

equating our faith

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magazine

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NTUMS PRESIDENT & ELEVEN'S NOTE

Assalamua'laikum Wr Wb.

All Praises to Allah s.w.t, the Lord of the Universe. May blessings and salutations be upon our Prophet Muhammad s.a.w, his family, his companions and those who followed thereafter.

Alhamdulillah we are given another opportunity to publish another issue of ELEVEN magazine, striving to continuously serve the Muslim tertiary community.

This year, marks the 8th issue since its beginnings in 2009. It serves as a platform for the Muslim community to share their thought-provoking ideas and even personal experiences through the magazine, whereby they will benefit the community at large. Over the years, the ELEVEN team has been increasingly trying out new methods of reaching out to more readers out there via its initiatives. It has been achieving success to where it is now today. The articles written by our peers and others represent a wide diversity of perspectives of their experience in religion. However due to the personal nature of the writings, it must not be taken as the sole authority on Islamic law in substitute to scholarly books and living teachers.

The theme chosen is "Seeking". Seeking encompasses many aspects. It can be interpreted as Seeking Allah, our primary aim of living in this life. Congruent to NTUMS vision, Seeking Mardhatillah, the theme encourages for intellectual thoughts on the matter. Another interpretation would be Seeking Love. That is, to seek the love of our closed ones in life. The ELEVEN team decided to take on both aspects, in addition to Seeking Happiness and Seeking Jannah, in this well-written issue. I would like to applaud the team on taking on such a challenge, and excelling in it.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the ELEVEN team, for their everlasting efforts in publishing the magazine. May Allah (s.w.t) reward the team abundantly for their efforts and may Allah make us firm upon the path of righteousness in all our activities and endeavours!

Ameen

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr Wb
 Mohamed Hamzah Bin Mohamed Abdul Kadir
 29th NTU Muslim Society President

Assalamu'alaikum wr wb

Alhamdulillah, we have reached our 8th issue. The theme for this issue of ELEVEN Magazine is Seeking. Seeking is an optimism that looks into the future, beyond the parameters through different lenses. As you go through the ascension of categories, you will be taken into a journey of multifarious ways of seeking.

Marvel at the beautifully crafted words and artistically captured photographs, guided through intricate designs and layouts. The team has successfully compiled an amazing magazine through a pool of different talents, providing you with a pleasant reading experience. With all the challenges the team has faced, our work have come to a fruition with Allah's will.

Seeking Love, Seeking Happiness, Seeking God and Seeking Jannah are the four main categories encompassing all articles. We hope that the knowledge gained will remind us that regardless, we are all part of the same Ummah, the Ummah of Rasulullah s.a.w, seeking for a common goal, together.

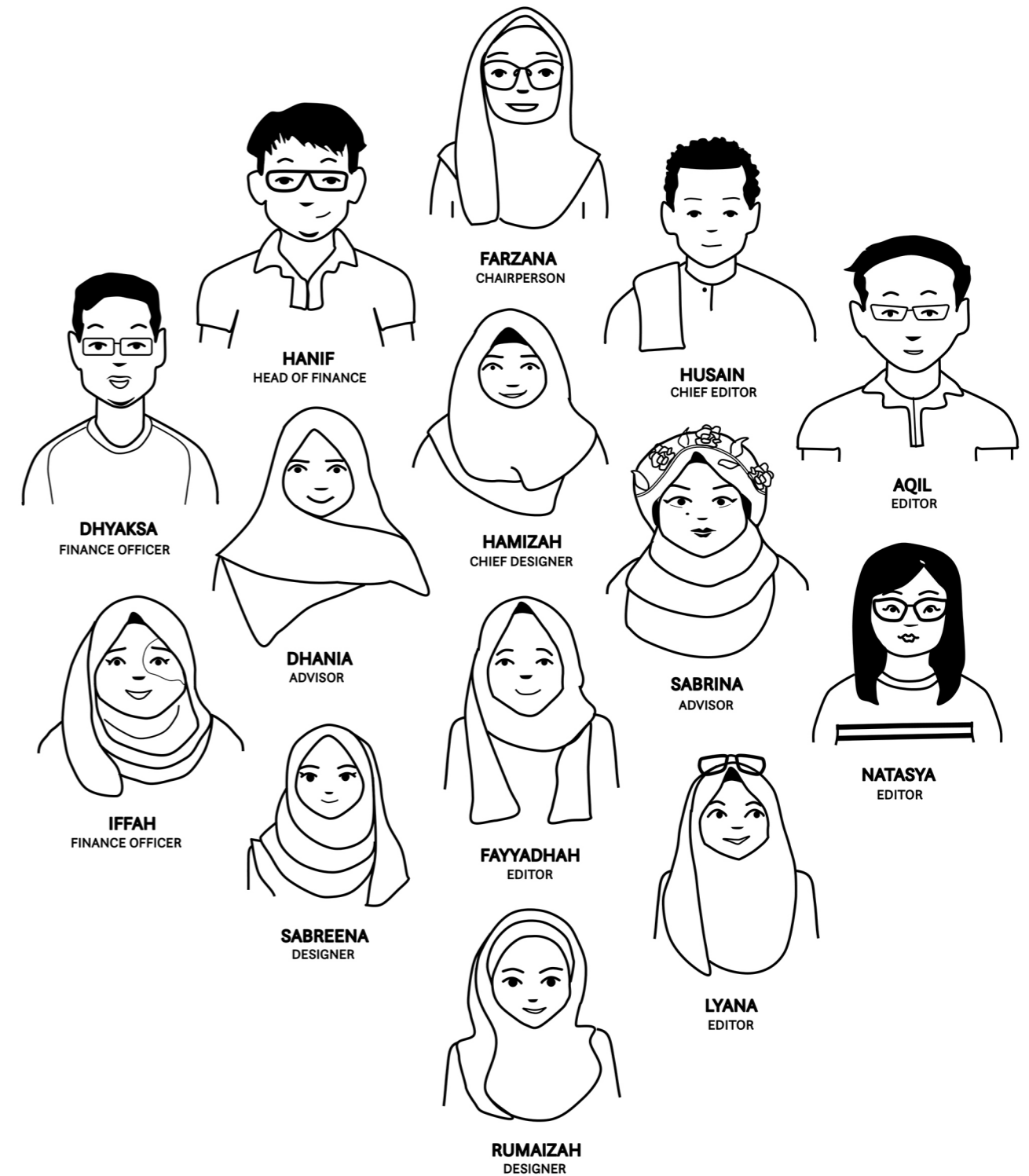
This year, ELEVEN took our expressive medium beyond the hard copy of our magazine. To showcase the many different rising talents in our creative ummah, Expressions with Eleven was held prior to the official launch event, to provide a common platform for them to gather and express their thoughts on our theme. ELEVEN has also leveraged on our social media platform to engage with our readers in our #whatdoyouseek11 competition.

Alhamdulillah, our engagements have all been very well received with your support. We hope ELEVEN will be able to achieve greater readership and continuously provide a quality read.

May this magazine be of benefit to you and those surrounding you. May it bring you closer to Allah and increase your love for Him and Rasulullah s.a.w. All that is bad comes from us and all that is good, comes from Allah.

Wassalamu'alaikum wr wb,
 Eleven '16 Team

ELEVEN'S COMMITTEE

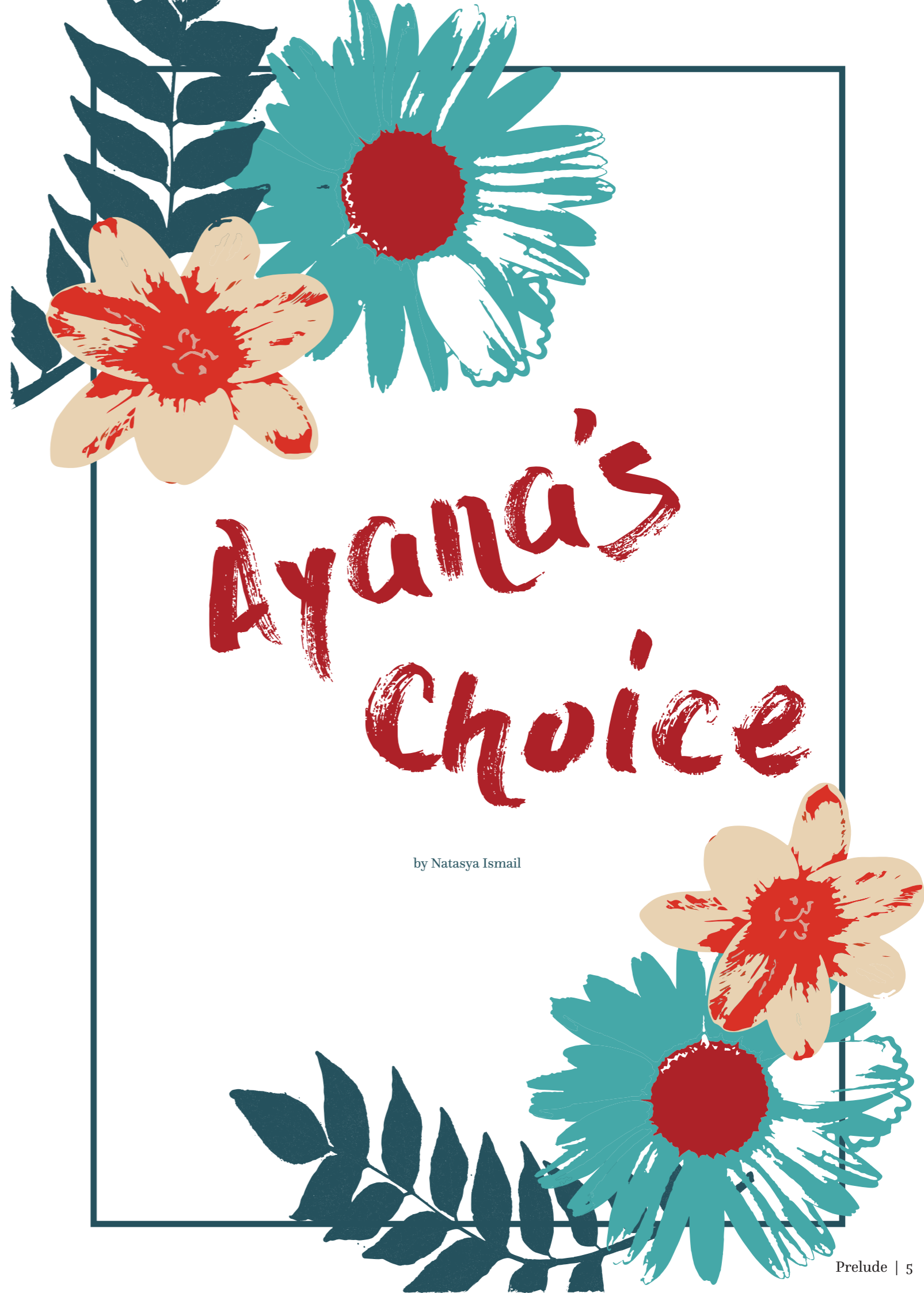


Eleven Magazine is an annual publication by the Muslim Society of Nanyang Technological University (NTUMS). Since the beginning of its publication, Eleven Magazine continues to serve as a platform for NTUMS' youths and tertiary students alike to voice their views on everyday issues based on the fundamentals of Islam. The name Eleven comes from the summation of the 5 Pillars of Islam and 6 Pillars of Imaan. The magazine seeks to be a source of inspiration, a spiritual revivification and an easy yet intellectual read.

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Part I

**“And of the people are some who say,
“We are the believers of Allah and the Last Day,”
but they are not believers...”**

She stopped mid-way, fingers interposed between the yellowed pages of the aged, threadbare Koran on her lap when she heard a soft murmur outside her bedroom. Ayana peered over her shoulder, tugging softly at the ribbons that secured her white, satin telekung. The muslin curtains drifted a little in the wind, making the few hairs on her back stand in the frigid air. The voice was getting louder, somehow closer. Ayana dragged herself up from the prayer mat where she had been seated, hunched over the Koran since the muezzin’s call for Fajr prayers pervaded the room from the portable radio speakers. Ayana took measured steps out of the room, a vermilion, marbled misbahah strung over her slender wrist.

Ayana followed the direction of the sound that sounded like someone was enumerating a litany of muffled, Arabic words in a seamless rhythm.

She had only moved into the dormitory of her college the previous week and was still struggling to adapt within the enclosed, matchbox dimension of her room. It seemed more arduous now that her mother wasn’t there to wake her up for Fajr and that she had to depend solely on a battery-operated FM radio which, at times, malfunctioned and switched to the Tamil station entirely on its own. Praises to Allah s.w.t, Ayana never seemed to miss a prayer notwithstanding the peculiar circumstances of dated technology.

Her slippers feet paused at the threshold of the musollah at the first level of the dormitory. The door was slightly ajar. Ayana’s olive fingers curled around the cool, metal knob tentatively. There were exactly two things in her mind at that exact moment; both options (if she chose) would present two disparate turn of events.

Option A

She could open the door and identify the individual who was reciting Surah Maryam within the confines of the room. Such a euphonious baritone breathing each ayat to life. But the individual is undoubtedly male, a non-mahram. If they would be found together in a room, at such close proximity, it would create baseless rumours and even, the possibility of fitnah

Option B

She could retract her steps and suppress her nafs, allowing the individual to be a mystery until, if Allah wills, she finally chances upon him at another time.

If Ayana were to choose Option A

She turned the knob silently, allowing a pool of fluorescence emitting from a single, filament bulb on the off-white ceiling escape the room and thus, illuminating her. Ayana gazed at the figure of a man sitting cross-legged over the prayer mat, hunched over the Koran just like she had moments before. He had his back turned to her but she could lucidly make out who he was from that position. He was in one of her Linguistic modules, a third-year Mathematics senior. They had barely spoken a word to each other; he always seemed wary of staring too much at her, for too long. They had only exchanged smiles on an occasion when they had to hand out essay briefs within an arm’s length from each other. Ayana respected him for the grace of which he treated women with, the caution in his gaze that shielded the whispers of Shaytan. But every other girl in her batch was in a long-term relationship, some had even gone steady since Junior College. She feared being the only one left on the shelf, forlorn and gathering dust throughout her youth. It didn’t seem wrong if she were to conjure the courage to approach him and introduce herself, in that very room.

“Assalamualai-“

Stop. Before Ayana could even lift a leg up to cross the threshold, her mind had rapidly skipped to Option B.

If Ayana were to choose Option B

Nafs. A delicate, intangible product of human idle and willingness to be pursued by the sensuous whispers of Shaytan. Ayana reproached herself, having dared to even have such interjections that would displease Allah. Yes, perhaps he was her future Imaam, the person that would lead her in the daily prayers and supplicate her readings of the noble Koran. Perhaps he was the man she would inevitably find love in for the sake of Allah. But if he truly was, then Ayana did not have to cross the line and force the meeting. She had to keep her dignity intact – furthermore, she wasn’t even sure if she was prepared to present herself with the opposite sex at 6.30 am in the morning.

Ayana backed away, closing the door behind her as she trudged back to her room. In the momentary state of disillusionment, it had slipped her mind that she was still clothed in her prayer garments. She chortled silently and promptly muttered praises to the Almighty as she clutched her misbahah to her chest. Insha’Allah. One day. Nobody knows for certain whom Allah has paired him or her with, when he or she will meet and if they were really fated for each other. If only Ayana knew that this was only the beginning of the numerous challenges she would imminently face.

Part II

“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.”

(4:1)

The emblazoned words glimmered brightly on the screen of her iPhone as she lifted her finger in mid-scroll. Ayana’s eyes were glued to the phrase, quoted directly from Surah An Nisa, for an immeasurable moment before she caught herself in the lull. Astaghfirullah, she gasped aloud as she regained her composure. Alana straightened her back on the off-white couch as her mother crossed the living room hauling fresh laundry in her arms. She hastily pushed the lock button of her phone and tossed it in between the feather cushions.

“Ayana, what are you doing there? You look like you just saw a Jinn pass by!” inquired her mother as she plopped herself on the nearest armchair.

Ayana quickly grabbed the clothes from her mother’s lap and began folding them languidly. She couldn’t get the thoughts off her mind, his name still vivid within her periphery. Cheeks flushing hot crimson as she fought back her embarrassment, Ayana attempted to steady her trembling fingers on the hem of a pair of khaki trousers she was folding. But how did his account even ended up in her Instagram feed? One of her classmates must have messed with her phone when she had left it on the table the other day to greet Nature’s call.

“Or is this a calling? Allah’s way of leading me to him?” she questioned, biting the corners of her raspberry lips.

“Ayana, don’t lose yourself too much in your thoughts. You’re being led by Shaytan to stray away from Allah,” her mother’s casual yet assertive voice intercepted her interjections.

In the midst of all her preoccupations (that included a twenty-page dissertation she had yet to complete), Ayana felt a particular chill emanating within her as she perused through her closest friends’ Instagram and Facebook accounts. Most of them were either gushing about their approaching nikah dates or in the middle of planning their wedding ceremonies. Some of her childhood friends were already awaiting the birth of their first child! And here she was, single and surreptitiously available. But was she? Was she ready to face a lifelong commitment that not only hinges on her future, but the entire future of the Ummah? As her conjectures probed further, a light tap on her shoulder intercepted Ayana’s attention.

“I know what’s going on in your head, Ayana. Why don’t you take wudhu’ and perform Istikhara? Insha’Allah, with Istikhara, Allah will guide you to what is best for you. Don’t simply harp on your nafs. Ask Him, the one and only,” her mother mutters gently, stroking her daughter’s head.

Hanging her head low, Ayana’s eyes began brimming with tears. How could she have forgotten the One who truly knows everything that had been arranged in this temporary world? The thought of consigning to Allah had completely slipped her mind in the expanse of mindless passion and portentous thinking. Masya’Allah... But Istikhara seemed too major; too rash of a supplication to be made for something that Ayana was not even sure of. Lips tightly compressed, Ayana stares emptily at the phone, her mind roving back and forth. Should she:

Option A

Just add him as a friend on Instagram and let the conversation commence that way?

Option B

Is Istikhara really the best remedy for this unsettled heart?

If Ayana were to choose Option A

Follow.

Her fingers escaped the button rapidly, Ayana’s heart hammering in her chest as she waited for something brilliant to happen. Yet her expectations were clearly malignant – there were no bright sparks of glee erupting in her heart, nor was her uncertainty abated in the very least. In fact, it was the complete antithesis. Restless, Ayana spent the night in its entirety gazing at her phone, screaming for him to accept her pending request. This went on for weeks, dominating most of time in between classes, even making her miss Asar at one point when she was busy stalking his Facebook. With dampened spirits, Ayana began to fabricate assumptions about him that later spread like wildfire throughout campus.

“Oh, he’s such a snob! It’s just an Instagram request. Not a marriage proposal.”

“Oh, god, I’ve heard that he even asked a girl out once and dumped her a day before the date!”

“He only looks religious but has a blackened heart...”

Unbeknownst to Ayana, he could not have possibly accepted her request for his phone had malfunctioned just hours before she hit “Follow”.

If Ayana were to choose Option B

“O Allah, verily I seek the better [of either choice] from You, by Your knowledge, and I seek ability from You, by Your power, and I ask You from Your immense bounty. For indeed You have power, and I am powerless; You have knowledge and I know not; You are the Knower of the unseen realms...”

Clasping her hands together, Ayana placed them on her face and recited, “Amin, Ya Rabb.” She smiles to herself, feeling warmth spreading over her insides and enveloping her in its comforting embrace. It always felt that way after performing salah, an intimate and personal conversation with your Maker that had the innate ability to make you feel assured of matters closest to the heart. Having performed Istikhara for the first time in her life, Ayana realized that both tawakkul and effort come in seamless tandem with each other – without any one of these, it would all result to waste. A reminder by Ibn Hajar al-Haytami resurfaces in her consciousness: “One of the benefits of this (Istikhara) is to further distance oneself from the desires of one’s own egotistic inclinations.” With that, Ayana awaited her fate.



Part III

“The sinner does not care about whether he angers his Lord or not, all he cares about is satisfying his lusts and desires.”

Ibn al-Qayyim [Ighaath Al-Lahafaan, P.44]

The glint of silver caught her eye, glimmering brightly for a second before she averted her gaze to the thin mist that was pressing itself intently against the windowpane. Toying with the ring with nimble fingers, Ayana watched as children from the nearby madrasah took turns playing the swings in the playground. Two months had passed since the engagement ceremony, yet still, they had not officially met each other. The man whose melodious baritone piqued her desires that very night was now her fiancé. Despite the perpetual bliss prior to marriage, Ayana still felt like something was amiss. Hadn't all her patience paid off? Then why was there still a gaping hole in her heart needing to be filled with his presence? The only symbol that represented their relationship was this smooth, silver ring that clung to her index finger. Nothing more.

They had never made eye contact, much less met each other. His elusiveness was staggering to Ayana – once, she had even questioned herself of his existence. Communication was limited to a couple of weekly text messages that protracted her dissatisfaction. Why can't I be like those other girls who go on dates with their fiancés and have candlelight dinners facing the sea? Throwing herself over the bed, Ayana grabbed her laptop and began her Googling spree in blatant fury.

How to make your boyfriend... fiancé go out with you?

Why do I have doubts in my relationship?

Love before marriage in the Islamic context.

Amongst the 100,000 related searches, only one caught Ayana's eye. "Hook up with Allah, and He will hook you up," she muttered to herself, directing the cursor to the beckoning link. She swallowed a lump that had lodged in her throat all this while, a certain sense of self-disappointment shooting up to her skull. Again, she had failed herself for constantly being overwhelmed by her own nafs. How could she even think of getting married, forging an untainted relationship with someone, when her own relationship with the Almighty was still a very flawed one?

"Thus, for those of us seeking to get married, in addition to looking for marriage at every event, let's look for marriage in our relationship with Al Wahhab, The Giver of All. Let's be honest. We are talking about the Al Mujeeb, The Responder to Prayer. Those are amongst the Names of Allah! Allah gives and He answers!" she read aloud, her own crisp words punctuating the silence that pervaded the room.

Perhaps Ayana had forgotten the importance of du'a in the midst of entangling her relationship with her fiancé. The answers to her doubts were all there in front of her, condensed within the orphaned copy of the Quran that merely sat on her bookshelf gathering dust. In reshaping and enhancing her relationship with the Creator, she too would gain more knowledge of her beliefs and God. But why was it so arduous for her to reach out for the Quran and prayer mat at times of difficulty? Why was she so inclined to wallow in self-pity and wait for something to happen? Curled up like a newborn infant, Ayana attempted to filter her thoughts and make the rightful decision.

Ask Allah, or leave it to our own nafs to decide.

If you were Ayana, what would you choose?

Filling the Vessel

So....who do you love?

By Hawa Anwar

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

In your quietest moments, it creeps up on you. That gnawing need for love. You don't realise it when you're surrounded by worldly tasks, you don't know how to get rid of it. All I need is someone to fill my life. You keep searching. Will you ever find the one?

The loss of connection to the One does this to us. God created a void in your heart that is only His to fill.

**“Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest”
(13:28)**

If you try to fill it with a partner, an ambition or an activity, the void gets bigger as the longing for love gets stronger. And once He guides you to realise you need to worship and love Him to feel more whole, you realise there is a higher standard of love waiting for you. You are just not at your optimum yet. But how do you get there?

To those who say, “I have not yet found sincere love in my heart for Allah and His Prophet s.a.w.,” have hope. When the prophet Muhammad s.a.w. tells us that

**“you will be with those whom you love [on the Day of Resurrection]”
[Sahih Bukhari]**

we are reminded that love is purposeful. Even the slightest desire in your heart to find Allah will be answered if you believe, for the prophet s.a.w. said,

**“Allah the Most High said, ‘I am as My servant thinks [expects] I am. I am with him when he mentions Me. If he mentions Me to himself, I mention him to Myself; and if he mentions Me in an assembly, I mention him in an assembly greater than it. If he draws near to Me a hand's length, I draw near to him an arm's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.’”
[Sahih Al-Bukhari]**

So don't give up. Try to remember moments you have failed Allah, who guided you back? Could it have happened if He did not permit it? If He can allow you to be in a state of struggle to find love for that which He loves, then He can raise you to the state of Love for Him. Ask Musa a.s. who, from having killed a man saved the Children of Israel from the worst

leader imaginable. Anything is possible if He wills it.

You can be something special—something special to Him—if you don't give up. Keep making sincere dua to The Most Merciful for the love in your heart to be for all He loves. Keep listening to stories of the prophets. Keep close those who smile at the mention of the Beloved's name. Try your best to emulate his character and deeds, for he is the most loved by Allah. This following is only possible with knowledge. To gain this knowledge, let us take the first step toward asking those who know such as teachers and scholars so that we may be rightly guided to His Love.

DEEN OVER DUNYA

A MUSLIMAH'S JOURNEY FOR HEREAFTER

by Nurain Amirah Bte Abdul Rahim

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Everyone wishes to be liberated from the stranglehold of Dunya - including her.

She recalled the feeling of overwhelming sadness and disappointment. An innumerable amount of desire and anguish tears at her feeble heart - all for the sake of this temporal world where most of us only seek to indulge in His creations but dither to bestow thankfulness upon the Creator. The world, that she had once held so securely and possessively in her grasp, came crashing down to her feet like a band of dominoes. She knew the right thing to do was to let go.

But how can she? Where can she even begin?

As she sought for ease in that moment of ambivalence, Allah s.w.t relayed her words of wisdom through a beloved asatizah.

“Always choose Allah s.w.t and no matter how hard the going gets. Simply because, if you choose Allah s.w.t over something today, what makes you think that Allah won't choose you for something even better later on?” the words echoed in her ears, reverberating as she contemplated on her prayer mat after Zuhr.

Istighfar lingered at her raspberry-coloured lips, never pausing even as beads of tears cascaded down her cheeks. So true yet so arduous to accomplish. Despite the heaviness of her heart, she mustered enough strength to silently whisper to herself, “I have to let it go. Ya Rabb, please help me through this journey.”

Allah s.w.t is indeed the best of planners - her prayers are finally answered. The letter bearing the gift that she so desperately coveted slid over her opened palms. Finally after much pleading and praying, Al-Wahhab, the greatest giver of gifts, granted her wish.

With so much hope and happiness surrounding her now, she knew that she had to give back to Allah s.w.t, to find a way eternally express her gratitude. She pledges to be a consistently better servant of His.

The journey towards embracing Allah s.w.t again commenced. She had to start believing in herself and rebuild her self-worth. Past experiences of excruciating disappointments and rejection had made her easily anxious and timid. She is perpetually seeking the opportunity to break away from this cocooning shell that had enclosed her for so long. Immersing herself in activities that promotes the seeking of Mardhatillah, she makes seeking the pleasure of Allah s.w.t as the main goal in her life. Of course, with every new adventure comes a series of equally alienating

setbacks. In the beginning, she felt extremely out of place. There were no familiar faces around and it proved challenging to initiate a conversation with these strangers particularly like an introvert she is (very acutely compartmentalized by a certain Myer Briggs personality test). She felt a sudden urge to leave. Her legs felt the innate urge to flee, to succumb back into normality. Take the easy way out and quit.

Before she could even lift her legs up, she affirmed herself of the niat or intention she has set. ‘If it's for Allah, it shall be worth it. Allah put me to it to guide me through it’. True to His word, Allah has gifted her with a special comradeship. Through time, she gained friends who shared the same niat as her and was willing to constantly push her out of her shell. They believed in her softness - those little, seemingly insignificant actions - particularly endearing.

They restored the love and confidence that she desired for herself. It led her to passionately seek knowledge of the Deen. In order to be the best servant of Allah s.w.t., she believes that it begins with learning again about the basics of Islam itself - the root of all knowledge. To be able to perform His commandments with clear understanding and to have the desire to always be close to Him.

To put into place the right etiquette and values in all affairs that would ultimately be in line with the religion. That was her mission.

Though it no longer felt awkward to be surrounded by fellow Muslimahs anymore, it was still somewhat intimidating as she feels unworthy to be in the accompaniment of so many sisters who are already in their individual paths of seeking the Deen. In

class, she vividly recalled a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah r.a, where the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w said:

“Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge, Allah will make the path to Jannah (Paradise) easy for them.”

[Sahih Muslim 2699; Sunan Tirmidhi 2945].

The last (and never the least) phase for her now is to Istiqamah; the act of consistency. Allah s.w.t is also known as Al-Fattah, The Opener. He who has opened so many doors; of love and support from others, opportunities to acquire knowledge of the deen and to just be in the state of calmness within her. Whenever it is within her means to be there for others, supporting their journeys or seeking opportunities to learn through lectures or classes and volunteering her time for the community at large, for a greater purpose, she strives to be there. All for the sake of being the best servant that she can be to Allah, for all that He has granted her over the years.

All these were far from where she was several years ago and it wouldn't have been possible if not for the very catalyst - the disappointments, the sacrifice and learning to let go of worldly matters to seek Him. He, who wouldn't leave her disappointed and He who pieces all the brokenness together again.

May Allah bless our journeys to continue till Jannah. Allahumma Ameen

SEEKING GOD



It is a self-questioning matter on how do I seek Allah. Let us ponder upon this metaphor: As a parent, we always want the best for our kids. We could not leave our children all by themselves be it at the playground or at home. We are protective, love above all else. Fitrah (primordial human nature).

When our child performed well in school or in activities that we set for them i.e. memorizing verses of the Al-Quran, as a devoting parent, it is a norm to give rewards for our children. We will pamper our child with sweets or candies or toys or treats and you name it, the list goes on.

At some point of their lives, they work hard for rewards. Let's be honest. You did work hard for rewards from your parents did

you, that one time? Yes, you did. I did too.

However, as we grow older, as we mature, we know rewards will not keep coming. It will not signify much. As we grow older, we are capable of getting ourselves those rewards we used to receive which back then we thought impossible. Parents do things out of love for their child.

It is intense. A love that one can never express through words.

Now, the sweets, toys or candies is the Jannah. Is it Jannah that you seek? It is just rewards that you are seeking entirely? Or is it Allah that we seek?

Ultimately, it is Allah.

Jannah (Paradise) is a makhluk (creation) of Allah, He created the Jannah and Jahannam (Hellfire). He created the land and sea. Everything that exists today in this millennia is His creations. Is it not logical if it is His creations that we are seeking and not the Creator?

In the Holy Quran,

**“And that to your Lord is the end (of every one)”
(53:42)**

Allah loves His servant.

He is Ar-rahman, Ar-rahim. Just like how parents love their child. They give their child an intense care, love and passion. Even so, Allah's love, care and passion are The Greatest. Know that we have purposes in this Dunya.

Shaykh Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani Qoddasalloohu Sirrohu q.s mentioned “Anyone who seeks Allah, will surely find Him”

In the Book of Riyadh As-Salihin, Book 1 Hadith 440, Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said,

“Allah says: ‘I am just as My slave thinks of Me when he remembers Me.’ By Allah! Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His slave than one of you who unexpectedly finds in the desert his lost camel. ‘He who comes closer to Me one span, I come closer to him a cubit; and he who comes closer to Me a cubit, I come closer to him a fathom; and if he comes to Me walking, I come to him running”.

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Sincerity is doing the (ibadah) worship without just wanting rewards from Allah s.w.t. Sincerity is doing it for Allah's sake, for Him only. Similarly, if we are truly sincere towards our parents, we will not mind on the rewards that they will give, we do it because of true love.

When one gets crazy in love, nothing else matters but to achieve the Divine.

**“I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me ”
(51:56)**

Ibnu Abbas narrated in his exegesis that by worshipping it is to know Allah (ma'rifah). Knowing Allah contributes to many ways, by His attributes, by looking at nature.

When a learned man ponders upon a plant, he will want to know how does the plant survive. Who let it grow.

Who manages it. Who gives life to it. He will understand the beauty and appreciate its surroundings.

A black ant crawling at night under a black stone in the dark, no naked eyes will be able to see the existence of the black ant, but know that Allah is the Most-Seeing. As how tiny the ant is, He Sees and He knows.

He sees and knows the heart of the servants as well.

He reads and looks into the hearts, understanding our matters above anyone else. Henceforth, as a creation to The Creator, on the journey to meet Him, it is our duty to purify the inner self to prepare for the Day.

He mentioned in The Book of Surah 91 Ash-Shams verse 9: Success is really attained by him purifies it

In purifying the heart through plentiful of worship, remembrance of Allah s.w.t. at all times, give blessings to our Beloved Prophet s.a.w and performing and good deeds.

Mufti Mesir in one of his lectures clarify the certainty of servanthood to our Creator is to perform worship to Allah and Him alone, purify the heart in preparation for the Last Day in

**“The Day when neither wealth will be of any use (to any one) nor sons, (88) Except to him who will come to Allah with a sound heart, (89)”
(26:88-89)**

and in his last point, he states of the purpose of living is to give prosperity to the world we are living in. There are many ways for contributing prosperity for the Dunya.

Firmly, through the good behaviour (akhlaq) of a person would be enough to give benefits to the society and the Deen. Prophet Muhammad s.a.w is a perfect example to the whole of mankind. He represents the Divine. He represents the Divine. With the presence of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w there is Islam.

It is through Prophet Muhammad s.a.w, that we are able to learn about The Creator and His Might.

We learned the words of Allah through Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. The Messenger s.a.w also demonstrated exemplary values and virtues through his character and mannerism. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w was sent to perfect moral character. He was sent at a time when slavery was rampant and humans were seen as a tradable good.

However, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w taught humankind that a person is a slave only to Allah. Prophet Muhammad s.a.w also uplifted the status of a former slave, Bilal bin Abi Rabah ra by asking him to make the first call to prayer; calling out to all to pray to Allah, Lord of the universe.

**“Surely, there has come to you, from your midst, a Messenger who feels it very hard on him if you face a hardship, who is very anxious for your welfare, and for the believers he is very kind, very merciful”
(9:128)**

This faqeerah seeks forgiveness for the shortcomings in the write-up. All bad is from me and all good is from Allah the Almighty. I am nothing without His Guidance and all knowledge comes from Him. Alhamdulillah wa syukurillah.

by Nur Rashiqah Binte Tumiran

Forgive me nots

by Zulhaqem Bin Zulkifli

You forbade,
I succumbed.
So evident the transgression—

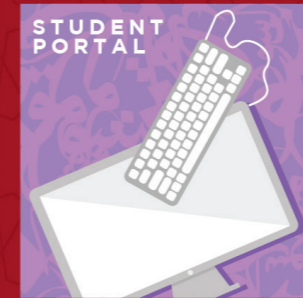
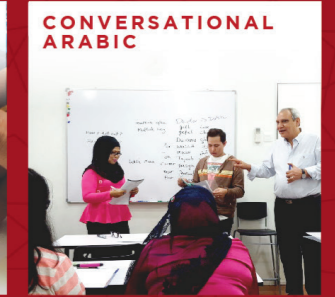
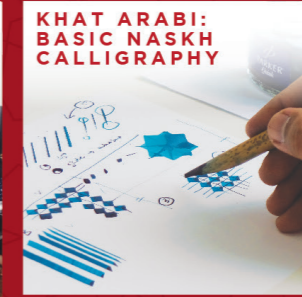
Forgive me not.
And yet, You promised a mercy
greater than wrath.

The tongue is silent,
Where words fail me,
Too late it is to apologise –
Forgive me not.
But yet, You would honour me
should I mention You.

My soul!
How wretched it is!
So apt the suffering –
Forgive me not.
Still yet, You gave a fathom for my
arm's length;

I cannot stand,
My back is pained.
Though heavy this burden –
Forgive me not.
But yet, You came in haste, whilst
I was walking.

Ablaze I am set, basking in Your
mercy.
An atom in Your infinite compas-
sion
I beseeched – forgive me not
And yet, forgiveness was all You
had.



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Unparalleled *Love*

By Amirah Sabrina

You let people
Sway your thoughts;
Thoughts of your worth,
Thoughts of your significance.
Second-guessing,
Hesitating,
Oscillating from one critic
to another

You've been fooled,
And compelled
To make up for all that you lack
To feel present but invisible,
To be acknowledged but easily forgotten

And yet,

Everything about you
Is a self-portrait;
The way you laugh;
Every breath you steal in between
Whether you let your hand rest on your mouth
Or throw your head back,
How your face glows;
Brimming with joy whenever you speak
Of the things that makes
Your heart swell with utter delight,
Or the delicate spring in your step,
Or the wrinkles around your mouth and eyes,
Or even how you hold back a yawn
They're what makes you
You
No one can do it better
Than you do.

And perhaps
You are seeking for The One
To validate your worth,
To make you complete.
But maybe
The one is just you

So wrap yourself up
In your embrace
Romanticize yourself;
With pride, not pity
With grace, not grief
Take long commutes
Let your mind unravel and
Wander to a safe place
For all your inner monologues to reside for days

It isn't selfish
It isn't egoistic
It's essential
It's learning to love every bit of you
Without discounting your feelings.
It's giving yourself compliments
And never settling for less
Because you are your own chorus.



The Quran: **A love letter from Allah**

By Nur Lyana Bte Jamil

Noor Farhan © 2016

Love is innate. It forms the roots from which our souls blossom and reside deep in our hearts, seemingly endless and abundant. It forms the core of Islam and they are synonymous. Love in Islam is all encompassing; it does not only focus on love between a man and a woman but with Allah s.w.t., with Prophet Muhammad s.a.w., with his family and companions, with family, friends, neighbours, strangers and nature. The amount of love we have to offer is limitless. Thousands of years ago, the Quran was revealed to the Beloved.

Today, the Quran is still in all its glory, serving as a guide to us. But it does not only teach, it heals. It does not only introduce us to Islam, it introduces us to Him. It does not only hold infinite knowledge and wisdom, it serves as a bridge from Him to us.

Allah s.w.t teaches us about love and its characteristics in the Quran. How love is earned, how love is reliance on Him, how love is not obsessive, how loving is difficult, how love is fair. But it does not stop there.

He shows His love for us through stories of the prophets so that we can have a glimpse into the lives of the ones He has chosen, the ones who lived with profound love for Him that nourished their souls no matter how hard it gets. He shows His love for us through His Commands that are filled with goodness we could spend our lives uncovering and it would still not be enough because His Wisdom surpasses

our comprehension. He shows His love for us through the repeated reminders we find throughout because He knows there are times we get lost and we need to find our way back to Him. He shows His love for us by mentioning that He loves the believers, proof that our love for Him is not taken for granted and is reciprocated.

“When lovers are not able to meet, the next best thing is to send a message of love, what we call a love letter. When the letter arrives, a true lover will read it over and over, relishing the words of his or her lover. That is what the Quran is: a love letter from God.”
Shaykh Hamza Yusuf

We are aware that the words in the Quran are His but it becomes one of the plethora of things left deep in our subconscious; it exists but its meaning keeps fading with time. The same words that lived in the heart of Rasulullah s.a.w. are the same ones we read today. He sent a beautiful letter for us to adorn our time with. He sent a beautiful letter to calm our tempestuous hearts. He sent a beautiful letter reminding us of His Love to soothe our souls that miss Home. The language used in the Quran is simply the language of love. Allah's Divine love for us exists even before we did.

Allah is Love.

THE GREAT SAINT OF SINGAPORE

by Amir Irsyad Khan

We begin this article with the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful for without His help, there will be no article. May Allah guide us.

In the early 19th century, shortly after Stamford Raffles, there was also another man that arrived on the shores of this island, a man greater than the “founder” of Singapore. He is none other than Habib Nuh bin Muhammad al-Habsyi. Who is that, you may ask? Let us take a look at the story of this man who is known as the Great Saint of Singapore.

His beginnings

An honourable descendant of Rasulullah s.a.w, Habib Nuh came from a long line of pious predecessors. He was born on a ship while his family was sailing to Penang. When his mother began experiencing labour pains, there was a great storm such that the ship almost capsized. His father, Syed Muhammad bin Syed Ahmad, decided to name him Nuh in honour of Prophet Nuh after which the storm calmed. He grew up in Penang and upon reaching adulthood, he worked in a town there, Butterworth.

His conduct with people

On the invitation of Habib Salim bin Abdullah Ba Sumayr, (who?), he came to Singapore in his early thirties. He then spent the rest of his life in Singapore, calling people to Islam here, in Malaya and the neighbouring islands. Rasulullah s.a.w showed that calling people to Islam does not have to be through words alone. Rather, it is through your everyday actions that define your dakwah. This, Habib Nuh exemplified. Habib Nuh’s most well-known attribute was his compassion. He often gave out sweets and money to children and orphans as well as helped the poor and destitute. He walked for long distances to fulfil the needs of others. Once, he travelled from Telok Blangah to Paya Lebar on foot to help a family whose child was sick. As a result, the people loved him. A true leader is the one that sacrifices himself to serve the community.

His dedication to Allah

Every night, he will make his khalwat^[1] on the hill at Palmer Road where he will spend the night in prayer, zikir^[2] and contemplation. He was a constant visitor of graves, praying for the dead and reciting holy verses of the Quran until daybreak. He lived his life simply without chasing the world and devoted his life solely for Allah. He once said, “Don’t be greedy for worldly materials nor have any ill-feelings towards anyone throughout your life.”

[1] Khalwat: Being alone to focus on ibadah

[2] Zikir: Recitations that make us remember Allah

His resting place

Thousands of people from Singapore and the region came to pay their last respects to Habib Nuh. During the funeral, a peculiar thing happened. Arrangements had been made for the burial of Habib Nuh at a Muslim cemetery. However, his coffin became immensely heavy and would not move an inch even with many people carrying it. Somebody then stood among the crowd and announced that Habib Nuh once mentioned that he was to be buried at Mount Palmer, the place of his khalwat. Many agreed to this and immediately, the coffin was light and could be lifted.

Today, Habib Nuh's maqam is well-developed with a mosque, Masjid Haji Muhammad Salleh, built beside it. Countless number of people from Singapore and all over the world will attend the haul^[3] of Habib Nuh every year. Even to this day, there will be a constant stream of people visiting his maqam, all in the hopes of getting some barakah^[4] in their lives. Sitting with a saint, alive or dead, has an effect on our hearts. It will allow us to remember Allah if we are truly sincere.

His saintly blessings

There are many amazing stories with regards to his saintly blessings. One which can be seen to this day would be the incident related to the moving of his maqam. The authorities wanted to shift the mosque and his maqam to another place during the planning of the East Coast Parkway (ECP) expressway. A viaduct was supposed to cut across the maqam. Despite the efforts of the Islamic Council of Singapore (MUIS), the board managing the maqam then, to convince the developers to change their plans, bulldozers were placed at the site. To the dismay of the contractors, the bulldozers could not be started. Even after bringing in a new set of bulldozers, the same thing happened. Eventually, a detour had to be made such that the viaduct bends around the maqam. Currently, that viaduct is part of the Marina Coastal Expressway. So, if you happen to be driving past the maqam, don't forget to recite al-Fatihah for him.

Lessons and legacies

As you can see, to be a friend of Allah, one does not have to devote their time solely on spiritual deeds. Habib Nuh balanced his time between being among the people and with Allah. So what is the use of relating Habib Nuh's story if we do not make an effort to continue his legacy?

What we can do is to be kind and spread goodness to the people around us. Support each other on worldly needs and more importantly, for the Hereafter. Give help when necessary and give advice with compassion and wisdom. Everyone is at a different stage of their lives and religion. We don't know where we are in the sight of Allah. Habib Nuh, a person whose rank lies in the highest heavens, never discriminated among the people. He was good to people across strata. His ways had such an impact that a few British officials converted to Islam.

Also, don't forget to set time to be with Allah. Every day, we should have a time to be at our prayer mat to do zikir, doa and contemplation. The best time is always the last third of the night as exemplified by Habib Nuh. He had a special place for his khalwat which was at that time surrounded by jungle and facing the sea; the calming breeze and serene vista was likely the ideal place to draw closer to Allah. Instead of seeing zikir as a chore, it should be seen as an opportunity to stop from whatever we are doing and let go of everything. Let Allah take over our affairs. A great man once said, "Be consistent with zikir." InshaAllah all our worries will be replaced by strength and hope because we know that Allah will be with us.

Conclusion

The barakah of one man has seemingly captivating power to attract people from all over the world. Even to this day Muslims all over the world, ranging from big time scholars to the common people, visit his maqam when they travel to Singapore. Sadly, many Singaporean Muslims do not even know the treasure that is so close at hand. Isn't it ironic that the best thing in Shenton Way is not the tall, sophisticated buildings but a small, unassuming corner behind a bus terminal where a towering saint resides?

[3] Haul: An appointed day to remember a specific scholar and learn from his legacy

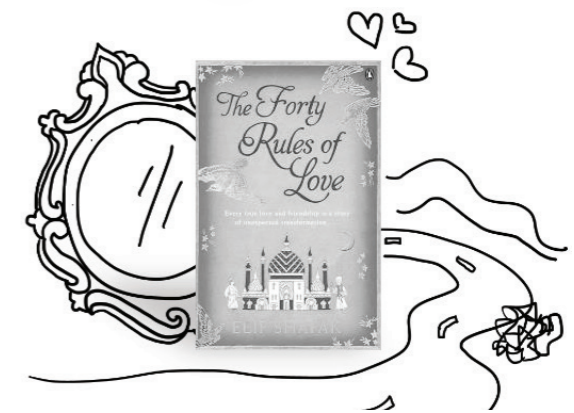
[4] Barakah: Something small but results in comparatively larger goodness

References: The Grand Saint of Singapore, compiled by Ustaz Muhammad Ghouse Khan Surattee and the Outreach Unit of al-Firdaus Mosque

The Simplest

Rule

by Maliah Zubir



November was the month of leaving. The leaving of friends, mothers and seasons. I was experiencing a temporary dislocation myself when my family travelled to Dubai. Dislocation from a state of comfort, to not knowing how to comfort others. Travel gave me distance to reflect—and what better companion to accompany one on a path of seeking than a book? Virginia Woolf once said, "Books are the mirrors of the soul" and in such situations, we find ourselves looking for that book. The one that can articulate to us how we feel or how we should feel. The Forty Rules of Love by Elif Shafak is one such book.

This was the story that accompanied me on long car rides through the Emirates. Lines from the novel would float in and out of my mind, perhaps answers in fragments to predicaments both present and future. When bursts of green disrupted the monotonous brown stroke of the desert, I knew we were reaching our destination for the day.

Abu Dhabi is, believe it or not, richer and grander than Dubai. In Dubai, they spoke nothing but reverence for their magnanimous ruler Sheikh Zayed and the royal family. Where there was an opportunity to boast of the country's riches, they swelled with pride. The Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, built in honour of the late ruler, is the culmination of two of the country's greatest prides.

As we treaded on the immaculate marble floor, it became clear that we were entering a masterpiece. At that moment, I wished I were a bird, so that I could admire the courtyard floor in all its glory – an augmented version of the tinted pearl petals that encircled the pillars, topped with 24-carat gold. It was easy to accept the monument as the crown jewel of the city. Easy to forget that it was first and foremost a place of worship.

At the corners of the mosque's courtyard were blue pools of water that contrasted starkly against the alabaster minarets and domes. They reflected the structure's likeness in perfect symmetry as though to beautify what was already made perfect. Like mirrors. Looking back, Allah s.w.t could not have given me a better visual metaphor for the quote that struck me the most while reading Shafak's novel: "Believers are each other's mirrors."

Mirrors best describe how the story of Shafak's novel is packaged. The Forty Rules of Love follows the story of Ella Rubinstein, whose worldview is rattled after reading Aziz Zahara's manuscript entitled Sweet Blasphemy. His novel forms the core narrative of The Forty Rules of Love. As I read of Ella reading Aziz's story of Shams to search for herself and Shams searching for Rumi, I was aware that I may be reading Shafak's story of Ella in search of myself

as well. This Matryoshka doll effect echoed the constant deferral in which we attempt to define ourselves or find our purpose in life. This epiphany paves way for questions: What does it mean to be a reflection of another believer? What were Rumi, Shams, Ella and I searching for? What could you, dear reader, be in search for?

To answer the former, Shafak elaborates in one of the Forty Rules of Love: “But eventually it is best to find a person, the person who will be your mirror. Remember, only in another person’s heart can you truly see yourself and the presence of God within you.”

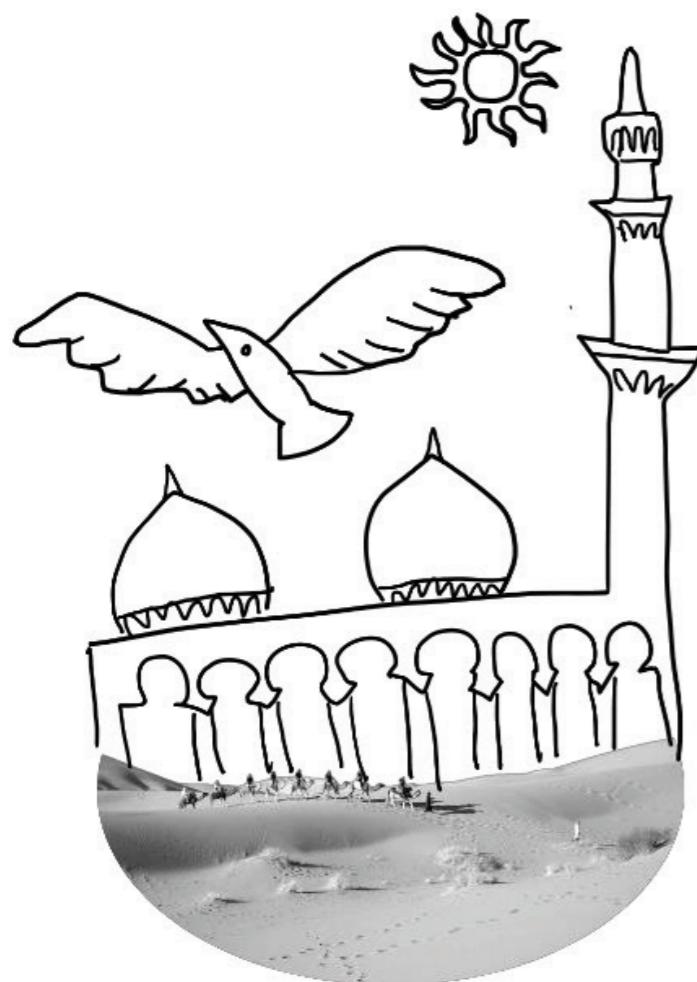
Her insight offers an introspective stance, focusing on a believer’s condition of heart in relation to his relationship with Allah s.w.t. She posits that the heightened clarity in which we view our hearts can open more doors in our lives for Allah s.w.t to permeate the room of our hearts.



Perhaps Rumi and Shams as companions on the path of Sufism, have reached a level of ihsan (perfection) to know exactly what they were searching for—someone who loved Allah s.w.t as much as they did, someone whose room was brimming with love for Him but yearned for it to overflow. Perhaps someone still fumbling, such as myself, sees illusions of our true purpose in life in the form of trivial woes. Worries such as whether my words are enough to another person, when I am unperturbed by how I strive less to reach out to Allah s.w.t. Perhaps a non-believer like Ella searches the world for an answer to the eternal question of love but upon treading on a vast form of love—too vast to comprehend—they back away at its intensity.

As I closed the covers of my ruffled copy, I felt my spiritual cup filled. Much like how a sleepless soul thrives on a cup of coffee until he consumes the next cup that will keep him moving. The Forty Rules of Love is a read that will satiate one’s literary thirst for a long time to come. Many months later, its caffeine still sustains me. Whether it be forty or fifty rules, The Forty Rules of Love is a reminder that the simplest rule is to love Him, and gain His love in return. Shafak spurs us wayfarers on, lest we be afraid to take the quest.

“The quest for Love changes us. There is no seeker among those who search for Love who has not matured on the way. The moment you start looking for Love, you start to change within and without.”



first SIGHT

When she first caught sight of him,
She thought he was the one.
His eyes – so inviting,
She came to him at once.

Her senses were heightened
Yet blurred at the same time.
She was unable to discern reality
From her hopes and dreams.

She knew she had to run,
And towards him she did.
But she should have known better,
And gone the other way.

A love that consumed her,
Yet left her feeling empty.
The moonlight reached her,
But failed to touch her.

Loved, yet neglected,
Love did not flow through her.
She never bloomed.
Hers was a soul in paralysis.

Love is just an illusion,
He played his cards out well.
When the game was over,
He left with her heart.



Shafiqah Wajid © 2016

WALKING FROM YOU TO YOU

By Izzah Hazirah Binte Azmi

“If Allah knows [any] good in your hearts, He will give you [something] better than what was taken from you.” (08:70)

Matters of the heart will inevitably find their way to us, and love will always be an unavoidable topic. We are surrounded by love, love we so graciously receive from our family, friends and possibly, a significant other. Love empowers one to be better especially in the eyes of Allah. Thus, it would only be reasonable to strive to improve ourselves for the One who truly matters. It is always important to surround oneself with people who are able to impact our lives positively and Allah has a way of naturally removing those who are not suitable for you, even without your knowledge. Many times, you are left questioning why things turned out the way they did but time will reveal the reasons why; you will reach enlightenment and the only thing left to utter is Alhamdulillah because Allah will always have a greater plan for you, beyond what you can imagine. So, trust Allah and surrender to His plan.

Walking away from love is extremely difficult and leaves one feeling broken, especially when it's a termination of a relationship. In this day and age, we are so deeply influenced by social media and our worldview has shifted such that there is the publicity of trivial things. Undeserving people with questionable morals are placed on a pedestal for us to model after. The concept of love that is presented to us is very Hollywood-centric and it is inevitable for us to fall into this trap. Once we establish a love like that as an ideal, there will be a disconnect in

expectations and the people we expect from because they are unable to meet our expectations. We tend to place our hopes on people, on Allah's creations when we should have focused our energy on Him. Everyone will disappoint except Allah. By becoming wiser and learning from experience, when it comes to seeking love, one should seek Allah first.

“Indeed, with me is my Lord, He will guide me” (26:62)

Ironically, heartbreak taught me all these valuable lessons. Disappointment after disappointment from the person I trusted very much forced me to undertake a journey on my own where I found myself and Him. I discovered that I could be more self-sufficient because I know Allah s.w.t will always be by my side. It was a painful but meaningful process, but only through misery and hardship did I internalize this fact. That was when I slowly loosened grip on someone I loved and learnt to let go. Instead, I surrendered all my love to the One who has never left me or let me down. I have always wondered what was lacking but I realized no one will be able to fill my void except Allah s.w.t. I learnt to strengthen my connection with Allah, to fill my heart with love for Him.

Everything else naturally becomes secondary. This newfound connection gave me resilience to face any obstacle presented to me.

“Verily! Only in the remembrance of Allah, will your heart find rest” (13:28)

Of course I was defeated but that is the good thing. It was a chance for me to pick up the pieces and to reconnect with Allah. Allah wants me to place my hopes in Him and only Him. For that, I do not regret what has happened. I changed my perspective, perceiving it as a lesson rather than a mistake. Everyone is placed in your life for a reason. In this case, Allah has given me a chance to run to Him. I hope that this would make my heart whole again and purify it because essentially only the heart matters. It is time I guard my heart against all that would lead me astray and to eradicate my love for all things worldly, including people who are unable to help me on this path. I am happier when I learn how to surround myself with people who are on the same page, helping each other on this journey. Slowly, you forget the heartache as you keep yourself occupied and the heart starts to heal because you realize it is not in our place to attach our hearts to something that does not belong to us in the first place. You will attain peace and tranquility with God's Will as you fill the core of your heart with love for Allah.

“Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.” (13:11)

As your heart starts to heal, take this time to focus on yourself and develop as a person. You are given the opportunity to improve on yourself, so why not take it? Just like how we expect the best from others, we have to take a step back to look at ourselves in the mirror. Everything starts from self. I would want to be the best version of myself that I am capable of achieving. Change for yourself and for Allah. It is time we place importance on things that truly matter such as embodying values of kindness, generosity and sincerity. Work towards that. Once we put in effort in improving ourselves for our Deen, everything will fall into place. Additionally, you start loving yourself more in the process as you learn that you are trying even though we are imperfect beings. You realize your self-worth and slowly, issues that bothered you and troubled you in the past no longer hold the same weight because your priorities change and your world-view broadens.

“And verily We sent messengers (to mankind) before thee, and We appointed for them wives and offspring, and it was not (given) to any messenger that he should bring a portent save by Allah's Leave. For everything there is a time prescribed.” (13:38)

In letting someone go, you actually gain so much more. You are not broken. Move forward, your heart will be at peace. Love is eternal; it should lead us to Jannah. Thus, wait patiently because I am sure it will be worth it. Your heart should be saved for the one who truly deserves it. But for now, share your love with people who deserve it such as your family and friends.

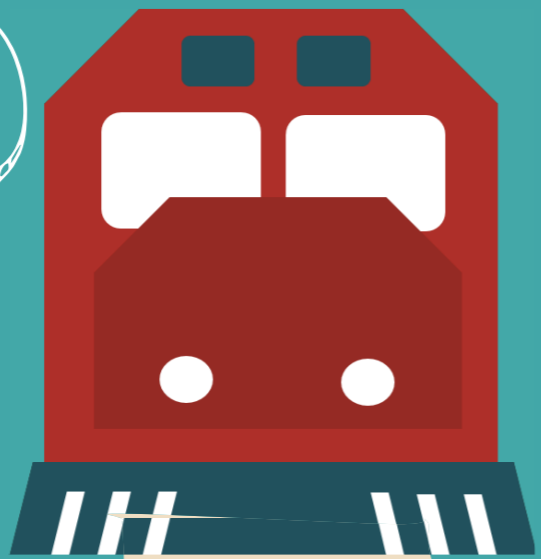
Patience, my friends.

“What is meant for you, will reach you even if it is beneath two mountains. And what isn't meant for you, won't reach you even if it is between your two lips.”



BOARD THE TRAIN

by Shaikha Salma



We all love to be loved. We all want to be wanted. We are all searching for that one thing that completes us, that mirrors our soul. We are all searching for love. Falling in love is like boarding a train. As you go by, all you can see are the sceneries passing by in a blur, but all beautiful. Along this journey, you see many others boarding, alighting. Boarding, alighting. And then someone comes along who makes your journey more beautiful. But soon enough, they will have to say goodbye. Their stop has arrived, and it is time for them to alight. It is only then you realize that not everyone is on the same journey as you. They too, have their own journeys to take. Their own destinies to fulfill. And their journey may not always be with you. We all have different routes. Many routes. One destination.

Dear one, let them go. Remember that they were never yours to begin with. Only from letting go, can you feel peace, from within.

Do not let your dear heart get distracted by the dunya. It is okay to feel tired. It is okay to feel helpless. It is okay to feel overwhelmed. It is okay for your prayer mat to be moist with your tears when your heart aches or when you feel that you've had enough. Because

unlike humans who will alight when they have to go, who may turn a blind eye to your pain, He says 'Come to me'. 'Come to Me, come to Me'. Dear weary hearts, do not go through this life feeling alone. Our hearts were never meant to feel lonely. Go back to Him. Come Home. Like a baby wailing for their mothers for comfort in a world where everything is uncertain and scary, our hearts yearn for comfort too. For a place to call Home. Allah hears your pain, He understands. And He is always with you.

Dear one, do not seek love outside your heart. The love of the Divine can only be felt, from within.

Look around you. His love can be seen and felt through everything He has given you on this journey. All you have to do is open your eyes. Look at the oceans that seem so endless you do not know where it stops and where the sky begins. That go so far deep men can only wonder what lies beneath it. Ponder about how the sun rises, illuminating the entire world and then sets it into darkness. It always seems darkest right before the dawn, so do not despair, do not curse the darkness because within each darkness is a treasure, and have faith that you will see the light once more.

Marvel at the billions of stars that lie just above your head. Wonder passionately what it is like to be up there. How majestic and beautiful this universe truly is, we will never really know.

Then look inside yourself, and just like all of His creations, see how beautiful you are. Look at your heart that has never stopped beating for you. Look into your mind, packaged so beautifully so that you may feel, think and ponder.

Do not let the last time you close your eyes be the first time your heart truly sees. Look into the eyes of the ones you love and think about how lucky you are, for Allah to have sent these beautiful souls to be on this journey with you. He has never left you alone.

Dear one, listen.

Listen to the birds chirping. Hear your dad laugh and see the twinkle in his eyes. You think that His love can only be felt when your head lies on the prayer mat, but look around. His love is in everything He has blessed you with. He has sent you blessings upon blessings in this world so how could you ever doubt His love.

Dear one, your heart was never meant to be broken.

It is made by the Greatest of Lovers, the One who never disappoints. Go to Him. He understands that some feelings cannot be put into words, just like how love cannot be stringed into words.

When your heart is bruised and you have no one to turn to, turn to Him. He is with the broken hearted. He understands that some darkness feels darker, lonelier and more painful than others. He has seen your first darkness.

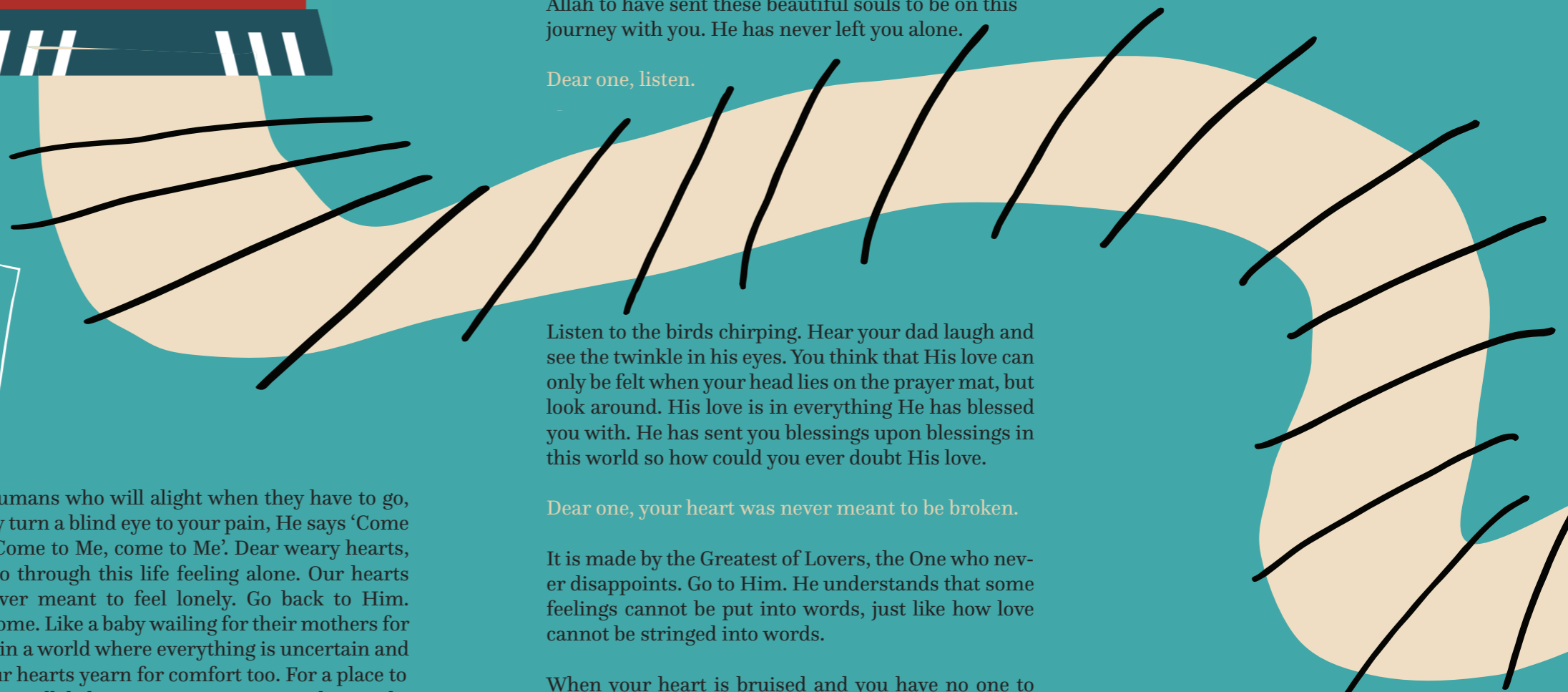
Before you were even born, before you knew how to talk, before your first laugh, before your first cry. He took care of you in the dark before light entered your eyes for the first time. Before you saw the world unfold in front of you for the first time. He took care of you during the first darkness that you've ever known, and He will take care of you through every darkness that follows.

Dear one, seek love in the right places.

Your heart is a gem, a treasure that needs to be

protected. It is too precious to be given away and few can comprehend your true value. So board the train, fall in love.

Treasure the ones that He has blessed you with and appreciate everything you have. You never know when will be the last time you can. Board the train with His love in your heart. Only then will you taste not only the sweetness of the journey but you will also end up at the destination you longed for.



i am a runaway hostage to myself
the culprit and victim
at the same time

i'm a poor pauper
nothing! nobody!
but nobody itself is too much of SOMEBODY

lone and still
trying to hear myself
the quieter you become
the more you are able to hear yourself

this heart knows deep inside
there is an undiscovered Treasure
a Perfected Jewel
a lofty Prize for the seekers
a gold mine of Infinity

my Heart
a blessed Seal
an overflowing flood
Of Ibrahim

i close my eyelids and finally

my Eyes open
and wiTHin

i see You are a thousand Suns
i see You travelling faster than light itself
i see the planets aligned in harmony
i see cream crusted bagels and apple trees swaying
i see the deep trenches of the ocean
i see a school of mackerel swimming

All in Harmony
i am the Harm
and You bring the Harmony
inside of Me

You are nothing but The Sun
You burn so bright and gleam like the Moon
You are a shoreless sea
You ascended the 7 heavens
Face to face with the Truth

The Truth using the Truth for the Truth
Your Light burning so bright till
there is no more night
that can hurt me
or day
that can blind me

Your Light emanates beyond the horizon
and all the signs point to You.

they say that love leaves clues
my Heart, can't ignore it
everywhere i look
there is only
You.

this heart, Your Zawiya in Istiqomah
Remaining after Annihilation

my heart, a thousand shades of sorrow
but Your Smile
heals All!

by Abu Sofian

Your Smile Heals All

1ST

#WHATDOYOUSEEK11
CONTEST WINNER



Al-Aqsa Mosque

@faanybone: "I seek for the safety of Masjid Al-Aqsa. And I seek for the safety of our palestinian brothers and sisters. Spending 4 days in Palestine has showed me how bad their condition that they are living in. The insanely difference between the Arab and the Jewish homes. Even as a tourist, I feel like a prisoner. But the one thing I admire about them is that they are fearless. #whatdoyouseek11 #elevenmagazine"

CONGRATULATIONS!

dear Mum,
i wish i could tell you how much i loved you.
last night, before going to bed i was in tears.
i couldnt picture life with you no longer around.
you made me that plate of sardines and eggs when i got home late.
it's not easy saying i love you to the person who deserves more.
i know that years from now when you are no longer beside me,
and when my tears call your name,
you will be here with me,
in the light of my heart
a place where you will live forever.

and i know,
that You are God's gift,
and just as Paradise lies under your feet,
i wish i could hold you again just one last time,
before we bid goodbye to these flesh and bones,
so that I could experience Paradise on Earth,
by the touch of your hands,
and as I wipe away your tears.

Dear Mum,
if only i could show you the vast horizon
of who you truly are
maybe
just maybe
You live in the East and the West
and Your smile's the crescent moon in the night sky,
and your kisses the pelting of raindrops on a sulking face.

Maybe,
just maybe,
You can hear me calling out to you in the echoes of the Cosmos
and this breeze that brushed me-
Your tender touch,
assuring me
that it's all going to be okay.

And as I close my eyelids,
these Eyes awaken,
I see nothing but

your
Majestic
Face.

*"Your
Mother
is the Cosmos"*

By Abu Sofian

AIMING FOR HAPPINESS: THE BULLSEYE

By Nurul Ain Binte Abdul Razak

She squinted her eyes against the blinding rays of the sun as she looked up in search of her target. And there it was, 50 metres away, round in shape and shining as bright as the golden sun - the mighty bullseye, the key to happiness. She prayed that nothing would stall her from attaining it, that opportunities would never be late and that only the best shots would be made.

A sudden gust of wind ruffled the leaves on the trees. Everyone was still and quiet. Their bows loaded with arrows, tips resting on the edge of their feet. They waited. No shots were made, not an arrow released. They obviously knew what they would be risking.

The timer continues its countdown: 3 arrows, 2 minutes left. "I can do this," she whimpered. She was still searching; searching for opportunities in the wind. Then she began. She lifted her bow off the ground, the sight pin hovering above the target, and pulled the string to anchor position. She held it there, all 32 pounds or 15 kg's worth. "I have trained enough for this," she assured herself. Her thoughts flashed back to when her inexperienced bow arm would have shivered and collapsed from a lack of strength but not this time. The anchor was stable and solid as her back muscles tightened.

The arrow was launched as soon as the bow clicked, signalling the ideal moment of release. At that instant, the wind began to approach a standstill. It was then that the opportunity presented itself. Her grip softened and the string left her grasp as she watched the arrow propel forward into the distance.

X, X, 10, 8, 8, 7. She earned herself 3 sets of 10s for that end. The buzzer sounded again to signal the start of the next. With lighted footsteps, she paved her way back to the shooting line. Her confidence strengthened as she aimed to do better, this time with maintained focus and caution. Excellence, she believed, can be achieved but not many can actually maintain. She chose to be the exception and often wondered what has kept her going. It was happiness.

She looked back at the days when she used to immerse herself in a wide array

of activities: events planning, community service etcetera. However, none of them could match up to the happiness she found in the sport. She was able to learn a new skill and be consistently good at it, thus instilling hopes of doing well. It has taught her the meaning of diligence and hard work, filling her with an abundance of satisfaction when exchanged with medals and gifts in return.

Healthy competition has indeed provided her the platform she needed to prove herself as a competitive archer. It pushes her to strive and do the best she can in every situation, which is essential in developing oneself holistically. Juggling studies and sports may be difficult to some but through the contentment she acquired, training was made easy especially when the purpose was dedicated to obtain the pleasures of Allah. The bullseye need not necessarily present her the gift of happiness but the processes and outcome has certainly did. Sports has kept her healthy and in good shape as her mind is clear about the direction she is aiming for in life.

The technical process of Archery has indeed inspired her to actively open up the gifts of happiness coming from many other avenues she has met and is bound to meet. Perhaps the happiness that she had been seeking has always been there that all she has to do is to open the doors of her heart to welcome it. Just as how the sport has instilled in her the courage to release, one should release oneself from doubt and insecurities, in order to accept one's flaws and overcome hardships, eventually finding happiness.

After an exhausting day in the field battling the unpredictable weather, she headed back inside. "10 minutes," she whispered as she steadied herself on her hands and knees. With palms facing down and hands far apart, she began a series of strenuous pushups against the floor. She is in much better control of her breathing now. The clock on the wall caught her attention. "It's 10pm. Why am I doing this again?" She let out a slight chuckle before retreating back to position.

Seeking Sagacity

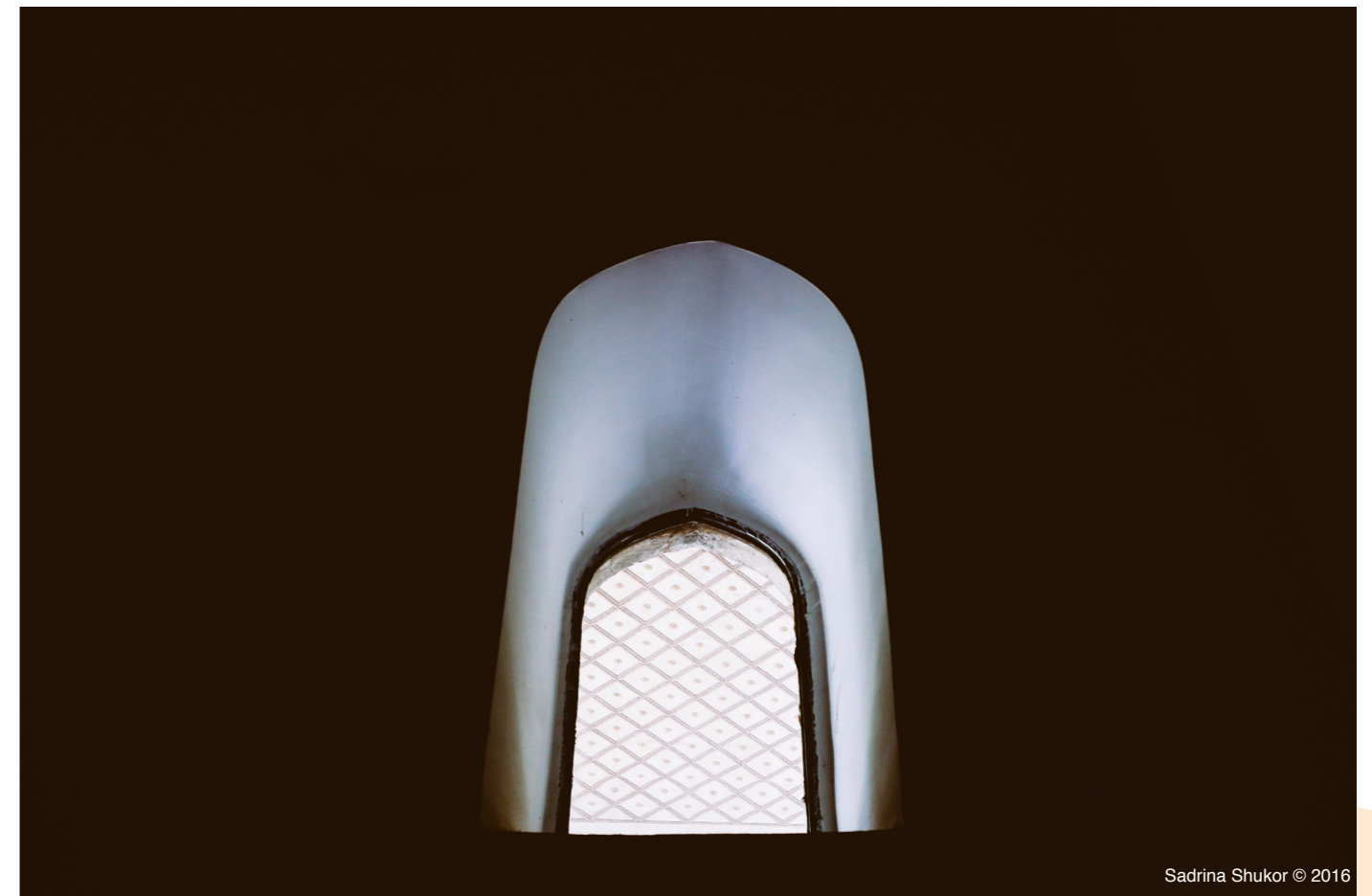
by Husain Bin Abdul Rahim

Where is the Wisdom lost, a Believer's lot?
As the Arab Prophet taught,
The Light filled with love, kindness and tears
Brought myself to naught.
Where are the likes of Jalaluddin Rumi or Fakhruddin Ar Razi?
Even Al Ghazali or At-Tabari?
Maybe Ibn Rushd or Ibn Ata'illah?
Saints, scholars and pious men
Are we not looking for all of them?
Maybe in this turbid times,
Mercy reveals itself as a pearl deep in the ocean,
A speck of snow in the sky innocent,
A grain of sand in suspended motion.
Embodiments of tranquillity and serenity,
Effusing light through their hearts.
Illuminating the darkness within.
They live in obscurity, unknown by many;
Gentle voice, mellifluous speech, inspired soul
Rendering our beings awestruck in the sublime.
Tears fell as rain fell and one doesn't even know why.
If Meaning is what we are searching for,
Then hasten to the Men of God for what lies in store
Of Wisdom, may never reach you again
Once more.
Go.

An Arab poet once said, "This cosmos is nothing but meaning set up in images, those who discern them are people of sagacity." Wisdom is embodied by the Sage, one whose life's concern is the application of wisdom, Al-Hikmah, as known in Arabic. It is likened to a treasure upon which is bestowed the Mercy of God and renders the receiver one who has 'attained much good', as mentioned in the Qur'an. (Al-Baqarah 2:269) The entirety of the world - its reality, subtleties, meanings both hidden or apparent, and its true purpose escapes the common knowledge of mankind. It is as if we are attempting to find the pearls in the sea by looking at the surface. Many have drowned in the sea of confusion, wrecked by the turbid waves of ideologies, arrogance and disputation. Few have managed to float but even fewer are able to dive deep to find the hidden treasures and lived to tell the tale. In this writing, we will attempt to impress upon the reader the works of two Sages, granted by God from His Heavenly Fountain of Wisdom in order to bring

benefit to humankind. The two esteemed persons are Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Martin Lings or affectionately known as Abu Bakr Siraj al-Din.

Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas famously announced that the crisis in the world today is the 'loss of Adab' in his book, 'Islam and Secularism'. Being an erudite scholar and intellectual of Islam, he responds to the encroachment and perversion of western philosophy and ideology in the world by clarifying Islam's position on the terms and definitions of values and ideas. In doing so, the degradative values and ideas that have penetrated Man's psyche and worldview can be uprooted and replaced by seeds of an Islamic worldview that is based upon certainty (yaqin) and not conjecture or doubt. "Adab", as defined by Al-Attas, is right action that springs from self-discipline founded upon knowledge whose source is wisdom. The Quranic wisdom of knowing the proper place of things and it's harmonious order



Sadrina Shukor © 2016

is lost. Therefore here we will enlighten the reader on the idea of Happiness as conceptualised within the Islamic worldview.

In his newly published book, 'On Justice And The Nature of Man', he defines Happiness as that which is "generally experienced in worldly life consisting of feelings and emotions that vary in degree from moment to moment; it is something psychological and mental that escapes the grasp of consciousness. But there is also, even in this worldly life, a happiness that abides in the grasp consciousness. Abiding happiness is not something that pertains to the physical entity in man; nor is it a state of mind, or feeling or emotion that undergoes terminal states. Abiding happiness has to do with certainty (yaqin) of the ultimate Truth based on Revelation and fulfilment of action in verification of that certainty. Certainty is a permanent state of consciousness natural to what is permanent in man, i.e. of the soul. It is an abiding act of the spiritual heart stabilized in tranquility which saturates the self with peace and security; it is illuminative knowledge, and this knowledge is true faith (iman). It is knowing God as He describes Himself in genuine Revelation; it is also knowing one's proper place in the realm of Creation and one's proper relationship with the Creator accompanied by the requisite action in conformity with that knowing."

Syed Naquib Al-Attas is a living sage who enriches the world with new insights and wisdom of the religion. It would be a severe loss not to reap benefits from him or his books. This writer strongly recommends Syed Naquib Al-Attas' books and if possible, for the reader to learn directly from him when he holds lectures at CASIS, UTM. It is best to grab every opportunity that Allah has given us to obtain knowledge from scholars/ the wise while they are still alive.

Martin Lings or Shaykh Abu Bakr Siraj al-Din is another sublime being whose presence the writer has been late to come to know of. This wise figure aptly returned to the spirit after putting the finishing touches to his book entitled 'A Return to the Spirit: Questions and Answers'. The western world is indebted to him for introducing Sufism to the social consciousness through the seminal work of 'A Sufi Saint of The Twentieth Century', revealing Shakespeare's deep metaphysical meanings, and many more. Recalling

the identification of the crisis of loss of Adab, we will proceed with an extract from Martin Lings' book that details a remedy by him to solve the crisis of the Islamic civilization today. According to Martin Lings, in 'A Return To The Spirit' the remedy to embracing Islam in one's life goes like this: "By way of answering this question, let us recollect certain outer aspects of our civilization- I mean, the Islamic civilization-



aspects whose function was, and can be again, to act as a protective shell for the kernel, that is , for the religion itself. The fabric of our civilization is woven out of the example set by our Prophet; and particularly significant in this connection is the fact that his house was a prolongation of his mosque. This for twelve hundred years- and more in Islamic countries- the houses of his people were prolongations of the

mosque. The Muslim would take off his shoes when he entered his house just as he would take them off when he entered the mosque; he would sit in his house in the same manner as he sat in the mosque; he would put such ornaments on the walls of his house as he s.a.w on the walls of the mosque; nor would he put in his house any ornaments that would not be suitable for the mosque.

Moreover, they were an ornament to the prayer, unlike modern European clothes which rob the movements of the prayer of all their beauty and impede them, just as they act as a barrier between the body and the ablution.

All that I have mentioned is outward, but the outward acts upon the inward, and a man's clothes and his home are the nearest of all things to his soul, and their influence on it is perpetual and therefore incalculably powerful. There can be no doubt that these outward things were one of the secrets of the depth of piety among Muslims, for twelve hundred years; and this brings us back to the saying that Islam embraces the whole of life. Thanks to the outer aspects of Islamic civilization, the whole of life was in fact penetrated by religion, and I see no other remedy for our present religious crisis, but a return to that noble civilization whose function is to create a worthy setting for the spirit of religion, a setting that makes relatively easy the fulfilment of our ritual obligations. Nor can the community dispense with the help of anything that makes this spiritual life easier, for man was created weak. But this return can be accomplished only by the widespread setting of examples."

In conclusion, the wisdom, knowledge and legacy they have left for us is likened to a ship of salvation to steer our way through the rough seas of confusion in this age. Therefore we must first apply this Adab by making our outward state of our clothes and homes conducive for ease of worship, so that we are always in a state of dignity and remembrance of the sacred. With that, may we traverse the ocean safely to reach the shores of abiding happiness together with the guidance of these two shining beacons of humanity, and to recover the lost Meaning in all things that was in us, once more.

In shaa allah. Amin.

Thus he was continually surrounded by reminders of the spiritual dignity and spiritual responsibilities of man, and he dressed himself according to the same principles. His clothes were in keeping with the dignity of man's function as representative of God on earth, and at the same time they made it easy for him to perform the ablution, and they were in perfect conformity with the movements of the prayer.



How To Be Truly Happy and Contented In This Life

by Sabrina Abdullah (Ashley Boey Ching Wern)

Contentment is one of the most crucial prerequisites for happiness in life. If one is content, one lives in harmony and with happiness. These invaluable qualities are priceless, and if one fails to be content, one would never be happy.

Indeed, it is easy to forget that true happiness does not come from getting something we desire, rather, from recognizing and appreciating what we have. This is ever more so with the influence and prevalence of social media in portraying the lives of the affluent as quintessential, we tend to associate happiness with the acquirement of material possessions and wealth. The media perpetuates an ideal that leaves people unsatisfied with what they have, making it easy to be sidelined from seeking happiness via contentment. It emphasizes on the need to want more, and that a person's worth has a direct relationship with what he/she possesses. In fact it is mentioned in the Quran that,

“[W]hoever desires the life of this world and its adornments - We fully repay them for their deeds therein, and they therein will not be deprived. Those are the ones for whom there is not in the Hereafter but the Fire. And lost is what they did therein, and worthless is what they used to do.”
(11:15-16)

In face of our capitalistic world, we are wired to view success and happiness as the attainment of material gains – having better cars, bigger houses, more wealth, and other worldly objects that indicate monetary achievements. We forget that what we should strive to achieve is Allah s.w.t's favor, and in this journey is where we are able to attain true happiness.

To be happy is to be thankful for what we already have, and not to be consumed by worldly desires.

“Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one's] hope.”
(18:46)

If one does not get the money that they desire, or pregnant, one needs to trust that Allah has better plans that is to our benefit. In our pursuit of wealth or material possessions, we become slaves of the world, rather than slaves to Allah. We forget that contentment is a wealth that never diminishes and a treasure that never perishes. Instead of saying “Alhamdulillah” (praise be to God) for what we have, we desire more, and having these desires unfulfilled leaves us unhappy with our current situations. Thus, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w advocates for us to look at those who are lower than us (rather than to those more superior), so as to be grateful and not to belittle Allah s.w.t's blessings upon us. What we currently have, and what is to come, has all been predestined by Allah s.w.t, hence, we have to accept that some things are unchangeable, and in face of such circumstances, one should feel redha, which is to be content with what Allah s.w.t has ordained and receive it gratefully. Recognizing this in itself should motivate us to be happy. Having such complete faith in Allah s.w.t allows one to be content – grateful for what we have (and do not have), and acknowledging that Allah s.w.t (who is the All-knowing) knows what's best for us.

A vaulted bazaar,
happiness is a vaulted bazaar.
The hanging lights, they're stunning
but the darkness is the one that most haunts your dreams.

The blue vines, they hold lovely bulbous blue flowers
that trickle the hard, harsh blue fencing.
For a while, you think to yourself about
what blue might be,
where blue came from,
and how you might feel
in this world,
in this life,
sitting in the sad dampness of this blue shade.
The blue begins to embrace the shadows on the surface
of the tall, flowing blue tents that surround you and seemingly go on forever.
Just as your head begins to fall, lulling you asleep
under the sad dampness of this blue shade,
you notice the glory of the flickering sunrise

A BLANKET OF BRIGHT EYES

By Noraine Kuswadi



Sadrina Shukor © 2016

The rolling clouds that unfurl yellow like carpets
A blanket of bright eyes
The golden haze of a smile
Revealing the grandeur of the kingdom where you reside-
A gradient light, with your hands cupped and touching the sky
you no longer sit in the sad dampness of this blue shade.
But graze under a glowing Green gallivant
of the hanging lights that are stunning.

A vaulted bazaar,
Happiness is a vaulted bazaar.

Some fear it Some dream it alone in a foreign place

by Sorfina Fadzlon

I belong to that latter group. It will indeed force you out of your comfort zone but Alhamdulillah, there is so much one can learn from it. My exchange programme began last year in August 2015. My coursemates and I went to Oslo, Norway for a semester and it was the best time of my life thus far. Lucky for me, school took up only 3 days in a week, which left the rest of the week free for us to do anything. Apart from exploring Oslo, we mostly travelled across Europe. I ventured to 8 countries within my 5 months of exchange programme. Some of the trips were eventful, but then they say "Experience is your best teacher". With that I can safely say I now know how to jumpstart a car and also get a car out of wet sand (or so I wish).

I have to humbly add before I delve further into the topic of travelling that I am fortunate to travel often with my family to faraway locations. We used to make it a point to travel together minimally once a year to places like Switzerland, Spain and South Africa. Hence, I can clearly observe the stark difference in my attitude and behaviour when travelling with family as compared to when I travel with friends. I shall now list down some key points to observe before/during and after travelling, so that my fellow wayfarers can get a heads up before you pack your suitcases!

BEFORE YOU GO UP AND AWAY..

1. PACK VERY WELL

No, mum and dad will not send you your toothpaste if you forget to bring it along. Write a checklist way beforehand so you won't forget to pack in the essentials. Common items forgotten could include electronics' chargers, photocopies of important documents and Sabun sertu (Taharah Soap - extremely important!).

2. ESTIMATE YOUR FOOD SUPPLIES

I admit, it's not like you're going to the jungle for weeks on end but it is necessary especially in countries where halal food is rather scarce or very expensive (First hand experience on this one). Dry products or packaged pastes/gravies (in luggages) are generally fine but familiarise yourself well with the destination country's customs requirements especially when it comes to food in your hand-carry.

3. SALAM EVERYONE AND ASK FOR THEIR FORGIVENESS BEFORE YOU DEPART

Very straightforward. I think this is very important for you'll never know if you get the chance to meet them again upon your return.

4. PSYCH YOURSELF

Remind yourself that you will be alone - you have to be resourceful, alert and independent. "Never forget your solat (prayers)" is what all my elderly relatives reminded me. It can be easy to miss it because you're travelling or the prayer times are very different compared to Singapore's.

WHEN YOU (UNKNOWINGLY) STAND OUT IN A CROWD..

1. BE CAREFUL OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Try to understand and adapt to the culture of the locals so that you can feel at ease. Also, make an effort to pick up some common phrases in their language like "Hello" and "Thank you". In notorious areas, be extra vigilant of your personal belongings. When travelling, do not be too friendly to strangers or release unnecessary information about yourself or your friends (where you stay, how much money you brought etc).

2. MAKE FRIENDS WITH LOCALS

Despite my previous point of being cautious when meeting new people, it would make the exchange/travel a whole lot more meaningful when you meet new people and share ideas or thoughts. Just practise your own discretion and be wary of shady behaviours. With that said, we should always remember the concept of Huznuzon (assuming good of others) and pray that Allah s.w.t guides us and keeps us safe.

3. EXPLORE THEIR MOSQUES/ HALAL FOOD OUTLETS

80% chance you'll be eating kebabs but why not? In Singapore you only get it most conveniently once a year in crowded, smoky night markets. I suggest doing this because this is the best way to meet new muslim brothers or sisters, be it locals or tourists. They can likely share with you cool insights about the area and other useful information.

4. IMMERSE YOURSELF IN HIS CREATIONS

The auroras, the shooting stars, the pristine clear rivers and seas, the beautiful flora and fauna and the sunrise and sunset to name several jaw-dropping, spine-tingling amazing experiences. The beauty and perfection of Allah s.w.t's creations will never cease to take your breath away. So look out for these but more often than not you don't even have to look that far.

AFTER YOU HEAR THE "BUMP"
WHEN THE PLANE KISSES THE
RUNWAY... YOU'RE HOME!

1. SAY ALHAMDULILLAH, ALHAMDULILLAH, ALHAMDULILLAH

Coming back home to your loved ones is a feeling that is indescribable. Emotions will flood your soul and when you look back at your journey - realising that He, The Most Gracious and Most Merciful protected you and kept you safe from any harm or hurt so that you may return a stronger individual and can witness that tear in your mother's eyes and smile on your father's face.

2. REFLECT AND PEN IT DOWN

This step is required for any traveller, regardless of the duration of travel. If you don't pen it down, at least share your experiences or stories with your loved ones. It will not only increase your gratefulness but also remind you how you were strong when facing adversity or challenges while abroad.

To wrap it up, I would like to say that I thoroughly enjoyed my time on exchange with my friends, travelling and bonding with them especially over our home-cooked meals. However I loved to spend more time alone - it was precious time I used to reflect and question myself... "What do you aim to get out of this exchange? How can you be stronger, braver, kinder, more caring and compassionate? Have you been grateful for what you have in Singapore and here in a foreign place? Have you told and showed the people you love, that you actually love and care for them? What would you do differently when you return home?" To each of this questions, I have my answers and you would have yours. However there is no doubt for one thing - insya Allah, Allah s.w.t and Rasulullah s.a.w will always be there to guide you to find answers for these questions and take care of you wherever you are on His Earth.

Into Light

by Nur Hidayah Bte Mudzaffar

Lost in the dark,
I seek Light.
I thought I had it all, truth is-
Empty inside.
These feet -
walked a thousand miles,
seeking for laughter and smiles,
in places-
Futile.

This heart, it has felt
a whirl of emotions.
With every fall, there's so much
of an inner commotion.
And I remembered
wishing for
all things to
stop
in
motion.

I remembered how it was dark and still.
I couldn't see a thing - it was scary.
I remembered how the darkness kills;
how I was so desperate to flee.

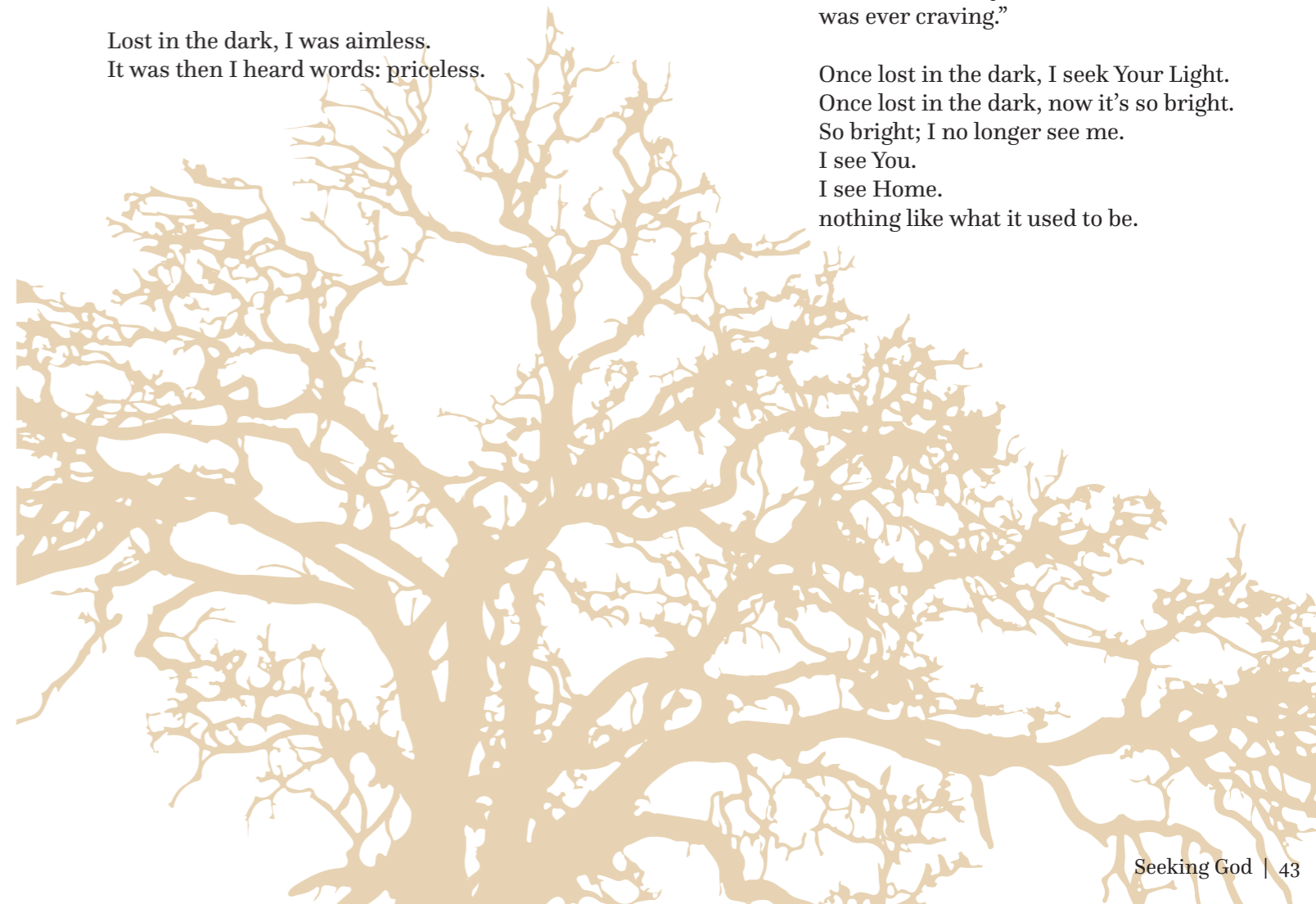
Lost in the dark, I was aimless.
It was then I heard words: priceless.

"Look up, my dear.
Look what's ahead.
Beautiful things await.

Trust.
Keep trusting,
not in the fleeting,
but in the One Who is capable
of bringing
this weak being
from darkness
into His Light.

Seek.
Keep seeking,
not the fleeting,
but the Everlasting -
And the truth is,
that was all that your soul
was ever craving."

Once lost in the dark, I seek Your Light.
Once lost in the dark, now it's so bright.
So bright; I no longer see me.
I see You.
I see Home.
nothing like what it used to be.



NOT A ONE WAY STREET

by Nurul Jannah Binte Mohamed Nasir

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful

As Muslims, sometimes we have this ‘formal’ relationship with Allah. We fulfill His obligatory commands; we avoid major sins; we call upon him with the same du’as that we’ve been supplicating with since young, and things never really progress from there. However, being Muslim entails a love for Allah that makes us look forward to knowing Him, pleasing Him, and finally meeting Him in the akhirah. So how do we attain such love and feel near to Allah? How can we taste the sweetness of faith? And how are we able to trust Him no matter what the circumstance? These happen when, and only when, we have a strong relationship with our Lord.

In our seeking nearness to Allah, it is important to understand that we are not alone in the process. Allah is with us in every step of our journey, answering our call and helping us, facilitating our efforts to be closer to Him. When we remember Allah, Allah reciprocates our remembrance. The Almighty says in Surat al-Baqarah,

**“Remember Me and I will remember you.”
(2:152)**

You, the servant of the Most Generous and Most Merciful, the One who has Power over all things. Does that not make you happy? Is not the best reward of remembering Allah, to be remembered by Allah? Who are we but slaves, we are nothing; but for Allah to remember us, that’s everything. And when we mention Allah in front of people, Allah mentions us to an audience better than ours: the angels.

Allah is All-Knowing, Ever-Appreciative. He watches over us and knows when we try to better ourselves, with the goal of seeking the His pleasure.

Allah is All-Knowing, Ever-Appreciative. He watches over us and knows when we try to better ourselves, with the goal of seeking the His pleasure. Allah rewards us in many ways, one of which is nearness to Him. For example, when we have good intentions and work hard in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah grants us understanding, strengthens our memory, makes it easy for us to apply our knowledge, and gives us the wisdom to teach it to others. That is Allah drawing closer to us. Not only does Allah facilitate our good deeds, He rewards us for it in abundance. Allah says in Surat al-Muzammil,

**“...and whatever good you send before you for yourselves, you will certainly find it with Allah, better and greater in reward.”
(73:20)**

In a hadith narrated by Abu Huraira r.a., the Messenger of Allah s.a.w. beautifully illustrates the relationship between Allah and His slave:

**“Allah the Exalted says: I am as My slave thinks I am, and I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers me to himself, I remember him to Myself; if he remembers Me in a gathering, I remember him in a gathering better than it; if he draws near to Me a handspan, I draw near to him an arm’s length; if he draws near to me an arm’s length, I draw near to him a fathom’s length; if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.”
[Sahih Muslim 2675, Muttafaqun alayhi]**

The prayer is also an integral part in maintaining a relationship with Allah. Our prayers are conversations with our Maker, wherein Allah engages us, such that He answers us just as we are reciting the opening verses of our prayer, the Fatihah.

The Prophet s.a.w. said:

**“Allah the Exalted said: I have divided prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for. When the servant says: Praise be to Allah Lord of the Worlds, Allah says: My servant has praised Me. When he says: The Gracious, the Merciful, Allah says: My servant has exalted Me. When he says: Master of the Day of Judgment, Allah says: My servant has glorified Me. When he says: You alone we worship, You alone we ask for help, Allah says: This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will have what he has asked for. When he says: Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom you have favored, not those who went astray, Allah says: This is for My servant, and My servant will have what he has asked for.”
[Sahih Muslim 395]**

Not only that, Allah hears our complaints. Just as He knows the longing of Ya’kub as for his son Yusuf as who said,

**“I only complain of my suffering and my grief to Allah, and I know from Allah that which you do not know.”
(12:86)**

Allah responds to our supplications. And if we were to ask regarding Allah, His answer is that He is Near:

**“And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided.”
(2:186)**

Allah communicates with us through His book, the noble Qur’an. In chapter 55 (surat ar-Rahman; 1-4) Allah begins by describing Himself, “The Especially Merciful. (Who) taught the Qur’an. He created man. He taught him eloquent speech.” Reading this, it would seem as though the sentences are reversed, and that the logical order should be “Allah, the Especially Merciful, He created man, then taught him speech and language, then taught the Qur’an.” However, this arrangement of verses teaches us at least two things:

(1) that the blessing of the Qur’an exceeds the blessing of life itself, and that

(2) if it is Allah Himself who taught the Qur’an, why should we not learn?

After all, a wise person once said, if you want to talk to Allah then pray, and if you want Allah to talk to you, read the Qur’an.

Connecting with the Qur’an. In the hope of linking theory to practice, I am including some tips that I personally feel, with the help of Allah, can build and strengthen our relationship with Him: The first tip is to read the Qur’an. The Qur’an is a source of comfort and immense knowledge. Hence, strive to understand its meaning, implement its teaching and witness the change in your lives as you do so.

Regarding Prayer and Du’a. Be as conscious as possible in your prayer and eliminate distractions. Understand and internalize the du’as that you make, regardless if it is in Arabic or the language you are most comfortable with. Call upon Allah with His Good Names, be passionate in your du’a, such as to literally feel butterflies in your stomach when you are making the du’a. Seek out the times of supplication that are answered by Allah. Lastly, have high expectations of

Increasing in Sunnah Acts. Smile! Spread peace. Be punctual i.e. fulfill your promises (this is also more than a Sunnah). Strive for excellence. Treat others kindly. Praise Allah regularly. Pray timely, voluntarily. Et cetera. For Allah says in a Hadith Qudsi:

**“...My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him.”
[Sahih Bukhari 6502]**

May Allah grant us His love.

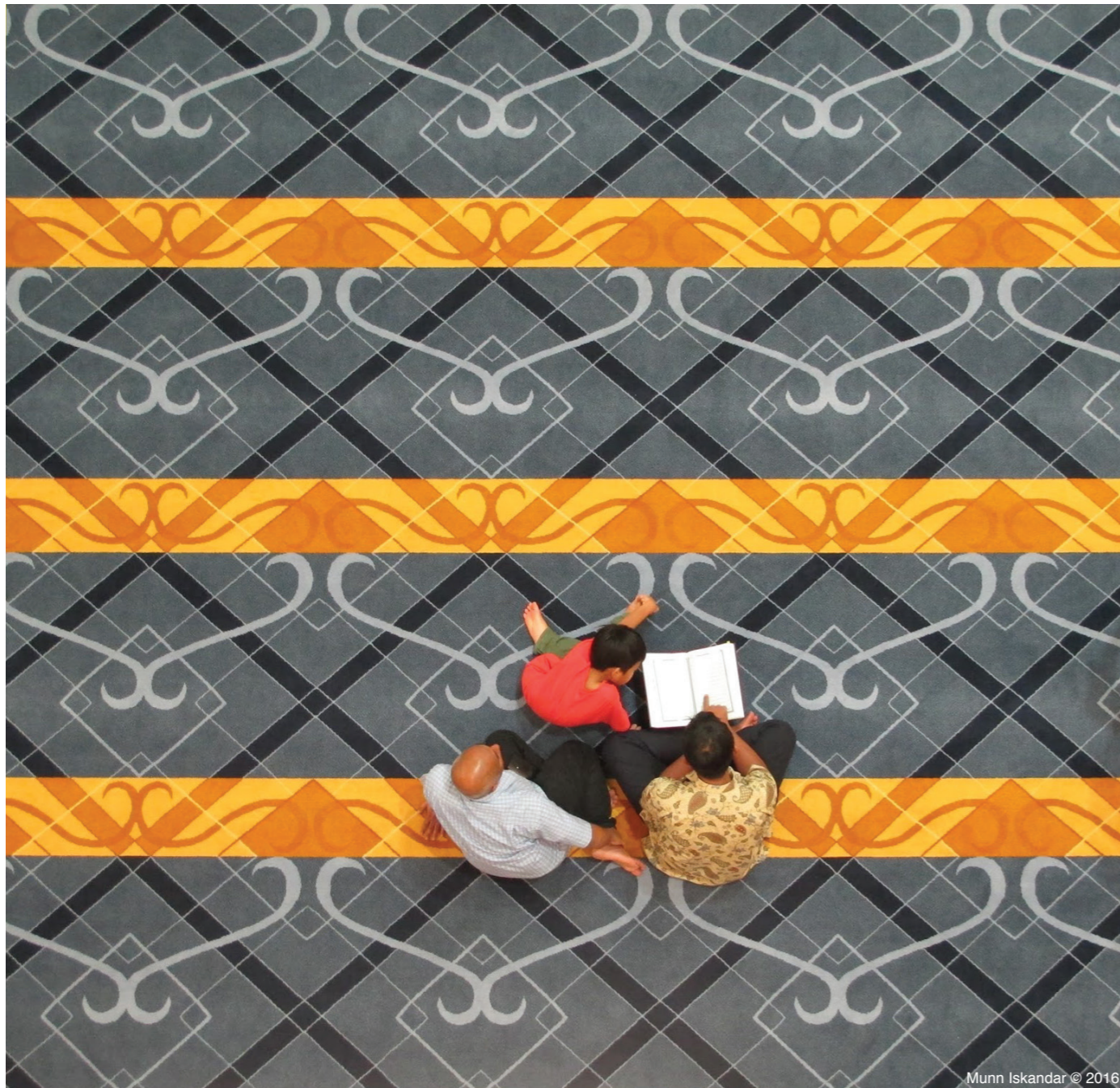
Ameen.

CONNECTING WITH
THE QUR'AN

PRAYER AND DU'A

INCREASING
SUNNAH ACTS

Corrections



Munn Iskandar © 2016

by Aqil Luqman Bin Nurhakim

Did you know that a rocket that is on its way to the moon is off course at least ninety-seven percent of the time? So how does it reach its destination?

In his book, “The Slight Edge”, author Jeff Olsen explains that each rocket has a guidance system with a gyroscope at its core. A gyroscope is a spinning disc with an axis at its centre that does not move even when its surroundings change. The gyroscope is thus always pointed in the direction the rocket wants to go.

Whenever the system’s guidance system senses that the rocket is off course, it tells the rocket. The rocket then corrects itself so that it heads towards the true destination. This process repeats itself countless times from the point of lift-off all the way until the rocket reaches the moon.

In seeking of Allah s.w.t, we too need a guidance system. We need a system that will allow us to correct ourselves so that we can attain our ultimate goal.

Like a rocket’s gyroscope, the central part of this guidance system is one that is internal. Your gyroscope is beneficial knowledge taught by guided teachers. Your conscience then taps on this knowledge to inform you of what will aid you in your journey to Allah s.w.t and what will not.

For example, you’ve learnt that praying Sunnah prayers consistently holds immense rewards and will help you bring you closer to Allah s.w.t.

But you’re tired or you need to rush to class. It happens. In this situation, you usually have one of three options. The first would be to leave it and go ahead with whatever else you need to do. The second would be to rush through the prayer with the thought of what you need to do in your head. The third and most ideal would be to pray with full sincerity and presence.

At this moment, you need to rely on your guidance system to choose what would bring you closer to your destination on your path of seeking Allah s.w.t. You need to correct yourself to do the action that is best so that you may insyaAllah find what you seek.

Situations like these occur daily. Like the rocket ship, you would need to regularly correct yourself throughout this journey of life in order to draw close to our final destination.

From this internal system, one should also build external systems that are beneficial. Learning from religious teachers and surrounding oneself with friends who will remind you to do what is right are systems that are critical in your path to seek Allah s.w.t. These people will push you to be better Muslims and will help you whenever you lapse.

We are imperfect beings who make mistakes daily. We need to regularly correct ourselves and be open to others reminding us so that we may stay constant on the straight path.



Tawakkal

by Abdul Adib Bin Mohd Omar

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Allahuma solli a'la sayyidina muhammad wa a'la ali sayyidina Muhammad

How many times have we been put in a situation where things do not go according to what we have planned it to be? Sometimes the things that happen to us happens so quickly and swiftly that we don't even realise what is happening.

Ever felt that sometimes we don't plan for things but it just goes another way? That paper that we didn't study so hard for, we eventually did well and even got an A. That company that we have always thought was impossible for us to get but somehow we find ourselves landing a job with them? More often than not, things go better than what we have planned for and we are able to see the positive effects of it immediately and there is no sadness or grief involved.

Sometimes we lose a loved one. Either through death or perhaps the person is not meant to be in our lives for the time being. And Allah knows best. Sometimes we fail a subject that we thought we would do well in it. And Allah knows best. Sometimes we think that we have the next five years planned out but suddenly a calamity happens and everything changes. We may not even know what will happen to us the next day. Recently, I came to know that a dear friend of mine was involved in an accident where it resulted in his left heel being completely crushed. What came next was a series of surgeries to try to reconstruct his heel

and now he is undergoing therapy which will allow him to walk normally again, InsyaAllah.

This is a man who thought that he had the next six months planned out, graduate from school and start his new job which he has already secured. Imagine how would he feel. Imagine the questions he has for the Almighty. Imagine the pain and sadness that must have engulfed him. The eyes that witness the suffering of others can only empathise and sympathise but no one truly knows what the individual is feeling.

"Trust Allah."

"Alhamdulillah you are still alive, Allah still loves you."

"Take this as a new start for yourself, to be closer to Allah."

These are the kind words that you would often give to the individual who is facing a certain calamity. Whereas what goes on in their mind is:

"Ya Allah, why me?"

"Ya Allah, what are you trying to teach me?"

"Ya Allah, why?"

"The eyes that witness the suffering of others can only empathise and sympathise but no one truly knows what the individual is feeling."

As cliché as it sounds, it really is a means of Allah bringing us closer to Him.

Narrated 'Aisha: (the wife of the Prophet) Allah's Apostle said,

"No calamity befalls a Muslim but that Allah expiates some of his sins because of it, even though it were the prick he receives from a thorn."
[Sahih Bukhari]

We have to be patient. To be patient in dealing with such situations. To be patient with Allah. To be patient with our friends. To be patient with ourselves.

Easier said than done, that I can assure you.

Hence, we need to have a good support system, a group of friends who are able to remind us to see that everything happens for a good reason and that we need to trust in Allah. That His plans are much greater and more beautiful than ours. Our plans are limited to our limited knowledge but He is the All-Knowing and He knows what is the best for us today, tomorrow and in the future. We need to hold on to that. To that hope that Allah will never disappoint His servants who are patient when facing the trials that He has placed upon us.

Even Prophets face sadness, as mentioned in the Quran:

"He said: I only complain of my grief and sorrow to Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know."
(12:86)

Even the Most Beloved, Rasulullah s.a.w faced multiple sad events in his blessed life. The year that the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w lost his beloved Uncle, Sayidina Abu Thalib, the one who has taken care of him since he was eight years old and when he lost his beloved and first wife, Sayidatina Khadijah RA, whom he was married to since the age of 25 and whom has been his pillar of support since his early days as a Prophet, whom he has six beautiful children with, amongst whom is the beloved Sayidatina Fatimah Zahra RA who was betrothed to Sayidina Ali RA and from them came Sayidina Husain RA and Sayidina Hasan RA.

Yes, the trials that the Prophets a.s had to face were great in magnitude and numerous in number but the one thing which we can try to emulate is the patience that they showcased, the unwavering faith in Allah that they had despite their darkest days. That is amongst the takeaways we can learn from learning about the history of the Prophets, especially from the history of the Beloved, Prophet Muhammad s.a.w.

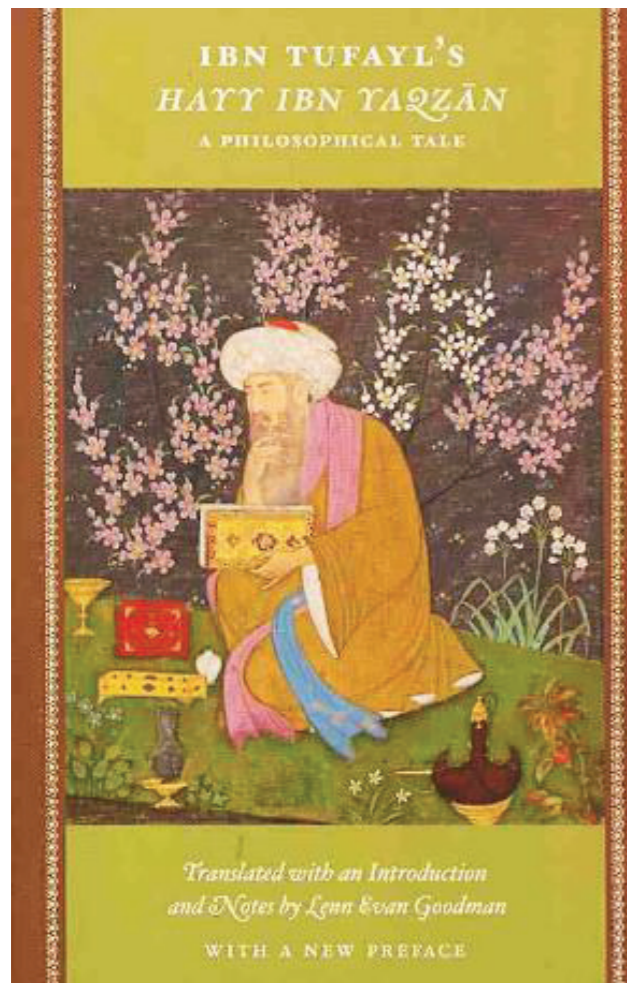
While sometimes things may not go our way, do remember that the rainbow appears after the rain even while the rain might be accompanied by thunder, lightning and strong winds. Remember to hold on tightly to this beautiful faith that Allah s.w.t has bestowed upon us and also upon our Beloved Prophet Muhammad s.a.w and soon we will know that things are not that bad after all.

Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim
Allahumma solli ala Saidina Muhammad wa ala alihi wa sohbihi wa sallim.

Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzan

A crying baby, cast into the sea.
A mother's desperate prayer, "Be with him. Never leave him, Most Merciful God!"

Ibn Tufayl tells us a story of Hayy ibn Yaqzan, who grew up in isolation from man. A doe as his surrogate mother, fawns as siblings - Hayy's knowledge and experience seem limited to the raw earth, animals and nature. Alone in a rich, tropical island, one would undeniably compare Hayy to the likes of the primitive man, uncivilized and backward. Despaired of guiding parents and stripped from any human contact - would Hayy become a human, or savage? What of his spirituality, his religion - with no man to teach him? Nay, not when The Creator, is his direct Educator.



Hayy ibn Yaqzan, literally means Awake, son of Aware. Awake he is, treading the jungles - as he searches for a sense of belonging, the reason for his weak limbs and their strong legs, his nakedness amongst their furred coveredness. Awakened he becomes, as he experiences the loss of his mother doe to old age. In his frantic attempts to find the cause of death, he gains cognizance of the temporality of life and of the soul, that transcends all sensible objects. His kind mother-doe no longer belongs to this bloodied, motionless body. She has been moved... and this realisation comforts Hayy. Hayy's momentous encounter with mortality spurs him to seek that "substance" that has abandoned from his doe-mother's heart. Akin to a surgeon, Hayy first dissects the animal bodies, in search for that vital, metaphysical substance. As he anatomizes every aspect of the external, material world, Hayy, at the same time, deconstructs, the internal capacity unique to Man, the rational mind. Rationally examining the immediate physical world, leads one to only discover limitations, within both mental and physical dimensions. Now, what follows ahead of Hayy's questions and doubts is a journey to God - the Truth, the only End.

Abu Bakr ibn Tufayl, was a twelfth-century Muslim philosopher, born in Guadix, Andalusia (now known as Spain), and served as the vizier and physician of the



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Almohad King, Abu Ya'qub Yusuf. In his work Hayy ibn Yaqzan, the very first philosophical novel, Ibn Tufayl was heavily inspired by Avicenna and Al-Ghazali. Hayy ibn Yaqzan had been written as a response to Al-Ghazali's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. In Hayy, ibn Tufayl intends to "explain the meaning of human existence according to philosophical ideas", as a reconciliation between philosophy and religion. The fundamental plot of Hayy echoes of the Prophetic traditions of Adam as, Musa as and Muhammad s.a.w, therefore emphasising upon the sacred relationship between Man and his Creator. Ibn Tufayl's has allowed for systematised construction of Hayy's ability to rationally deduce that God is Necessarily Existent. Thus, it is said that Ibn Tufayl's allegorical work demonstrates "harmony between faith and reason". And yet, the story of Hayy is beyond just deciphering the ever-persistent intellectual dilemma with regards to God's Existence. In Hayy ibn Yaqzan, Ibn Tufayl hints towards the profound reality of human fulfillment, to know and witness God Himself.

Hayy's experience provides us more than just a window to observe a man's journey to God, it is a subtle, yet truest reflection of the most vital part in ourselves - an inherent desire to return to the Divine.

A Sufi saint, Shaykh Ahmad Al-Alawi once said, "Faith is necessary for religions, but it ceases to be so for those who go further and who achieve self-realisation in God. Then one no longer believes because one sees. There is no longer any need to believe, when one sees the Truth."

And, in the words of ibn Tufayl, 'For the tale points a moral for all with a heart to understand, a reminder for anyone with a heart or ears to listen and to hear.' Hayy is within everyone of us, and we plead to The Living (Al-Hayy), to awaken our hearts...

by Hadra W.

"There is no longer any need
to believe, when one sees the Truth"
Shaykh Ahmad Al-Alawi

When will God's Help come?

By Mohammad Syafiq bin Mohammad Suhaini

The wind felt good.

It ran through my hair.

I looked forward... It was still there. I took the step forward.

Green... Orange... Red...

The wind blew faster, stronger.

“When comes the help of God?”

I was always told that I was special. At least, that was what my teacher told me. She is kind, loving and gentle.

I like her very much.

I spend time at her table, after school. She usually asks me to carry her books and accompany her while she does her work. Actually, I think she does not want me to run off and do any more silly things again.

But today is different. On her shelf, a new green, leather-bound book with gold, bold lettering stood triumphantly, between the boring, used schoolbooks.

I like shiny new things.

I begin to fidget. I could not take my stare off it. I begin to tap my fingers impatiently. I try to articulate my words, but the voice does not come. It angers me.

I want it. Real bad.

Teacher notices me. She traces my stare from my eyes to her book, with expert precision. Her face breaks into a wide smile, and she says, “Here, take it. Read it. You’ll like it.”

I snatch it out of her hold even before she could pass it to me.

I hold it tight in my arms and ran home - hard and fast.

I am excited. Real excited.

I fumble through the myriad of locks and gates into my home. I cursed each key and lock for taking time away from my book and me.

Once inside, I zipped to my room.

I wanted to avoid mother. She’s a horrible woman.

I think she hates me.

She always tells me how ashamed she is for having me as her son. I do not know why. I am always in my room after school. I never leave my room to meet anyone. Even if they are here in my house.

Anyway, I collapsed onto my bed.

With glee on my face, I place the book solemnly before me.

The gold letters glimmer in the evening sunlight. The green leather stood majestic and silent.

It is such a great, grand, big book!

I try to make out its title. Th...The Hol...Holy...Qu...Qura...Qur’an.

The Holy Qur’an.

I opened the book.

The smell of the new pages hit my senses in a million ways. It was just like meeting an old friend, although I have not got any.

I looked at the writings in it. There were two columns. One had squiggly lines and weird characters. I cannot make anything out of it at all.

The other one, I knew. English. It was beautiful. This book... made my hairs stand on end, many times. It was a

strange book, just like me. The first chapter was just seven lines.

Many times it talked about God. He sounds powerful. All-Hearing, All-Seeing... Able to do anything He wills!

Wow!

I must find Him. I must.

When I find Him, I shall ask Him to make my mother love me again, and to give me friends. Maybe even to make me normal again.

He has a nice garden, I keep reading about it too. Flowing rivers and all. I want to stay there. With mother too.

I need to find Him.

The day was getting dark outside. I do not know how long has passed.

Mother is not back yet.

I think if I shall read aloud, He might listen to me:

“Or do you think that you shall enter the Garden without having suffered like those who passed away before you? Misfortune and hardship touched them, and so shaken were they that the messenger, and the believers along with him, would cry: ‘When comes the help of God?’ Oh --”

BANG!

The door swung open violently.

It was Mother.

She looked furious. She smells too. There was a bottle in her hand.

I do not know what she drinks, but whenever she drinks it, she gets angry.

Angry violent.

She charges at me and lands a tight slap across my face. It is piercing. I feel tears coming out.

But I am strong. I will hold them back.

I know God is here. He is my friend.

I made an attempt to keep my shiny green-and-gold book away. Bad move.

“What were you reading from?!”

“Nothing.”

“Bring it.”

“No. It is mine.”

My voice begins to falter against hers. Her tones are huge, strong and loud, like a wave, or a mountain.

“Bring it here, you useless piece of flesh. I know what is that! I swore to stomp it out of my house! Bring it!!”

Another slap. My cheeks begin to throb.

Those tears again.

“Please... Don’t...”

“God DOESN’T EXIST! Where was He when your father died! Where was He when you were born! WHERE IS HE NOW!?”

Mother was furious like never before. Tears were streaming down her eyes.

She was angry sad.
I am really scared.

She threw the bottle in her hand. It broke into a million pieces, splashing liquid and glass all over the floor and my bed.

I am really scared now.

Mother takes my book, my shiny, green-and-gold book, and begins to tear it up, in front of my eyes. “NO!!” Too late. In her anger, she tore the pages out of the book and scratched the beautiful, green-and-gold cover.

It was now ugly. Hideous. Useless.

Like me.

I began sobbing real hard. I do not know what to do.

I reached for the book - but she threw it out the window.

My eyes widened in horror.

What shall I tell Teacher? Will she be angry with me? Will she hate me like how my mother hates me? Will I not have anymore friends?

My heart began beating real fast.

I begin to cry harder. The tears were beginning to hurt my eyes.

My head felt light.

I screamed. And screamed.

I felt another slap.

I screamed again. When comes the help of God... When... WHEN...

My head feels dizzy... All I saw was the colour green...

And then darkness.

When will God’s help come? When... God?

“Or do you think that you shall enter the Garden without having suffered like those who passed away before you? Misfortune and hardship touched them, and so shaken were they that the messenger, and the believers along with him, would cry: ‘When comes the help of God?’”

... Now surely the help of God is near!” (2:214)

TO SEEK IS TO BECOME

by Ustaz Mohammad Feisal Mohammad Hassan



SEEK



ACQUIRE



BECOME

Allah the Most High creates creation with a purpose. Mankind was created to collectively seek obedience. Due to this purpose of obedience, mankind with all the endowed physical, intellectual and spiritual faculties, throughout his development in life from infancy to old age, naturally seeks. In his infancy, a baby seeks milk through cries and smiles. A toddler seeks attention through his charm and movement. At school, a young one seeks competition through sports and examination. A man seeks a wife through love and friendship. A mother seeks help from recipe books to prepare the sumptuous dinner. A grandfather seeks company among friends at the corners of markets and mosques. The list will go on and on, to show that seeking is a human deed, innate and critical.

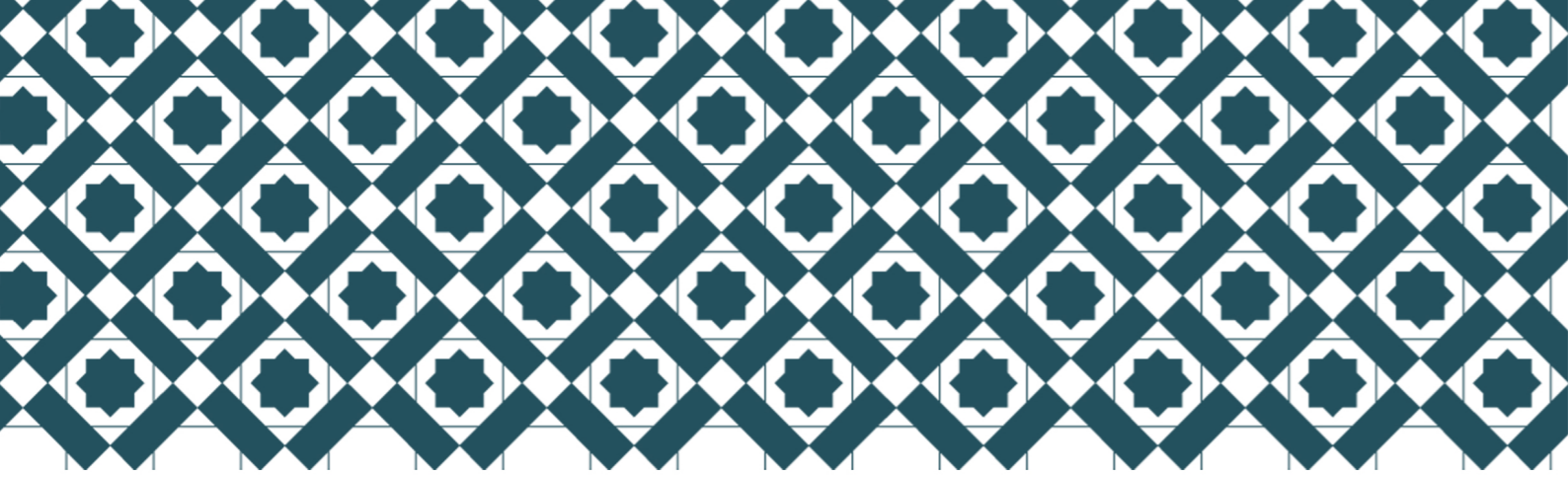
As a whole, a human being seeks so as to acquire. Once acquired, the next natural order is to become. Therefore, what we seek will eventually determine what we become.

A person who becomes an ‘alim, literally the one who acquires ‘ilm (knowledge), was once a seeker of knowledge, a murid. A murid, the one who seeks knowledge, attempts to acquire knowledge so as to become an ‘alim. From such a straightforward framework, mankind seeks, acquires and becomes.

In this process of seeking, mankind grows, nurtures, experiences, evolves, innovates, civilizes, and attains.

Within Islamic thought, in all that mankind seeks, we are bound to the single purpose of God’s creation. Mankind is created to ‘ya’buduun¹ – from the root word of ‘a-b-d which means to serve, to worship, to adore, to render service, to obey, to submit with humility and humbleness.²

Therefore, mankind seeks to acquire life to become ‘abd/’ibaad (pl.) – a servant. Such is the sole purpose of God’s creation.



In seeking to be a servant – the one who submits with humility and humbleness – the Quran guides through providing a multitude of avenues to be sought, among others:

1. Seek benefit and blessings (fadhl and ridhwan)³
2. Seek countenance (wajh)⁴
3. Seek assistance (isti'aanah)⁵
4. Seek means (wasiilah)⁶
5. Seek both worlds (akhirah and dunya)⁷
6. Seek forgiveness (istighfar)⁸
7. Seek refuge (isti'aazah)⁹

For those who seek these objectives, God in the Quran ascertains attainments such as the abode of peace, patience, an escape from darkness, entrance into nur (light), guidance, ease, pardon, security, etc.

As seeking becomes a necessity, thus the best exemplar, Prophet Muhammad pbuh, showed a clear direction through a mostly-recited Hadith, that intention precedes all actions.¹⁰ Thus a seeker following the example of the Prophet will observe a framework of seeking which provides a structure to attainment. The framework is as such:

A Believer attains to the purpose of God's creation in emulating the path of the Prophet to become one who serves – an 'abd. One who seeks, enters into a path of choices between emulating goodness (khayr) or discarding evil (sharr). And with each act performed, he will reap his dues, now and in the Hereafter. Thus understanding that seeking is second nature to mankind, let us make full use of our limited time, space and capabilities, to attain the greatest of all attainment which is we belong in gratitude and blessedness, as his 'ibaad (servants), entering into His company and the peaceful eternal abode, passing and fulfilled.



However there are continuous challenges that confront a seeker. History has painted the challenges of generation and generation of mankind, overcoming challenges or even failing to overcome challenges. In the majestic Quran, from the intermingling of the influence of evil to the excellence of worldly conquest in the stories of the creation of Adam, to him be peace, to the adventures of the great Zulkarnain, seeking is a central theme within the multitude of themes presented within its anecdotes and amthaal (examples).

Thus we ask, what are the qualities needed in our path of seeking. Let us focus within our context of being a Muslim Minority. As a Muslim minority within a secular multi-racial multi-religious Singapore, in seeking, we need to be endowed with values that shape and direct our perception and action.

Imam Ash-Shafi'e, God's blessings be upon him, said:

“If you fear becoming deluded and impressed by your deeds, then remember whose pleasure you are seeking, and the joy in which you want to be, and what punishment you fear. Whoever thinks about these things will diminish his deeds.”¹¹

In values, we seek syukur (gratitude and thankfulness) in the variety of ni'mah (sustenance) that we have been endowed with. The strength of our syukur defines who we seek to become. The repetition of hamdalah (Alhamdulillah)¹² in our prayers should make us individuals whom are at peace with gratitude, filling the corners of our being within the light of positivity, even in the worst of time and circumstances.

When things aren't shining on the bright side, let us seek sabr (patience). The strength of one's sabr evolves to shape the strength of one's being. The strength of the sabr of Prophet Ya'qub, to him be peace, is exclaimed in him beautifying the period when life calls for sabr.¹³

With knowledge, science and technology blossoming within the gardens of modernity in Singapore, let us seek to personally in our own way contribute to a 21st Century Melayu Islam Singapura goal. A goal that seeks wisdom (hikmah), values (budi) and faith (iman) within the conduit of appreciating the role as a Singaporean, striving for an accomplished worldly attainment, and serving with a smiling, sincere, rahmatic image embracing a spiritual fulfilment of an 'abd.

To do so, let us keep our rich traditions alive, starting from optimizing the I'tikaf space within the beautiful sejadah (prayer mats) of our multitudes of Masajid (mosques) in this red dot of ours. Our forefathers and pioneers had a vision of endowing and building these sacred spaces. Let us be the generation that strive to acknowledge, appreciate and fill these I'tikaaf spaces specifically, and the effort put to ascertain our multifaceted identity with faith, culture, values and work ethics.

As students at university, diligence, vision, and hard work are critical elements in seeking for knowledge. Cultivate our minds to optimize this period to excel in our specialized field of studies. Cultivate our hearts with syukur and sabr. Syukur and sabr are determined too by our contribution to the wave of change

in putting the acquired knowledge to good practice.

In doing so, let the future blooms, inShaaAllah, with the passion of a seeker under the light of the Provider, following the Path of the Blessed Seeker, Nabi Muhammad, peace be upon him, who became sought after.

There is no power and no strength save in Allah Most High Most Great.

And Allah knows best.

1 Al-Quran 51:56.

2 William Lane, Edward, Arabic-English Lexicon (London: Willams & Norgate 1863), 1936.

3 Al-Quran 5:2.

4 Ibid. 6:52.

5 Ibid. 2:153.

6 Ibid. 5:35.

7 Ibid. 28:77.

8 Ibid. 41:6.

9 Ibid. 7:200.

10 Nawawī, 'Izz al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, and Denys Johnson-Davies, An-Nawawī's Forty Hadith. (Damascus, Syria : Holy

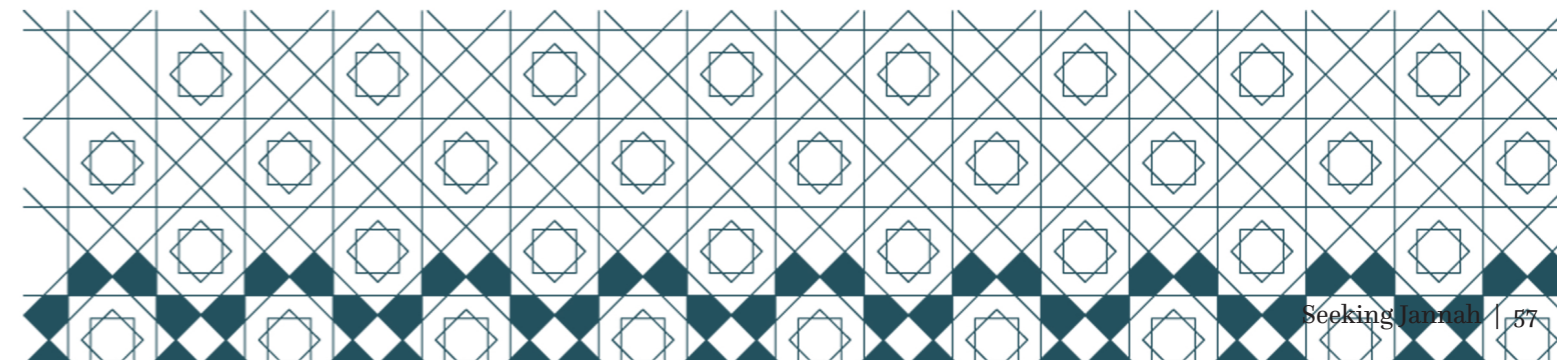
Koran Pub. House, 1977, c1976., 1977), Hadith 1.

11 Muhammad Ibn-Ahmad ad-Dahabi , Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'

Biographien Berühmter Persönlichkeiten (Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 10:42.

12 Ibid. 1:2.

13 Ibid. 12:18.



Unbreak My Heart

In the name of God, most Gracious, most Compassionate

O God, bless our Master Muhammad (pbuh) who opened what had been closed, and who is the Seal of what had gone before, he who makes the Truth Victorious by the Truth, the guide to Thy straight path, and bless his household as is the due of his immense position and grandeur

Chapter 3: Guarding the Heart Against Whisperings, Envy and Ill Thoughts
(Excerpt from Imam al-Haddad's book, Treatise on Discipline in the Path of the Seeker)

Note: Italicised texts are extracted from abovementioned book

"A seeker should strive diligently to guard his heart against whisperings (of evil suggestions), diseases (of the heart such as envy) and bad or evil thoughts. He should erect veil over the doors to his heart, to be constantly vigilant and prevent these things from entering it. Indeed, once these elements enter his heart they will ruin it, and it will become difficult to expel them from it."

The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w said,

"Verily, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound and if it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart."
[Sahih Bukhari & Muslim]

Allah s.w.t said in the Holy Quran,

"The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart."
(26:88-89)

Imam al-Ghazali rahimahullah (may Allah have mercy upon him) mentioned in his book Minhaj-ul-Abidin (The path of the worshipful servant) that a seeker in the path of Allah s.w.t should guard themselves against:

1. ... the world because Prophet Muhammad s.a.w said, "Love for the world is the source of all errors." When someone loves the world so much to the extent it is attached to the heart then he will be takabbur (arrogant), proud of himself, unable to be humble.

2. ... human beings. Prophet Muhammad s.a.w said that your religion depends with whom you are friends with. If your friends are good people then you will be a good person. If your friends are those who are attracted to materialism or anything haraam then it is likely that you will follow their path.

3. ... the accursed shaytan. Allah s.w.t said,

"Indeed, shaytan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze."
(35:6)

"Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You]."
(7:17)

Therefore, it is compulsory upon us to know our enemy, how to challenge our enemy, how to defeat the enemy as the crisis we are facing today is related to the heart. Prophet Muhammad s.a.w taught us to always remember Allah, to recite Ta'awwuz: (I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed shaytan) before doing everything.

Abu Huraira radhiallahu anhu (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Prophet Muhammad s.a.w said that,

"Verily, Allah does not look at your appearance or wealth, but rather He looks at your hearts and actions."
[Sahih Muslim]

"The heart is the place upon which his Lord's gaze falls."

We have two important things - (i) our seven limbs (eyes, tongue, ears, hands, legs, stomach and genitals) and (ii) our heart. Guarding the heart is more difficult than guarding the limbs! Imam al-Ghazali RA mentioned that the heart is like the king and the limbs are the ministers. When the king is good, his ministers will be good. When the king is bad, then he will order his ministers to engage in bad things, there will be a tendency that it will command the limbs to do bad. For example, the heart will tell the eyes and tongue to look at something and say words which are haraam (prohibited). Therefore, it is important to keep the heart clean. Among the conditions for a seeker of knowledge (secular and/or religion) is he must have a clean heart, thereby he will have a good akhlaq (conduct).

"Thus, it is essential that the seeker should purify his heart from worldly desires, spitefulness, rancour or bitter feelings, swindle or deceit towards any Muslim, or from having ill thoughts towards any of them."

We must purify our hearts from worldly desires (syahwat-ul-dunya), for example, being attracted to unnecessities, which are attractions of the world and a distraction, which prevents us from getting close to

Allah s.w.t. A Muslim, a mukmin, a seeker of God who wants to get closer to Allah s.w.t should focus on and take care of the heart, as he knows that the ultimate goal is to get closer to Allah s.w.t and His Messenger s.a.w.

Look at the companions of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w, whose ultimate goal is to be with Rasulallah s.a.w and get closer to Allah s.w.t. They prevented their hearts from anything that would distanced themselves from Rasulallah s.a.w and they loved Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. One of the way to prevent the heart from bad characters and traits is to love the Messenger of Allah s.a.w, through learning his sirah (life), to emulate him, to be close to him, to make abundance selawat (invocation) and salaam upon him s.a.w.

We need to put love in the right way and place. The problem today is we are putting love in a wrong way, we love things that do not give benefit(s) to us in this life and The Hereafter. For example, you have a girlfriend and she did not text you and that make you sad, worried et cetera. But, when we love Allah s.w.t and His Messenger s.a.w, all these feelings will not happen. We will lead our life happily as our heart is clean thereby it is easy for us to absorb knowledge because knowledge is nur (light) and Light of Allah s.w.t will not be given to those who had sinned. Light of Allah s.w.t will only be placed in a clean heart, where there is no takabbur (arrogance), hasad (envy), anger, and attractions for the world. When the Light of Allah s.w.t enters the heart, then everything will be made easy for you, He will give a way out to every difficulties you are facing, for Allah is Al-Wahhab (The Bestower).

There is no benefit for akhirah if you earn a degree but there are so many sickness in your heart i.e. you are unfilial to your parents, what good does your degree bring if you could not even supplicate for your parents? What is the use of your certificate if you do not pay a visit to your parents and help them to fulfill their needs, to be obedient to Allah s.w.t, the One who had created you and who He Himself gives you the certificate you had earned or are earning? He is The One who provides us with everything,

therefore we need to have a balance in our life, balance of both the world and The Hereafter. We believe there is The Hereafter because it is one of our integrals of iman (faith).

The medicine to clean the heart is through dzikrullah (remembrance of Allah s.w.t). The 'ulama (scholars) recommended three forms of dzikr, to be recited as much as possible:

I. Istighfar - Astaghfirullah al-Adzim (I seek the forgiveness of Allah, The Most Magnificent)

II. Selawat and Salaam (Invocations) upon Rasulullah s.a.w - Prophet Muhammad s.a.w mentioned,

“He who invokes one blessings upon me, Allah will shower ten blessings upon him and obliterate ten sins (of his) and elevate him by ten ranks.”

He s.a.w also mentioned that,

“Whoever sends blessings on me ten times in the morning and ten in the evening will have my intercession on Judgment Day,” and “Verily the nearest of people to me on the Day of Judgment will be those who recited much prayers on me.”

III. Kalimah Tawheed (Oneness of God) - Laa ilaha illAllah MuhammadurRasulullah; There is no God to be worshipped but Allah. By reciting this, Allah s.w.t will protect you and prevent you from entering the Hellfire. As a student, we should work hard in our studies but at the same time, remember to recite the dzikr abovementioned, at least 100 times of each dzikr per day and once you are used to it, increase the dosage every day.

“Instead one must be of good advice to them, compassionate with them, and merciful towards them, have faith and believe in the good in them.”

The first thing is to advise them, show mercy to the servants of Allah. For example, when Prophet Muhammad s.a.w made da'wah (preach the religion) in Thaif after the passing of his wife, Sayyidatina Khadijah binte Khuwaylid radhiallahu anha (may Allah be pleased with her) and his uncle, Abu Talib, he was rejected by the people of Thaif, who threw stones at him, which caused him s.a.w to sustain injuries. His companion, Sayyidina Zaid bin Harith radhiallahu anhu (may Allah have mercy upon him) who accompanied Rasulullah s.a.w tried to protect him but was still unable to prevent Rasulullah s.a.w

from being hit. There came a point where Rasulullah s.a.w was bleeding and his blood almost dripped to the ground and he immediately used his hands to stopped the blood from dripping. Sayyidina Zaid bin Harith RA asked why did Prophet Muhammad s.a.w did that to which he replied that if a drop of his blood were to drip on the ground, the wrath of Allah s.w.t will be immediately befall upon the people of Thaif and he, Rasulullah s.a.w did not want that to happen to them. The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w then made du'a to Allah s.w.t to make the offsprings of those people of Thaif embrace Islam.

Who you are, your characters, the way you speak, how kind you are to others, how you pray with presence of the heart all depends on the state of your heart.

May Allah s.w.t make us live as Muslims and die as Muslims and enter Jannah as Muslims. Ameen Ya Rabbal 'alamin.

Allahu'alam Bissowab
Allah knows best what is right

IMAAN DIP: The struggle is REAL

by Raudah Karim

3.30pm. The adhan for Zuhur went off 2 hours ago. But I still have an hour to relax before Asar. Alright, solat can wait. [Outcome: You ended up praying 20 minutes before Asar. Rushed.]

6pm. The Muslim Pro app notification buzzed, reminding you to read an ayat from the Al-Quran today. You tapped on the app which contains 4 other similar notices, all unread since 3 days ago. Never mind, this can be done before I sleep. [Outcome: You ended up falling asleep, phone in hand]

Do these scenarios sound achingly familiar? How often have we found ourselves procrastinating our prayers, using assignments (or the latest episode of Walking Dead) as an excuse to occupy ourselves? Or perhaps, how often have we ignored the notifications on the Muslim Pro app to recite an ayat of the day despite the constant reminders? And it's not even because we have a strand of urgent things to settle -- we are simply *'not feeling it yet'*.

Moments like these are what I refer to as the 'Imaan dip' phase. If I were to explain this in my own words, it would be those days when we feel lazy and the desire and love that we once felt for Islam is slowly fading. We know deep down that our love for Allah s.w.t will never cease, yet our actions are not strong enough to prove it. We only perform the bare minimum of what is required of us, like our 5 obligatory prayers, but we still feel distant from Allah s.w.t, an emptiness that grows incrementally if nothing was done to fill the gap.

I'm sure most of us have been through this phase because after all, as humans, our Imaan is never consistently stable. It fluctuates depending on how we choose to live our lives. It was also narrated that our Prophet Muhammad s.a.w once said in a Hadith:

“Imaan wears out in the heart of any one of you just as clothes wear out, so ask Allah to renew the faith in your hearts”
[Reported by Al-Hakim and At-Thabrani]

Therefore, it is vital to begin by asking Allah to constantly renew our Imaan whenever we feel distant from Him.

However, our Imaan will not increase overnight merely by making du'a to Allah s.w.t. It requires great effort from us who have prayed for it. As mentioned in Surah ar-Rad,

“Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.”
(13:11)

So how do we even begin to recharge our Imaan amidst hectic school and work schedules? The list below is based on my findings and personal reflection, coupled with some conversations I've had with peers who have been through this phase. It, first and foremost, serves a self-reminder. I hope that it will be beneficial in one way or another to you. May Allah s.w.t guide us all.

The three keywords that were consistently mentioned in guides or lectures on how to increase one's Imaan are: Solat, reciting the Qur'an, and Fasting.

1. SOLAT

Go back to the prayer guidebook you've left gathering dust on a bookshelf.

You might be thinking, “Hold up, I'm reading this because I can relate to that part above about praying 5 times a day, though not exactly on time. But the first thing I need to do is to read a prayer book? I'm not learning how to pray though...”

But have you ever, in your prayer, read Al-Fatihah, zikir, tashahud and then in the last rakaat you wonder....“Eh, last rakaat already?”. Or maybe, mid-reciting a surah, you start to doubt yourself, “Is this rakaat number 2 or 3?” (I have a confession, I am guilty of both!) If yes, then, you are currently facing difficulty in obtaining khusyuk, I presume?

Prayer is a ultimately very personal experience. When we pray, we are conversing directly with our Lord, pouring out our hearts to Him. In prayer, we are speaking to Him and we are telling Him exactly

how we feel. And He is still listening despite knowing what is in our hearts already. But if we can't even fathom what we are saying in this excruciatingly personal conversation we have with our Creator, will there be any meaning at all? Hence, it is crucial for us to always go back to our basics once in awhile to remind ourselves of what we are reading and saying in our conversation with Allah. Without the ability to decipher them, our prayers would have no meaning in it, simply a mindless repetition of movements in our daily routine that we adhere to 5 times a day.

2. QURAN

Read and reflect on one ayat per day

Perhaps we should pause and do some math. How many times have we tapped on the social networking icons on our smartphones? Compare that number to the number of times we've tapped on the Qur'an app icon? Yup.....

One way to climb out of the 'Imaan dip' is by consistently pondering over the Qur'an.

Allah says in Surah Ar-Zumar, ayah 23,

“Allah has sent down the Best Statement, a Book (this Qur'an), its parts resembling each other (in goodness and truth) (and) oft-repeated. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from it (when they recite it or hear it). Then their skin and their heart soften to the remembrance of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah. He Guides therewith whom He wills; and whomever Allah sends astray, for him there is no guide.”
(39:23)

Put yourself up on a challenge to ponder over at least one verse in the Qur'an each day. While on the journey to school in the MRT, make an effort to tap on the Muslim Pro app, scroll through 114 surahs, and halt at one of the 6230 ayahs, instead of scrolling through your Instagram feed. Pause at a verse and recite it in your heart. Appreciate and analyze every word instead of rushing through it. Finally, make a mental checklist of certain parts which you had difficulty in comprehending so that you could seek guidance from an asatizah on your next visit to the mosque.

The question we should constantly ask ourselves is, “What is it that Allah wants to tell me?” People are described in different categories in the Quran. Reflect, which category am I in? Is this category mentioned in this verse the one that I want to be in or otherwise?

Allah s.w.t says in Surah Al Isra,

“Indeed, the Qur'an guides to that which is most suitable.”
(17:9)

So let's make an effort to look for Allah's message to us in every verse of the Qur'an that we read each day because there is guidance in every verse of the Qur'an for us.

3. FASTING

Developing a routine

Nothing keeps us checked on being mindful of Allah like fasting. After all, whether we are fasting or not, others can never tell unless we let them know. It is easy to hide at a corner of the school and eat or take a sip of the water from the cooler. Unlike other acts of worship, fasting is entirely based on self-restraint. And because of this, it is one of the things commonly recommended when we are facing an Imaan dip.

When we fast, we train ourselves to be more mindful of Allah. We are more careful about how we converse. We are more careful about what and how we do something. We take more control over the thoughts running in our head. We strive to be our best. Because we know that wrong actions and being enslaved by our nafs may nullify our fast. And because above all we know that Allah is watching.

So, fast. If fasting every Monday and Thursday is a challenge, start with fasting on the 13th, 14th and 15th of every month (based on the Islamic calendar). And enjoy the aftereffects of feeling a special purity of your soul, as though you have cleaned it from all that is negative, unnecessary and unrelated to Allah.

It is important to remember that Imaan cannot be easily perfected overnight. Yes, the struggle is real. But as real as it is, it is not abnormal. Do not be overly upset with yourself when it dips. Well... Yes, be upset. Maybe for 5 minutes. When you've successfully conquered it, let's remember to convert that feeling of disappointment into actions with the correct intentions. What our Imaan needs is work, work and more work. If we want to get closer to Allah and feel that the boost in our Imaan, effort has to be instilled within us. Indeed, renewing of our Imaan is a continuous process of improvement and growth. And I truly believe that as long as we persevere together along with the intentions of pleasing Our Creator, we will be able to rise from the 'Imaan dip', Inshaallah. Only Allah knows best.

THE DANGERS OF LEARNING ONLINE

by Muhammad Danish Bin Fadzlon

“Don't be so off-beat, we must embrace the now and use technology as a tool for learning!” enthused a friend of yours during a Forensics Science lecture as he uploads an image of a hadith in his Instagram account.

Hmm...there has to be some truth in the above statement right? It IS 2016 anyway -- an era of fast-paced technology where hardbacked Qurans are swapped for electronic ones and daily supplications are readily available in free applications

on the App store. So why are people still using “traditional” methods of attending weekend religious classes when everything can be so easily accessed right at our fingertips?

You may ask yourself: How can learning Islam online be so detrimental to an individual? If this particular question has crossed your mind several times, then this article aims to shed light on the possible dangers of learning Islam unguided, followed by helpful tips on how to go about learning Islam the safer and preferred way.



Sadrina Shukor © 2016

1 THE DANGER OF NON-VERIFICATION

Islamic knowledge covers all aspects from aqidah (creed) to Syari'ah (jurisprudence) to akhlaq (manners). As such, it is impossible for a person who has no prior knowledge of the topic to distinguish what is right and wrong. The given quotes in an article may look valid and the charming baritone of self-qualified asatizah on his Youtube channel may sound very much convincing and believable. However, there is no quick and effective way to instantaneously verify the authenticity or degree of sahih in the words spoken or written. It becomes even more dangerous if we accept it as the absolute truth without due verification with a learned scholar or the Holy Book which will result in the grave mistake of leading others into the erroneous path.

May Allah s.w.t protect us.

2 THE DANGER OF CHOOSING AS WE PLEASE

The difference in mazhab (schools of thought) of the content being delivered online is another tricky issue to take into careful and precise consideration. Picking and mixing different views of different cases is prohibited in Islam. Doing so will render the Syari'ah as merely a plaything in the hands of ignorant people as they are able to pick a view based on their desires without any form of inhibition. This

is why the practice of “pick-and-mix” has been condemned by all the renowned scholars of Syari'ah.

3 THE DANGER OF SELF-INTERPRETATION

“The one who seeks matters of his deen without an Isnad (chain of authorities and transmission of knowledge) is similar to the one who climbs to the roof without a ladder.”
(Imam Abdullah Ibn Al-Mubarak ra)

What this saying essentially means is that we would need a qualified teacher (the ladder) in order to understand the true meaning of the classical text that is being studied. It is highly unlikely that a non-scholar of Islamic studies would be able to grasp the actual meaning and depth of the text without proper guidance from a qualified and experienced asatizah. The interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah is not something to be handled so easily. It requires an extensive study of the Syari'ah, and this cannot be undertaken by someone unqualified in the field. Therefore, having an educator read the text with us allows clarification with him/her and prevents the problem of wrongful interpretation.

Case in point, it is alarming how many unfortunate Muslims have recently been swayed by the likes of ISIS, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups into thinking that Jihad means “war against non-muslims”. In actual fact, Jihad simply means “to struggle” and the biggest Jihad is against our own Nafs (temptations).

4 UNABLE TO LEARN THE MANNERS OF THE TEACHERS

Our religious teachers are as much a source of manners as they are a source of knowledge. By learning from them, we are presented with the opportunity pick up the adab (respect and politeness) which the teacher imparts to his/her students.

As such, we are able to internalise the knowledge learnt in the right frame of mind and heart instead of misusing it or belittling others with it.

“Do not learn knowledge for three things and do not leave it for three things. Do not learn it to dispute over it, to show off with it, or to boast about it. Do not leave seeking it out of shyness, dislike for it, or contending with ignorance in its stead.”
[Narrated by ‘Umar r.a.]

That is why adab and the pursuit of knowledge should never be separated. It is harder to learn adab from an online video or lesson as the lack of physical and verbal interaction hampers a holistic learning process. Sitting through a class with our fellow brothers and sisters of Islam, we experience a learning process where our teachers portray an unmatched level of respect and humility for their students to exemplify in the real world notwithstanding their vast knowledge. In sha Allah, we will pick up the adab of the teacher through constant interaction. In turn, we should respect the knowledge we gain and use it to benefit ourselves as well as the community. We should follow the footsteps

of our beloved Rasulullah s.a.w and his companions to see just how far their knowledge and adab has attracted thousands to embrace Islam till this very day.

With all those dangers out of the way, let us now move on to see how we can improve our quest for knowledge. It cannot be denied that the pursuit of Islamic knowledge is held very highly in Islam. Additionally, Fardhu 'ain is mandatory for each and every Muslim to know. Hence, the purpose of this article is not so much as to discourage the reader from learning Islam but to make him/her more wary of the dangers of unguided learning as well as the possible complications that might arise from it. That being said, online learning is still an effective way to supplement your knowledge.

Some credible sources which might be of interest to you have been included here for your exploration. Videos on youtube by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf and Nouman Ali Khan, cater to an international audience and are all very interesting and cover a wide variety of topics. For those more comfortable with the Malay language, Habib Najmuddin, Habib Ali Zaenal Abidin and Ustaz Iqbal Zain may come to mind. If you like your lessons a little more structured, then you may want to check out online courses conducted by SeekersHub or follow any of the recorded lectures conducted by recognized asatizahs (teacher) nowadays. However, as previously mentioned always be wary and consult with your own teachers should you come across new material from unknown sources.

Herein lies the importance of Talaqqi in Islam. Talaqqi is a method of learning whereby an Islamic lesson is conducted in a halaqah (small group) and is led by qualified asatizahs and guided by certain books to achieve a higher spiritual level. This is by far the best method of learning Islam as the teacher is able to explain in-depth the meanings of the text and remove any misconceptions or misinterpretations that might arise from the students immediately. Students of these classes are also able to cover a topic very thoroughly with the guidance of the teacher.

There are literally hundreds of free classes being conducted in mosques around Singapore. Certainly, there is one that will fit your needs as well as lifestyle. Some prefer a formal education where students are made to seat across tables while others prefer a more relaxed setting conducted in prayer halls. The important thing is Istiqamah (consistency) in attending classes. It is totally normal to feel out of place or shy at first when going for a new class. Bring a friend (or few) along. Remember your good friend at the start of this article saying you were off-beat? Well now, you have good reasons to tell him or her otherwise! Make it your own personal da'wah and jihad to get more of your friends to come. Go together and learn together. Discuss about the topic after class. If all else fails, make new friends in class!

We are brothers and sisters in Islam after all. It will make the journey to Jannah a memorable and enjoyable one with the friends you love. Remember, what your friends learn from you or as a result of your actions, you will earn, in the Hereafter.

Finally, let us improve our self in the best possible manner as we follow in the footsteps of Rasulullah s.a.w knowledge. May we be blessed by Allah s.w.t and pray that whatever knowledge we have gained throughout our short life will guide us on the right path to Jannah.

Prophet Muhammad s.a.w once said: "Whoever follows a path to seek knowledge, Allah will make the path to Jannah (Paradise) easy for them."

Insyallah Amin.



ELEVEN'S HALAL FOOD TRAIL

By Fayyadhah Zainalabiden

The post 'Eid period has descended upon us and that means money piling (for most of us). For the more generous among us, perhaps we'd be looking for meaningful ways to spend some of the money collected. What better way than to treat ourselves and maybe some family and friends to a nice meal? To spice up the experience a little more, we have come up with this informative list of quaint food places you might like to patronise. The locations span across all corners of Singapore, to add to the variety and cater to the convenience of our readers. In addition to that, we have also included the nearest mosques so you can easily find them if need be.

priced at \$6.90 for 6 pieces or \$10.90 for 10 are fairly tasty, but we'd personally prefer if they were a little softer. The sauce itself was light albeit slightly overpowered by the black pepper. Overall though, if you're looking for a good bargain, this is definitely a place to try. Besides the food we've mentioned, they also sell some quirky dessert French toasts and delectable grilled cheese sandwiches. Drinks come in reasonably sized vintage glass bottles which are really cool, so what more reasons do you need to visit? You might have to bear with the absence of proper seats and tables, but since they sell mostly finger food, you wouldn't really need those anyway.

MEAT OUT

The state of the basement level of this building leaves much to be desired, but look past that (and other eateries around) and head straight for this curious little establishment that can be spotted immediately from the escalator ride down from ground level. It looks a lot like a pop-up store but the only things that would pop up are the delicious flavours it has to offer. The dishes are limited to several varieties of street-style food, which are lacking in neither portion nor taste.

We were greeted by a lone vendor who was absolutely warm and friendly (MashaAllah). Despite being recommended the chilli cheese hotdog, we went with the lighter options of chilli cheese nachos and their meatballs with mashed potatoes instead. The nacho, at \$3.90 is simply divine with a rich tomato salsa sauce that is warm, having been prepared on the spot, along with a generous drizzle of cheese sauce. This snack is a steal as the serving is enough for two (if you're not greedy). The meatballs and mash which are

Basement 1, Cathay Cineleisure Orchard
Opening hours: 12pm - 10pm daily
Nearest Mosque: Masjid Al-Falah, 15 Cairnhill Road



SIGNATURE MEATBALLS © MEAT OUT

THE RAMEN STALL

Japanese food lovers out there often come close to pulling their hair out when their cravings kick in, since it's difficult to find halal, authentic Japanese cuisine here. Fret not, for The Ramen Stall will chase all those worries away. Their wide array of Japanese dishes will leave you spoilt for choice but a fair warning, also potentially a hole in your wallet. Authentic Japanese food comes at a cost, so maybe you'd consider coming here for special occasions or gatherings. That said, it could still be possible to spend reasonably if you're willing to share the food.

It'd be a sin not to try one of their signature ramen, since the restaurant is named after it. The beef ramen (\$12.90) is served in a piping hot bowl of savoury broth, with springy noodles and bits of seaweed. The tender slices of beef can be easily peeled apart with your chopsticks (if you know how to use them).

787 North Bridge Road
Opening hours: 5pm - 5am (Weekdays)
12pm - 5am (Saturday, Sunday & Public Holiday)
Nearest Mosque: Masjid Sultan, 715 North Bridge Road



BEEF RAMEN, CALIFORNIA ROLL & UNAGI MAKI © FAYYADHAH

Enjoy all these together and it's like comfort in your mouth. We also tried their California roll (\$9.90/ 6 rolls) and umagi maki (\$14.90/ 6 rolls) which were fresh and exquisite. You can roughly gauge the average price of their food here, but if you don't mind forking out a bit more money for a satisfying meal, we'd recommend that you give The Ramen Stall a chance to blow your minds (and tummies).

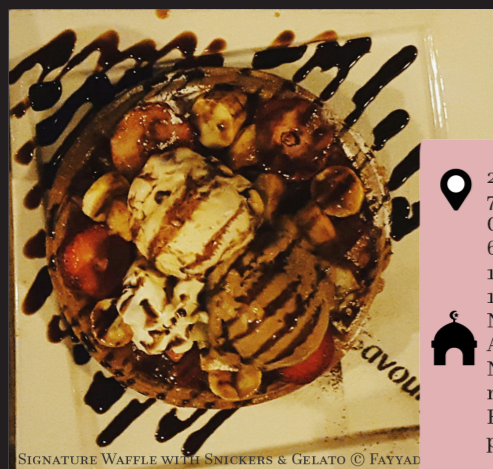
*It'd be best if you come around opening time to get a table as most customers tend to reserve seats in advance especially for dinner from 7pm onwards.

SAVOURY

This stretch of road along Jalan Kayu is a bustling hub of eateries open till late into the night. It's a must-go if you live within the area and are daring enough to venture into this rather isolated corner. Savoury stands out with its cosy interior and its prominent gelato bar in the foreground. You can choose whether to sit further inside the restaurant or in the open air, which could be nice if there is a cool breeze in the evening or at night.

Main courses are generally very Western-inspired dishes ranging from pastas to different proteins with a side of fries, but those coming to hang out and just chill should try their impressive dessert menu. At the top of the list would be their homemade waffles, which are available in either signature (with maple syrup) or drizzled with salted caramel sauce, and can be accompanied with 1 or 2 scoops of gelato to your own preference. You'd have to look through the flavours available before taking your seat, which is a bit of a hassle, but their eccentric flavours come in a good number of varieties such that you won't have to deliberate for too long. We settled for the signature waffle with Snickers and salted caramel gelato (\$18.50). The waffle is quite large, yet light and fluffy, which makes for a sufficient shared dessert for two. The scoops of gelato are in huge chunks which makes the entire dish very filling indeed. They're not too dense or sweet or cloying, and hence accompany the waffles topped with fruit perfectly.

If you're not a fan of strong, bitter coffee, then we'd suggest that you give theirs a pass as even the Toffee Latte (\$6) lacks the delicate sweetness in spite of its faint hint of toffee. The mocktails however are a must-try, if the refreshing and fizzy Shirley Temple (\$6.80) is anything to judge the rest of their interesting flavours by. So if you're in the neighbourhood and looking for a late-night hangout with good food and atmosphere, do drop by Savoury or any of the other neighbouring eateries according to your own budget.



SIGNATURE WAFFLE WITH SNICKERS & GELATO © FAYVA

246 Jalan Kayu, Singapore 799470.
Opening hours:
6pm – 11.30pm (Weekdays)
12pm – 1.30am (Saturday),
12pm – 11.30pm (Sunday)
Nearest Mosque: Masjid Al-Istiqamah, 2 Serangoon North Ave 2 Alternative musollah at Tang Tea House next door (if permitted).



CITRUS CAJUN LAMB RACK © CITRUS BY THE POOL

CITRUS BY THE POOL

It is ironic that one would go to a sports complex to locate an eatery where one could stuff one's face silly but none of it matters once you've stepped into this establishment. Despite its name, there's nothing characteristically citrusy nor is there a view of the pool from the restaurant, but the interior is still beautiful regardless. With a substantial menu of affordable appetisers, main courses and desserts, you wouldn't hesitate to try a bit of everything.

Main course includes a free canned drink of your choice, so the prices listed are inexpensive considering the type and portion of dishes they are serving. We tried the Grilled Free Range Chicken (\$13.90) which consists of a juicy chicken thigh cooked Sous Vide, accompanied by roasted baby potatoes, seasonal vegetables and wild mushroom atop a creamy citrus sauce. All elements of the dish are executed well, with sufficient flavour. The Catch of the Day (\$14.90) – pan-seared salmon with seasonal vegetables, wild mushrooms, mashed potato and cream sauce – does not disappoint as the amount of mash is generous and the dish is seasoned beautifully throughout. If you're looking for restaurant quality food that could save you a few dollars compared to the usual places you could get such food at, you surely have to consider this place.



CRISPY CHICKEN TORTILLA WRAP © CITRUS BY THE POOL

3 Woodlands Street 12, 3-3A
Woodlands Swimming Complex
Opening hours: 11am – 11pm daily
Nearest Mosque: Masjid An-Nur, 6 Admiralty Road

ZULOS CAFE

It's not unusual to find a cafe nestled among blocks of HDB flats nowadays, and Zulos is no different. You might feel a bit out of place on your way to finding it, but once you spot the pretty exterior and eventually enter the small and cosy premises, you'll feel right at home. It helps that the furniture and decor are simple and rustic, and the food won't burn a hole in your pocket. Where else can you find such a great deal on comfort food and location?

The highlights of their menu are their assorted churros, waffles and milkshakes. The Kinder Bueno Churros which come in 6 pieces at \$6 is dressed in crunchy crumble and a delicious drizzle of hazelnut chocolate sauce that does taste very strongly of

its famous namesake. Their Cookies 'n' Creme Waffles (\$8.50) are cut into neat quadrants topped with Oreo crumbs, white chocolate chips and showered with a deliciously sweet white chocolate sauce. Both desserts are made fresh and served warm, with a choice of ice cream if you prefer, for the waffles. Pair them with a milkshake or lighter drinks like the range of Arizona iced tea and other beverages, and you'll have a perfectly satisfying meal worth

every dollar spent. This is one not to miss!

Blk 612 Clementi West Street 1
Opening hours: 3.30pm – 9.30pm daily
Nearest Mosque: Masjid Darussalam, 3002 Commonwealth Avenue West



COOKIES & CREAM CHURROS © ZULOS CAFE

INSTAGRAM FEATURE

Follow these eateries on Instagram for a glimpse of their delectable dishes:

MEAT OUT: @MEATOUTOFFICIAL

RAMEN STALL: @THERAMENSTALL

SAVOURY: @SAVOURY_SG

CITRUS BY THE POOL: @CITRUSBYTHEPOOL

ZULOS CAFE: @ZULOS_SG



STICKY CARAMEL MILKSHAKE © ZULOS CAFE

OTHER ADHOCS BY NTUMS

Seekers' Garden Talk



ALLTERISK collaborated with Jamiyah's Children Home to conduct a camp for the kids.



YUSRA Raya Revamp 2015, graced with the presence of Mr Goh Chok Tong.



Muslimah Empowerment Series (MES) Usra Event



Freshman Orientation Camp - Mayar Iszana



Overseas Humanitarian Expedition (OHE)
Meshira De China



Overseas Humanitarian Expedition (OHE)
Aurora Purnama



Islamic Awareness Programme (IAP) held a shake-this-hand campaign to spread the message of peace and love.



Please handle this magazine with care and if need be, dispose it off properly either by burning or super-fine shredding as it contains Qur'anic verses.

Thank you