

Interfaith Iftaar in Mumbai Highlights Shared Values of Righteousness, Solidarity and Reflection during Fasting

Mumbai, March 17, 2026: *The Inter-Religious Solidarity Council (IRSC)*, Mumbai, organised an Interfaith Iftaar gathering on the evening of March 17, 2026, at the Baha'i Centre in Marine Lines, bringing together leaders and members of diverse faith communities in a spirit of unity and harmony during the holy month of Ramzan.

Centred on the spirit of Sacrifice during fasting, the gathering featured thoughtful insights from religious leaders across many traditions, all highlighting the shared spiritual significance of fasting and sacrifice.

Sheikh Naseer from the Ahmadiyya community was the first to address the gathering, reflecting on Ramadan as a time to foster righteousness, patience, and compassion. He highlighted that fasting deepens awareness of the suffering of others and reinforces the dual responsibility of fulfilling duties towards both God and fellow human beings. According to him, fasting serves as a powerful tool for personal transformation and spiritual growth.

He was followed by Fr. S. M. Michael from the Indian Institute of Culture, who shared insights into the Christian observance of Lent, drawing parallels with other traditions of fasting. He explained that Lent is a period of reflection, sacrifice, and reorientation towards God, often involving abstinence not only from food but also from habits and attachments. He noted that the 40-day period encourages believers to move away from materialism and deepen their spiritual commitment, culminating in the celebration of Easter and the core Christian beliefs of sacrifice and resurrection.

Swami Braj Mohan Das from ISKCON Chowpatty then opened his address with a prayer and reflected on the universality of fasting across religions. He emphasised that fasting is not merely abstinence from food, but a pathway to cultivate empathy, compassion, and inner discipline. Drawing on the teachings of Krishna, he described austerity as a pillar of Hinduism—encompassing discipline of body, mind, and speech. He noted that true fasting involves speaking truthfully and non-agitatingly, and using periods of restraint for contemplation and spiritual growth. He also highlighted that fasting should transform individuals beyond ritual, fostering humility and compassion even after the fast is broken.

Mr. Salim Khan from Jamaat-e-Islami elaborated on the purpose of fasting in Islam, describing it as a means of cultivating God-consciousness (taqwa). He explained that fasting trains individuals in restraint—of words, actions, and thoughts—and encourages introspection and moral discipline. He stressed that fasting is not meaningful without ethical conduct, noting that habits such as dishonesty negate its spiritual value. He added that fasting builds resilience and inner strength, enabling individuals to stand firm in the face of challenges.

The final speaker, Mr. Shatrugan Jivnani from the Baha'i community, underlined the shared purpose of fasting across faiths as a means to build unity and strengthen moral character. He

described fasting as a symbolic act of discipline, detachment, and empathy, adding that it nurtures both the material and spiritual dimensions of human life. Explaining the Baha'i practice of fasting, he noted its role in developing spiritual strength and drawing closer to God. He emphasised the "golden rule" of treating others with kindness, stating that fasting ultimately serves to unite humanity as one.

Irfan Engineer, Co-Convenor of the Inter-Religious Solidarity Council, briefly spoke about the upcoming Conclave of Religions scheduled for May 9, which will address critical issues such as rejecting religious extremism and promoting harmony with nature.

The Interfaith Iftaar provided a meaningful platform for dialogue and mutual understanding, underscoring values that transcend religious boundaries. The evening concluded with the breaking of the fast (Iftaar), symbolising fellowship, shared humanity, and collective reflection.

The Inter-Religious Solidarity Council, Mumbai, reaffirmed its commitment to promoting interfaith harmony and continuing initiatives that strengthen peace, dialogue, and solidarity among diverse faiths and communities.