctors and specialists who ask him to get them food on sehri iftaar and say "Aaj 10 logu ko meri taraf se iftaar."

"Besides delivering healthy, clean, and affordable food, I also want to protect the environment, so I deliver food in biodegradable and environmentally friendly packaging," he said.

"During the second wave of Covid-19, he received a call from a doctor in Delhi based in Kashmir asking him to cook food for their elderly parents while he was away," he said.

"This prompted me to restart the tiffin service. On the first day," he said, adding that he delivered around 25 boxes, and now his team manages up to 300-500 boxes every day in

warm containers.

He said that it motivates him to visit hospitals to give more food to the poor ones. He also rewards his team for their hard work and security so they can continue this great work in the future.

Now, he is planning to start the Tiffin Aaw Foundation, a foundation to provide free home-prepared food to destitute individuals, including the poor, orphanages, darul ulooms, individuals experiencing infirmities, and ailments. "By 2025, Rayees aims to launch this initiative and is seeking public help and support," he said.

"I want the chain of 'Aaj iftaar meri taraf se' to continue even after Ramadan," he said and urges people to think of another mission as "Aaj khana meri taraf se" so that everyone can do a little for the general public.

He is grateful to Nida Rehman, his wife and greatest supporter, his team who worked hard in every situation whether day or night, and the people who trust Tiffin Aaw and say it might take some extra minutes to get their food but they will not compromise with their health and would eat tiffin from "Tiffin Aaw" only.

In this holy month, let's not break the chain and say "Aaj iftaar meri taraf se" so we can acquire all the good deeds. With the Tiffin Aaw Foundation, Rayees hopes to make a significant impact on society and help those in need.



Fasting helps triumph over temptation to smoke

Sajid Raina

Ramadan is a month of abstinence. It's not only about fasting but demands significant changes in daily routines. It dictates a regime of lifestyle that commands discipline. Even the chain smokers can't escape its dictate.

Muslims around the world observe fasting during this Islamic month from dawn to dusk. The observers are not only directed to abstaining from food and water but are supposed to resist other desires and temptations too.

"This month not only offers spiritual healing but also provides an excellent opportunity for individuals to make significant changes in their lifestyle and develop a resolve to make healthy living choices," noted Shabir Ahmad, a well known expert whose dedicated efforts make it possible for hundreds of youth to quit smoking.

The nicotine addiction is the hardest to resist. Some of the chain smokers who find it hard to quit smoking even after therapy manage to do it in Ramadan. If they don't quit they at least pan-out the intermittent spells.

"Ramadan taught me the true meaning of discipline and self-control. By quitting smoking during this holy month, I realized that I am capable of overcoming any challenge and becoming a better version of myself," said Reyaz Ahmad Dar, a contractor by profession who has been a regular



smoker since his mother's death in 2018.

"Quitting smoking during Ramadan can be a great opportunity for those struggling with nicotine addiction. The discipline and self-restraint practiced during fasting can also be applied to breaking the habit of smoking, leading to a healthier and more fulfilling life," he said.

"Many individuals like me who struggle with nicotine addiction find that quitting smoking during Ramadan can be a turning point. The self-control and discipline practiced during the holy month can be applied to breaking the habit of smoking,

resulting in a healthier and smoke-free life," said Murtaza Khan, another nicotine addict.

Dr.Fayaz Ahmad Bhat, Assistant Professor Department of General Medicine at SKIMS Soura, believes that fasting is the best opportunity for smokers to quit smoking. He notes that fasting generates willpower, which can help individuals overcome addiction and quit smoking.

"The act of fasting creates a sense of discipline and determination, which can help individuals overcome addiction and quit smoking," Dr.Fayaz said.

Dr. Irfan from GMC Srinagar believes that Ramadan provides an excellent opportunity for people to leave bad habits such as smoking as fasting develops a sense of patience in the person. "Ramadan is a month of patience and self-restraint, and quitting smoking can be seen as an act of self-restraint," Dr. Irfan said.

Dr Jahangir Ali, MBBS MD posted at District hospital Bandipora said that the Ramadan is not just a month of fasting; it is a month of health and spiritual healing.

"It is an opportunity for individuals to make significant changes in their lifestyle and develop the resolve to make healthy living choices. Quitting smoking, taking care of one's health, and observing a balanced diet are some of the ways individuals can benefit from this month and improve their overall well-being," he said.

Live telecast of Taraweeh from Hazratbal shrine receives overwhelming response

Mohsin Mushtaq

In a historic development, Muslims across the Kashmir valley and from around the world can now witness the Taraweeh prayers live from the Aasari Shareef Dargah Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar.

The Dargah Hazratbal Sharif located in Hazratbal area of central Kashmir's Srinagar city is considered the holiest Muslim shrine in Kashmir, where Muslims gather to offer prayers and seek blessings.

News channels and the official Facebook page of the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board have collaborated to telecast the live stream of the Taraweeh prayers from the holy shrine, marking a significant step in making these prayers accessible to a wider audience. The Taraweeh prayers are special prayers offered during the nights of the month-long fasting period of Ramadan.

Several private news channels, including News18 Urdu, Gulistan News, The Real Kashmir News, and Kashmir News Service, are broadcasting the live stream. Additionally, ANN News, the Kashmir region's first and only 24/7 TV news channel, is also telecasting the Taraweeh prayers live from the Dargah Sharif Hazratbal.

The move has garnered positive feedback from

Muslims across the valley, who appreciate the initiative. Dilawar Ahmad Beigh, a viewer from the Malbagh area of Srinagar, expressed his gratitude for the live stream. He said, "I am grateful to the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board for taking this step. It has allowed me to witness the beautiful Taraweeh prayers being offered in the mosque of Aasari Shareef Hazratbal, something that I would have never been able to experience otherwise. I feel more connected to my faith."

Naseema Begum, a viewer from North Kashmir's Bandipora district, also commended the initiative, stating that "The live telecast of Taraweeh prayers is a remarkable innovation. It has made it possible for people from all corners of the world to witness these beautiful prayers. This is a shining example of how technology can be used to bring people closer to their faith."

Darkshan Andrabi, Chairperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Wakf Board, emphasised the significance of the move, stating, "The Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board is committed to providing all necessary facilities to the devotees during the holy month of Ramadan. With the pandemic still affecting our lives, we wanted to ensure that people could still feel connected to their faith and perform their religious duties. The live telecast of Taraweeh prayers is our way of providing a safe



and convenient solution for those who are unable to attend the prayers in person."

The availability of live transmission on TV and social media platforms enables Muslims from different parts of the valley to participate in the prayers and feel connected to the holy shrine. The move is a testament to the power of technology and its ability to bring people closer, even in the most trying times.

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Kashmir receives 100 trucks of dates

Gulbadin Rather

As the holy month of Ramadan progresses, people of Kashmir are indulging in their favorite fruits to break their fast with dates and watermelons topping the list. The consumption of these fruits has increased significantly during Ramadan, with over 100 trucks of dates and 25 trucks of watermelons being delivered to the Valley every day.

According to Bahadur Khan, the President of the Dry Fruit Association in Kashmir, around 100 trucks of dates have been consumed in the first 20 days of Ramadan. "Ajwa dates, which are considered one of the most premium varieties, are the most popular among Kashmiris. These dates are brought to Srinagar from different parts of India and are sold to distributors across the districts," he said.

Bashir Ahmad Bashir, the President of the Fruit and Vegetable Association in Kashmir, stated that at least 25 trucks loaded with watermelons arrive in Kashmir every day during Ramadan. These watermelons, which weigh around 11-12 tons per truck, are sourced from various states in India, including Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat, he added.

"The demand for watermelons usually goes up during Ramadan, and as the temperature rises, the demand is expected to increase further. The refreshing and hydrating qualities of watermelons make them a popular choice among the people of Kashmir during the holy month," Bashir added.

The consumption of dates and watermelons during Ramadan is not just a cultural tradition but also has several health benefits. "Dates are a rich source of energy, fibre, and essential minerals, making them an excellent food to break the fast with. They also help in keeping the body hydrated and reduce the risk of constipation. Watermelons, on the other hand, are a great source of hydration, especially during the hot summer months, and are rich in vitamins and minerals," said several health experts.

Meanwhile, Muneer Ahmad, a 32-year-old who is involved in fruit business in Srinagar fruit-mandi said that the consumption of these fruits during Ramadan not only helps in keeping the body nourished and hydrated but also brings the people of Kashmir together. "Families and

communities come together to break their fasts with these delicious fruits, making it a time of togetherness and unity," he said.

He also said that the consumption of dates and watermelons during Ramadan is an integral part of Kashmiri culture and tradition.

"The increased demand for these fruits during the holy month not only benefits the local economy but also has several health benefits. As the holy month progresses, the people of Kashmir will continue to enjoy these delicious and nutritious fruits, strengthening their bond and sense of community," he said.



The demand for watermelons usually goes up during Ramadan, and as the temperature rises, the demand is expected to increase further. The refreshing and hydrating qualities of watermelons make them a popular choice among the people of Kashmir during the holy month



Dates: nutritious energy boosters

Yasmeena Rashid

As the holy month of Ramadan comes to a close, marketers in Kashmir continue to offer a variety of dates that are popular among shoppers.

Streets in Srinagar are filled with vendors selling different types of dates twice a day, as families gather for the sahr and Iftaar meals, in contrast to their normal daily eating routine.

It is customary to break the fast with dates, which are believed to provide the body with the necessary nourishment, while preventing blood sugar from spiking too quickly when consumed with a traditional drink made of milk and basil seeds.

Local retailer Aijaz Ahmad notes that different kinds of dates are



es, 25 trucks of watermelons per day



Kashmir markets have variety of dates from Middle East, Iran, Algeria

Ada Jan

In the Middle East dates, locally known as 'Khezir' or 'Khajoor', are a popular fruit and a significant part of the Ramadan diet in Muslim countries. During this holy month, Muslims all over the world fast from dawn to dusk, focusing on spiritual reflection and worship. One of the most significant food items in high demand during Ramadan in Kashmir is dates. Consuming dates to break the fast is a tradition that goes back centuries, with the Prophet of Islam himself advocating its use.

Noor Mohammad, a dates seller in Srinagar, reports a demand for four tons of different varieties of dates every day, fetching him 11-14 lakh rupees. The rates vary from Rs 90 to Rs 1050 per kg. Dates are imported to the valley from different parts of the world, mainly Saudi Arabia, Iran, Algeria, and Palestine, and vendors stock up on large quantities of dates in the weeks leading up to Ramadan.

Dates are not only consumed in Kashmir but throughout the Muslim world. Eating dates before a meal helps to reduce overeating during Iftaar, as they help to satisfy hunger and reduce cravings for unhealthy foods. Dates help boost the immune system, reduce inflammation, and improve digestion, making them an ideal food to consume during Ramadan when the body needs a quick energy boost after a day of fasting.

Different types of dates are generally sold in Kashmir, including both high-range and low-range, each with its own unique taste, texture, and appearance. The most popular types of dates include:

Medjool dates: considered the king of dates due to their large size, rich

flavour, and juicy texture.

Deglet Noor dates: a smaller, drier variety that is often used in baking and cooking.

Barhi dates: a soft and sweet variety often eaten fresh and considered a delicacy.

Sukkari dates: a favourite due to their nutritional value, health benefits, and cheap price.

Ajwa dates: grown exclusively in Medina, Saudi Arabia, and have a soft, fruity texture with a prune-like taste.

Khola dates: very sweet and soft, with a toffee flavour that is almost syrup, best paired with coffee or tea.

Mabroom dates: a soft, dry variety with dark maroon colour and modest sweet and chewy flesh.

Safawi dates: a soft, moist variety from the Al-Madina region of Saudi with a particular deep black colour.

Itteema dates: very sweet and large-sized dates that originated from Algeria.

Halawy dates: a soft and creamy variety often used in desserts with a rich, caramel-like flavour.

Zahidi dates: a smaller, drier variety often used in baking and cooking with a sweet and nutty flavour.

Khadrawy dates: a soft and sweet variety commonly grown in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East with a rich, honey-like flavour.

Theory dates: a small and sweet variety often used in baking and cooking with a rich, nutty flavour.

Amber dates: a soft and fleshy dry variety named after its amber colour and skin appearance, one of the most famous dates due to its size.

Multiple experts suggest that dates have numerous health benefits and are a delicious way to break the fast during Ramadan.

imported from Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Iran, and at least four to five different varieties are consumed in bulk in Kashmir. Dates are highly nutritious and rich in natural fibres, vitamins, and minerals, such as calcium, sulphur, iron, potassium, phosphorus, manganese, copper, and magnesium, making them a favoured fruit during Ramadan.

Eating two to three dates at the start of Iftaar is recommended by health experts, as it provides the body with the necessary sugar to restore low blood sugar levels after fasting all day. Dates are also versatile and can be used to make a variety of desserts, appetisers, and sauces during Ramadan.

During Ramadan, fasting can cause mild health problems, such as headaches, low blood sugar, and lethargy. Consultation with a dietician may be beneficial to address these concerns.





‘Sahar Khwan’ tradition losing appeal, relevance



This year, I was told by many residents, not to visit their lanes. **They say they don't want to be disturbed** and if we have to wake up for Sahri they will manage as they have **alarm option even in their mobile phones**

Numan Bhat

In the early morning, when Kashmir is cloaked in darkness and its residents are sound asleep, the sound of drums pierces the silence, and a voice cries out, "Waqhtey Sahar!" Sahar's time has come.

These are the Sahar Khwans, who bang their drums in the streets of Kashmir before sunrise to encourage Muslims in the valley to wake up for their pre-dawn meal, or Sahar, so they can prepare for the hours of fasting that lie ahead during the holy month of Ramadan.

The Islamic month of Ramadan, which begins with the sighting of the crescent moon, is the ninth month on the lunar calendar. One of Islam's five pillars is fasting, which is a key component of Ramadan all across the world.

Throughout the holy month of Ramadan, Kashmiris have practised a centuries-old tradition known as Sahar-Khwani, or calling for pre-dawn meals. However, the younger generation in Kashmir is not reluctant to rely on this tradition and rather suggest it to end.

Muhammad Altaf, a Sahar Khwan (drummer), starts strolling the streets of Soura Srinagar every night during the holy month of Ramadan to awaken Muslims for dawn meals when the majority of Kashmir is still in a deep sleep.

Each year, Muhammad Altaf, 27, leaves his home in Aaragam village in the Bandipora region of north Kashmir with

his drum and travels the 75 km to Srinagar just a few days before the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

He wakes people up for Sahri at 3:00 a.m. by strolling through the tight pathways and dark alleyways. "Waqht-e-Sahar" (it's time for pre-dawn meals), Altaf yells loudly. As he passes, he could see lights inside the houses being switched on. That motivates him to carry on the duty with more passion.

Sahri is typically eaten between 3:45 am to 5:00 am in the morning. Altaf travels from one lane to the next while yelling "Waqht-e-sahar" and drumming.

Altaf said, "This year, I was told by many residents, not to visit their lanes. They say they don't want to be disturbed and if we have to wake up for Sahri they will manage as they have alarm option even in their mobile phones."

Rest of the year, Altaf said, they work as labourers, however, and doing this work for the month of Ramadan also gives them a respite from the hard labour work during the day while bringing them some earning and gifts at the end of the month, he added.

About 35 years have passed since he first visited Srinagar with his father, who died three years ago. He is not alone; during this period, his 66-year-old uncle, a few relatives, and several neighbours also served as Sahar Khwans in the city.

Due to the availability of gadgets such as cell phones, alarm clocks, and

radios, many young people have begun to question the tradition of Sahar Khwan, saying that it has become outdated.

Haris Khan, a young man from Soura Srinagar said that he no longer requires Sahar Khwan because he has an alarm on his cell phone.

The married couples with small children have a different argument for abandoning the tradition. They say that the noise of the drums wakes their children up thus making it difficult for them to manage having sahar and then prayers.

Imtiyaz Ahmed, 45, (another Sahar Khwan) said, "I think the perception of people regarding Sahar Khwani has changed as I see this culture dying. It seems our work is obsolete," he said.

"Though we come here, travelling long distances, we are not being welcomed the way our elders were. We are not being encouraged. At the end of the month our earning is about 2,000 rupees and a few bags of rice that we collect from the locality where we go," he said.

As it is nearly Eid, we will be going back to our village soon. Most of the Sahar Khwan in all the localities of Srinagar are from our village so we go together in 30 trucks and take the bags of rice, he added.

As of now the tradition continues but given the changing mood of some people who knows it might be relegated to past and may fade-out from the memory in the coming years.



Fasting helps lower anxiety, depression levels: Study

Syed Batool Andrabi

Most of the studies conducted across the globe suggest that individuals who are on fast, experience improvement in depression, anxiety and even stress.

Dr Yasir Hassan Rather, Professor in Department of Psychiatry, IMHANS, GMC Srinagar said that research has found that fasting during Ramadan can have a positive psychological effect on individuals due to the feeling of connection with the community and spiritual wellbeing. "Studies have also shown that fasting can increase feelings of self discipline, self-control, empathy and compassion," he added.

Dr Neelofer Jan, senior researcher at Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences Kashmir said that several studies have shown that fasting can have positive effects on mental health. "It can reduce stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms and also can help improve and decrease progression of various neurodegenerative diseases like dementia, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia," she said.

"Fasting causes the human body to deplete its glucose stores. With no available glucose, the body converts stored fats into ketones. These ketones work as a fresh fuel to power-up the brain's processing. Therefore, after the initial "brain fog" experienced during initial days of fasting, the mind becomes much clearer and the ability to focus is



sharper. The neurons in the brain use this new fuel to enter a growth phase and create new synapses, which result in improved learning and memory," she said.

A study published in Current Neuropharmacology found that the short-term calorie restriction from fasting can boost antidepressant chemicals in the brain.

Dr Nelofer said that after a few days of fasting, the body adapts to starvation and starts to release high amounts of happy hormones including endorphins, norepinephrine and dopamine into the brain.

"Some studies have also demonstrated improved sleep patterns in patients with insomnia compared to pre-fasting levels and a possible decrease in migraine due

to serotonin levels going up. Depending on the length of the fast, there is also an improvement in chronic inflammation," she further added.

"Chronic inflammation increases the risk of developing illnesses, like cardiovascular diseases, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, certain cancers, and also major mental health disorders like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

"An extremely interesting phenomena discovered during fasting is known as autophagy as the brain breaks down old and damaged cells and recycles them into new ones," she added.

"Through this self-eating process, the toxins are removed from the brain delaying the development of neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's. Most of these findings have been confirmed on lab animals because controlled studies on the human brain are difficult," she said.

Studies have shown that children suffering from epileptic seizures had fewer incidences of seizures when placed on calorie restriction diets or fasting as it counteracts the over-excited signals exhibited in epileptic brain, she added.

A 2021 study found that those who fasted had lower anxiety and depression levels as against those control groups who did not fast," said Dr.Nisa, a practising psychologist at JLN hospital Rainawari Srinagar.

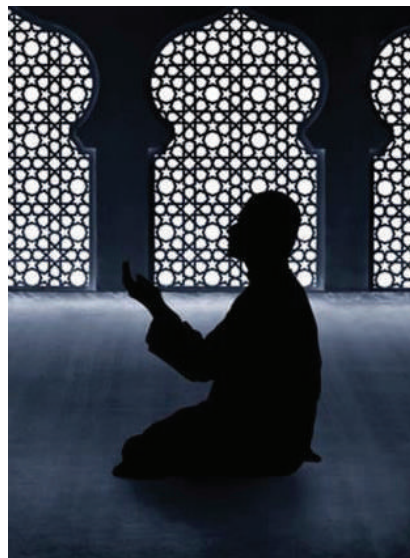
Aetikaf: Seclusion for spiritual purging

Iihak Tantray

Aetikaf is a practice of purging in Islamic tradition that is usually practiced in the Islamic month of fasting: Ramadan. Aetikaf means going into seclusion for a stipulated time. A person in Aetikaf remains isolated in a mosque or a hospice and keeps himself/herself busy in prayers and reading Quran taking interval breaks for necessary meals or ablution. As per the tradition this particular practice is followed especially in the last ten days of Ramadan.

The purpose of Aetikaf is to disconnect from the world and focus on worship, contemplation, and reflection, with the ultimate goal of gaining closeness to Allah, explained Maulana Irshad, a scholar at Darululoom Rahimiya, Bandipora.

While Aetikaf can serve as a means



of completing the benefits of fasting and making up for any shortcomings in one's earlier Ramadan worship, it is important to note that it is not a substitute for the daily acts of worship that are expected of Muslims throughout the year. It is simply an additional opportunity to seek spiritual growth and renewal, Maulana Irshad emphasised.

Sharing his experience from Aetikaf in the previous year Ishfan (25) said, "It is a pleasant experience that is unique. Initially, it was difficult to have patience, but gradually when I started praying, making Dhikr, and reciting the holy Quran more and more, then I felt that I was getting closer to Allah."

Another youth Arsalan believes that by directing our hearts to Allah during Aetikaf, we can draw near to Him and

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Srinagar restaurants serve Mediterranean iftaar



Mehroob Mushtaq

The month of Muslim fasting Ramadan has its many charms. Although the main focus is on the fasting during the day, however, the two meals- one taken at the beginning of the fasting before the wee hours of the day called Suhoor and the other taken at the dusk to end the fasts called Iftaar are also fascinating times. Most importantly Iftaar is kind of a celebration every day.

To cater to this daily festive meal many restaurants in Kashmir have introduced new dishes from different cuisines. After working all day, most of the restaurants provide people with delicious Arabian food when it's time to break their fast.

Ramadan is the ninth month of Muslim calendar and the holy month of fasting, praying, forgiveness, reviving lost friendships and family ties, Muslims mostly break their fast with their families during Ramadan and pray for one another.

In Srinagar, there are various restaurants that serve Mediterranean, Arabian cuisine besides traditional Kashmiri dishes to their visitors.

For the first time in Kashmir, the Marine

Dine restaurant in Jawharnagar, Srinagar is open from Iftaar till Suhoor providing hassle free services to the customers.

It is a unique underwater themed aquatic restaurant which serves delicious food with a peaceful ambience. The restaurant serves a variety of dishes to customers throughout the month of Ramadan.

The restaurant's owner Qaim said, "It was my father's dream that we bring traditions from the gulf countries here. Over the past two years, we have been making that dream a reality, and this year, we are finally able to open our restaurant from Iftaar to Suhoor."

Manoj Singh Rawat (General Manager) of the restaurant said, "We serve flavourful and aromatic non-vegetarian food on a carefully crafted Iftaar menu."

"We make Arabian food for Ramadan. Nuts, dates, and basil seed beverages are all free. Haleem, sheshtao, fish, fattooosh, and other delights are among the foods we serve here, and in addition to tandoori momos and Afghani momos, trout fish is also prepared here in the tandoori way," he added.

He further said, "We also provide vegetarian cuisine. Here, we provide both delicious Iftaar and Suhoor. This notion came from Saudi Arabia. There is

also a mosque nearby where prayers are arranged," he added.

A customer Azhar Hajini said that this is really a great concept that has been introduced here. Kashmir being the Muslim dominated country, this is the first restaurant that remains open from Iftaar to Suhoor.

"I have been to the restaurant with some of my friends, loved the food, concept, theme, ambience of it. Families should plan and visit such places," he added.

Café Ababeel, Wazir Bagh, Srinagar, also serves variety of cuisines. They also serve dates in addition to a tray of fresh fruit from it. The menu includes soulful delicacies in the form of basil seed drinks, paranthas and Mediterranean dishes.

Senior Executive Chef Hussain of Café Ababeel said, "The Iftaar meal is well-balanced. Before to the nuts and hummus, the tulsi seed syrup is presented. Mediterranean and vegetarian food are both available. Lal Mas and Murg al-FahmVigra are then delivered to them."

"We have been providing food since the start of Ramadan at the tempting price of Rs. 786 - the number considered auspicious by many Muslims). An Iftaari platter including Kabab, Keema Ball, Biryani, Chicken Tikka, Malai Tikka, Shahi Tukda, Sharbat, and Dates are available. Till the time of dinner, which lasts until 10.30 p.m., these foods are available and are offered to the visitors," he added.



It was my father's dream that we bring traditions from the gulf countries here. Over the past two years, we have been making that dream a reality, and this year, we are finally able to open our restaurant from Iftaar to Suhoor

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experience a sense of comfort and openness. "The purpose of Aetikaf is to focus on Allah, to engage in a consistent process of remembrance and reflection, and to cut back from worldly distractions," Arsalan said.

As Ramadan draws to a close, many Muslims participate in Aetikaf to seek spiritual rejuvenation and engage in

deep prayer and contemplation.

Although it is an individual practice but at many places people do it collectively. Usually if more than two people are in Aetikaf in a single mosque they cover their respective spaces with a cloth in order to create that secluded space.

In North Kashmir's Bandipora district, DarulUloom Raheemiya has a history of hosting over 1200 individuals

from various parts of the valley and outside states each year who participate in a joint Aetikaf there.

These participants come from diverse backgrounds, united in their shared desire to seek spiritual enlightenment and devote themselves to deep prayer and contemplation during this holy period

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