

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT 'IFTAR' (A SOLEMN OCCASION OF THE BREAKING OF THE
FAST) AT AMIR MAHAL, CHENNAI ON 08.06.2018**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Nawab, Mohammed Abdul Ali,
Prince of Arcot

Maulana Mohammed Fayaz Alam Sahib

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am happy to be here today to extend my greetings at the Iftar function being held in the month of Ramadan.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting from dawn until sunset, to commemorate the first revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad. This annual observance is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Ramadan is a time of spiritual reflection, improvement and increased devotion and worship. The act of fasting is believed to redirect the heart away from worldly activities. It also brings about self-discipline, self-control, sacrifice and empathy for those who are less fortunate; thus encouraging actions of generosity and charity which is called Zakat.

While fasting from dawn until sunset, the devout refrain from consuming food, drinking liquids, smoking etc. Muslims are also instructed to refrain from behavior that may negate the reward of fasting, such as insulting, cursing, lying, etc. The essence of fasting in Ramadan is spiritual. But fasting also offers a number of health benefits which are confirmed by doctors and scientists worldwide.

Pre-fast meals before dawn are referred to as Suhoor, while the post-fast feasts after sunset are called Iftar. Dates are usually the first food to break the fast. Following that, Muslims generally adjourn for the evening prayers, the fourth of the five daily prayers, after which the main meal is served. This is a time of fellowship with families, friends and surrounding communities. Thus fasting in the month of Ramadan is meant to bring about unity and peace among people of all religions by promoting communal harmony and universal brotherhood.

The Quran clearly states that there shall be no compulsion in religion and that people of all faiths shall achieve salvation provided they follow God's guidance and perform constructive deeds.

Vedantic philosophy of India visualises the human race as Vasudeiva Kutumbakam, or belonging to a single family of God, a message that finds echo in the Quranic concept of ummatan waahida (unity of mankind).

Religion does not teach enmity with those belonging to other religions.

Mutual hatred and violence between conflicting groups of persons from different religions is the most futile thing in the world. As Kabirdasji said,

कहै हिन्दू मोहि राम पियारा तुरक कहे रहिमाना ,

आपस में दोउ लरि-लरि मुवे , मरम न कोऊ जाना .

How we see God is a direct reflection of how we see ourselves. If God brings to mind mostly fear and blame, it means there is too much fear and blame welled up inside us. If we see God as full of love and compassion, so are we full of love and compassion".

I am also tempted to quote two more rules - one on 'patience' and the other on the inner search.

"Patience does not mean to passively endure. It means to be farsighted enough to trust the end result of a process. What does patience mean? It means to look at the thorn and see the rose, to look at the night and see the dawn.

Impatience means to be so shortsighted as to not be able to see the outcome. The lovers of God never run out of patience, for they know that time is needed for an effort to gain fruition".

And the second one, "No matter what your destination, just be sure to make every journey a journey within. If you travel within, you'll travel the whole wide world and beyond".

The purpose of fasting is to enable the self to travel within, so as to attain divine bliss. I am sure that those amongst you have fasted during the holy month have experienced this bliss.

I wish to conclude by saying that "What is needed is a fellow feeling between the different types of religion. This should be a fellow feeling which springs from mutual esteem and mutual respect, and not the condescending, patronizing, niggardly expression of goodwill."

We live in challenging times, but what we need is not the 'Clash of Civilizations' but the 'harmony of all humanity'. This should be based on true goodwill among followers of different religions.

May the nearness to the divine bring us closer to the consciousness of the divine. My best wishes to all of you.

Nandri Vanakkam...

Jai Hind.