

**The Inter-religious Solidarity Council (IRSC) observes Inter-faith Holi,
Easter and solidarity in the month of Ramadan**

The Inter-religious Solidarity Council (IRSC) is dedicated to promoting respect for all religions and fostering peaceful coexistence. Followers of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Bahai faith, Zoroastrianism gathered to celebrate Holi, Easter, and express solidarity in the holy month of Ramadan, on 5th April, 2024. We reflected on the positive traditions and teachings upheld by these diverse faiths. More than 80 persons from different faiths were present on this occasion. Among those who were present and spoke about the festivals were Swami Dayadhipananda from Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Satyanaam Das from Udasin order, Sadguru Yogiraj Dr. Mangesh Da, Swami Keshav Chandra Das from ISKCON, Sister Neeraja from Brahma Kumari order, Maulana Fayyaz Baqir, Dr. Salim Khan from Jamat-e-Islami Hind, Sheikh Naseer from Ahmadiyya community, Shabbir Bhopalwala from Dawoodi Bohra community, Fr. S. M. Michael from Indian Institute of Culture, Fr. Frazer Mascerenhas, Rev. Vivian Fernandes, Prof. Brinelle Dsouza, Prof. Ranu Jain, Dr. Surinder Kaur from Sikh faith, Zoro Bhatena from Zoroastrian faith, Mr. Mayur Yevale from Buddhist faith, Mr. Jaya Puthran from Bahai faith.

Holi, with its vibrant colours, symbolizes the arrival of spring and hope, while the ritual of Holika dahan signifies the triumph of good over evil. In our modern world, it serves as a poignant reminder to cast away hatred and prejudices in the Holi fire, and embraces humanity and compassion instead.

Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, embodying the essence of hope and love. It also inspires to fight against injustices and resurrection of

righteousness. The month of Ramadan inspires us with the values of sacrifice, charity, piety and solidarity with those left behind and facing injustices. Ramadan urges us to control our desires, base instincts, remember God and revisit God's message of righteous path.

The common message that emerged from all faith traditions were essentially three- first that of triumph of good over evil, second that of religions calling upon all human beings to reign in their desires and baser instincts in favour of religious values and consciousness and third that of universal love. Sadguru Yogiraj Dr. Mangesh Da narrated the story of Prahlad and Holika which symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. Similarly Keshav Chandra Das too emphasized how holi represents the message that we should collectively strive for overcoming evil through goodness. Rev. Vivian Fernandes recounted that Easter also signifies victory of hope and good. Dr. Salim Khan reminded that fasting during Ramadan symbolizes piety and goodness.

Keshav Chandra Das emphasized that in Hindu religion like other religions, fasting purifies the soul through sacrifice and austerity. This helps in realizing self. Maulana Baqir echoed this sentiment by pointing out that Roza doesn't just mean fasting or not eating but also fasting of the mind and soul. He emphasized that this sacrifice brings us closer to consciousness and humanity. Sheikh Naseer too reminded that roza replenishes the soul.

Swami Dayadhipananda while explaining the philosophy of Hinduism pointed out that Hinduism teaches us to spread love and live in peace. Sister Neeraja emphasized that the message of all religions is love. Satyanaam Das reminded us that humanity is the biggest religion and love is the universal language that binds

humanity. Fr. Frazer Mascarenhas underlined that love is at the core of all religions and spirituality. Brinelle Dsouza emphatically stated that all religions propagate love and none teaches violence or divides. Maulana Baqir strongly concurred that all religions including Islam teaches love and fighting against injustice irrespective of the religion of the sufferers. Surinder Kaur also emphasized that Sikhism believes love to be the essence of religion.

If such common noble messages are given by all religions then why do conflicts persist in society? The causes for the same were outlined- namely, feeling that one's religion is superior over others and misuse of religion for political and economic interests. It is imperative that we foster awareness within our communities, emphasizing that religion inherently promotes love and harmony, while conflicts arise from its misappropriation by vested interests, rather than from religion itself.

The IRSC fully embraces the profound messages conveyed by these festivals. On this occasion, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to peaceful coexistence and denounce all forms of hatred, violence, and discrimination against any religious community. As a part of joint celebration, all participated in the iftaar with Muslims breaking their fast and partook Easter cake, followed by interfaith dinner. The rich tapestry of diversity in Mumbai strengthens the bonds between our various communities, rendering our shared existence all the more meaningful and fulfilling.

The IRSC extends its warmest wishes to all residents of Mumbai, regardless of faith, for a joyous and harmonious celebration of Holi, Easter, and Ramadan. IRSC

wishes all Mumbaikars Happy Eid, happy Baisakhi and happy Gudi Padwa on April 9th and best wishes for the Hindu New Year.