equating our faith

eleven magazine

THE FINAL PRINT (2021)

President's & ELEVEN's Note

Assalaamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.

All praise is to Allah, Lord of all worlds. May peace and salutations be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad, his family and his companions.

This 14th ELEVEN print publication marks the end of the production of the annual ELEVEN physical issues. With ELEVEN shifting its focus fully onto the online platform, this final print magazine is only the beginning of an even more exciting future, becoming a platform which strives to be relevant and in tune with the needs of the current generation. This is in line with the theme set for this year's ELEVEN: Becoming - becoming a well-loved print magazine that will be engraved in the hearts of many, but also becoming a fresh online identity that will strive to new heights.

I still vividly recall when Aashiq approached me last year, before I was even officially appointed as the President. He proposed the idea to have ELEVEN move onto an online platform, an idea which has already been brought up years back by previous ELEVEN teams, but never had the full traction needed to make that transition a success. We've had a long discussion, exchanging our thoughts and concerns. When the final call was made to allow the Heads to begin their journey, I still remember that both Aashiq and Sarah were full of enthusiasm - something which I admired and was at peace with. Not just because of what they showed at that point in time, but because I was fully confident that the energy shown was not a short-lived one, but that it will be sustained and that they have started their journey with a strong footing. Truly indeed, the energy and effort that the Heads along with the ELEVEN team members have put in has led to the realisation of the ELEVEN website and this very magazine that you are holding onto right now. I would safely say that the decision to shift ELEVEN online was the right decision, and I thank Allah that with His grace, this feat was made possible, *Alhamdulillah*.

May the ELEVEN ad hoc continue to benefit its readers in years to come. To be a place where contributors are able to share valuable insights and express their creativity, and for readers to ponder upon these works as a form of self-reflection and introspection. May Allah bless and accept all the efforts of the current ELEVEN team, previous ELEVEN teams, and to everyone else that has made it possible in one way or another, *Aameen*

Wassalaamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.
Muhammad Mukarram Sofi B M M
34th NTUMS President

Assalaamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.

Thank you, dear reader, for joining us for this issue of ELEVEN.

ELEVEN has for a decade been bringing our community all manner of content. What began as a simple newsletter has become an institution spanning dozens of writers, multiple committees, and hundreds of readers, all tied together by our shared engagement with this publication and our commitment to have conversations. ELEVEN has worked hard to provide an avenue for performing *da'wah* and sharing in the message of Islam.

It is fitting that the theme for this issue of ELEVEN is 'Becoming'. ELEVEN has been undergoing that very process for years now, growing, transforming, and reinventing itself to serve the community better.

It is in this spirit of becoming that we take the momentous step of leaving the print publication behind. What you hold in your hand is the final print issue, containing some of our most popular and most meaningful pieces from over the past ten years. We close this chapter today, but look forward into our future with hopeful hearts as we embark on new adventures together.

While the end of the print magazine may be a poignant moment for many of us, rest assured that our creations will not die here. Established with love and care in September 2020, we are overjoyed to introduce to you the latest chapter in our story: a brand new online platform.

Built with love, e-leven.co brings creations from artists in our community, to you, dear reader. We invite you to join us as you always have, and to let your weary bodies, hearts and minds find refuge in the art of the souls around us, twice a week, all year round.

The potential of a young platform is boundless. From video lookbooks on Eid to infographics on current affairs, our ELEVEN community has been game to express their penchant for innovation. With you around, who knows what other content awaits!

As we close this chapter and build on the new one, ELEVEN thanks you now more than ever for the support, no matter how long you've been here. There is so much that ELEVEN has been and can be — but it will not become itself without you.

All that is good comes from Allah.

For all that has happened, *Alhamdulillah*. And for the next chapter, *Bismillah*.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.
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Photograph by Muhammad

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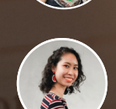

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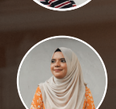

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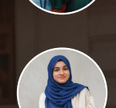

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Photograph by Sakinah Mohsen

equating our faith

ELEVEN

Find all the past themes!

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A	U	T	A	L	O	V	E	N	T	O	P	C	N
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REACH OUT
LOVE
CHANGE
JOURNEY
TIME

PLANT
IDENTITY
SEEKING
DAWN
WEAVING

CONVERSATIONS
PHASES
POSSIBILITIES
BECOMING

ELEVEN's Themes

It was surprisingly difficult for us, the 14th ELEVEN, to trace the themes of past issues of ELEVEN dating back to the very beginning. What we initially thought of as a simple matter of going through the archives and pulling up past issues that we each separately had, ended up being something of an adventure. A journey through the Wayback Machine, through old, untouched boxes in *Musollahs* across NTU, even through LinkedIn, all in search of clues as to when exactly ELEVEN began.

This may sound surprising, but the truth is that ELEVEN was not the first publication launched by NTUMS. No, we previously had a series of newsletters, two websites, two Tumblr pages, and even bulletin boards that were updated frequently. But as times changed, so did the needs of our community – and so ELEVEN was born. What was challenging for us was to unravel the threads a little better as we approached that point of genesis and to work out where the older publications really ended and where ELEVEN began.

How fitting that the very first theme, as far as we can tell, should be *Reach Out!* It felt in a bunch of ways like the early committees that planted the seed for what ELEVEN is and what ELEVEN could be were reaching out to us across time and space to remind us of our purpose, the reasons this publication exists, and the ways in which we will continue to do our best to serve the community in the best of ways.

You see, what became increasingly clear was the fact that ELEVEN, as we know it today, is an institution in itself, with a history of its own and a collection of stories held in our past that make up the fabric of what this publication is all about. Every committee member, every advisor, every contributor has played a vital part in weaving this all together. And each of the themes on the opposite page? Each of them tells a story of their own, providing insight into what the community here in NTUMS was like at that point in time, and encapsulating the identity of the committee that brought it to life.

Each theme encapsulates its issue. But each theme also is over time assimilated into the mythos – and the ethos – of ELEVEN. *Love*, *Change*, *Journey,* all of them – each of these issues come and gone have now taken their place in the collective consciousness of the community we serve and in the institution that is this publication.

It was with the 9th ELEVEN that the initial idea for moving the platform permanently online in the longer term was born. That was, in many ways, the *Dawn* of this era for ELEVEN, with the 9th ELEVEN committee conceptualising what an online ELEVEN would look like.

It was only with the 13th ELEVEN though, that these *Possibilities* were finally realised. Years of work had gone into trying and testing different solutions, different practices and different structures – the 13th ELEVEN tied it all together, and, with their theme, cast their eyes forward, excited to see what comes next.

And here, with the 14th ELEVEN, as we bid farewell to the print publication for good, we carry each of these themes with us. As we take a leap of faith and commit fully to this vision for the future, we recognise that ELEVEN has been on a years-long journey to arrive at this point. And we recognise that ELEVEN will continue to change, continue to evolve. We set ELEVEN into the future on the course of reinventing itself. Of transformation. Of evolving with the community. Of meeting change. Of never settling for simply being. Of *Becoming*.

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Threads of Faith
Threads of Faith
Threads of Faith

By Ikhmah Roslie

Here's to all the daughters,
whose hearts have been broken by their dads.
Isn't it sad that the first man in your life
turns out to be one of your biggest tests?
The ache that you feel, the tears you have shed,
the hurt sank so deep, it's impossible to forget
how your father was never there & it drives you mad,
but remember that He's in here, through the good & the bad.
Take it one day at a time as you handle each mess,
For He is with the silent, the broken, and the oppressed.
& believe me when I say that you deserve no less
in this world but Him, the absolute best.

Here's to all the single mothers,
whose bodies became homes for the weak & the homeless,
whose arms became shields, so strong & unbreakable.
Her love is a blessing, her affection is timeless,
& you can't figure out why, oh, why was she mistreated.
Maybe the real question here is why men are so careless
To hurt & abuse when she has committed to you?
Well, men are human, so are you. We all need reminders
but the difference between the two is they are heedless, reckless,
of the fact that He sees. & I swear if it wasn't for religion,
I would go mad watching all this injustice, feeling completely helpless.
So press on, brave warriors, for in His love lies your redemption.

Here's to all the lasting friendships,
those who were there when my soul was crumbling with fatigue.
Humans by day but when the sun dips, the cloth over their chest rips.
When I'm distressed, alone & depressed, they are my Justice League.
Devoid of love, full of anger for the skies above, I drink their love in sips.
Home is a feeling, not just a place. & I feel it here, so what else do I seek?
I get so tired of this life, of this world, the disappointments seem to run thick.
& honestly, I'm sick of feeling so weak, over & over again.
In the dim of the night, no hope, no light, my shoulders they shake & heave.
Armed to the teeth, in His mercy they believe, reminding me, "Please, dear, just breathe.
He gives you these troubles, because you are able.
& the ease after this temporal life is eternal."

Here's to the most intriguing human being I've ever met,
Whose eyes are soft when he's happy but stormy when he's sad,
He has asked me before to choose between a sunrise & a sunset,
& I chose you, Ya Allah, for giving me him, the best view I've ever had.
Sometimes it feels as though he went to war with love & left a piece
of himself, of his soul. So he never really did come back whole.
It's frustrating when he's gone cold, the warmth is what I miss.
"To love is easy but to understand is profound." or so I've been told.
Into the deep, I dove right in. But I made a mistake – I forgot about the keys
for the gates to his mind, for the lock on his heart & the soul that he sold
for the ropes around his feet. I can't seem to untie them so all I ask is this;
pull him back to You & bring him back home with an anchor to hold.

& Here's to the One & Only,
who heals all the daughters,
whose hearts have been broken by their dads.
who protects all the single mothers,
whose bodies became homes for the weak & the homeless,
who blessed me with all these lasting friendships,
those who were there when my soul was crumbling with fatigue.
& made me lucky with the most intriguing human being I've ever met,
whose eyes are soft when he's happy but stormy when he's sad.
It leads me right back to You, all these people, all these threads,
they've woven me entirely – made me strong & kept me soft, but yet
between me & You, it's a lifeline that can never be compared.

Illustration by Nur Azizah | @madeby_zy

Common Misconceptions of Inshaallah, Astaghfirullah, Mashaallah

These sayings are often being interjected in conversations with fellow Muslims. The question is – do we really understand what they mean? Nur Ashikin explores this question.

INSHAALLAH easily punctuates a person's sentence. When invited for an *Eid* gathering, we say *InshaAllah*. When asked to help out for a community event, we say *InshaAllah*. But how many of those *InshaAllah(s)* are really us having firm faith that yes, we do have the freedom to make a choice but ultimately He decides whether we are able to carry it out? How many then are said despite having already made the decision in our hearts to decline or to get others off our back, because we foresee questions we cannot be bothered to answer if we were to decline an invitation?

InshaAllah carries the meaning 'If God wills' and thus should be accompanied with a commitment to fulfil that promise. If despite our efforts, there are still obstacles along the way preventing us from fulfilling our promises, then be assured that He has other plans for us.

However, if *InshaAllah* is conveniently reduced to lip service, we are slowly transforming ourselves into individuals who hold no respect for promises made. The more we verbalise it without carrying out its intended meaning, the more we display the characteristics of a *munafik* (hypocrite).

Allah SWT reminded Rasulullah SAW of the importance of saying *InshaAllah* when Quraisy individuals who enquired about Ashabul Kahfi approached Rasulullah SAW. Since revelation about it has not reached the prophet SAW yet, he told them to come again the next day for the answer. However, the reply did not come as he envisioned.

And never say of anything, "Indeed, I will do that tomorrow," except [when adding], "If Allah wills." And remember your Lord when you forget [it] and say, "Perhaps my Lord will guide me to what is nearer than this to right conduct" [Al-Qur'an, 18:23-24].

Allah SWT did send the revelation eventually but it was not on the very next day, as mentioned by Rasulullah SAW to the Quraisy. This verse was revealed to Rasulullah SAW as a reminder to say *InshaAllah* because he should not make promises that he is unsure he can fulfil.

Saying *InshaAllah*, even after making a decision to proceed with something reminds us that He is the ultimate Controller of our lives. Let us remember to say *InshaAllah* before we want to do something, and if it is an intention that is best for us, He will guide us through it.

Living in this transient world full of challenges makes it easy for one to be susceptible to sins. With its literal meaning of "I seek forgiveness from Allah", it is apt that this saying should be at the tip of our tongues. As His servants, we should be in a constant state of begging for forgiveness from our Creator.

ASTAGHFIRULLAH is often said as an expression of shame or disapproval upon hearing something about others that will incur the wrath of Allah SWT. However, be careful to not mete out our own judgement towards the individual through our speech, for only He can judge. For instance, refrain from saying, "*Astaghfirullah*, how sinful! Why did she do that when she knows it's *haram*?" We seek forgiveness from Him for allowing us to find out about other's *aib* and most importantly, to protect ourselves from the same wrongdoing.

It is encouraged to seek forgiveness at the end of the day for the wrong deeds that we have done, intentionally or otherwise. A stereotypical misconception is that *Astaghfirullah* is said only when we know we have committed a sin.

Indeed, Allah SWT is *Al-Ghaffar* and He keeps forgiving. We say *Astaghfirullah* because we are fearful of Allah's wrath, yet hopeful upon his mercy as we work towards the obedience of Allah SWT. If even Rasulullah SAW, the best role model of mankind, sought forgiveness from Allah SWT 70 to 100 times daily according to *hadith* narrations, what more us mere humans? It is hoped that our constant desire to be forgiven through saying *Astaghfirullah* will help to open doors of goodness for us in this world and the next.

If *Astaghfirullah* is often laden with negativity, **MASHAALLAH** is generally expressed when something good happens. In Arabic, *MashaAllah* means "Allah has willed it". By attributing everything to Allah SWT, it can be used for the good or the bad that happened because He has power over all things.

Saying *MashaAllah* should be used, not only to give admiration at goodness and beauty. It is observed that *MashaAllah* is commonly used to praise someone's good looks or talent. However, the saying should instead be utilised as a humbling reminder that whatever good was bestowed to us was not because of our own capacity, but Allah. We must always remember that whatever Allah SWT gives, He can take away easily.

It is essential for us to comprehend the meanings of *InshaAllah*, *Astaghfirullah*, and *MashaAllah*, so that we are able to express it within the right context. Let us also internalise their significance, and adopt the right behaviour and mindset in accordance with these sayings. Only then, will we realise the true bearing and power of His words.

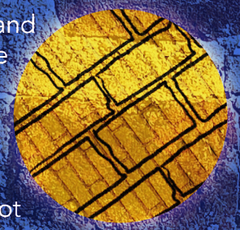
By Nur Ashikin
Calligraphy by Zubaidah Dadlani

It was a normal day for me.

I woke up, got dressed and headed to school. As I commuted to school, my phone started buzzing. There were notifications from BBC, Al Jazeera and New York Times, all alerting me of Trump's latest attempt to ban Muslims that he so passionately promised to white supremacists and nationalists during his election campaign. Wow. He managed to pass an executive order banning Muslims from 7 Muslim-majority countries from coming into America. Imagine the chaos, the panic, the confusion that would ensue.

I opened my Facebook application and scrolled through my news feed. The number of posts on politics that day on my news feed was unprecedented. I watched AJ+'s video, of their reporters going down to the various airports in the US and I saw, through their lens, numerous protestors who banded together as they resisted Trump's ban in the hopes that the power of the masses would put pressure on the authorities to overturn the order. Later that night, I saw a photo on Twitter that immediately went viral. I loved that photo from the moment I saw it. It was the most meaningful photo ever taken amidst the pandemonium, the hopelessness and the confusion. Amidst the protesters and the heated environment they were in, the subjects of the photo encapsulated the beauty and the solidarity of the human race.

It was the photograph of seven-year-old Meryem, a Muslim, and nine-year-old Adin, a Jewish boy, on their fathers' shoulders, looking and smiling at one another as their fathers talked about the similarities between halal and kosher diets at Chicago's O' Hare International Airport. The photograph was captured by Chicago Tribune's Nuccio DiNuzzo.



People talk about the power of words but they forget how powerful pictures can be and how a single, simple photograph can be rife with social and political messages. The photograph captured the hearts of many, because it showed unity amidst diversity. In a time where this very diversity is not being celebrated, but instead, used as a weapon to incite hatred and xenophobia as well as a division of Us against Them, this photograph is a beautiful subversion of Trump's anti-Muslim and overtly-nationalistic rhetoric. The photograph establishes hope amidst troubled times. It is a reminder that diversity does not and will not divide us. Everybody, regardless of one's race, religion, creed, sexual orientation, gender, wants peace. And they want love.

The attempt to ban Muslims will forever remain a horrifying moment enshrined in the 21st Century, a chilling revival of what the Jews faced in Germany during World War II. Yet, Trump's Muslim ban also showed various people, not just from different faiths, but people from various socio-economic backgrounds coming together to help. Lawyers came down to the various airports to provide free legal services to those who were detained. Here, humanity transcended class differences as lawyers were willing to offer their services, with no strings attached, to help complete strangers. Here, empathy transcended economic imperatives. Here, solidarity triumphed over differences.

This display of true humanity did not occur just once. It was evident as well in the Women's March that was held a day after Trump's inauguration. Women and men alike came down to Washington in a bid to fight for women's rights in an administration that disregards the value of women and police women's bodies. The amazing show of the crowd - a stark contrast to the small crowd a day earlier at Trump's inauguration ceremony signalled that a new dawn is approaching on the horizon. Although there needs to be numerous follow-up actions to sustain the Women's March movement and to produce effective change, these individuals from all walks of life - from different religious, racial and socio-economic backgrounds - came together to challenge entrenched stereotypes and deep-rooted prejudices for equality and change. This is social awareness, which is producing a society of informed individuals who can contribute something substantial to society and effect profound change, someday.

Even music and fashion have become politicised and have been turned into platforms to promote social change and social awareness. In this year's Grammy Awards, A Tribe Called Quest, with Anderson .Paak, Busta Rhymes and Consequence, delivered an extremely politicised performance that strongly condemned President Trump and his Muslim ban, even boldly labelling him as "President Agent Orange", while Q-Tip repeatedly roared to the crowd to "resist", as they literally kicked down a faux wall, in a symbolic act of resistance and non-acceptance. In this year's New York Fashion Week, designer Anniesa Hasibuan is making history yet again as she intends to cast her feature made up entirely of first-generation and second-generation immigrant models, wearing the hijab. In a time where the political climate is so charged when it comes to Muslim women and the hijab as well as the immigrant issue, she aims to raise awareness of equality and spread the message that the hijab should be celebrated as a sign of diversity, not as something to be feared or condemned. Want to make a statement? Do it through music, do it through fashion. It works, it sends the message across. People's interests are captured, their attention is piqued. Music and fashion have become platforms for awareness and change.

What this generation has, something that is powerful and potent, is courage. The courage to unite, the courage to raise social awareness and the courage to challenge deep-seated prejudicial narratives in the name of progress and equality, fearless of the backlash and the retribution. And courage to do all these is a sign of hope. It promotes the betterment of ourselves and the society we are in.

So, don't lose faith in humanity just yet. There resides great power in the masses.

tearing down walls

By Shabira Basheer
Illustration by @rez.assured

Christchurch

By Aashiq Anshad

I wake up this Friday to news alerts.
Dozens Hurt –
I wake up to notifications - our brothers and sisters, in the midst of their supplications,
In the midst of talking to Allah find their conversations
cut short.
Firearms Incident –
Gunshots –
Our brothers and sisters in the midst of their supplications,
Tending to their obligations,
Find their souls set free.
I wake up to Trends on Twitter and Hashtags on Instagram,
New Zealand, Christchurch –
I wake up to see
headlines.
Multiple Deaths in New Zealand Mosque Shootings
إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
Cut down in the safest of spaces,
In the midst of their supplications,
Mid-conversation
With our Lord, in the safest of places.
I wake up to headlines,
New Zealand Police Warn People to Avoid Mosques
The safest of spaces.
I wake up to stories of a brother who sees a man enter his mosque, who greets him,
Assalaamu'alaikum –
Peace.
Gunshots –
I wake up to retweets, to a video circulating.
Gunshots –
Our brothers, prostrating,
Never to rise to their feet.
I wake up to an *ummah* shaken, collectively awakened
To a frightening reality, to our mortality, to questions of morality.
A profound sadness runs through our community

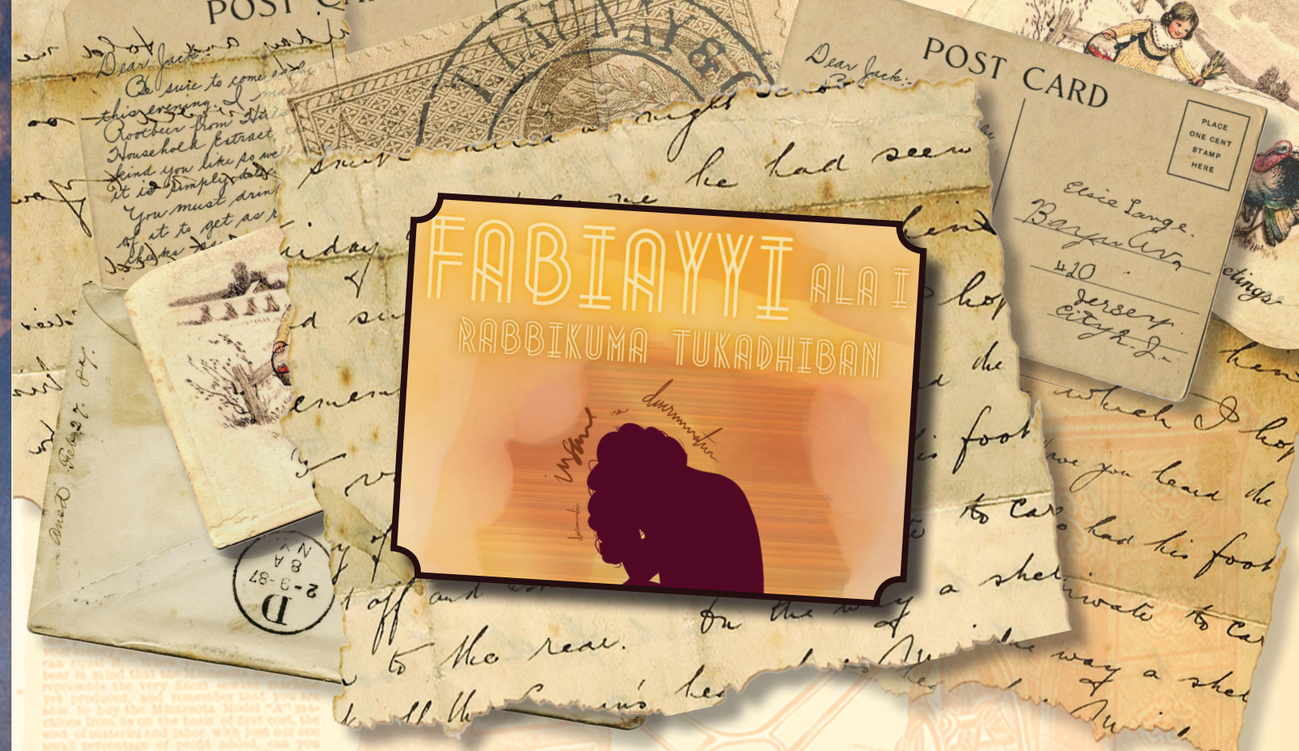
We wake up to a renewed need for unity, we wake up amidst questions from all corners of society.
We wake up to a police statement –
"We ask all mosques to shut their doors"
Seemingly the safest of spaces no more –
But it is imperative they remain open, even more
Crucial than before. It is imperative that we remain open –
Bruised, scarred, but an ummah unbroken
Even as stories come out of blood along the floor.
Unbroken as we are, we do not lock ourselves inside.
We do not close our doors, we have nothing to hide.
Our arms are open.
The depths of confusion and consternation can only resolve with conversation.
We wake up, an ummah unbroken.
We wake up to You knocking on our doors, our windows, our hearts and minds,
We wake up to You
Reminding us to be kind
To ourselves, to one another,
Woven, as we are, together.
We wake up to You knocking on our doors, reminding us to be glad
That every time we fall
Asleep, we wake up at all.
We wake up to You.
Are we truly ready for the arms of Your embrace?
Are we truly ready for a conversation with You, face to face?
We wake up.
We wake up to You.
We wake up to headlines, to retweets, to trends on Twitter, on Instagram.
May we remember you.
& may we remember You, Allah.
We wake up to talk to You,
To perform our supplications,
To tend to our obligations,
To join our Lord in conversation.
We wake up for You.
Al-Fatihah.

SEEKING SAGACITY

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.

By Husain bin Abdul Rahim
Graphics by Adam Rosli | @adamrosli_

The full reflection piece can be found on e-leven.co



"Then which of the favours of your Lord do ye deny?"

Amidst all the cacophony please listen,
there is nothing wrong with your brain.
Fabi-ayyi ālā-i rabbikumā tukadhdhibān[1]
Voices crawl into your mind beyond your volition.
The jury's out, you're insane.
But amidst all the cacophony please listen
Children's hearts do not see the legislation,
their eyes do not pierce with disdain.
Fabi-ayyi ālā-i rabbikumā tukadhdhibān
People indiscriminately shoot with the "impiety" gun
making their courtesy a sight to be feigned.
But amidst all the cacophony please listen
Your beauty surpasses the touch of the sun,
darkness is when mercy is best attained.
Fabi-ayyi ālā-i rabbikumā tukadhdhibān
Every man's hands are calloused with discrimination,
it needs sandpaper to erase the grain.
Amidst all the cacophony please listen,
Fabi-ayyi ālā-i rabbikumā tukadhdhibān

By Nur Laili
Illustration by @lails_lit

1 Al-Qur'an 55:13

BARBERSHOP

Staring at the barber pole outside the shop, Ahmad debated if he should enter. He considered the possibility that his presence would not be welcomed but it had been years since then. Figuring it was finally or never, Ahmad walked in.

The familiar ringing of the bell coincided with the opening of the door. Ahmad could see the man he was looking for, knees bent, face turned away in concentration as he snipped the hair of a young Chinese man who clearly looked as though he had somewhere better to be.

"Just a moment, I'm finishing up here." Uncle Siva's voice was still the same then, albeit a little tired. Ahmad did not know what he was expecting. He had changed so much and to be back was like walking into his past.

While waiting, Ahmad took the opportunity to glance around the barbershop. The air was thick with the musty smell of mothballs. He was glad to see that the '90s-styled interior and brick design of the walls remained.

The room was just as he remembered it, with every square-foot filled with jokes and movie posters, random newspaper clippings and comic sections which were already turning yellow, vintage gear collected and donated by loyal customers, and male-modelled haircuts. While Ahmad remembered the flimsy plastic chairs he used to sit on as a child, now there was a metal park bench flanked on a wall for those waiting their turn.

Ahmad glanced back at the old man, still preoccupied with his customer. Ahmad practically grew up here. He still remembered the cacophony of intermingled languages as the regular customers of the barbershop often spoke in Malay, Tamil, or Mandarin to Uncle Siva, who managed to build a close rapport with them as he worked on their hair six days a week, every week for nearly 20 years and counting.

Uncle Siva's expertise was mostly self-taught and his beloved tools were the simple metal scissors, straight razor and manual clipper which he kept alongside his brushes and blades in a small trolley he often carted around.

That day did not seem like a busy day but he remembered that the shop was often full of regular customers, most of them elderly men, waiting patiently for their haircuts. Ahmad was an easily distracted child and even the magazines and comics that Uncle Siva bought specially for him could not contain his attention for very long. Eventually, watching the men in the shop became a new means of entertaining himself.

There was always one who would be quietly reading a newspaper that he had brought to the shop and leave after he was done. Then there were chattier others who would speak passionately about the rising cost of living. His customers also shared snippets of their life to Uncle Siva about home, work, and children. Uncle Siva listened raptly to their stories, interjecting occasionally to ask questions or provide sage advice, but he was mostly a good listener.

"Okay, I'm done– Ahmad? Is that you?"

Ahmad faced the old Indian man that he now was towering over. Ahmad took a moment to examine his face. He was expecting Uncle Siva to be old - he himself had just celebrated his thirtieth birthday - but he was not prepared for this.

"Hello, Uncle Siva."

"My boy! It is you! It's been what? Eight years since I've last seen you!" He walked over and leaned in for a hug, his hand clasping firmly on Ahmad's shoulder. Ahmad returned it with equal fervour.

A cough broke them out of their reverie.

"This reunion is nice and all but can I pay now?"

They had almost forgotten that they had company. The young man handed over his money, muttering something and promptly leaving the shop.

"Kids nowadays very rude ah. Don't respect their elders anymore."

Uncle Siva picked up an old broom resting in the corner of the room and began sweeping the hairs on the floor. Ahmad, not knowing what to do with himself, was content to let Uncle Siva pick up the conversation.

"So you got married?"

"Yeah. Got a little boy. Another one on the way."

Ahmad could see the misty eyes of the barber but he kept silent. It was a lot to take in. Uncle Siva stopped sweeping and looked at Ahmad.

"I see," he started, before slowly approaching another topic, "I heard that he's sick now. That's why you came back, right?"

"Yeah, the doctors said…. It's not good." Ahmad's relationship with his father had always been – he had to think of a word to say – fraught at most but even then, his father's rapidly deteriorating health distressed him.

"I tried to visit him, you know? Your mother let me in but as soon as he saw me, he went crazy!" Uncle Siva let out a coarse laugh. "Started screaming bloody murder."

They shared a small smile. They knew his father's personality all too well. That man could really hold a grudge. But for how long? Wasn't the certainty of impending death enough to bury the past?

"I have to go. I just came to say hi. It was nice seeing you, Uncle Siva. I'm… I'm glad you're still around."

Uncle Siva gave him a firm pat on the back with a promise to visit again. Ahmad walked out of the shop, the all-too familiar bell triggering a memory in his head.

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Ahmad waited patiently in line for his order of iced Milo and teh tarik at the coffee shop. It was his daily after-school ritual to buy the drinks for himself and Uncle Siva. The old man loved his teh tarik and he considered it a payment for the hours he allowed Ahmad to stay at his barbershop.

"Did you hear? There's a fight at Uncle Siva's!"

"Wah! Where you hear one? You want to see or not?"

"Yah, yah, let's go!"

Ahmad perked his ears at the information. Drinks forgotten, he made his way to Uncle Siva's. From outside, he could make out two figures through the windows. People were starting to gather.

"Isn't that Hamid?"

Ahmad pressed his face closer to the glass. Sure enough, he recognised the broad shoulders of his father, looking imposing and tense. Ahmad tried to make out what his father was saying but his words were muffled. All Ahmad could see was the face of Uncle Siva facing his father, brows drawn together and mouth curled in a snarl. Debating temporarily before deciding, Ahmad opened the door and winced at the clanging sound of the bell that accompanied the action. His father and Uncle Siva stopped their argument but they continued staring menacingly at each other.

Distracted by the commotion, Ahmad had thought that the shop was empty but he realised that there were others in the shop but they were congregated in the corner, ready to intervene should the need arise.

Uncle Samad, someone Ahmad regularly talked to when he spent his afternoons at Uncle Siva's shop, stepped towards Ahmad.

"Ahmad, go home. You don't need to see this."

Ahmad made no move to leave and instead, looked at his father. "What's going on?"

His father ignored his question but moved towards him. He reached for Ahmad's wrist and tried to lead him out the door. Just as he was about to leave, Uncle Siva spoke, "Don't come anymore. You are not welcome here."

Ahmad struggled out of his father's grasp to look at the man.

"You too, Ahmad." Uncle Siva added coldly.

"But," Ahmad started sputtering, but his father's firm grip was bordering on painful and he was pulled away from the shop and away from the stunned silence of the audience around them.

When they were finally alone in the lift of their flat, his father let go of his small wrist. Rubbing gently at it, Ahmad was still trying to process what had happened.

"That man! Thinks he can tell me what to do about my own child. I'm his father. I can do whatever I want. Who does that bastard think he is?"

Ahmad could only listen as his father muttered angrily to himself. He wanted to press further, but he knew the consequences of angering his father when he was in one of his moods. He still had the welts to prove it.

The ding of the lift signalled that they were close to home. As his father stepped out, he was still muttering but he stopped and looked at Ahmad squarely in the eye.

"I don't want you going to that shop anymore, do you hear me?"

Ahmad thought about Uncle Siva. Sweet, kind Uncle Siva who welcomed him everyday after school and did not mind when Ahmad completed his homework at the shop. Uncle Siva who bought him comics and left them in the shop after Ahmad mentioned that he was a fan of Iron Man. Uncle Siva who had been his friend and confidante since his father brought him to the barbershop for his first haircut as a little boy.

Ahmad did not want to follow his father's orders but he nodded even when the tears threatened to spill from his eyes.

"If I see or hear about you going anywhere near that shop, I will make you regret it. Do. You. Understand?" He had grabbed Ahmad by the shirt and shook him as he said those words, his question coming across as less of a statement, more a threat.

"What's that commotion? Hamid, what are you doing?" Ahmad breathed a sigh of relief as he heard his mother's voice.

"Stay out of this, Salmah."

His father let go of his shirt and stormed off into the house, brushing roughly against his mother who had rushed out to help her son. Ahmad could only cry against the comfort of his mother's embrace.

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Ahmad braced himself as he knocked on the door of his parent's bedroom while trying to hold the bowl of porridge balancing on a tray. His mother had left him a note saying that she had to leave to collect something and left Ahmad with the task of bringing lunch and medicine to his father.

His father laid silent on the bed. Was he asleep? Ahmad stepped closer to make sure. His eyes were open so not asleep then but he appeared deep in thought, not noticing Ahmad was there at all. Ahmad took the opportunity to take a good look at him. It had been eight years since he had left and facing his father for the first time since then, he did not quite know how to feel.

Ahmad stood there staring at the wizened face, adorned with wrinkles but what was the most pronounced detail was the skin that had drooped on the left side of his face. A burst artery. Stroke. That was what the doctors had said.

His father's left arm was curled up against his side, essentially paralysed and Ahmad could see how much both his left arm and leg had atrophied after months of disuse. Ahmad was informed about his father's condition but seeing it for the first time, he almost felt sorry for the man.

"Abah…" his father turned his head slightly towards the sound, blinking owlishly at his son. "Abah." He tried again. "I brought you your lunch." He lifted the tray to show his father the bowl of porridge.

Silence. Ahmad was used to his father being silent but this situation unnerved him. Recalling his conversation with Uncle Siva earlier, Ahmad was determined to set things right.

"I met Uncle Siva just now. He said you didn't let him visit you?" Ahmad took a scoop of the porridge and blew gently at it before placing it on his father's lip, urging it open. The old man turned his face away.

"Don't be stubborn. You have to eat." Ahmad let out a sigh. "You have to make things right with Uncle Siva also. He still cares about you, you know."

His father used his working arm to push away the bowl Ahmad was holding, causing it to crash onto the ground. Ahmad looked at the shattered pieces of glass and globs of porridge on the floor.

"Why are you so stubborn, hah?! Even now, even on your deathbed, you still don't want to forgive him?" Ahmad could not believe that he had felt sympathy for the withered man lying before him. "You keep pushing everybody away when all they are trying to do is help you!"

"He should've…" His voice was soft and mostly slurred, but Ahmad moved closer to understand what his father was saying. "He should've minded his own business."

"All this anger, all this unnecessary suffering you've put yourself and everyone else around you..." Ahmad seethed at those words.

When his father did not respond, Ahmad decided to take matters into his own hands. He ripped his father, struggling a little under the weight. His father protested but even as he did so, the left side of his body was too paralysed to move. Ahmad carefully picked his father up – the old man still thrashing about as much as he could – before setting him on the wheelchair in the corner of the room.

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The bell clanged as Ahmad pushed the door open.

"Ahmad! I know I asked you to visit again but I never thought it would be so soon!"

Ahmad did not reply. He was a man on a mission. Keeping the door open, he went out and returned with his father, struggling a little to lift the wheelchair over the step.

"Well…." Uncle Siva's eyebrows were raised. "This is a surprise."

"Uncle Siva, my father… He…" Ahmad did not think ahead. "He needs a haircut."

"Well," Uncle Siva paused. "Alright." He walked over to his cart and dragged it over to Ahmad and his father. He unfolded a plastic cape and draped it over Ahmad's father who tried to push the offending material away from his body.

"Hamid, your hair really is too long. It's been a while, right?" Uncle Siva lifted a matted lock of hair off his head. It was greasy and clumped together. "Just let me do this for you, okay?"

His father sat, not making a sound, having no energy left to argue. Finally, he gave a little nod. He used his right hand to scratch at his head and then at the straggly hair growing around his chin. Uncle Siva watched his movements, understanding immediately what the other man wanted. He reached for his clippers and pushed the other man's head downwards, going through the unruly mess. Hair began to pile up on the man's shoulders.

"I hate the new electric razors. I prefer them old school you know."

Hamid harrumphed in reply making Uncle Siva laugh out loud, the sound surprising both of them.

"Glad we can finally agree on something."

Ahmad, satisfied with the exchange, picked up a comic before settling down on the bench.

They had a lot of catching up to do.

By Faiqah Rizliana
Graphics by Adam Rosli | @adamrosli_

BLOOMING ALONG THE CITIES I VISIT

Hanoi, Vietnam

The cold was unexpected. When we exited the airport, none of our efforts to keep ourselves warm worked. I did my best to squeeze my hands together and hug myself with my thin layer of clothes, but the cold was relentless. My nails turned blue. It hit me — my ignorance about the rest of Southeast Asia. I thought all of Vietnam shared the weather of Malaysia and Singapore. As I stood shivering outside the airport gates, in addition to the weight of the cold, I also felt the weight of my mistake.

I spent the following fourteen days exploring the tiny and enriching streets of Hanoi with my new jacket. That chilling feeling upon first arriving in Vietnam struck me then, and the impression still remains now. The world is incredibly vast; my Southeast Asian neighbours contained so much beauty to explore and learn from.

As I walked along the Old Quarter with my new jacket, I reflected on the visual and interruptive force of the French against Vietnamese architecture. The sight called my attention to the impact of a traveller's ignorance upon arrival in a different land. My first visit to Vietnam marked the last time I would ever want to visit a place with ignorant presumptions. As I hugged myself against the wind, I made a promise: to always be open-minded as I travel.

Fez, Morocco

The sight of Old Medina blew me away. The chaotic walkways grasped my sight with their vivid warm colours. The cacophony of voices in the market — sellers calling for buyers, friends in conversation, children and teenagers playing along the narrow streets — was foreign yet welcoming. The shop owners smiled at us, embracing us with *salam* and greeting us with *marhaban*. I took a deep breath, and the amalgamation of oud, spices, dust, and sand created a scent I never want to forget. The entire atmosphere begged for my attention and my appeal. Omar, our host, walked us through his hometown with the familiar aptitude only a local would carry. My friends and I looked around ourselves in awe. The browns and oranges of the walls, the wooden musk in the air, the sand in the light — I vividly remember how utterly timeless the city felt. Fez had a personality of its own, and the streets in the Old Medina was one of the veins that allowed the heart of Fez to continue beating. I was so fascinated by every corner that this city had to offer.

That first night, our hosts served us dinner in the intimate space of their home. As we took in the marble floors and the delicious Moroccan khobz, I also made sure to take in our hosts' conversations. I knew I would learn best about the city from its dwellers. Listening, I brimmed with excitement to begin our adventure.

Reykjavik, Iceland

Streetlights. An uncommon feature in the country even in the city area. There were no lamps to accompany us in the dark, only reflective markers to guide us. Yet, though our path was shrouded in darkness, the drive back to our accommodation was nothing short of stunning. Above us, the sky boasted a natural depiction of what it would be like to live away from light pollution, away from city skyscrapers, away from tall buildings and architecture. In the dark, the sky glowed. The stars served what the absent streetlights were not able to. Constellations, stars, galaxies, possibly even planets and other universes; they were all scattered across the black canvas of the night sky. They dotted, glittered, spread themselves as wide as the empty horizon could be seen, as far as my limited sight could experience.

The drive back under this wondrous view made the darkness around me feel like nothing. It made me forget that I was on an island thousands of miles away from home, from the warm comforts of familiarity, from the assuring protection of those around me. It made me forget the terror that came with my first time driving overseas. Though the journey lasted a mere few minutes, it gave me a memory of a breathtaking sky that will last a lifetime.

Glasgow, Scotland

It was hard to tell when exactly spring began. It was gradual. The air felt less cold, the paths were less slippery, the skies bluer than grey. And the flowers — their petals accompanied the light flakes of snow that didn't manage to fall during winter. The soft blend of pinks, whites, and yellows bloomed alongside the greens on trees that, only weeks ago, were mere brown branches. Seeing the flowers in full bloom, it dawned upon me how quickly the previous three months had passed.

By then, each of the streets carried its own significance; Hillhead was an area of interaction and friendship, Queen Street was a space of intermission and brief transit, whereas Garrowhill is the place of return, the place I call my home. Under the blossoming trees of University Avenue, I beheld the beautiful midst of spring, the season of rebirth. As I lay comfortably on the ground, I closed my eyes and inhaled the scent of the grass, my surroundings buzzing with faint sounds of conversation. Within two months, I'll be embracing the arms of Singapore — what sort of lessons will I be able to bring home?

By Izza Haziqah

WEARING GREEN

Twenty in twenty seventeen
I was called to wear green
A rite of passage in the Lion City
As Simba was in The Lion King
A destiny set by The Divine
To take lead of the pride
From a part of the millions of lives
To their lives in the hands of mine

Wow, from just fun and games
Now, I'm being told my place
I've yet to learn to pay my bills
But today I've been trained to kill
Paradigm shift in a land of peace
The world is not what it seems
Everyday I've been pushed off cliffs
So I can learn about maturity

I am a Malay-Muslim Soldier
Took an oath to defend our honour
But just across the borders
Are my fellow Muslim brothers
We're supposed to love one another
And to fight off the oppressors
But when I'm faced with a believer,
Who will be the first to shout "Fire!"?

I was only just twenty and had not seen the world
But I hold this responsibility, don't you think it's cruel?
To breach my duty is to plan my funeral
But where lies loyalty in a place that's rural?

Life's not a straight line planned by The Divine
Sending a thousand signs to guide and untwine
With passing time the sun will shine
Across the night sky the stars will soon align
Then I'll find the meaning of life
The way He outlined for all mankind

By Ahmad Zaid

You Wouldn't Tell A Butterfly

By Farid Yusuf

You wouldn't tell a butterfly to stay a caterpillar
A beautiful flower to remain a little bloomer
Or ridicule a child for growing a little bigger
So why is it that when he stares in the mirror
With hopes of becoming a little greater
You put him down like he's a little beggar
You pass judgment on him, a little quicker
You bring up his past like he's the worst of all the sinners
You make him feel like a failed mister
So truth be told, who's the real monster?
Is it he, the dream-killer
Or you, the real murderer?
The same is true for our beloved sisters
You put them down in the name of honour
When the hijab was revealed to make them only stronger
As the western world is already telling our girls to look hotter
And you are only adding oil to the fire by telling them they are goners
Think, through all these psychological stresses, do you really want them to prosper?
Love, not hate, is what we need to foster
If only we don't give up on others for a little longer
With a bit of motivation, there's nothing they can't conquer
So serve the love on the saucer
And slay the hate with a slaughter
You wouldn't have changed for the better
If everyone pushed you down and called you an imposter
For every son of Adam is a sinner
And the best of sinners are the Repenters
So, open your doors to welcome the Repenters
May Allah SWT guide us and make us of the Embracers.

Illustration by Nur Ainin Sophea | @a.__p_ea

Keeping up with the Khushu'

We have all been there before. We are at the campus *musollah*, performing our prayers, when our thoughts absently drift away.

"Have I studied enough for the test later?" the mind whispers.
"Ugh! The deadline for that assignment is today, not tomorrow!" your memory suddenly functions again.
"Hmm what should I have for dinner later?" the stomach wonders.

In all honesty, this is something we all have faced at least once during our prayers. None of us are immune to distractions in *salah*, but that does not make it acceptable to continue offering *salah* that is tainted by distractions — *salah* without *Khushu'*.

Khushu' refers to the submission, tenderness, and longing within the heart. When the heart swells with *Khushu'*, the body naturally follows during our *salah*. The Prophet SAW said in a hadith:

"Beware, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body will be sound, and if it is corrupt the whole body will be corrupt, and hearken it is the heart."
(Sahih Bukhari, Book 52, Hadith Number 50)

It is also about being cognizant of Allah's Greatness, and the awareness of one's own shortcomings. It grants us the humility needed to complete *salah* accordingly. Thus, guarding our *Khushu'* is important. However, our *Khushu'* fluctuates with each prayer depending on the strength of our faith at that point in time. Renewing our intentions and *Iman* is therefore paramount to renewing our *Khushu'*, and the onus is then on us to continually equip ourselves with relevant knowledge. Not only will that help us improve the level of humility in *salah*, it will also help us take the most important step to succeed in *dunya* and *akhirah*. *InshaAllah*.

So how do we better our *Khushu'* during *salah*? Here are some practical steps toward achieving that goal:

1. Knowledge

وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ وَٱلدَّوَآبِّ وَٱلْأَنْعَـٰمِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُۥ كَذَٰلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَـٰٓؤُا۟ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

"And among people and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colours similarly. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving. (*The Qur'an*, 35:28)

It was narrated that Anas bin Malik said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'Allah has His own people among mankind.' They said: 'O Messenger of Allah, who are they?' He said: ''The people of the Qur'an, the people of Allah and those who are closest to Him." (Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 1, Hadith Number 215) - Would this be more relevant?

In this hadith, the term 'people of the Qur'an' refers to those who learn and ponder it. The hadith above demonstrates how increasing our knowledge of the religion helps brings us closer to our Creator. Thus, garnering knowledge for the sake of improving our *salah* such as *tawhid* is certainly the right step towards building our *Khushu'*. However, it is important to seek knowledge under the guidance of Islamic teachers and scholars (without relying too often on *Ustadh* Google).

2. Seeking Refuge

We should also seek refuge in Allah SWT from Satan by reciting "*Aa-'udhubillahi min Ash-Shaitanir Rajim*" before starting the *salah* and even during the *salah* itself. Reciting *Bismillah* (In the name of Allah) before beginning the *salah* is encouraged not only to ask for guidance and help in staying *Khushu'* but it also serves as a reminder of our intentions for praying.

3. Being mindful

Borrowing something from contemporary knowledge, the psychologist-subscribed Mindfulness-Based Cognitive therapy suggests that reminding oneself to come back to the present moment as soon as one realises that one's thoughts have drifted away can help to maintain focus in the present moment. It has been shown that this technique prevents our mind from being engrossed in our own thoughts and helps us stay grounded. This is definitely an applicable tip for our *salah*!

4. Understanding recitations

How many of us truly understand what we recite during our prayers? To fully understand and to mean the recitations of our *surah* will lead to better *khushu'* us we are able to appreciate the intricacies of our *ibadah*. Hence, it is highly advisable to read the *tafsir* of the *surah*, *surah Al-Fatihah* especially, to comprehend the verses. It is only through understanding that we can fully immerse ourselves in *salah*.

5. Visualising

Reminding oneself that one is standing in front of Allah SWT and praying as though you see Him will help maintain your *Khushu'* as well. Being aware that He is seeing you as you perform your prayers keeps you focused.

6. Good pace

Perhaps the most challenging issue for us while praying in school is the sheer rushing from one place to another. On a busy day, especially, we will try our best to squeeze in time between our schedule to catch our fard *salah*. Be that as it may, it is still crucial that we remain attentive and relaxed by keeping a good pace between *salah* actions, taking 5 seconds or more per action. Put heart into every *takbir* you recite and make a conscious effort to prolong your *sujood* by reciting duas during the *sujood* and before the last *tasleem*.

By Hijanah Jailani and Iqbal Firdaus
Illustration & Typography by @rbaln_ and @lutfiahalisha

7. Remembering it could be the last

There are two things certain in life — death and grades. While calculating our GPAs may be quite unlikely for most of us during *salah*, we should remind ourselves of the inevitable reality of death. Perhaps the most morbid tip on this list, it does not however change the fact that all of us will meet our Maker one day. We may not know when, but one day we will be praying our last *rak'ah*.

Besides mastering the methods to increase *Khushu'* during the prayer itself, we should remember that what happens outside our *salah* would affect our state of *iman* and hence, *Khushu'* during prayer. Our conversations and interactions with God do not only take place five times a day, but 24/7 as He sees all that we do and knows what resides deep in our hearts. Therefore, spend your time doing what reminds you and brings you closer to God, whether it is by helping others, marvelling at His creations, or surrounding yourselves with good people who remind you of Him. This awareness of Allah's presence, known as *taqwa*, is fundamental to maintaining *Khushu'* in the long run. Ultimately, we should perceive the five daily prayers not as an obligation but as a gift from Allah to us to lighten our burden and act as a source of peace and comfort. After all, what could be more comforting than knowing that you have a strong relationship with God?

Conquering the Everest

Coming from a family of outdoor enthusiasts, it is not surprising that Muhd Hilwan Bin Muhd Idrus has developed a love for the outdoors since a tender age. His love for the outdoors has manifested in many forms such as rock climbing and hiking, among others. Despite bagging many accomplishments, from completing 22 days of Technical Mountaineering Course solo at Mount Shitidar in the Indian Himalaya, Kullu Valley, to canyoning in the freezing cold canyons at the Swiss Alps, Hilwan's thirst for challenges is far from being satiated. He is currently preparing for his greatest hurdle thus far — climbing Mount Everest, which will be realised in 2015 together with his team, 'Team Singapura Everest'. Taking inspiration from Singapore's early beginnings and his mother, who is his own personal inspiration, Hilwan believes that in the end, it is not merely about conquering Everest, it is about conquering himself.

What are the preparations for your journey?

Mental and physical preparedness are the first two things to think about. We prepare physically by training three times a week doing staircase climbs 40 storeys for five sets with 18 kg load. Mental preparedness is achieved by being mentally prepared for the conditions there. To know and to accept that there would not be proper sanitation, that we will be camping out for a full 27 days in tents, that we will not get proper food, that temperatures can drop to -20 degree Celsius or below, that bad weather may cause our expedition to fail and that I may not return from the expedition. To know and to accept all these conditions are part of mental preparedness. Being prepared financially is also very important. At the moment I work fulltime in TBWA, an international advertising agency and I diligently set aside a sum of money from my salary to finance my climbs. To prepare spiritually, I need to let go of everything that I am attached to here in Singapore and go with a peace of mind; to seek forgiveness from my parents and to prepare some sort of a will in case I do not come back.

Were there any challenges that occurred during your mountain trips?

I remembered when we had to trek up to Mera Peak (6467m) and we left high camp (6000m) at about 2 a.m. and the winds were howling and the temperature was so cold that icicles formed under my nose. We had to trek in that condition for 6 hours to reach the summit. I passed out and fainted less than halfway up because of lack of oxygen. There was just not enough air up there and every inch of your body is fighting to absorb any amount of oxygen there is in the air. When I passed out, my team stopped to rest while they tried to wake me up and get me rested. Ten minutes later, we were up and continued walking through 50 cm deep snow for the next 3 hours before reaching the summit. Eventually, whatever challenges that come your way, you just have to stop and take a breather before taking one step at a time and punching right through your own limits. You will be climbing the first 2 hours with your body and the remaining 4 hours with your mind. This is just one of our challenges that we had in the mountains.

How do you fulfil your daily obligations as a Muslim in the mountains?

As best as I could, I will *solat* standing up. But if it is too cold, I have to do my *solat* in my sleeping bag. That is the only way that I can do it without freezing. I will try to take *wudhu* with water if the water is not too freezing, but if it is, then I will do *tayammum* on rocks or even on the inner walls of my tent. I would say that it was a privilege for me to do my *solat* in such harsh conditions. It is only then that you would treasure the *nikmah* of taking *wudhu* or of *solat* standing up in a warm room. Being able to do my *solat* surrounded by all the beautiful creations makes me feel very small and insignificant. When I recited surah *Al-Imran ayat* 190 while I was hiking up the mountains, I felt really humbled as I saw all the mountains around me. With regards to food, the guides cooked mostly vegetarian dishes for us and they brought canned *halal* meat that they bought from Kathmandu town.

What do you hope to achieve by going through this journey?

I hope to firstly be a better Muslim, to humble myself and see Allah's greatness and His magnificent creations. I hope to share these experiences with those who see the outdoors as a platform to bring oneself closer to the *Deen*. It has been a beautiful journey for me and I hope more people can see what I saw and experience what I have experienced, either through videos or photos. Everyone has their own 'Everest' to conquer - an obstacle that they cannot seem to overcome. I never thought that I could do what I did, but I did it anyway. In the end, it is not the mountain that you have conquered, it is yourself.

How does this journey help you to better prepare for subsequent journeys in your life?

After the expedition to Nepal and experiencing some near death, some frostbite and other near-death experiences, I realised that what we are going through here is incomparable to that. Suddenly everything here becomes easy. As long as it does not require me to walk 10 hours in 50 cm snow, and facing -20 Celsius temperature, nearly falling off a cliff, losing a limb due to frostbite, then it is not that bad after all.

Text by Nina Salina Bte Suandi
Illustration by Aqilah Iqromah | @qraftsbyqroms

RUMINATIONS ON WEAVING

By Maliah Zubir

Weaving. Writing. Thinking.

There is something to be said about the action itself; the thing in motion, the half-formed thought before a final product. As someone who writes and creates, I find myself more intrigued by people's creative processes. And what defines the creative process more than the moments when we're not creating? The moments before we begin a project? As something like notes in a margin, here are some quotes and thoughts I carry with me and recall whenever I feel the urge to make things.

Seeing with new eyes

Animator Hayao Miyazaki shares how he once tried to document the aftermath of the Depression on Japanese citizens but ended up with 'snapshots of life as usual.' "Just a typical, ordinary day, but I wanted to keep pictures of ordinary days," says Miyazaki. In the same vein, creating is the process of capturing beauty in the ordinary. You can capture the beauty of a second in a photo, a memory in words, the hue of the sunset with paint. They are all beautiful. We are all experiencing the same world, but I believe everyone can bring a different perspective to it and bring out the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Not everyone is talented and that's okay

In his memoir What I Talk About When I Talk About Running, Haruki Murakami argues that talent comes naturally. He doesn't count himself as one of the lucky ones, but he likens finding inspiration to searching for a water vein: "I have to pound the rock with a chisel and dig out a deep hole before I can locate the source of creativity… But as I've sustained this kind of life over many years, I've become quite efficient, both technically and physically, at opening a hole in the hard rock and locating a new water vein. So as soon as I notice one water source drying up, I can move on right away to another." What Murakami suggests is that creating isn't a magic act, but it requires diligence. And perhaps, diligence is a more sustainable attitude to have than relying on raw talent.

The best works are stolen

Austin Kleon offers another definition for creating; that it is an act of stealing. In his aptly named book Steal Like an Artist, Kleon posits that the way to create your most original work is to – paradoxically – steal from many people. Not one, because that's plagiarism, but many. He urges us to steal from our idols, our favourite movies and albums, the signboard we saw on the way home. To elaborate on my first bullet point, I'd like to quote Jim Jarmusch: "Select things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic." Humans are never capable of making perfect copies, so how we remix and reconfigure our influences is what makes our work original.

Read widely and read deeply

This may come as a surprise, but I realised that books play a big role in the process of creating. I realised it as a graphic design student when year after year, my lecturers referred us to the library to search for inspiration – our computer lab during our graduation year turned into a library itself, as we toiled away on our final year projects. I realised it while watching contestants on MasterChef Australia use their free time to study recipe books. And it showed in their performance. They read to improve their technique and culinary vocabulary, to learn the history and science behind classic dishes, and of course to gain inspiration for new dishes. Reading and learning can be a hard process, but it's a necessary step.

I feel like my thoughts on creating will never be set in stone, that maybe five years from now I may revise this list altogether. That is a process in itself.

Illustration by Nur Azizah | @madeby_zy

the SEAMSTRESS

By Asyraf Mustaffa
Illustration by Nur'Afifah Roslan

The needle trembled in her grasp
Its eye wavering in her frail hand
She squinted, her breathing steadied
And whispered, 'a little more'
But the thread buckled, unyielding to her plea
She realised she had been stooped over
And the familiar ache raced across her back as she sat up
Small padded footsteps from outside
Greeted her even before she saw her daughter's face
Her Love sat beside her, eyeing the torn dress
Why don't we just buy another Mama?
Because we mend what we treasure, my Love
This tattered hole is a reminder of our faults
And memories etched should never be forgotten
But preserved as our lives' silver linings
Her Love grew and knelt beside her, eyeing her torn dress
Why do you still stay Mama?
Because our heart strings were bound together by Him
Woven to perfection, my Love
But we decided to create our own knots
Some stitched our imperfections together
While others were complicated by our unwillingness
To let go of our frayed ends
Because tugging these strings
Will only tighten the noose in the middle
And our hearts are not hard enough to see you suffocate

Her Love stood in the doorway, dressing her torn eye
Why does it hurt Mama?
Because pearls are born from the oyster's discomfort, my Love
And so will embroidery from a needle's prick
The beauty of your fabric rests on your fervour
To soldier on with your own hands.
She sat where her mother used to be
The needle now remained unmoving in her grasp
Its eye unwavering in her hand
She squinted, steadying her breathing
And whispered, 'I can do this'
The thread yielded to her mother's legacy
Her heart finally seamed

A HUNDRED VISIONS AND REVISIONS

I'm about to tell you the things that I think I remember from my bus trip to the MRT station one night. Nothing special happened. It didn't lead to a big moral conclusion. There wasn't a call to adventure or a call to action.

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Any other day or night, I would've taken the seat upstairs, near the back of the double-decker. But that night, the 179 was a single-decker. I can't tell you how many students were at the bus stop with me or what day it was, except that it surely wasn't a Monday.

They got on first. Were it not for the warm streetlights streaming into the windows, it probably would have been impossible to see anything. The driver's silhouette, his steering wheel, the walls and fuzzy seats in the bus were all cast with a sharp orange glow. I thought I'd caught a faint musty smell inside the bus, but when I turned to walk further in, I knew for certain that it smelled musty.

In the front half of the bus, there were seats facing each other like in an MRT. I can't ever tell you why anyone would've thought that was a good idea, but I was more optimistic that night. The driver'd already slammed his foot on the throttle. Those seats were a saving grace.

I sat down. Laptop, bag, bottle. Shuffle.

The slightest breeze of a melody began serenading me. Huff.

At the seats across me were two people. One of them was a Chinese worker. At least, I thought she was Chinese. How was I to know? Sometimes, I need 20 guesses before I get my friends' races right. You'd think that living in a multi-racial country, I'd have this algorithm figured out by now, but I don't. In fact — how was I to know if she was a she?

Anyway, she was in an orange uniform. The streetlights shone on her hair, which was tied back into a straight ponytail. Her legs were crossed and her back was hunched. She made me think of worker

dormitories, and family members toiling in some faraway country. But she also had her earpieces on, she was scrolling on her phone and she was as engrossed as any other commuter you could imagine on their phone, and that made me think that maybe she wasn't as lonely and depressed as I'd, for some reason, thought.

Next to her was an Indian man. Maybe. The streetlights shone on his thick hair. He didn't have a phone. Instead, he had his elbow hung on the back of his seat so that he was facing the front of the bus, looking out the driver's seat out the driver's window.

Near the door, there was, plausibly, a white student with his earpieces on. The wires were swaying sharply to and fro. His hands were in his pocket. Daring. Macho. Who was he trying to prove?

I wish I could tell you more about the people, but I only gave myself half a second to stare.

I looked away. The pole nearest to me came into manual focus. The pole had diamond-shaped grooves on it. The orange (or was it purple?) paint was chipped. It was reflective like a mirror under where the paint should've been. Why that captivated me, I can't tell you. I don't know.

Or maybe I did. I remember wondering that the pole must've been as old as, or older than, I was.

It was probably 16 bars into the song that I realised it was playing, fewer bars when I saw myself laughing with my colleagues in that white-lit office over summer break, and even fewer that nostalgia crashed onto my heart. But my colleagues — ex colleagues — were not in the bus, and the only thing lighting up the seats across from me were the streetlights coming and going, empty.

When did they get off the bus?

The student clambered to the seats. Only now did he grip the handles. All the wiser.

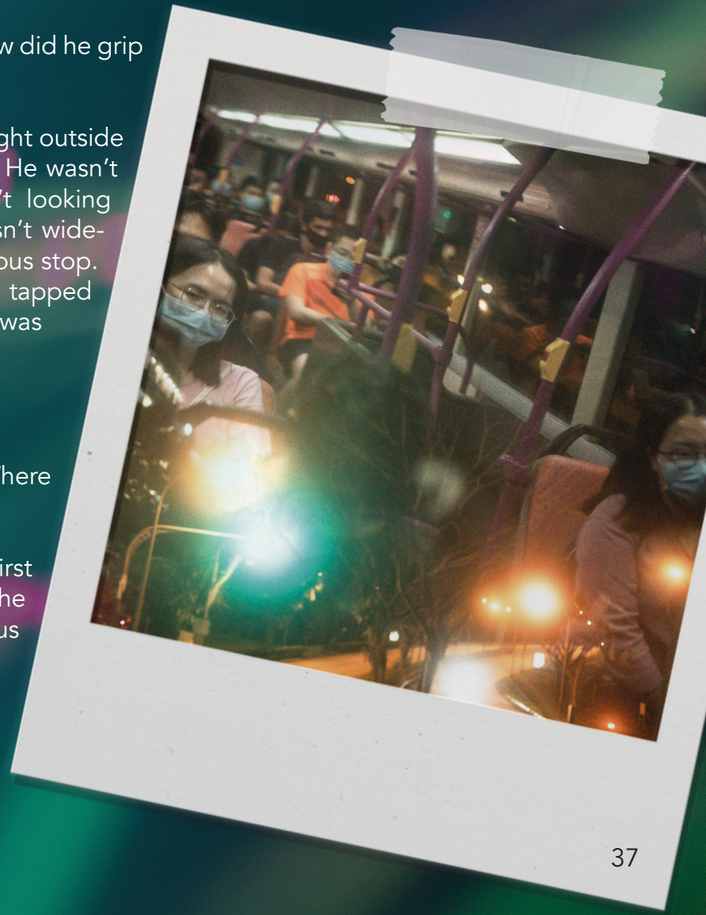
The student sat directly in front of me. The light outside blinked green on his hair, then red. Blonde. He wasn't looking at his phone. He definitely wasn't looking at the seats across from him either. He wasn't wide-eyeing the driver's window or each passing bus stop. His fingers drummed one rhythm. His foot tapped another. But I still couldn't hear the song he was listening to.

So. He knew his way around.

And I'd missed the last two songs, at least. Where did they go?

In my hips, I could feel the bus taking the first bend before entering the interchange. Did he notice, above our heads, how frayed the bus advisories had gotten? The bus bent again.

No — in fact, where did Monday go?



By Nursarah bte Safari
Photographs by Aashiq Anshad | @jabariphotos

to seek is to become

By Ustaz Muhammad Feisal
Photography by Zubaidah Dadlani

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, civilises, 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'buduun'*[1] – 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 Qur'an guides through providing a multitude of avenues to be sought, among others:

Seek benefit and blessings (fadhl and ridhwan)[3]
Seek countenance (wajh)[4]
Seek assistance (isti'aanah)[5]
Seek means (wasilah)[6]
Seek both worlds (akhirah and dunya)[7]
Seek forgiveness (istighfaar)[8]
Seek refuge (isti'aazah)[9]

For those who seek these objectives, God in the Qur'an 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 SAW, showed a clear direction through a mostly-recited Hadith, that intention precedes all actions.10 Thus a seeker following the example of the Prophet SAW 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 SAW 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 Qur'an, 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 multiracial 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 who 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 optimising 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 strives 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 optimise this period to excel in our specialised 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 bloom, *InshaAllah*, 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 SWT knows best.

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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.

WOVEN together

By Shaikha Salma
Photograph by N B | @nabshrl
Illustration by Zhohirah | @zhohirah_

hundreds and thousands
of years
apart

be still, my heart
just like the night

when the revelation came
in the quiet cave of Hira
where our Beloved was residing
searching for the Truth

how can you deny
our hearts are woven together
when this was a man
who spent his days and nights praying for you
with tears in his eyes
“ummati, ummati”

a man who cares for you
so much more
than you care for
yourself

who wants to save you
in all the ways a person can be saved
so much more
than you want to save
yourself

tell me
has it ever occurred to you to pray for your grandchildren,
your next few generations?
but here lies a prophet
who has been praying for you
constantly
despite having never met you
despite knowing he will never meet you
in this life

how can you deny
our hearts are woven together
when hearing Our Beloved’s words
brings peace and tranquility
to our hearts

you may not understand
but your soul knows the truth
as it comes from Allah just as how it will return to Him
that there lies a Messenger of Allah
and his name is Muhammad (SAW)
and he loves you more
than you could possibly imagine

the sun that we see
that is shining so bright
the moon that we see
in the stillness of the night

is the same moon that accompanied him
on his long nights
searching for the Truth
searching for what is right

he used to ponder and reflect
about the alternation of night and day
with the same signs He is giving us now
on this very day

see, nature has its way of letting us know
that everything is in due time
and one day we will have to let go
even the sun that doesn’t seem to age
after burning for millions of years
will come to its final page

but some things are eternal
and it’s the things you cannot see
just like Our Lord, All Forgiving
and the love our Beloved had,
for you and me

his love transcends through time and space
we were in his thoughts, his prayers, his heart
despite the hundreds and thousands of years
apart

Oh Beloved
I can only long, and hope and pray
that I get to see your beautiful face
illuminating with light,
one day
for you to recognize me
as one who follows your deen
despite the thousands of years
in between

how beautiful are prayers
that it weaves our hearts to Him
and to the ones we love
in whichever world they are in
prayers are timeless

just like how Our Beloved prays for us
from thousands of years ago
and the way we pray for him
whom we hope to follow

in our prayers and in our hearts
we will always remember
so how can you deny
our hearts are woven together

HIDDEN FAITH

By Yasmeen Rashid and Siti Ayeeshah Zaki
Photograph by Aashiq Anshad | @jabariphotos

Yusuf* is a Muslim revert. In conversation with ELEVEN Magazine, he shares his experiences of realising his faith, practising it, and hiding it from the most important people in his life — his family.

**Name of the interviewee has been changed to protect his identity.*

Born in Singapore to a Hindu father and a Sikh mother, Yusuf was raised in an interfaith family. "Growing up, the concept of God was very prevalent," he says. "I didn't believe in either parent's religion. Then, I just knew there was a God, someone I had to pray to."

The 23-year-old engineering student describes himself as a very curious child who asked a lot of questions.

"When I went to the Hindu temple, I would ask why are we praying to an elephant. When we went to the Gurdwara and we would prostrate to the Guru Granth Sahib, which is the holy book in Sikhism, it didn't sit well with me to know that I had to prostrate to something that I can create with my own hands. I always asked my dad and mum, and they couldn't give me an answer," he says.

Yusuf's first contact with Islam happened when he was about 7 years old, when he spent every June and December school holiday with his Muslim cousins. "My mum's sister married a Muslim," he explains. "When I stayed at their place, I got a taste of what they were practising." It was them, he says, who planted the seed of Islam in his heart. "They would talk about Islam very often. They would talk a lot about God. That kind of touched my heart."

Yet Yusuf affirms that that seed of Islam grew because he set out to understand about the religion. "I like to read up on religion," he says. "I'm interested in how people shape cultures and why there are so many different faiths in the world. What I am today is because of that research. It's because of that quest to find answers."

In Secondary 2, Yusuf did his first *rakaat*, which he recognises as the first time his belief translated into action. "I bowed down and said nonsensical things," he says, laughing at the memory. "I was going through a down period at the time. I knew I believed... but when a friend got into a coma, I was like, 'OK I need to do this.' I remembered what my uncle, aunt, and cousins did, and I just did it in my room."

It was Yusuf's secondary school friends who eventually taught him to pray. "They weren't the best of Muslims, but I hold them very closely to my heart because they were there when I was beginning to learn about the religion," he reminisces. "During the O-Level period, we would stay in school till very late, and we would pray together at the street soccer court."

When we asked about the most rewarding experience since he began his journey as a Muslim, Yusuf replies, "What I am today is because of Islam. When I went to Punjabi school, I hung out with a lot of wrong people. I felt Allah protected me and pulled me away from that. When I went to secondary school, I did very well in everything that I set out to do. When I went to JC and the army, I also did very well. It was because of the morals and the teachings of Islam. As long as you stay close to it, you will probably never go wrong."

Still, Yusuf's journey is an ongoing difficult one. Yusuf's family doesn't know that he's Muslim. His challenges, he points out, are very different from born Muslims. "When you go home, you can say salam. People reply to your *salam*," he explains. "You can say 'I'm going to pray' and nobody will say anything. You don't have to worry about the food being placed on your table, whether it's *halal* or not. Being at home is comforting."

For Yusuf, being at home impedes him from practising his faith. "Half of your focus will be on the prayer, the other half on the door," he says, on trying to pray in his room. "When you hear the key turn, you know you have to stop praying."

Fasting in Ramadan has also proven to be a challenge. "My mum will cook. If I say I'm not hungry, she'll think there's something wrong, because I love my mum's cooking," he says. "There was once, I fasted the whole day, then my mum came home at 4pm. She asked if I wanted chai and I said no. So I thought I could survive until Maghrib. Then, she came into my room and put the chai on my table." Yusuf recalls the time he threw away the tea his mum had made him, in an effort to keep his fast. "I felt very bad," he confesses. "There are times like this where it's very hard to explain to people. They won't go through it."

The picture Yusuf paints – and it seems a fairly honest and frank assessment – is of someone struggling to reconcile his love for his faith with his family. It gets especially hard when the topic of Islam comes up at home. "My dad would openly condemn Islam in front of the whole family. I cannot say anything because the moment that I do, they will know that I'm taking sides. And if I'm not taking the side that they're taking, it's going to be an issue."

"It's really very painful because you see so much hate for the religion which you adore so much and you cannot do anything about it," he says. "At this point I look at my parents and wonder how I'm going to tell them that I'm Muslim. It's going to break their hearts. It's going to destroy them."

When we asked about the most challenging thing about being a revert, Yusuf replies, "Integrating into society. You don't know where you belong. When people hear about reverts they go, 'Wow what brought you to Islam?' It's very nice to tell them your story, but... the behind-the-scenes is honestly very, very difficult."

"I have a lot of friends who are Malay Muslims, but I will never feel the same thing they feel for each other. They have their ways of doing things, their own slangs. I come from a Punjabi and Hindi background, so it's a huge part of my culture. I love Bollywood, weddings, and all that, but there's the *haram* side of it. When I'm with my cousins, I'm comfortable with them. I can talk and joke with them, but the moment they say 'Let's go clubbing tonight,' it goes back to 'I don't belong here and I don't belong there.' So where do I go?"

Yusuf is open about the mistakes he's made and honest about the fact that he still has much to learn about Islam. He admits that there have been many instances when he wanted to give up: "There have been days when I've been so frustrated I wanted to disobey Allah. I didn't want to do this anymore."

But he knows there is no turning back for him. "It's the fact that it's *hidayah*... and the curse of knowledge. You can't unlearn what you've learnt," he says emphatically. "You know this is the right path, so you going away from it is just your loss."

"If Allah guides you to remember Him, it's a sign that Allah loves you."

– Ali ibn Abi Talib

FAITH, MEASURED?

By Abbas Karim

How do we measure our faith? Is it by the amount of *zikr* we do in a day? Is it by the amount of *surahs* we memorise? Is it by the length of our beard or *hijab*? Or is it by *zabibah*, the mark on one's forehead (which actually might be caused by the body's resistance to insulin, really, Google "aconthosis nigricans"). I think we can all agree that it is virtually impossible, if not impossible, to measure faith, because faith is something that is within our hearts and only we and the One who created our hearts know what dwells in it.

Still, we will find on social media all kinds of videos and posts on how certain personalities are not "Muslim enough", or even deemed "unislamic". If faith is almost impossible to quantify, how then do some 'critics'—who tend to over emphasise their ع and غ for some reason— deem other Muslims "not muslim enough"?

Thus, driven by curiosity (and perhaps even skepticism), I went down the Youtube rabbit hole and watched a couple of videos about individuals being critical of the way other Muslims practice their faith. Often, such videos would judge the levels of others' faith based on their actions. What is common amongst these 'critics' is that they have a lot of videos judging other religious Muslim figures. These 'critics' would often call out other Muslim figures' actions as being "contrary to Islam". Yet, instead of being constructive in their criticisms, they are in fact distinguishing their own "brand" of Islam from others. It often seems that in their minds, there can only be one type of "true Islam". I am not saying that we should not call out a prominent figure if he is advocating values or practices that are outside the fold of Islam. However, most of the time, these 'critics' use mental gymnastics to argue that so and so is not teaching "true Islam", when really the basis of their arguments is that anyone who does not follow the 'critics' form of Islam is deemed wrong.

The call towards "true Islam" is a prominent theme in such posts and videos. Whenever I come across such a term, I wonder which "Islam" is being referred to? Is it *Nusantara* Islam which emphasises reading Yaseen for a passed one? Is it *Indonesian* Islam which uniquely advocates educating Islam through their pesantrens? Or is it South Asian Islam which is known for their *tablighi jamaat*, amongst other things? "True Islam" is a paradox because Islam itself is a transnational movement that is not confined to the boundaries of a nation state. More often than not, Islam takes the shape of the local community with its foundational beliefs at the core of that development. There will inevitably be different interpretations of Islam based on the demographical and geographical contexts, amongst possible others.

Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad explains this notion of different Islams beautifully:

"Those who come to Islam because they wish to draw closer to God have no problem with a multiform Islam radiating from a single revealed paradigmatic core. But those who come to Islam seeking an identity will find the multiplicity of traditional Muslim cultures intolerable…That there should be four schools of Islamic law is to them unbearable. That Muslim cultures should legitimately differ is a species of blasphemy."

Allah SWT also says in Surah Hujarat, the Holy Qur'an :

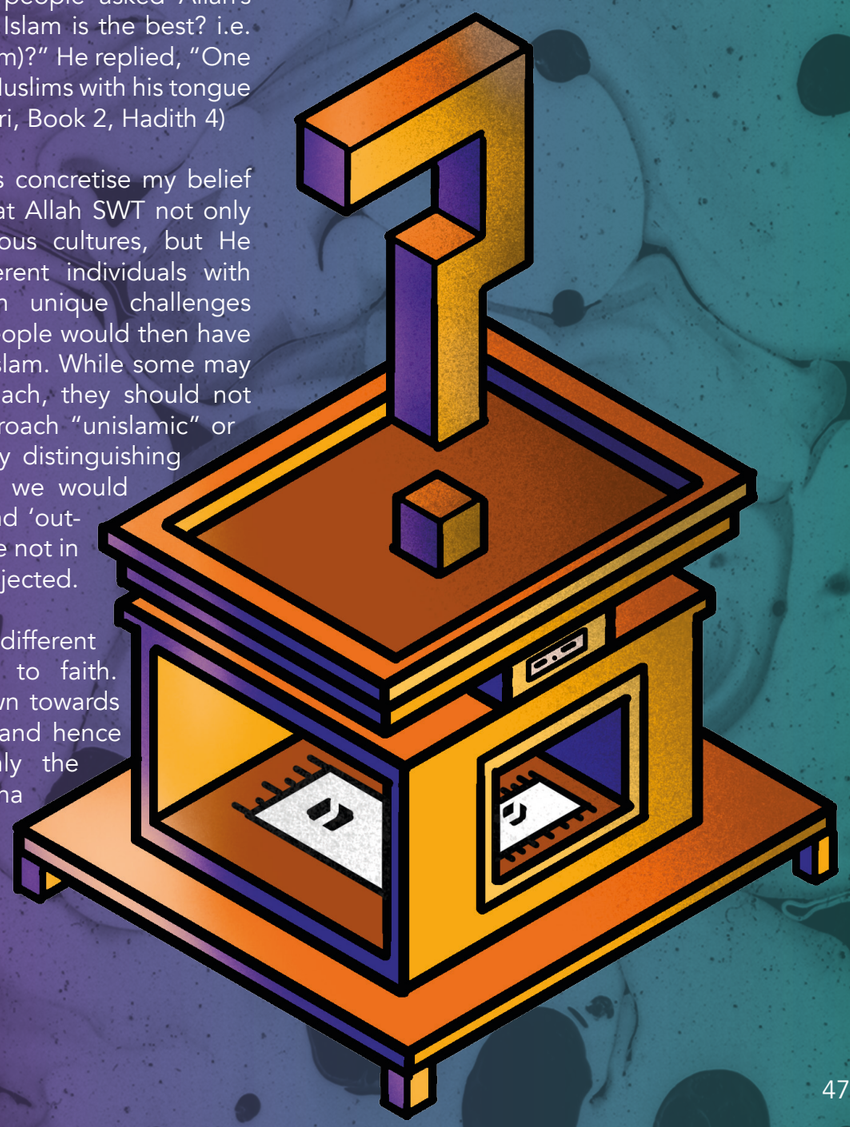
"O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Al Qur'an, 49:13)

Furthermore, narrated by Abu Musa, Rasulullah SAW once said, "Some people asked Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), "Whose Islam is the best? i.e. (Who is a very good Muslim)?" He replied, "One who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands." (Sahih Bukhari, Book 2, Hadith 4)

These verses and sayings concretise my belief that Allah SWT shows that Allah SWT not only made us a part of various cultures, but He also created us as different individuals with unique challenges. With unique challenges and contexts, different people would then have different approaches to Islam. While some may prefer a particular approach, they should not be quick to label an approach "unislamic" or "not muslim enough". By distinguishing a single brand of Islam, we would only create 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' and those who are not in the 'in-group' are to be rejected.

We, as individuals, are at different spectrums with regards to faith. Perhaps someone is drawn towards the poetic side of Islam and hence would embrace not only the Qur'an, but also Mawlana Rumi's "*Masnavi*". Perhaps someone is drawn towards the side of Islam which brings about social justice and equality and hence would support minorities' rights. Or perhaps someone is drawn towards Islam's call for cleanliness and would like to make themselves seem proper and neat through modest fashion.

Whatever approach we may choose, there really is no true measurement for our faiths. As long as they are grounded in the teachings of our Prophet and our Lord, our hearts should ultimately be filled with divine Love by the One who made it. For indeed, "How could He not know His Own creation? For He alone is the Most Subtle, All-Aware" (Al Qur'an, 67:14).



Am I Muslim Enough?

The strong wind chills me to my bones as I got off the airport bus. Homes were of gothic style architecture. Pavements were made from cobblestone, making it uneven and frankly uncomfortable to walk on. A castle casually found in the middle of the city centre. A completely different but endearing accent of English. All these differences and changes are part and parcel of moving abroad to the unfamiliar. This whole process evokes many emotions. It is a new phase of life — leaving the comforts of home for an elsewhere that promises new adventures.It was the first time that I ever had a room, let alone a studio flat, to myself. The first time that I had complete freedom with no house rules and curfew. More than anything, it's an opportunity to completely reinvent yourself because it seems as if moving abroad gives you a blank slate. Nobody knows who you are, and it seems like the opportunity to curate the person you want to be.

Except, somehow, that doesn't seem completely true for me. We are far from the blank slate that we wish to be. The hijab feels like a clear neon sign of my faith. In this polTitical climate, I can't help but also be hyper aware of this realisation. Soon enough, it felt as if I was trying to show the people around me that I was a 'good' Muslim.

The problem is, what even is a 'good' Muslim?

Back home, this question seemed easier to answer. It's easy for us to place ourselves in a social bubble where many express religion in the same way that we do. Even in the wider Singaporean community, people have some semblance of an understanding of Islamic beliefs and practices.

Despite Edinburgh being a relatively diverse place as compared to the rest of Scotland, I do often find myself being the only hijabi or the only person with tan skin in the room. People were often curious about me and my beliefs and would ask me questions to satisfy their curiosity. Because of that, I felt that there was some responsibility on me to represent Islam well, as I became the first Muslim friend for many. In hindsight, it seems ambitious that I placed so much pressure on myself to try and present this idealised image of a 'good' Muslim. This perhaps was partially driven by fear of losing strength in my faith as I left the comfort and familiarity of the Muslim community in Singapore. I prayed daily that I constantly experience the high of my faith. I negotiated with myself that I wanted to be good enough but also not too Muslim as I feared judgement either way. I questioned myself: Am I Muslim enough?

An interaction with a close friend made me ponder my internal struggle. One of the weekends, I found myself at a school social event that was held at the school bar, which doubled as a small theatre for movie screenings. One of my close friends had planned for a free movie screening. As I went through the crowd of people holding their beers, I thought to myself, "*Astaghfirullah*, why am I at a bar? I am being such a terrible Muslim." A *hijabi* at a bar? My mind went crazy thinking about what others would think of this odd sight. It did feel as if I was tarnishing the reputation of Islam by being there, until my friend came up to me and said, "I know that you don't drink, but I'm really happy to see that you're here to support me!" This then made me question: was I really a bad Muslim? I never drank, and I was there to support a friend, which is an inherently good trait in a person. Is this not what my faith has taught me? To be kind and to maintain good relations with others? This interaction has made me come to a realisation about my struggles of portraying the 'right' kind of Muslim, where I struggled with the external portrayal of, rather than my personal journey with, my faith.

I realised that my struggles with my religious image and identity were more a result of the fear of judgement from others when I should have been focusing on my love for my faith. I love my faith, but at that moment I feared judgement from others more. I feared judgement from people back home if I became seemingly 'less Muslim' while I'm here. I also feared judgement here if I were 'too Muslim' for being 'too conservative'. Does this not defeat the purpose of faith when it should be an internal journey of self-betterment rather than an external manifestation of it? I am certain that my internal battle came from a place of love for my faith, but I let my fear of judgement from others get the better of me. What I failed to remember was that only Allah SWT is worthy of judging us. Our faith will fluctuate throughout our lifetime, and that is the reality. He has written that we will face challenges and tribulations in our lives, testing our faith. We simply need to catch ourselves and put in the work to move closer to Him. We should not be too caught up on only the physical manifestations of our faith, as our intentions and heart matter as much. May we suspend our judgement of others and focus on our relationship with Allah SWT, as He is the All-Seeing amongst other things.

By Siti Amirah
Graphics by Izza Haziqah | @hellohazi

KISMET KISI

I have something on my mind. Been days now sleeping on it. I just needed to map out my feelings. There is no poetry in this. It is my fourth day here in Belgrade, Serbia. I was not planning to visit this country but *kismet* (fate) brought me here.

On the first night, I stumbled upon a *halal* Iraqi family-run diner near the train station so I went there to eat. There is no visible name of this joint save a very prominent *halal* sign on a flag by the door. Goulash and potato mash, Afghani rice. Minutes into my dinner, I realised the place attracted a rather unusual crowd; men huddled in blankets and hoods in groups, negotiating small change of denar for flatbread and portions of stew. Their dark eyes in deep daze, withering away when our eyes gazed. Foreign language spilling all over. Pashtun. Farsi. Arabic. Urdu. Sparse English.

Then it struck me like snow sleet. The refugee crisis! These men are stranded here. They are everywhere; at car parks, behind the train station, under the bridge. Spilling.

Belgrade snowed over that first night and temperatures dropped to some say the coldest January in decades.

I take the same path every night, a few metres down the block and a diagonal trail across a park to the diner. I noticed an odd looking container building along the street and it was packed as always. I went in on the second day thinking it was a supermarket but nope, Refugee Aid Miksalište. I climbed back down and stood there in the harsh snow. I was shaken.

I remembered the Malaysian Chinese lady who ran a vegan place in Budapest during my first few nights of this sojourn. She spoke about spiritual progression and how we heal one another. How she opened up the doors of her "soul harbour" to the refugees near Keleti railway station when everyone turned them away and how she recounted the deadest stares in their eyes. Three days in, I had not seen any parts of Belgrade except for the trips to the diner to stare into their eyes. I saw cities and cities in them. Ruined, rebuilding, ghost, gone. I wondered what is on their mind. Is it God? Is it the absence of God? Of trust? What do they think of Allah? Do they miss home? Where are their mothers? When were their last hugs? Do they feel less alive? Less human? Empty or so full? Where do they pray? Do they pray at all? Is there a void to be filled? What is 'hope' in Farsi? What is 'faith' in Pashtun?

I frequented the diner for the lack of an option but I invested so much now I just blended in. A new server thought I was a refugee, the idea of having a foreign tourist at that time amused everyone. I wanted to be so available for them, unguarded. But I was so vacant, bordered.

Two boys came to join me at my table and I extended my regards. They were both aged 15, from Afghanistan. Encouraged by their families who were under attack by Daesh and Taliban to flee home and make a future for themselves. They walked for three months across Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria. But Hungary would not open the borders for them so they were stuck here. Some for months, others a year. And still waiting…

"Waiting is a part of intense living." I read that at a museum in Madrid almost exactly a year ago. Now it echoed so hauntingly. I texted friends back home for comfort. I was lost at being lost this time.

I also texted the refugee centre. I felt compelled to comprehend this confusion. I met Ivana, the communication manager, the next morning. We spoke and toured the space. The place was crowded as the refugees wanted to charge their devices and wifi, seek company and assistance basically.

I spoke to Hijjaz and Vahed, two of dozens waiting in line for a shower. There were children and women too. Lots of volunteers, medical personnel, supplies, care. They had everything save the border opening which still hangs the noose.

A boy was carrying a fleece blanket down the steps of the barracks, eyes darting at me. Lilting a melodious form with odd breaks like a search for a cry. A calling. A signal smoke.

I wished I spoke more Farsi. All my obsession over Iran but there I was, feeling sorely out of place and redundant. I felt hypocritical that my temporary passing would be an added burden of confusion. That my asking of "how are you feeling" felt like a rhetorical question harsher than winter. That my "Hey, I am Muslim too" felt like a disloyal abandonment. That my "May God keep you safe" as I waited for my plane home on Sunday showed my prerogative for moving while they were left with none. That my desire to understand was only trying to fill my void but rob them. So I left the space. I was so heartbroken until I read this.

"Stay strong. You're a *musafir*, Isky! Your prayers are the most *maqbul*, *inshaAllah*! Make use of that for now and seek betterment for both you and those around you. I'm pretty sure you're already helping them as much as you can in your own ways but ask and keep asking Him for more."

Last night, I went back to the diner. It was full so I asked if I could join a table. Again, I melted into the foreign tongues as I tucked into my kebab. A lady in her late thirties and two men smoking and chatting, sipping çay, they look Mexican but are apparently Afghani. The lady resembled my mum. She offered a chat and spoke of her struggles.

I noticed a pair of Central Asian-looking men across us. They reminded me of myself and my dad, just passively sharing the spring chicken, few words exchanged. Eating in haste, lingering eyes. Then they came over and spoke to the lady in Pashtun.

I smiled and asked if they were Afghani. Morteza and his uncle, Akbar. I told them now I understand why when I was in rural Iran the old men thought I was Afghani. We shared some similar features. They were so surprised to hear that I was from Singapore and just touring the Balkans.

My heart sank again when they said, "You live in the best country." I joked they should follow me back to Singapore. They apparently fled from asylum camps in Iran trying to reach Paris. But after months of poor predicament, tonight, they plan to make a detour to Greece.

That was their last meal there. Their smiles glossed over their sorry states. I was on the brink of tears when I shook their hands to wish them a safe journey when Morteza embraced me so tightly.

"*Khoda Hafez*" (May God be with you)

God is Giving, indeed.

By Noor Iskandar
Graphics & Typography by Rez | @rez.assured

Your Mother IS THE Cosmos

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.

By Abu Sofian
Illustration & Typography by Rez | @rez.assured

PERMANENCE OVER TRANSIENCE

By Siti Maryam
Photograph by N B | @nabshrl

change is the only constant

the only constant in this life is change; changes that equate to different phases in life. living in between those phases,then, can be likened to going through constant transitions. and in these transitions, one will be searching for their identity. as a result of the lack of a fully-formed self-concept, we succumb to temporal desires that give immediate gratification. but what i seek to achieve is permanence of the Hereafter over the transient desires in this life.

going through these constant transitions in between phases makes it simple to slip away into the unfavourable. it is easy to fall into the trap of the ignorant, the unlawful or the disobedient. just a small misstep could lead to a downward spiral of negative, unwanted emotions and actions. and that's when the broken cracks of my faith call for You; the All-Listening, the All-Knowing. the depths of my despair cannot bear to face You in the state of my imperfect self. but You know how imperfect we are, as You are the All-Knowing. and as Your Slave, i am trying my hardest to live this life in accordance with Your Pleasure. but i am struggling, and in that struggle, i am also learning.

the millennial's progress

figuring life out in the stage of emerging adulthood can be daunting. with the high expectations that i place on myself, this constant desire to always be the best that i can be for myself and for the people around me. and as any human would, i make comparisons with societal standards to assess the current state of my own life. coupled with the normalcy of social media, i am always connected to the outside world. with the increase of this connectivity, i can learn about anything, anywhere and anytime. on one hand, i could use this facet of social media in order to improve myself by seeking content that nourishes my soul. on the other, it could be detrimental to my psycho-social need to always be relevant and in the loop. and that's why it is vital to know the boundary that i set for myself as i embark on this journey called life. to know and achieve the balance between what's going on in my chaotic mind, with my ever-growing to-do list, and doing what's good for my soul, like taking time in my day to be with Him. i am trying to figure out this balance, as have others before me. and i may not succeed in the here and now, and that's okay. but i will keep trying. to seek Your Felicity. to seek Your Guidance. towards You. to You, for You.

the how and why

in the search of meaning in this life and for the next, i'd always question the how and why. how did i end up here? why was i deserving of this opportunity? how would it be if things turned out differently? why me, not them? and in trying to answer the questions, i always end up with even more curiosity. i find that the more i try to get the answers, the more there is that i don't know. and that can be quite frustrating particularly when this heart needs the closure that it craves.

You are the Best of all Planners

and when the search for meaning arrives at a mind block and we have nowhere else to turn to, we surrender to You. we submit to You, because You are the All-Mighty, and the Best of Planners. and our hearts will only ever be content when You give us Your Decree. and this heart will only be at peace after placing my forehead on the prayer mat, begging for Your Guidance and Forgiveness. only You can guide us to the right path, only You can grant us the closure of peace that this heart craves.

calling for You, always

this soul is on a never-ending search for peace and serenity. even when i have accomplished a milestone, there is always "what's next?", something that is lacking, an emotion that makes me feel that i am not quite there yet. that feeling of being whole, being complete, of reaching the destination that makes me feel just right. and as much as i know that feeling would only exist in the Hereafter, my heart still continues to yearn for that feeling, despite knowing of its unattainable nature in the here and now. and perhaps that emotion drives me closer to You, calling for You when my heart is lost and broken. and perhaps i will keep calling for you over and over again, till i meet You.

with love,
M.

Questions

By Qistina Ahmad

Photograph by N B | @nabshrl

Questions.

Is it wrong to question the 'unquestionable' in religion?

As a student who studies religion theologically on top of just generic forms of religious issues pertaining to politics and society, I'm exposed to various other religions besides my own faith, Islam. Inevitably, I'd be asked questions on whether this would ever affect my faith and belief in Islam. Other than learning religion, questioning it is paramount in my pursuit of knowledge. Naturally, I've been exposed to the historical facts of Islam, the interpretation of the Qur'an, and the other Islamic sciences such as the study of hadith and fiqh alongside the equivalent for Christianity, Sikhism, Judaism, and other religions that I have never even heard of prior to this. On top of reading through their holy scriptures, I explore and question the different contested interpretations in hopes of understanding concepts better. Undoubtedly, religion is a sensitive topic that many feel intimidated to delve into, making it one of the most neglected topics in secular schools. With my passion for knowledge and the questions that I have about the religion, it seems to me that taking on this responsibility is my calling.

After making this bold decision of specialising in religious and ethnic studies as part of my major, I've received multiple concerns from both parents and friends. They were worried that this decision would cause me to find other religions more appealing than my current belief, or that I would misinterpret Islam since I was not learning it from religious teachers or scholars but from Western-educated ones. Some even go as far as thinking that I would convert out of the religion simply because I was studying it without establishing a concrete foothold in Islam yet. Plus, I was doing the unimaginable; I was questioning the 'unquestionable'.

"If Islam is the true religion, why did God create other ones?"

"If God is truly All-Knowing and the Most-Wise, why did He grant two separate groups of people with different faiths the same holy site?"

All of these harmless questions which were born out of curiosity, if asked anywhere else would be met with this infamous answer:

"Don't question the religion. Things are the way they are for a reason."

Perhaps our culture has unknowingly engineered us to accept things the way they are. Or perhaps it has been embedded in our subconscious that certain things in life aren't meant to be questioned. However, if questioning enlightens and empowers us to understand the religion better, why not? Questions create conversations between you and someone else, between you and God, and perhaps most importantly, with yourself.

I believe that questioning is a tool to fully grasp or understand something and this applies to understanding the religion as well. Religion is just like any other matter that you learn in school; reading something in a textbook, or watching a video online, or attending lectures might potentially spark a question in your mind. Most of us would not dismiss this, pursuing it to seek the answers we deserve. In my years of studying religion and then facing backlash for it, I've encountered people who are able to accept things as they are. Good for them. I, however, do not fall under this category. Questioning things that transcend human comprehension is as frustrating for me as it is for those who are at the receiving end of my questions. However, simply through questioning my own religion, I've obtained valuable and insightful understanding regarding human nature.

Firstly, I've begun to understand that people are afraid of what they don't know. I've had two types of experiences with regards to this. The first group would brush you off with a stern warning that there are things in life that you should not question – religion being one of them. Surprisingly, it's a sentiment that I agree with, as we've learnt that we can't answer questions pertaining to the existence of God in theological classes. Questions like, "Where did God come from?" or "Why did He create the universe?" Of course, we all can never find answers to that.

"They ask you (Prophet Muhammad) about the hereafter [when will be its appointed time?] Say: "The knowledge of that is with my Lord [alone]: None but He can reveal as to when it will occur..."
Qur'an 7:187

In this Qur'anic verse, we see how we, humans, are not equipped with the knowledge of the exact date of the Day of Judgement. Some information will remain as knowledge only to Allah SWT. As such, we should not occupy ourselves with questioning when it is and why we aren't bestowed with such knowledge as the focus should be for us to prepare adequately with the guidelines that have been made available for us to be ready whenever that day comes. That being said, it shows how even the Prophets, scholars, sheikhs, religious teachers have limits to what they know. This is also reflected in Surah Al-Kahf:

"If the sea were ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement."
Qur'an 18:109

This verse talks about how if we were to use the oceans as ink to write down the vast knowledge owned by Allah SWT, all the oceans would dry out. As mere human beings, we would be delusional to think that we are capable of retaining and holding the whole ultimate truth in our minds. The important thing is to treat each question with respect and not to belittle someone's curiosity. Contrastingly, the second group would go the extra mile of embarking on a journey to seek answers with you. I've had questions that are difficult to answer even when directed to religious teachers but they don't tell me that it's wrong to question them, as long as I know the limits to my questions. At the same, I've had friends who go as far as finding videos of reputable Muslim lecturers who might be able to provide better insight. Even as a student specialising in the study of religion, there are things that I don't know and scholars that I've never heard of. This, to me, proves how questions could be a stepping stone to learning more.

The second thing I've begun to understand is that people are wired differently. Asking the right questions is the first step to building rapport and having conversations with different groups of people which helps illuminate perspectives, allowing better understanding. Sometimes, it is through questioning one idea that you'll find answers to a thousand other questions which are related off the far tangent. Personally, I've grown to learn a lot about the attitudes of Malay-Muslims in a conservative society; I've learnt the do's and the don'ts and what the perceived taboos and sensitive topics of conversations are. With that, there is a pressing need for the Malay-Muslim society to develop the interpersonal skills and knowledge to be able to engage in honest conversations, intellectual discussions, and civilised debates to learn and understand the contemporary issues and problems which plague the realities of living in this day and age.

Lastly, I've begun to understand that Allah has given us '*aql* and the ability to think for ourselves. Unlike the practice of our conservative society, Islam encourages its believers to think critically and question things. It has been reflected in multiple verses in the Qur'an, one of which is:

"Do they not contemplate within themselves? Allah created the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them in Truth and for an appointed term. Yet many people deny that they will meet their Lord."
Qur'an 30:8

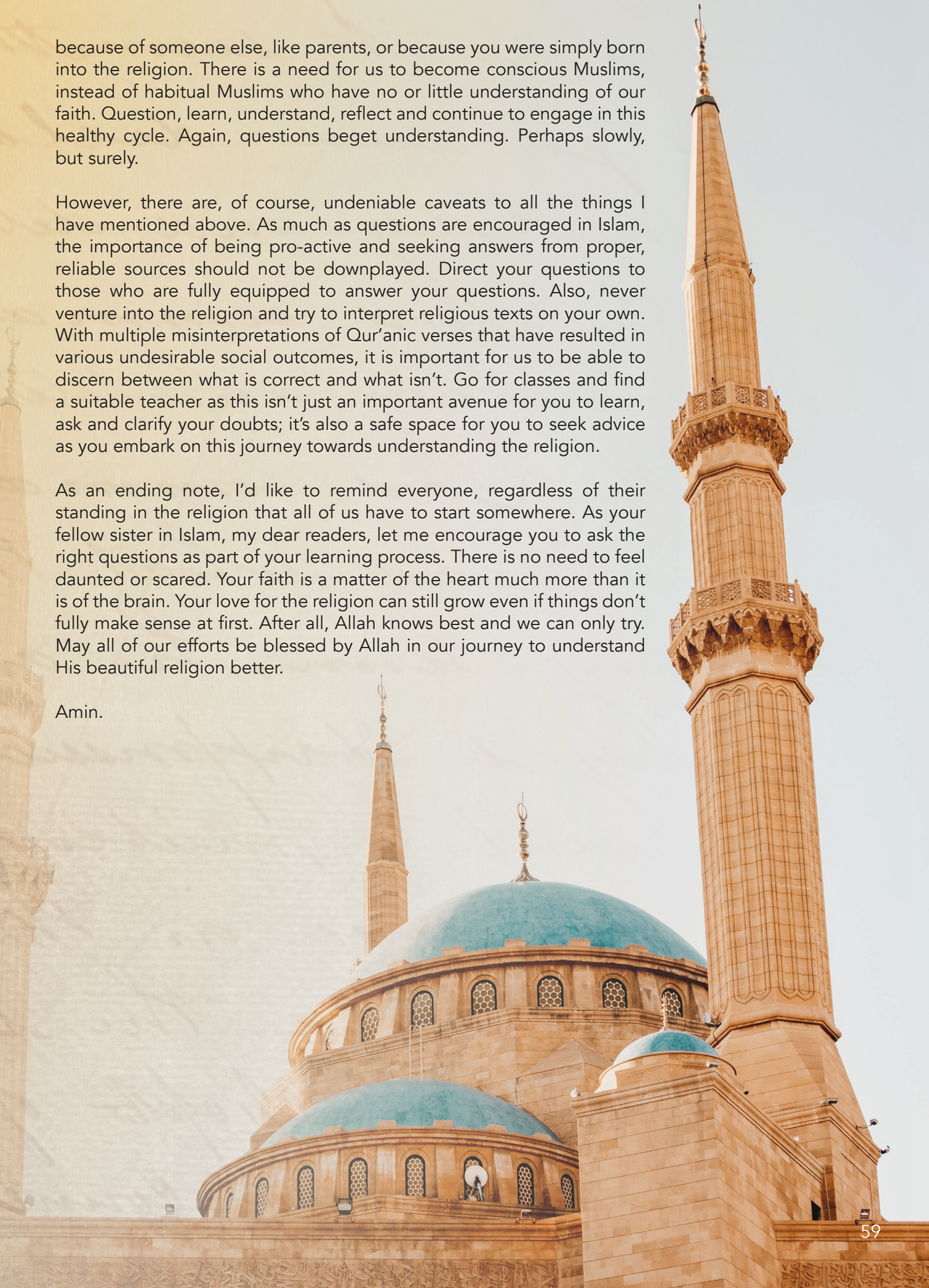
This verse explains that if people had reflected within themselves, they would have found an argument which proves the necessity of a second life after the present one – the existence of the Hereafter, the Heaven, and Hell. It shows us how '*aql* has been bestowed upon us by Allah SWT as a special characteristic of man which will set us apart from any other creations Allah has created, and that with everything he has created for us, there is an explanation behind it; we only have to reflect and ponder on it.

I personally believe that questioning the religion is a crucial step for Muslims to ascertain their faith as it enlightens them with the wisdom behind Islamic beliefs and not merely accepting it because of someone else, like parents, or because you were simply born into the religion. There is a need for us to become conscious Muslims, instead of habitual Muslims who have no or little understanding of our faith. Question, learn, understand, reflect and continue to engage in this healthy cycle. Again, questions beget understanding. Perhaps slowly, but surely.

However, there are, of course, undeniable caveats to all the things I have mentioned above. As much as questions are encouraged in Islam, the importance of being pro-active and seeking answers from proper, reliable sources should not be downplayed. Direct your questions to those who are fully equipped to answer your questions. Also, never venture into the religion and try to interpret religious texts on your own. With multiple misinterpretations of Qur'anic verses that have resulted in various undesirable social outcomes, it is important for us to be able to discern between what is correct and what isn't. Go for classes and find a suitable teacher as this isn't just an important avenue for you to learn, ask and clarify your doubts; it's also a safe space for you to seek advice as you embark on this journey towards understanding the religion.

As an ending note, I'd like to remind everyone, regardless of their standing in the religion that all of us have to start somewhere. As your fellow sister in Islam, my dear readers, let me encourage you to ask the right questions as part of your learning process. There is no need to feel daunted or scared. Your faith is a matter of the heart much more than it is of the brain. Your love for the religion can still grow even if things don't fully make sense at first. After all, Allah knows best and we can only try. May all of our efforts be blessed by Allah in our journey to understand His beautiful religion better.

Amin.



Temanku II

By Muhammad Johari

*This poem was written in memory of Husaini Md Rahim whose passing moved many, especially those who had the honour of knowing him. He was loving to his family, loyal to his friends and devoted to the community. I seek your kindness to recite Al-Fatihah and send a prayer or two his way. The QR code will lead you to the poem's English translation found in e-leven.co.**

**This note was written by Lyana Jamil, Husaini's fiancée.*

Temanku
Dikau sudah bersedia
Beristirehat di alammu
Pelitamu sudah bersinar
Pelayaranmu sudah
berakhir
Bertemankan suluhan para
kekasih Penciptamu
Temanku
Minyakmu sudah penuh
Nur di hatimu akan
mengarah
Bekalanmu sudah cukup
Hasil saham duniamu
seikhlasnya
Bertapaklah dikau di
alammu

Temanku
Berbulan kita gigih
berusaha
Titikan peluh dan
bersengkang mata
Mencari keredhaan tuhan
Berhijrah ke nusantara
dan tanah haram
Rupanya Khaliqmu menunggu
Penghijrahan sebenar
kembali kepadanya
Temanku
Dikau sahabat sejati
Hidayah yang selama ini
terbentang
Di mata kasar kami
Dengan ilmu, dikau
beramal
Penuh dengan kemurnian
hati

Temanku
Pabila kelak
Dikau tidak melihat kami
bersamamu dan Habibullah
Menghayati keindahan
taman-taman syurga
Jangan dikau tidak
memanggil kami
bersaksikan *Ar-Rahman*
Seperti telah kita
berjanji di baitullah
Temanku
Wahai sahabat yang
dikenang
Pertalian ini tidak
terputus
Biarpun alam kita berbeza
Semoga kami bermanfaat untukmu
Hikmah disebalik *ukhuwwah
fillah*

Temanku
Salam sejahtera dari kami
Diiringi pujian Illahi
dan selawat ke atas
Rasulullah
Pemergianmu tersentak
hati
Tetap kami redha seredha-
redhanya
Sesungguhnya, dari Allah
kita datang, kepada Allah
kita kembali

Semoga kita bertemu lagi
kelak nanti, duhai
temanku dan sahabatku,
Husaini Bin Md Rahim.
Al Fatihah

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 compassion
I beseeched – forgive me not
And yet, forgiveness was all You
had.

Forgive Me Nots

By Zulhaqem Bin Zulkifli
Graphics by Fahriah Hashim | @fakhriah_

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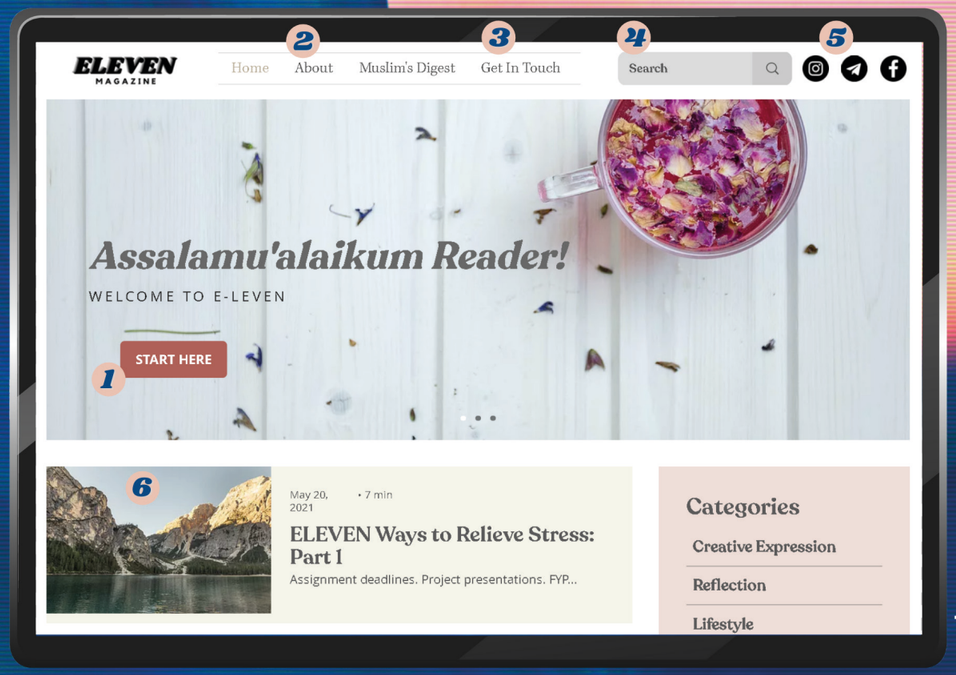
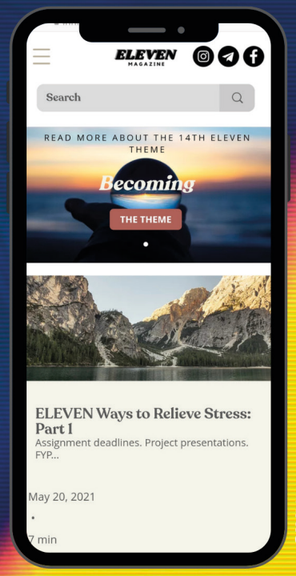
HOME PAGE



Desktop

With ELEVEN moving online, here is an overview of our website to help you get started!

1. **"Start Here"**
   Click here to direct yourself to the Muslim's Digest page.
2. **"About"**
   Click here to find out more about ELEVEN's members, our theme and other NTUMS adhocs.
3. **"Get in touch"**
   Click here to get in touch with us, or to become a contributor.
4. **"Search"**
   Click here to do a site wide search, mainly for articles.
5. **Social links**
   Click here to visit our social pages - Instagram, Telegram, Facebook.
6. **Latest articles**
   Click here to view our latest article.



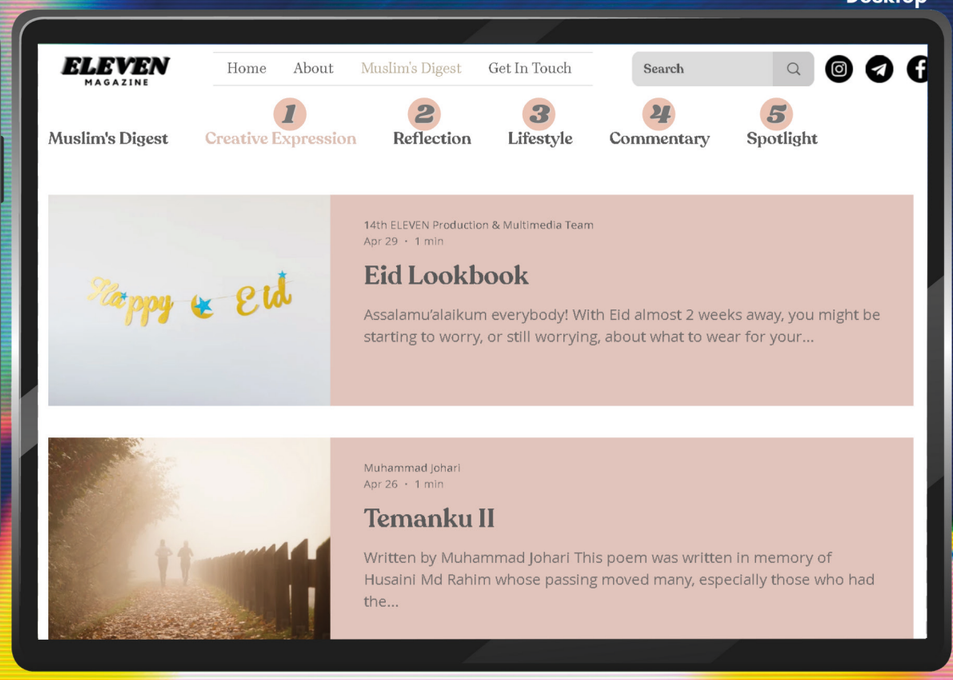
Mobile

Scan QR to explore page

Mobile

Scan QR to explore page

Desktop



Muslim's Digest is where you can find all of ELEVEN's content on the site. They are sorted into five categories:

1. **"Creative Expression"**
   This section consists of content which is produced by contributors or team members seeking to exercise their creative side - these may include poetry, short films, fiction prose, visual art, etc.
2. **"Reflection"**
   This section consists of content in which the creator is engaging with some manner of reflection. Contributions may take a reflective or personal tone, and include creative non-fiction or pieces grounded in religious concepts.
3. **"Lifestyle"**
   This section consists of submissions which engage with current events, members of the community, or initiatives at work. Submissions may include interviews, post-event reflections, and so on.
4. **"Commentary"**
   This section consists of submissions that engage with social issues and current affairs. Contributors may submit their opinion pieces for this section, or may even submit respectful responses to promote meaningful discourse.
5. **"Spotlight"**
   This section consists of submissions which engage with current events, members of the community, or initiatives at work. Submissions may include interviews, post-event reflections, and more.

MUSLIM'S DIGEST

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

Thank you.