



NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY'S MUSLIM SOCIETY

ELEVEN

MAGAZINE

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GUEST INTERVIEWEE:

USTAZ USAMA CANON

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Assalamualaikum Wrt Wbt.

Praises to the Almighty for all the blessings bestowed upon us. This publication is made possible only by His Will.

Why Love? If we reflect upon the Sirah, one reason why people were attracted to Islam was because they witnessed the beautiful character of our beloved Prophet (saw); a manifestation of Allah's love and compassion for his creations. Likewise, as ambassadors of our deen, wouldn't showing the love be the way to call people to Allah?

As humans, we lapse into moments of spiritual void as we struggle to position ourselves in this dunya. In times of hardship, we rush to Allah seeking His help yet when life resumes normally, we falter once again, consumed by this vicious cycle. Learn to count one's blessings and reflect on Allah's love for us; that way, we lift ourselves out of the spiritual slumber and Insha Allah be inspired to be better Muslims.

Subhanallah, let us not undermine the power of love!

My beloved ELEVEN team and contributors, I thank you for fulfilling this amanah to the best of your ability. May Allah (swt) grant us his best rewards. My dear readers, may this publication inspire, revive your Islamic spirit and be an easy read for you. Insha Allah! It is our responsibility to link everything in our life to Allah (swt). So, my brothers and sisters, how do we as khulafa' of the world, manifest His love in our lives? I leave you with this thought.

Wassalam,
Nur Ashikin Kamaruddin

PRESIDENT'S NOTE



Assalamu'alaikum Wrt Wbt.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
All Praise is due to Allah for providing NTUMS with the opportunity to produce our third issue of Eleven magazine since its inception in 2009.

It had always been our hope that this magazine would be a platform for youths to share their thoughts and experiences on issues relevant to their peers. This magazine was never intended to provide the reader with gospel truths on the subjects touched on, for this would be a grave injustice to the multitude of views found in tomes of scholarly work out there.

However, the articles are intended to provide intellectual engagement coupled with personal or unique insights to the issues so that readers can appreciate the various perspectives, engage in open discussion and ultimately arrive at their own conclusions. Appreciating this is especially important for this issue which deals with Love, an emotion so prevalent yet so often misunderstood by many.

My gratitude goes out to the team of Eleven magazine for the effort put into tackling this topic, and of course to all the contributors for taking on the challenge. May Allah (swt) reward them for their efforts, and may He guide us all to the path of righteousness.

Abdullah Aziz

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Fathollah Zakee | Hannah Hardy | Haer Jam Hari |
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ra: acronym for Radiallahu Anhu. It means "May Allah be pleased with him/her". This phrase is used for the blessed Companions.

swt: An abbreviation for the Arabic words "Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala" or "Glory to Him, the Exalted." These are words to glorify God when mentioning His name.

saw: An abbreviation for the salutations Sallallahu alayhi wasallam which means "May Allah honour him and grant him peace" specifically for our last prophet, Prophet Muhammad saw.

Insha Allah: God willing

Subhanallah: Glory be to Allah

Masya Allah: Indicating appreciation for an aforementioned individual or event.

dua: an act of supplication

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Protect your Love

The heart is beating, but the soul is dead. Some go through their daily activities being consciously aware of what Muslims should oblige to. We know what we should be doing in our minds, but our hearts do not feel at peace when performing our prayers nor do we look forward to increasing our acts of worship. There are lingering questions on why we pray; there are times ill thoughts are harboured towards brothers or sisters and sometimes, anger creeps in easily.

What has happened?

By Fazliah Abdul Latiff

We take our faith (iman) for granted. Yes, we trust that Allah grants what is best for us, but where is the effort? We think that just because we are Muslims, everything will work out fine. Has it dawned on us that Allah, the Possessor of everything, can take our iman at any time?

Iman is indeed a ni'mah (blessing) from Allah (swt). Only when we realise that, will we be grateful to Him. Iman cannot be inherited from our parents nor can it be purchased. It has to be earned and we must work hard to attain the highest level of iman to our best of our ability.

The iman resides in the heart. Our heart is vulnerable to provocations of Syaithan's whispers and to our desires. We need to guard our heart from such invasions so as to not transgress from Allah's Path. Naturally, we want to protect our iman – a priceless treasure that is worth defending.

Do you remember that special present you received from your loved one? You made sure it is meticulously maintained. You take special care of it because it is meaningful and precious. Likewise,

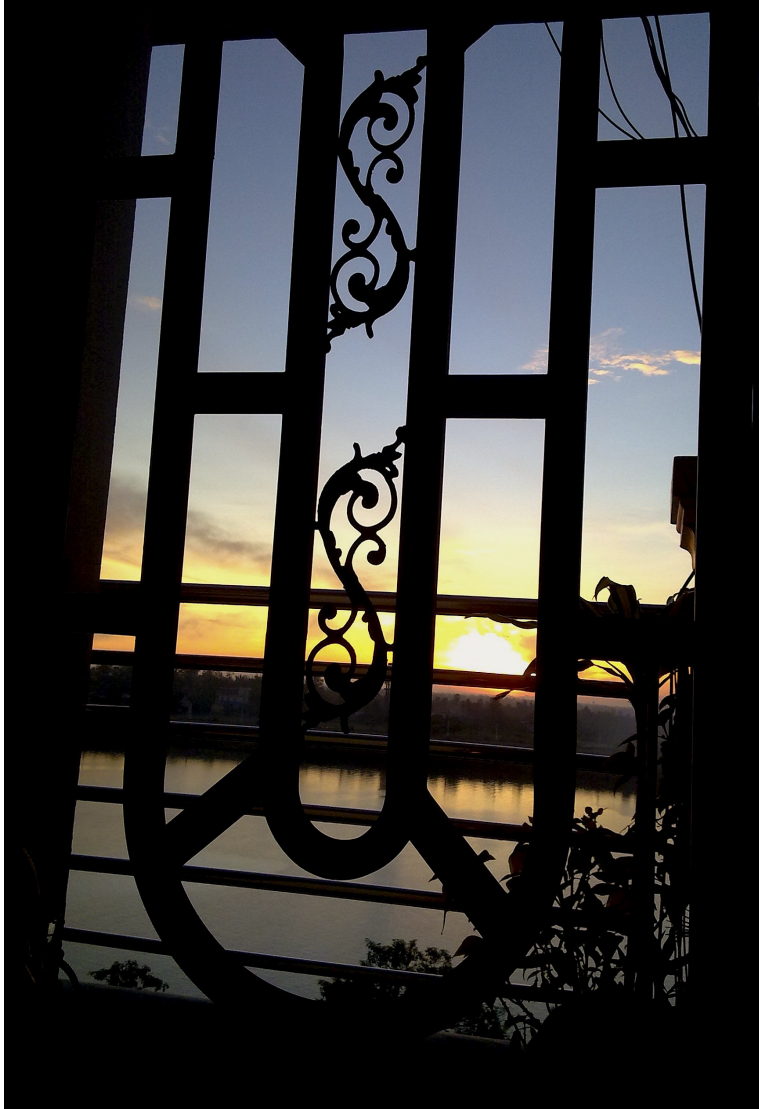
Allah presented to us one of the most beautiful faculties, which is the heart. We have to honour this gift from Allah by protecting it.

Sheikh Hamza Yusuf, an American convert and a world-renowned Islamic scholar who dedicated himself in the revivalism of traditional Islamic studies in the West, juxtaposed the spiritual heart to the physical heart. The physical heart is the most vital part of the body. It ensures the continuous pumping of blood through the circulatory system. Look at where Allah placed the heart. He put it behind the sternum, a flat, dagger shaped bone located in the middle of the chest. Along with the ribs, the sternum forms the rib cage that protects the heart. *Subhanallah*, we need to reflect on the Beauty and Wisdom behind Allah's creations!

So we ask ourselves, what have we done to protect our heart?

In one of the hadiths reported by An-Nasaa'ee and At-Tirmidhi,

"When the servant performs a sin a black spot appears on his heart, and if he seeks forgiveness this black spot is removed, and if he returns to sin the black spot grows until his



heart becomes black, and this is the 'Ra'an' about which Allah spoke, 'Nay! But on their hearts is the covering of sins (raan) which they used to earn.'

(Surah Al-Mutaffifin 83:14)

From this hadith, we sense that we will always struggle to keep the heart as pure as possible. If the physical heart is exposed to viruses, it starts weakening which will adversely affect the functions of the other parts of the body. Similarly, if we allow our spiritual heart to be exposed to sins and do not cleanse it by the constant remembrance of Allah, then our iman will falter.

Our beloved Prophet (saw) said that **"Indeed in the body there is a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the whole body is sound. If it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. It is the heart."**

To preserve the love for our Creator, the spiritual heart needs to be protected from one's evils as well as the evils around us. Have we then done enough to protect our heart?

When we fall in love, we always find a reason to justify our feelings. We can love someone for a variety of reasons.

One of the reasons we do not realise our love for our Creator is because we have yet to know Him well enough. Allah has showered upon us so many blessings. Yet, we take them for granted, sometimes forgetting to express our gratitude. We need to start reflecting on our attitude towards everything that He has bestowed upon us. Allah says in the Qur'an,

"And if you were to count Allah's favors, you would not be able to number them; most surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

(Surah An-Nahl 16:18)

Get to know Allah by realising what He has provided for us. Only then, will our iman be strengthened and we would love Allah's *deen* for us even further.

Why do we do things for the ones we love? We do it to express our gratefulness to them. On other occasions we do it because we feel the need to reaffirm our love for them. So be grateful to Allah (swt) by worshipping Him. Reaffirm your love for Him by hastening towards doing righteous deeds to His creations and continue to struggle to seek His Pleasure.

Everything we see, hear, say and do will affect our iman. So let us go all out within our means to protect our heart and the love for Allah.

Tips to not fall out of love

"Faith wears out in the heart of anyone of you just as clothes wear out, so ask Allah to renew the faith in your heart."
(At-Tabarani)

1 Ask ourselves why we love. Do we love X because of his character or what he did? Do we love Allah? Why do we love Him? Constantly remind ourselves the reasons why we love. That way, we would want to keep the love alive.

2 In any relationship, communication is one of the keys to developing a beautiful relationship! Our prayer is not a mere monologue, but rather a dialogue. A hadith qudsi reminds us that when we recite the Al-Fatiha, Allah responds to our every ayat. When we recite Alhamdulillah rabbi'l 'alamin, Allah responds, "My servant has praised me." When we recite Ar-rahmani r-rahim, Allah responds: "My servant has extolled Me." When we perform our prayers, we are actually talking to Allah. When we read the Qur'an, Allah is talking to us! In Surah Al-Asr, Allah swears by time and man is in the state of loss, except those who believe and do righteous deeds and counsel each other to Truth and counsel each other to be steadfast. When we read this, we ask ourselves, are we in the state of loss mentioned by Allah? Have we been doing righteous deeds? When was the last time we shared about Islam with someone? For the relationship to stay strong, communication is important.

3 Surround ourselves with people who remind us of Allah (swt). Who we hang out with matters. When we meet our friends, what does our topic of conversation usually revolve around? It is possible to converse about something we observe in the media and parallel it with the stories of the Prophets and the Companions or the messages that remind us of the greatness of Allah (swt). This is the support system to keep our iman going.

If we value our iman, we must protect our love for Allah (swt).

4 Be consistent! In a hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari and Muslim, Rasulullah (saw) said that *"The deeds most beloved by Allah are those which are done consistently, even though they are few."* It would be easier to maintain our momentum if we read a few verses of the Qur'an everyday instead of reading many pages of the Qur'an once a week. The point is to engage in deeds as regularly as we can, although it is small in quantity. It may seem tiny to us, but in Allah's Sight, it could be magnificent! Consistency in deeds coupled with sincere intention to please Allah would bring us closer to Him, Insha'allah!

5 In Islam, we should never confuse difficulty with impossibility. Allah creates us thus He knows what we are capable of. Would He ask us to do something that we cannot do? When He commands us to do a certain deed, it is the best for us. Love needs commitment and understanding. Be committed to Allah's *deen* and aim to understand it.

6 For the love for Allah (swt) to continue, we need to start paying more attention to our hearts. Value this gift that Allah has honoured us with. The heart, or *qalb* in Arabic, means something that turns around and upside down. It is natural that our hearts are constantly changing. This means it is true that our *iman* can be like a rollercoaster! There are moments we experience a high level of iman and other times, a low level of *iman*. Seek help in Allah when we realise our *iman* is low. Allah comforts us in the Qur'an to be patient and persevere in prayer. Trust that Allah will help us. Our Beloved Prophet (saw) taught us a beautiful du'a: *"Oh Allah, the Turner of hearts, make my heart steadfast and firm upon Your deen."* E



LOVE of Dunya For Akhirah

By Mohammad Syafiq

Life is transitory. This stage of being, which we love, will one day come to pass, into nothingness, into oblivion, hardly a shade of what it was before.

The despotic tyrant, the maiden so obsessed with beauty and the man besotted with love: each of these chased such worldly affairs.

In the end, to God was their return. Full as their lives were, empty were they in the sight of God.

Today's life is no different. Terms like "rat race" are used to describe today's life. Money, fame and power "talks" like never before.

In fact, this pursuit has stripped man from its humanity. Four billion people are slaving away to make one billion people rich. Is this the justice which many individuals are championing for?

And yet, when death approaches, whatever they have strove for are left behind, rendering the run during the race vain.

Life has surely got to mean more than this.

"And what is the life of this world but an enjoyment of self-delusion?"

(Surah Al-Hadid 57:20)

Man's obsession for wealth is legendary.

So obsessed is he, that he betakes wealth as another god. This unhealthy desire; albeit natural, will continue festering: *"Leave Me (to deal) with him whom I have created alone, and to whom I have granted resources vast... and yet, he greedily desires that I give yet more!"*

(Al-Muddaththir 74:11-12, 15)

Though God is the All-Rich (Al-Ghaniy), He looks upon wealth with such disdain that gold (and by extension, wealth) is cheap and meretricious! *"And were it not that (with the prospect of boundless riches before them), all people would become one (evil) community, We might indeed provided for those who (now) deny the Most Gracious... gold (beyond*

count)!" (Surah Az-Zukhruf 43:33,35)

The above ayah teaches the believers the value God has placed on this earth – impertinent, worthless and undeserving. *"By God, this world is more insignificant in the eyes of God," the Prophet (saw) told his companions, "than (this deformed dead lamb is) in your eyes."*

(Sahih Muslim)

Having been compared to a carcass of a deformed lamb, we see the true value of life: accursed, pathetic and nugatory. True life, God teaches, is in the Hereafter, in the Presence of the Omnipotent King.

"Sol" comes the taunt, "if life was so worthless, why live, at all?"

The Prophet (saw) have enjoined the believers to *"be in this world as though you were a stranger or a wayfarer."* (Bukhari) The Qur'an too, talks about life as a journey (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:285) back unto the Source that we originated from.

Therefore, the God-conscious believer spends as little time as possible

indulging in activities that might lead him away from the Source. For the believer, to be caught in a state of *ghaflah* (heedlessness) and fearing that his actions will be rendered vain upon death, is one of their greatest fears.

Our scholars have identified such a state as *zuhd*, or asceticism.

Zuhd (Detachment) has often been misconstrued as a rejection of the world and its pleasures. Many have thought that the *zahid* is the one who denounces the world for God. These were distinctly identified by their way of life: they wore clothes of rough, scruffy materials, and always engaged in perpetual prayer in a secluded area, detached from life, yet "close" to the Hereafter (Ibn Tarmiyah).

However, a quick check of the vast Islamic sources reveals *zuhd* as being nothing of that sort.

However, today we see a dichotomy. Matters are classified as either "secular" or "Islamic" - for which the "secular" act cannot be "Islamic", vice versa. This is a dangerous fallacy that has to be corrected.

"Az-zuhd in this dunya is not achieved by prohibiting the *halal*, nor by wasting money," said the scholar Al-Hasan Al-Basri. "Rather, it entails your being more certain in what God (most high and praised is He) has in His Hands, than your (being certain) about what you have in your hand."

Other scholars define *zuhd* along the same lines. Thus *zuhd* is not rejecting what is already allowed for the believers. Rather, it is living the world for God: detaching (*tazhid*) oneself of matters that brings one no benefit to the Hereafter.

To isolate oneself from the world will bring no benefit to the believer. The world has been made as a means to

reach the Transcendent and not the end in itself. Each created matter was created subservient to man, so that he would be able to carry out his role as the steward of this earth.

The believer who isolates himself from people is ultimately isolating himself from God, for Islam focuses as much on the individual as it does on the community.

Nay, to live the world for God, is to reject the excesses of life.

It is taking our lives as an *ibadah*, a devotion of love and duty to the Transcendent. "Actions are (judged) by (its) intentions," the Prophet (saw) instructed his companions, as found in the books of imams *Bukhari* and *Muslim*.

If we construe this, then it would be easy to be in a state of perpetual worship; our every action is intended as an act of *ibadah* to God.

"...behold! My prayer, and (all) my acts of worship, and my living and my dying are for God (alone), the Sustainer of all the worlds..." (Surah Al-'An'am 6:162)

Indeed, it is by having the correct and the most purest of intentions, will God truly award the righteous.

Worship in Islam is not restricted to a fixed set of rituals. Similarly, it decries such mechanical actions, for the worship has to be made with a consciousness that the Ever Close is listening, "for though you cannot see Him, then verily (know) He sees you." (Muslim)

Therefore actions done in this world has to have a greater function. It must ascend beyond the trivialities of life, for a life for God will be tested in word and deed.

The believer then must pursue a life of worldly success, whilst keeping the Hereafter in mind. Good is, ultimately, from God. The right question to ask

here is not what was done, but rather who it was done for. God commands believers to "vie, then with one another in doing good works!" (Surah Al-Maidah 5:48), for the believers have the certainty that to God will be their return.

However, today we see a dichotomy. Matters are classified as either "secular" or "Islamic" - for which the "secular" act cannot be "Islamic", vice versa. This is a dangerous fallacy that has to be corrected.

One most glaring example would be the "categorisation" of knowledge.

According to many, knowledge can be neatly split into two categories: "secular" knowledge and "sacred" knowledge. There is the belief that such "worldly" knowledge is of scant value to God. Again, the believer has to refer back to the source of such things: God. The fact that the first command revealed to man was "*iqra'*" (Surah Al-'Alaq 96:1) represents his duty to seek knowledge, to read from the Books that God has brought forth for man.

Learning and acquiring knowledge provides man the means of knowing the world and, by extension, his Creator. Just as the Qur'an illuminated ignorant practices, knowledge brightens the world one word at a time, by teaching man the methods to preserve and sustain the world, enriching his role as the steward of this earth.

It is with the end in mind, that the believer begins living his life for God. The point in worshipping God is to attain a balance, a counter for whatever life has wrought. Success in this world must also follow with success in the next.

Religion must never be made solipsist. The Qur'anic injunction to "ward yourselves" and then "your families" from the Fire (Surah At-Tahrim 66:6) makes it clear that Islam is not for the

self – it is for one, and it is for others. Salvation of the self must not be achieved at the expense of others. Therefore, besides stewarding the earth, God charges the believer with another role, as “witnesses over mankind” (Surah Al-Hajj 22:78). Having attained to faith, believers have to then ensure that they remain examples for mankind, that they might return to God’s path.

Such “witnessing” cannot be done by remaining passive. Instead, believers are encouraged to come out and be society itself. The fard *kifayah* (communal obligation) ruling makes it obligatory to attain representation in all levels of society: should a community fail to do so, then it has said to be a failed community.

Thus in the process of “witnessing”, believers must call for justice and fairness, and stand up for the truth whenever it has been trampled upon. These acts might be considered as “worldly”, but is, in fact, for the Hereafter. Ultimately, it is God alone that decides.

It has been made clear to the believer that the life of this earth must never be taken as the ends of the believer’s purpose. Rather, they provide him the means to reach the Transcendent. As low this world is, God is the most Close to those that seek Him.

“Have an earnestness for death,” Abu Bakr (ra) advised, “and you will be given life.” It is with the end in mind,

that the believer begins living his life for God. The point in worshipping God is to attain a balance, a counter for whatever life has wrought. Success in this world must also follow with success in the next. Life has to be embraced to ensure the fullness of God’s blessing. The bestowal of wealth, health and success provide the believer ample means and resources to be thankful.

Therefore, the believer who remembers God in his action will find life renewed in his death.

A life lived for God... a most worthy and noble cause for this transitory life.

“... for with You (O our Lord), is all journeys’ end!”. E

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Interview with **ustaz USAMA CANON**

Noor Hafifah Binte Ahmad Afif



Active in the da'wah activities since he was 23 years old, Ustaz Usama Canon is the director of the Zawiya Outreach Program as well as an instructor at the Zaytuna Institute. In addition to that, he also serves as a Muslim Chaplain at the State of California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and is a founding director of Ta'leef Collective, a non-profit organisation that provides a safe avenue for new reverts, Muslims as well as seekers of knowledge to learn, reengage and understand Islam. In Singapore for a series of lectures organised by Darul Arqam, we caught up with him to ask about his love for da'wah and his advice for any budding da'wah activists in Singapore.

What inspired you to do da'wah? Was it a natural progression from learning about Islam to doing da'wah work?

I converted to Islam when there was a resurgence of social resistance and a renewal of a tendency to rebel against certain status quo. There is a degree to which my Islam is always centred and trying to address the realities of the background that I came from. However, before I became Muslim, I already was socially active. I started a club in high school called "Unity through Diversity", which is a response to what many of the people of colour in our high school saw as a negligence of the administration of the school.

Who is the target audience closest to your heart in your many years of involvement in da'wah?

Generally, people who are interested in or have converted to Islam, regardless of their socio-economic and ethnic background – they are probably closest to my heart because I went through (similar experiences). The work that is most rewarding for me is serving people in the inner cities like doing da'wah in Chicago through the organization IMAN (Inner-city Muslim Action Network) or working in the prison; because my father is African American, I feel like I'm giving back to my people and community. In addition, there are people who committed crimes as

serious as murder but later, converted to Islam and they become gentle giants. That work tends to become very rewarding for me.

In addition, there are people who committed crimes as serious as murder but later, converted to Islam and they become gentle giants. That work tends to become very rewarding for me.

What do you consider to be your biggest challenge when outreaching to born Muslims?

We have this tendency to put the "Muslim" label on things and assume that makes it a unique situation. There is a large Afghani population

where I live and these youths were informed about Islam, for better or worse, through their Afghan culture. However, the hardest group of people, for me, to break through psychologically, are the very well-off Muslim youths. One of the reasons is their sense of entitlement. They think that everything is perfect in their lives so why would they need Islam? There is something about them that I can't really get through.

You mentioned about Muslim youths being informed about Islam through their cultures. How then to approach Muslims youths in multi-cultural societies where Islam is neither the 'indigenous religion' nor a key cultural influence?

Muslims in any given society have to be keen in reconciling Islam with the culture of that society – not watering down Islam, but reconciling it. In order for that to happen, Islam cannot be taught in a culturally-predatory way. We have to allow for people's cultural expression as long as it is not contradictory to shariah. We have to let that process happen because it takes generations for that reconciliation to come about.

What is your strategy in dealing with Muslim ex-offenders and developing a rehabilitation programme for them?

Firstly, the Muslim teacher has to understand the legal implications of the system so that they can encourage the Muslim ex-offender to be compliant with the guidelines of that system. Muslim chaplains have to intervene and affect that so they can reverse the trend of recidivism. To do this, you'll need the help of the custody and parole officers while

also earning the trust of the inmates and ex-offenders.

Secondly, you have to speak to their socio-economic reality. We have to get the necessary resources through zakat, charity, sadaqah or other community support, to help them get jobs after their release and help them get on their feet.

Finally, you have to be relevant. You can't talk about some weird esoteric deep spiritual questions without speaking about their on-the-ground reality first. He may be getting a cold shoulder from the Muslims, but his former gang members are ready to welcome him back. You have to be able to talk about that and translate deen-related matters to their relevant realities.

Muslims in any given society have to be keen in reconciling Islam with the culture of that society – not watering down Islam, but reconciling it.

There are youths who do falter and get attracted to other religions. How do we then, reintroduce Islam to them?

We have to create in the Muslim community culturally and socially relevant conversations, so that these people can come without feeling pressure. One of the points is that the conversations will have to be cool – they can't be weird and stuffy. We have to develop young leadership in our community that is trained within the religious sciences

but also understand people's social reality. The more we develop that type of leadership, the more we will be able to address questions like these.

What is your advice to our budding da'wah activist?

Call to Allah. Don't call to anything else. Don't call to Islam. Don't call to the mosque. What I mean is to prioritise. Connect people's hearts to Allah (swt). People can call to Islam, but not call to Allah. People can call to minhaj, but not call to Allah. Use your mazhab, use Islam and use the mosque – Those are tools by which you call to Allah (swt).

However, the only way to do that is if your own heart is connected to Allah. Faaqidu shai'in la yu'ti – Somebody who lacks something can't give it to other people. You have to be connected yourself. To be connected, you need to be in touch with the ulama' and the scholars. Be a person of dhikir. Be someone who is active in their own worship because if you're not worshipping Allah and not developing a deep relationship, it is not going to move anybody.

The other thing is to be connected to Prophet Muhammad (saw). Not just on a head level but on a heart level. Read and understand the seerah. Read the Shama'il and understand the prophetic characteristics. Allah said *"O Prophet, We sent you as a witness and as a giver of glad tidings, and as a warner; and as a caller unto Allah by His leave, and as a light-giving lamp."* (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:45-46) You have to be connected to the light, so you can become illuminated and be the means of other people's illuminations. **E**





Love for Knowledge

By Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz

Knowledge, or 'ilm, has been a subject of much discussion and to some extent, dilemma among Muslims. Our society seems to have dichotomised knowledge into "secular" and "religious" – best exemplified by the part-time madrasah system prevalent here, where for most of us, weekdays are spent in secular schools while our religious education is reserved for the weekends.

As tertiary students, having reached this milestone in the secular educational route, we find ourselves among those who appreciate the need to excel in this system of tests and examinations that might influence our options for the future. Even now, our goals and expectations will probably include a series of digits that will be printed onto our graduation certificates – our Cumulative Grade Point Average, or CGPA.

However, appreciating the importance of excelling in our course of study does not necessarily translate into an appreciation and love for the knowledge we acquire in the process. Besides, where then do we place the knowledge not covered in our course of study? More importantly, what is the role of Islamic knowledge to us and why is there a need to appreciate and acquire it concurrently? Finally, what is it about knowledge that has the potential of placing us among the "high ranks" as mentioned in the verse above?

Reconciling Revelation and Science

While the West is still reeling from a history of clashes between religious dogma and scientific inquiry, Islamic civilisations have had a more harmonious relationship between the two – some of our early Muslim scientists, mathematicians and philosophers being scholars of theology. The problem is not so much a fundamental attitude towards revelation as much as it is a fundamental attitude towards baseless dogma.

As proof, one of the greatest clashes between Science and religion in recent history was not due to the dogma of any established religion, but rather the dogma of atheism. In the early 20th century, the prevailing attitude in the largely atheistic scientific community was that the universe was eternal. However, Edward Hubble and other astronomers discovered evidence that the universe did in fact have a beginning in what is now termed as the "Big Bang". Staunch atheists, including Fred Hoyle who actually coined the name in jest, vehemently refused to accept such a notion simply because a universe with a beginning would call for a cause of existence – that is, God.

Today, while science provides us with more spectacular discoveries and a myriad of theories to explain each phenomenon, our efforts towards truth and certainty must be paired with guidance and knowledge from the Originator of it all, lest, we run into fallacy or worse, disbelief. For us Muslims, this guidance comes in the form of revelation in the Qur'an and the sunnah of the Prophet (saw) which provide us with the criterion, constraints and limitations for our intellectual efforts.

Knowledge, therefore, has to be based on these sources, followed by the gathering and interpretation of empirical data from our senses – more commonly known as the scientific method. The scholar's intellectual journey therefore attempts to arrive at a point of certainty where revelation and the extrapolation of sense perception agree. Where the two meet, we accept. Where they disagree, we reject, lest, we find ourselves straying from the path of Truth and from God Himself.

Where the Twain Meet: Of Wisdom...

"Envy is permitted only in two cases: A man whom Allah gives wealth, and he disposes of it rightfully, and a man to whom Allah gives knowledge which he applies and teaches it."
(Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

Knowledge, like wealth, is a trust given to us by Allah that can either serve to benefit or destroy, enlighten or confuse, guide or lead astray. Ever since man was conferred this trust over other creations, history has seen the multitude of benefits that knowledge has brought to man and his environment. However, history cannot ignore the countless instances where this trust was also abused by him – from his exploitation of the environment to the infliction he heaps on his fellow species.

The pursuit of knowledge can lead one astray and this is where it is pertinent that the seeker of knowledge has the right intentions and is guided by a set of unchanging principles ordained by none other than His Creator. Martin Luther King Jr. understood this well when he said, "Science gives us knowledge, which is power; Religion gives us wisdom, which is control."

The Muslim, ever wary of his day of accountability before Allah, realises the need to supplement his seeking of worldly knowledge with knowledge of the *deen* of Islam – the guidance and way of life that Allah has provided and ordained for us. This ensures that whatever knowledge he gains is attained and applied in ways which are pleasing to Him and not in ways that are disapproved.



"HE WHO FOLLOWS A PATH IN QUEST OF KNOWLEDGE, ALLAH WILL MAKE THE PATH TO PARADISE EASY FOR HIM."

THE ANGELS LOWER THEIR WINGS OVER THE SEEKER OF KNOWLEDGE, BEING PLEASED WITH WHAT HE DOES."

THE INHABITANTS OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH AND EVEN THE FISH IN THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEANS SEEK FORGIVENESS FOR HIM."

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE LEARNED MAN OVER THE DEVOUT WORSHIPPER IS LIKE THAT OF THE FULL MOON TO THE REST OF THE STARS."

THE LEARNED ARE THE HEIRS OF THE PROPHETS WHO BEQUEATH NEITHER GOLD NOR SILVER BUT ONLY THAT OF KNOWLEDGE; AND HE WHO ACQUIRES IT, HAS IN FACT ACQUIRED AN ABUNDANT PORTION."

[ABU DAUD, TIRMIDHI]

Faith...

'Soon will We show them Our Signs in the (furthest) regions and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth'
(Surah Fussilat 41:53)

When scientific inquiry agrees perfectly with revelation and experience, a magnificent result is obtained where this knowledge serves as an ayah, or sign, to the believer, strengthening his faith and more importantly, increasing his humility and submission to Allah. The tafseer of the following verse embodies this sublime convergence:

'For He is well-versed in every kind of creation. He Who produces for you from the green tree, fire, when behold! You kindle therewith!'
(Surah Yasin 36:79-80)

A cursory reading of this verse would yield very little significance. One tiny detail though, stands out from the verse above: What does the "greenness" of a tree have to do with kindling fire when we are only practically concerned with the brown part of the plant – the wood?

The answer is – literally and figuratively – within us. It is widely known today that besides fuel (i.e. wood), another essential component for fire is oxygen. And the main source of oxygen for us on land is – yes, vegetation! Photosynthesis replenishes oxygen; and Chlorophyll, the substance that makes this possible, is what makes the trees green!

"From the green tree, fire!" – In four words, Allah uses a fact now taken for granted that, in all probability, was unknown to people fourteen centuries ago so as to prove to us today that the Qur'an is indeed nothing short of a miracle from Him. Indeed, "He is Well-Versed in every kind of creation!"

...and Gratitude

'But if you count the Blessings of Allah, never will you be able to number them. Verily, man is given to injustice and ingratitude'
(Surah Ibrahim 14:34)

One of the most effective ways that we learn gratitude for any of Allah's blessings is when it is taken away from us temporarily, or forever. It is through hunger

that we appreciate food and nutrition, through exhaustion that we appreciate rest and comfort and through losing a loved one that we appreciate the gift of his or her presence.

But we spend all our lives with most of His blessings intact – from the air we breathe to the organs that receive it and from the beauty we perceive to the eyes that savour it. How then can we be grateful to Allah for all of this?

The answer is in the way we marvel at the work of any genius – whether it be a prodigious piece of composition, a masterful artwork or an ingenious feat of engineering. By understanding the significance and brilliance of such works, we appreciate them and the minds behind them.

Likewise, knowledge of the observable universe – from the creatures and objects within it to the elegant laws and patterns that govern it – helps us appreciate the greatness of its Creator and the countless blessings He has bestowed upon us. Acknowledging each of these blessings places us in a constant state of gratitude to Him – the Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer of it all.

On the Path to Paradise

The path of knowledge is a path of discovery. Just as we discover the smallness of our being in this vast universe, we discover also the greatness of the Creator who created it all. Just as we discover things previously unknown to us, we discover how much more will forever be hidden from us. And just as we discover the countless blessings provided to us, we discover also how lacking we have been in gratitude.

Our love for knowledge stems from our realisation of its implications and worth to us. If our hearts are tied down to the love of this world, then that is the limit of the knowledge we content ourselves with. If our hearts are elevated with the love for the hereafter, we then seek both worldly and religious knowledge for Allah's guidance and pleasure, and our quest for them takes us through an incredible journey of discovery that also increases our belief, gratitude and submission to Him.

Such a profound approach to knowledge certainly has its fair share of challenges and obstacles but remain steadfast in the certainty that it is a struggle worth persevering. **E**

ادخلوها بسلام امن

"ALLAH WILL
EXALT THOSE
WHO BELIEVE
AMONG YOU
AND THOSE WHO
HAVE KNOWL-
EDGE TO HIGH
RANKS."

(AL-MUJADILAH,
58:11)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله الذي جعل العلم نوراً
والعلماء أئمةً للناس

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله الذي جعل العلم نوراً
والعلماء أئمةً للناس



Love OR OBSESSION

WHERE DO WE DRAW THE LINE?

By Hamzah Abdul Aziz

“Everyone, sober or drunk, is seeking a beloved. Everywhere, mosque or synagogue, is the house of love”

Hafiz of Shiraz

It is in the nature of being humans that we crave for love, and to love. Love, however, means differently to different people. It may be that warm feeling of fondness or tenderness a lover has for his beloved. This passion and attraction may be attributable to another's physical beauty, traits, intellect, or a combination of various factors. At times, the needs of the beloved take priority over the needs of the lover. Slowly, the lover becomes the beloved as he assumes the characters of his beloved. As Kahlil Gibran succinctly states, "For love is sufficient unto love" and "think not you can direct the course of love, for love, if it finds you worthy, directs your course."

The intensity of emotions involved may lead one to cross the line of becoming obsessed with his beloved. The distinction is stark: a lover regards his beloved as a human being and the needs of the beloved are important to him, while the victims of obsession see their love interest as an object of their beloved's desire or romantic interest wishing to possess the object of their obsession. Whilst love is pure, obsession is shrouded with exclusive proprietary jealousy.

'LAILA AND MAJNUN'

At its most superficial level, the classic story of "Laila and Majnun" reflects another aspect of obsession. This is an immortal love story sometimes compared to "Romeo and Juliet" though it predates Shakespeare in oral tradition by more than 1,000 years. The story revolves around two star-crossed lovers, which left Majnun at the crossroads between death and madness. One day, a man saw Majnun kissing the feet of a dog and asked what he was doing. He replied: "This dog has just come from the street on which Laila lives. That is why I am kissing its feet."

At first he becomes mad (hence "majnun") and his poetry serves as his salvation. When rebuked, he replied: "To see the beauty of Laila, one requires the eyes of Majnun." Eventually, Majnun retreats to the wilderness, preferring the company of wild beasts to that of men. He continues to decline and eventually dies, out of madness, having exhausted all symbolic and psychological desire.

This story represents another facet of obsession. More commonly, obsession is understood to mean one's fixation with his beloved. On the other hand, this classic story also exemplifies one's obsession with one's self. Majnun, by the time of his final meeting with Laila, no longer harbours the same feelings for her and so he dies, contented. It may be argued that his love for Laila was transposed to his being in love with the notion of love. This is commonly seen through mankind's wallowing of unrequited love that leads to issues such as depression, compulsion or suicide.

'AL-WADUD'

Let us now consider what Islam teaches us about the *fitrah* and the boundaries of love. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in his book *Ighathat al-lahfan* ("Aid for the Sorrowful") says that the root of Islam is "love for God, intimacy with Him, and yearning to encounter Him." He also says, "The revealed books of God, from the first to the last, revolve around the commandment to love." Interestingly, many scholars have described the content of the Qur'an as "the story of love and lovers."

All of Allah's attributes are of a continuing nature. One of His attributes is "Al-Wadud" but it does not simply mean "Love" because it is an on-going attribute. Therefore, "Al-Wadud" means that Allah is "The Loving One": it is continuing, it is perpetual and Allah's love is everywhere. Allah is also "Al-Haadi" meaning "The Guiding One." He guides with His Love, His Rahmah, His Patience etc and He does all of this at the same time. Hence, He loves the believers as well as the repentant sinners. This is because as human beings, Allah is fully aware that we will sin but we are exonerated through our repentance. When we beg for His mercy, He forgives; and yet again He extends to us this magnificent love of "Al-Wadud" all over again.

THE SHADE

The guidance of Islam is therefore the guidance of love. One of our purposes as human beings is to consciously manifest Allah's love in our lives, in order that we are transformed into a better person. Furthermore, Islam requires us to love humanity, not just in regard to our potential for perfection, but also in spite of our inability to realize it. Love of the Prophet (saw) is love of all the beauty and nobility of character, truthfulness, justness, humility and inner strength of which man is capable and which the Prophet (saw) as the perfect man (al-insan al-kamil), possessed at the utmost degree. Thus, loving the Prophet (saw) puts us on the path to attain that perfection. Yet, it also helps us to accept our imperfect humanity, so that we are able to live in peace with ourselves as repentant servants of Allah, hopeful of His Mercy upon us.

The Prophet (saw) said in a hadith narrated by Bukhari, regarding the scene on the Day of Judgment when the sun is so close to us that we will be standing on our own perspiration: *"Seven people will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the day when there will be no shade except for His Shade. They are, inter alia, two persons who love each other only for Allah's sake and they meet and part in Allah's cause."* When we love someone purely for the sake of Allah (swt), we love him in spite of his shortcomings. If our intention is directed purely toward Allah (swt), such imperfection in another does not matter to us, for we are similarly deficient in our own character. We love him because we want to love Allah (swt), so that in turn, Allah (swt) will love us.

This love also serves as a benefit for us in dealing with problems in life. For example, if someone hurts us, we will not be upset easily because of the love we have for this person. We may not necessarily like what he has done but we still love him for the sake of Allah (swt). We may choose to reassert our rights, but forgiveness is better in the sight of Allah. We forgive because Allah is "The Forgiving One." When we forgive, Allah forgives us and loves us in return. And on the day of our passing from this life, it will be this very same person whom we love for the sake of Allah (swt), who will take us to the grave, pray for us and bury us.

CONCLUSION

Hence, to be a perfect man is to be a lover, but not just any kind of lover. We need knowledge to know what to love and what love asks of us, in order that we might become love itself.

Love is so central to Islam that without it there can be no real faith. It is love that motivates us to strive, to seek and to return to Allah (swt). It is love that provides us the strength to face challenges laid out before our lives. It is love that teaches us humility, compassion, trust, obedience and honesty. It is love that opens us to submission to Islam.

Thus far, we have alluded to the importance of loving Allah (swt), loving the Prophet (saw) and loving all of mankind. The way to attain Allah's love is to follow the Prophet (saw), to be in his footsteps, to strive to emulate him and in return, Allah (swt) will increasingly manifest His Love to us. We follow the Prophet (saw) by striving to become like him in our humanness, in our quality of relationships, in our conduct in society and in our service to humanity. Particularly by doing so, we become closer to our potential of what it means to be an obedient servant of our Lord and to be an exemplary *khalifah* of Allah on this earth.

If we nourish our hearts with love and we manifest Allah's love within our lives; with our families, our friends, in our work, in school, in our prayers, and in everything that we do, the entire significance of our existence will be transformed to a more meaningful appreciation of our existence.

On a final note, love of any kind must be directed towards attaining the Pleasure of Allah (swt). Love someone and/or everyone sincerely for the sake of Allah (swt) because each of our existence begins from and ends by reverting back to Allah (swt). More importantly, every source of love that we experience and we share with others is derived through the Love and Blessings of Allah (swt) upon us. Once this paradigm is clarified, there will be no place for a Muslim to be obsessed with any other love apart from the love of his Lord. His love is bounded by his desire to love Allah (swt), to love the Prophet (saw) and follow his *sunnah*, and to love all of mankind so that he will be shaded on the day when there is no other shade but Allah's Shade. E

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Success, Wealth and Good Life. When you come across these words, what are the things that you picture in your mind?

What are the feelings associated with it?

IN PURSUIT OF SUCCESS, WEALTH & GOOD LIFE

Our beloved parents, painted our minds with pictures of success, wealth and good life to encourage us to mature into good, happy and useful Muslims.

Our teachers encouraged us to be ambitious and visionary. Often, we are reminded of the importance of having a good education, which translates to getting a good job and a good life.

The media also paints an idealistic image of a successful, wealthy and good lifestyle.

These images and feelings, inundated our senses through interaction with our environment, are eventually implanted into our sub-conscious mind. Each time we come across the terms 'Success', 'Wealth' and 'Good Life', the images and feelings associated with it are triggered – Good career, good pay, happy family, pilgrimage, beautiful house and car, charity to the needy and the list goes on.

In line with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, having Success, Wealth and Good Life is natural and normal for human beings as they meet four out of our five needs, namely physiological, safety, love/belonging and esteem.

Unfortunately, because of the socialisation and setbacks that we face in an attempt to attain success, wealth and good life, we tend to correlate these terms with negative connotations.

Success is only for those who desire worldly contentment.

Money is the root of all evil. We are not meant for worldly success; our good

Seeking wealth & success makes one greedy and materialistic.

Being thankful to Allah for what we have is mistakenly understood as 'doing nothing to progress in life'. Striving for Success, Wealth and Good Life is not an *ibadah*.

According to Sheikh ul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH):

'Al-Ibaadah is a term which comprises everything that Allah loves and is pleased with, from the outward and inner sayings and actions.'
(Al-'Uboodiyyah)

Striving for success, wealth and good life is a form of ibadah if we have the right intentions to help us do the following:

CONTRIBUTING TO THE SOCIETY

- 1) Through physical efforts such as organising a donation drive.
- 2) Through education such as giving free tuition to children.
- 3) Through monetary means such as contributing donations; and
- 4) Educating people in managing their personal and family finances

At the moment, more focus can be directed to points 3) and 4).

Most of the time, the people in our society are only able to donate small amounts such as \$5, \$10 and \$50. Should we be contented when donating as such hardly facilitates the development of our society? We should realise that there are more people on the receiving end as compared to those on the giving end. Thus, small amounts may not be very effective in helping them out of poverty. The rate of our societal development can be quickened, if members of society are able to contribute \$1,000 or \$5,000 per person each year.

How then is it possible for the society to be able to contribute bigger amounts? Logically, they themselves must be successful and wealthy. How else can one help lift others out of the difficulties in life (financial-wise)?

Let us not undermine the importance of educating people in managing their personal and family finances.

Without proper guidance, they might not be able to improve their life no matter how huge their income is. Apart from budgeting, our society needs to be educated on how they can generate more income, reduce their involvement with *riba'* by managing their loans and have a strategic plan to attain success in life.

EDUCATE FUTURE GENERATION

Before we can educate others on managing their finances, we ourselves need to possess good financial knowledge and skills, consistently practise it as well as be equipped with a focused mind and a soul that is devoted to Allah (swt).

In a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (ra) which means:

"When the son of Adam dies his actions come to an end except three things, a continuing charity or knowledge which gives benefit or a pious child who prays for him."

(Narrated by Imam Nasaa'i)

Rasulullah (saw) mentioned the goodness of acquired knowledge which benefits others. For every bit of knowledge acquired, shared with others and put to good use, the rewards will be showered upon us even after our demise.

BUILD MORE ORGANIZATIONS AND CHARITY HOMES

Being successful not only evokes a sense of gratitude towards Allah (swt) for His Blessings upon us, we also develop a sense of empathy for the society. The late Hajjah Fatimah built Hajjah Fatimah Mosque. She was a successful and wealthy businesswoman who led a good life. After her demise, her charity still lives on as the mosque that she built benefited us even till today. Imagine how much more benefits we can bring to the society if we are able to do similar charitable deeds?

By and large, our society needs more homes and welfare organisations for the needy, the

orphans and the handicapped, mosques and madrasahs. When there are more people in our society who are successful, these groups of people can then enjoin efforts in building such homes and organisations.

LEAVE A LEGACY

Allah the Most Compassionate and Merciful, has given us the opportunity to redeem our sins in various ways. One of which we often overlook is via knowledge and charity. Being fortunate, educated Muslims, it comes along with the responsibility of ensuring that the welfare of our family, our children, our *Ummah* and the society are well taken care of.

In conclusion, acquire knowledge and skills about Success, Wealth and Good Life and contribute more effectively to the society. Subsequently, be a Khalifah that shares and promotes 'Success', 'Wealth' and 'Good Life' to our fellow Muslims. Then, leave this legacy to the future *Khulafa'*. Insha Allah, our Muslim community will change for the better.



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LOVE FOR PARENTS

by By Fatimah Zahra

Loving our parents is a beautiful gift by Allah (swt). Parents are, in my opinion, the easiest people to please.

In the Holy Qur'an, the status of parents has been mentioned at least 15 times. In fact, our Almighty mentions the status of our parents immediately after He asks us to submit ourselves to Him.

"And your Lord has ordained that you do not worship anyone except Him, and treat your parents with kindness; if either of them or both reach old age in your presence, do not say 'Uff' to them and do not rebuff them, and speak to them with the utmost respect. And lower your wing humbly for them, with mercy, and pray, 'My Lord! Have mercy on them both, the way they nursed me when I was young.'"

(Surah Al-Isra' 17:23-24)

Masya Allah. To be written in such a way signifies how important it is for a Muslim to be filial to his parents. Recently, my dad was diagnosed with an illness. Asking me what, why, how and when would probably not get you an answer. But what I will tell you is that it shattered my world.

I was not prepared. It was so painful like a dull ache that refuses to go away. Questions after questions started looming – Have I loved him enough? Does he know how much he means to me? Have I been dutiful to him?

Not everyone will get a wake-up call to show the limited time we have with our parents. There would not be blinking neon lights to remind us to love, cherish and respect them. This is a duty, an ibadah – A duty our Creator has bestowed upon us that brings us closer to Him by fulfilling our obligations to our parents.

Loving our parents is a beautiful gift by Allah (swt). Parents are, in my opinion, the easiest people to please. They rarely expect anything out of us. When they do, it is usually something we should already be doing. Nagging us to study or eat happens only because they love us.

Being in university and already of age, it is inevitable that we and our parents have a clash of opinions. Reasoning things out will allow them to understand our point of view, especially when we do it with love and respect. Raising children in this modern world with all its negative influences is not an easy task. Take the effort to understand our parents' views because even when we think they are smothering us, they are probably saving us in some way.

How much is due from us to our parents?

"Abdullah Ibn 'Umar saw a Yemeni man performing Tawâf while carrying his mother on his back. This man said to Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, 'I am like a tame camel for her! I have carried her more than she carried me. Do you think I have paid her back, O Ibn 'Umar?' Abdullah Ibn 'Umar replied, 'No, not even one labour pain when she was giving birth to you!'"

(Al-Bukhari)

The Yemeni man carried his mother while performing Tawaf whereas I could not remember the last time I did anything remotely remarkable as this for my parents. There is so much that is due from a child to his parent and yet, we skive from treating them the way they deserve to be treated.

Our parents feed us, clothe us, shelter us and nurture us to be proper Muslims. In return, the least we could do is to show love and kindness towards them. Allah (swt) is watching the kindness we show to our parents and surely, you will be rewarded for it, Insya Allah.

"Is there any Reward for Good – other than Good?"

(Surah Ar-Rahman 55:60)

Maintaining adab (good conduct) is part of Islam. As young adults, one of the biggest mistakes that we do is to ignore our parents. Often, we get so engrossed with our school activities and endless pile of assignments that our parents fade into the background. It is ironic since the reason we are in university in the first place is largely attributed to them. Good manners are

inherent in our deen. The more God-fearing we are, the better our manners should be towards them.

The Prophet (saw) has mentioned that "The best of you is the one who is best to his family". Our parents are our family. We may procrastinate on showing our parents how much we treasure them but consider how we may never get the opportunity again. So, pick up that phone and tell your mother how much you miss her. Ask your dad out on a date to eat some power nasi lemak. Drop hints on how much you love them. Sign up for a fiqh class or go for a talk at a mosque for some family bonding. Most importantly, make du'a for them. Pray for their health, their happiness and for them to be guided by the Almighty in this life and the Hereafter.

Allah knows best as He says, "Verily, from amongst My slaves is he whose faith cannot be rectified except by disease and illness, and were I to make him healthy, it would surely corrupt him. I run the affairs of My slaves by My Knowledge of what is in their hearts. Certainly, I am the All-Knower, All-Aware."

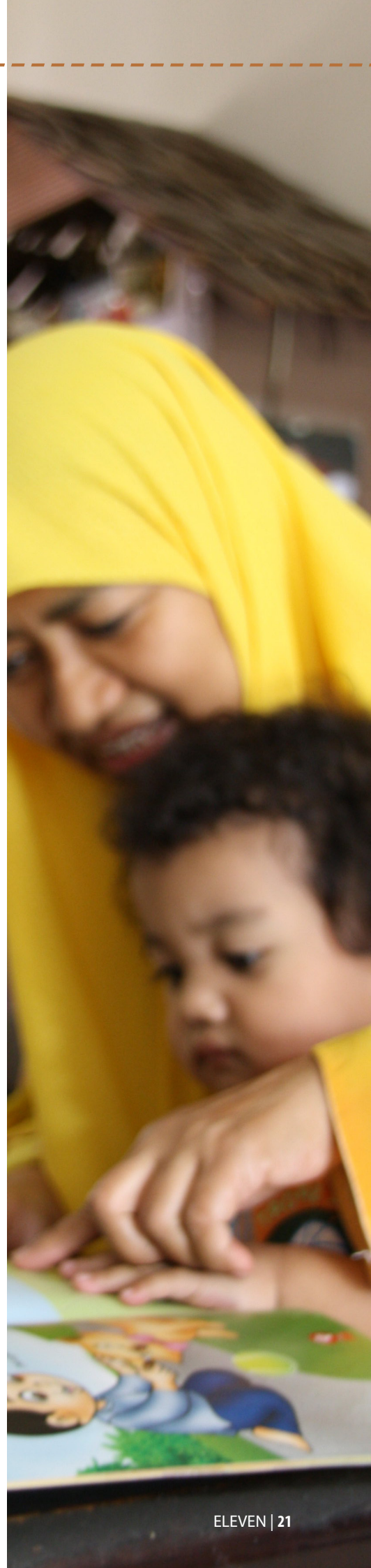
(Tabarani)

My dad might not be here for long. However, I am not willing to let him go without telling him how much he means to me and how much his daughter wants to make him proud. I aspire to be a kinder daughter, one whose love and respect is evident. And I remind myself first, before I hope to remind you.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) has said, "A parent is the best of the gates of Jannah so if you wish, keep to the gate, or lose it."

(At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)

What better reward than Jannah to encourage us to be the best child to our parents and loving them whole heartedly? May we all be guided to be better Muslims and see the blessing He has presented to us in this world – Our parents. Insya Allah. **E**





Love in Islam

Romance & Companionship

by Muhammad Firdaus Bin Hamzah

Love.

Is it something worth dying for? Or is it a blasphemous word? When mortal love finds us, it engulfs every inch of us. But when it forsakes us, we lose our bearings and try to rediscover ourselves. We fall in and out of love – a cycle which leaves us increasingly beleaguered in trying to understand the concept of mortal love and the key to finding our life partner.

The Concept of Companionship

The Union of Hearts

"And among His Signs is that He created for you mates from your own selves so that you may find peace in them, and He has set love and compassion between you. Surely, these are signs for those who reflect." (Surah Ar-Rum, 30:21)

The above-mentioned verse is a clear guidance by Allah, explaining the love between man and woman.

"... He created for you mates from your own selves ..."

A succinct and beautiful example of this innate inclination is in the creation of Hawa from Prophet Adam (as). Allah (swt) created Hawa from a part of Adam (as). For a wife, her natural reaction is to lean towards and rely on her soul mate, while for the husband,

he feels a part of him missing, and it is the love of his companion that makes him complete and they can then find peace.

Allah said in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13: *"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other."*

This signifies a distinct wisdom that Allah did not make one superior over the other. Rather, we are to recognise each other's differences so that we may understand and benefit one another.

"... so that you may find peace in them..."

Hence, the partnership that one forms, blessed and guided by Allah, should also be a refuge from which one can attain peace. Unfortunately, more often than not, one seeks to be overwhelmed by an enormous wave of emotions towards the

opposite gender, contrary to the state of partnership as described by the Qur'an. These feelings are a culmination of different attractive characteristics of a person, one of which is the lure of physical beauty.

"... and He has set love and compassion between you..."

Allah (swt) explains in the Qur'an of the nature of a human being whom He has created – we have been created with the capacity to feel affection and to be kind to each other. These are blessings from the All-Knowing and Most Merciful.

Mawaddah – Love

The Arabic word used to describe love in Surah Ar-Rum, Ayat 21, is "Ma-waddah", not "Mahabbah". The former has a deeper meaning – it refers to mutual love. As mentioned in *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi*, mutual love signifies the connection of two hearts. Therefore, we understand that we are not only able to love, but also, to be loved in return.

Rahmah – Compassion

Like the ebbing of the wave, love undulates through time and may not be enough to sustain a relationship. Allah (swt) has thus blessed us with the ability to be compassionate towards others. We will then be able to exercise patience and treat the other with kindness, so that, God-willing, one might rediscover the reasons of love for the other.

The Pursuit of Companionship

1a. Prospecting – Self-examination

Before beginning to seek for a partner, one should truly understand the self through examining the past, present and future.

Past – Reflect on past life experiences to gain and be reminded of important learning points.

Present – Be introspective and honest in self-examination. This helps to identify values, beliefs, attitudes, shortcomings and strengths.

Future – Think and ponder on the environment one wants to create for the family. For instance, consider how to raise one's children and the companionship and type of partner to share this responsibility with.

The religiosity of the husband or the wife has an overarching importance in marriage as seen from the following hadith:

A companion of Prophet (saw), Abu Hurairah, related that the Prophet (saw) said: "A man marries a woman for four reasons: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty, and her religion (and character). So marry the one who is best in the religion (and character) and prosper".
(Bukhari & Muslim)

To understand the wisdom behind the importance of religiosity in finding a partner, we must first embrace Islam as our Deen. A Muslim's personal character and life goals are greatly moulded through the teachings of Islam, and finding a partner who is compatible in religion and character would allow one to live life and raise a family comfortably.

This does not negate the importance of other factors mentioned in the hadith. Finding a beautiful partner would allow mutual physical attraction which contributes to a healthy sexual life. Finding a partner whose family is noble and religious would help in forging good family relations. Finding a wealthy partner would ease financial concerns when setting up a household. Seeking to fulfil all the mentioned factors would increase the possibility of leading a more fulfilling life with the partner.

1b. Prospecting – Help from Others

Several channels are available for us to seek potential suitors. Apart from those within circles of friends, one may also seek help from family, close friends or matchmaking services. Close friends understand us deeply; our family wishes us not only to find a compatible partner, but to become compatible family partners while Muslim matchmaking services allow us to be objective in seeking partners.

There is no particular method to subscribe to but knowing one's comfort zone helps a long way.

2. Dating & Courtship

What do we do once we have found someone? How do we get to know him or her better?

To know more about the prospective partner, courtship is allowed with certain guidelines in Islam. This includes seeking approval from parents for chaperoned outings in the company of relatives. After knowing one another and affirming each other's compatibility, the courtship may culminate into an engagement and marriage.

3. Istikharah – The prayer for guidance

Before making a commitment, it is important to be reminded that our judgement and knowledge is limited, and that Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful. Therefore, in this matter concerning half of our Iman, we should not forget to seek guidance from Allah to guide us in our efforts.

To seek guidance from Allah in making a decision that is best for us, it is highly encouraged to perform the *Istikharah* (Guidance) prayer – where 2 *raka'at* of prayers is followed by a beautiful du'a.

Truly, to Allah do we belong, and to Him, we shall return. As Muslims, we submit to the One God, and seek to please Him. Henceforth, finding a partner, who will shower us with love and compassion and help us in our journey towards becoming better Muslims, is very important. Being a good believer, we not only seek a good partner, but the best partner that Allah has ordained for us so that we may enjoy our marriage life fully, and prepare best for the Hereafter – that is our true happily-ever-after. And to that, we seek His Wisdom. E

For surely, Allah knows best.



▲ **These are the dates we should be going for and fall in love with.**

Credits: Haer Jam hari

▼ **Love is seeing Allah in every single thing.**

Credits: Haer Jam hari



Love inspires when it transpires.
Credits: Muhd Ashraf Mohd Salleh



▼ Love manifests itself in all of God's creations.
Location: Grand Canyon, Arizona, USA



▼ Love is a sacrifice.
Credits: Fathollah Zakee Bin Fatholmoein



RIGHTS OF A

HUSBAND

BY:
Nurul Hayati

Much has been debated when the story of Aisha, a woman from Kabul, had her nose and ears mutilated by her own husband after her attempted escape. Feminists around the world expressed rage at such sheer audacity and disrespect while some others acquiesced that her husband had the right as the Islamic Shariah Law states that a woman is not permitted to do anything against her husband that impedes her gratification.

Of course, as someone who shuns at the very thought of marital failure especially through domestic abuse, I wish none of that had happened to Aisha. But the world I live in is different from hers and I can only imagine what our sisters in Afghanistan are going through.

The rights of a husband on his wife must be understood as his wife's obligation to ensure sustainability and bliss in the marriage, *"Our Lord! Grant unto us wives and offspring who will be the joy and the comfort of our eyes, and guide us to be models of righteousness."* (Al-Furqan, 25:74)

This verse can be seen as the basis of a wife's obligation towards her husband and the responsibilities that entail.

It is undoubtedly easy to recite the duties of a wife towards her husband but many find themselves thrown into the risk of divorce exactly because of failure to fulfil their duties to each other. Therefore, a wife should always base her actions on this verse. She is to only engage in activities that bring happiness to her husband, and most importantly activities that will keep him at peace with himself and also with Allah. This provides not only a reason but also a motivation to keep her marriage going.

Islamic Shariah Law states that a woman has to obey a set of obligations:

Be honest, trustworthy and faithful.

She must not deliberately avoid conception as it will deprive her husband of having his own children.

Guard her modesty when her husband is not present.

She must not receive guests or gifts without her husband's approval, the former being emphasised on if the guest is someone her husband does not like.

Protect her husband's possessions and property.

Ensure her beauty is only for her husband and make herself attractive for him, by adorning herself with jewellery and pretty dresses.

Provide the highest level of companionship for her husband, to be his best friend.

These basic guidelines are not sufficient for the discussion today and in Singapore's current context. One has to face the inevitable

monster that consumes us - capitalism. With the rat race to the finishing line of financial and academic success, sometimes, we neglect what is most important. This is more so when a woman has been blessed with an abundance of financial and academic prowess that she no longer finds herself dependent on her husband, the provider. How then, can the dynamics of a Muslim Singaporean household work for the wife and the husband?

We must not forget that the role of a wife in Islam is pivotal to the success of her husband, and the couple's ultimate success of entering Jannah. Therefore, certain characteristics must be possessed and all women should strive to be the best wife for their husband, Insha Allah. The issues that young Muslim Singaporean couples have to grapple with deal largely with the financial aspect of marriage. With the husband's primary role of being sole breadwinner challenged by the societal pressure and exponentially high inflation rates, does it become imperative for the women to equally be responsible for bringing food to the table? At times, due to the wife's higher qualifications, she may even have to contribute a large part of her income to ensure comfort in the household. This might certainly be seen as unacceptable by society, especially her parents.

We should remind ourselves Rasulullah's (saw) wife, Khadijah (ra) did not see it as a problem in providing for them in the early stages of their marriage as her wealth was in abundance. If one of the four most exemplary women of all mankind did not mind, why should we?

Ultimately, the duty of a wife is to keep her husband at peace and do what that pleases him. Considering his financial state, consent to marrying him means that a woman is willing to accept the man for who he is and how much he earns. If she believes in Allah that the man she is marrying will ensure her happiness in this world and the Hereafter, I personally believe that she should provide for her family if there is need be. A wife should know her husband's abilities in order not to put pressure on him and strain their marriage. It's the love that makes the house, not the house that makes the love.

RIGHTS OF A WIFE

"It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature in order that he might dwell with her in love." (Al-A'raf, 7:189)

Marriage is something that is at the back of my mind, especially at this age where many of my peers and relatives are getting engaged, married or even having children. I ask myself who "The One" would be and deep down, I hope that if I do meet her and we decide to settle down, we'll live happily ever after.

Admittedly, not once have I thought about her rights as a wife. I will be sharing some of the things I have come across in the few books and articles and I hope it will spark enough interest for you to embark on your own quest to learn.

The Woman

Dr Muhammad Ali Al-Hashimi, in his book *The Ideal Muslimah: The True Islamic Personality of the Muslim Woman as defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah* mentioned that the righteous woman is the pillar, cornerstone and foundation of the Muslim family. She is seen as the greatest joy in a man's life, as the Prophet (saw) said: *"This world is just temporary conveniences, and the best comfort in this world is a righteous woman."* A righteous woman is the greatest blessing that Allah (swt) can give to a man, for with her, he can find comfort and rest after the exhausting struggle of earning a living.

Islam has honored women by giving them the right to choose their husband. Here are some of their rights as a wife.

Right to maintenance

As head of the family, it is wajib (compulsory) for the husband to provide maintenance in the form of food, clothing, lodging and general care such as medical treatment for the wife and their family. The husband is required to be fair in managing his money as his wife and children have rights over his resources. A hadith mentions: *"... Sustain her when you yourself eat and clad her when you provide yourself with clothing ..."* (Hadith reported by Ahmad and Abu Dawud)

In another hadith, Hind bint 'Utbah came to the Prophet (saw) complaining about her husband, saying: *"My husband is a miser and does not spend enough on me and his children."* He replied: *"Take whatever suffices you and your child within proper bounds."* (Bukhari)

Mahr

In Islam, the mahr (dowry) is a mandatory marriage gift given by the husband to the wife. Allah (swt) commands: *"And give the women (upon marriage) their dowry as a free gift..."* (An-Nisaa', 4:4)

Right to be treated with respect and compassion

"Live with them (your wives) in kindness; even if you dislike them, perhaps you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good." (An-Nisaa' 4:19)

Right to Justice, Equality and Fairness

Men who are married to more than one wife are required to act with justice, fairness and equality in dealing with them. The Prophet (pbuh) said: *"He who has two wives and leans to one as opposed to the other will come on the Day of Resurrection with one of his sides fallen."* (Abu Dawood #2133, Tirmidhi #1141)

Right to possess personal property - buy, sell, mortgage, lease without anyone's permission being required

"Whatever men earn, they have a share of that and whatever women earn, they have a share in that." (An-Nisaa', 4:32)

In Islam, the wife's property and earnings are under her full control and for her use alone. No matter how rich the wife might be, she is not obliged to act as a co-provider unless she herself voluntarily chooses to do so.

Conclusion

The Prophet (saw) said in reply to a questioner who asked about the best form of wealth, *"The best wealth is a tongue which is wet with the remembrance of Allah and a health which is thankful to Allah and a believing, pious wife who helps her husband to keep to the practice of his faith."* The references above from the Qur'an and Sunnah upgrade the status of a wife.

Therefore, before committing to a relationship, find out what are the rights of your significant other that have not been covered, like their rights to marital intimacy and in divorce related matters, as these rights will be your obligation. Should we fail to fulfill these obligations, we are not only answerable to our spouse but to Him as well. May Allah Guide us all to the Truth and keep us on the straight path, and improve our affairs and purify us for the Hereafter. Ameen.



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SUFI:

Devotion in Love

By Firdaus Abdullah

"The Beloved is all, the lover just a veil. The Beloved is living, the lover a dead thing."

Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi

Introduction

The word "sufi" is from the Arabic suf meaning woolen-clothed. In the earlier period of Islamic history, many men donned coarse woolen garments to protest the silks and satins of the sultans. Alarmed by the worldliness they saw overtaking Islam, they sought to purify and spiritualize it from within – to restore Islam to its deeper, mystical tone.

The name "sufi" is symbolic rather than descriptive: to be a sufi does not require a person to wear woolen clothes, but presumes an inner quality which was

at one time characteristic of those who wore them. A sufi is mostly understood to be a person of spiritual religious learning who aspires to be close to Allah (swt).

Theologically, their fundamental emphasis of understanding Allah (swt) is quite different from that of the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite theologians. Instead, the sufi developed a basic thesis for the God of love who is then loved by His creations. Impatient by the aridity of scholastic theology and philosophy with dreary speculations on the nature of divinity, the sufi's endeavoured to strive toward

direct communion with Allah (swt) and sought the divine reality or ultimate truth that stood above all the illusions and deceptions of the material world.

Dichotomy

During the time of Prophet Muhammad (saw), Islam was intricately introduced to mankind as a holistic deen guiding both the inner and outer dimensions of life: these two aspects of faith were indistinguishable. The Qur'an stresses both of these complementary qualities. One such example is the institution of prayer. Allah (swt) says: *"Establish your prayer for My remembrance"* (Surah

Ta-Ha 20:14) and "Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers" (*Surah al-Mu'minun 23:1-2*): emphasizing the purpose of our prayer as not merely one of outward performance but to remember God with a humble heart.

Succinctly explained by Prophet Muhammad (saw) when asked regarding the understanding of Ihsan, he replied: "It is that you serve Allah as though you see Him, and if you see Him not, He nevertheless sees you" (*Muslim*). Ergo, the consciousness of the presence of Allah (swt) and the feeling of love and awe which accompanies it, must permeate both of our faith and ritualistic practices. The sufi's ultimate goal is precisely this awareness of the nearness and presence of Allah in their lives.

Unfortunately, through the passage of time, Islam as with everything else, suffers the fate of specialization and caused a dichotomy between these two aspects of faith.

Development

The lavishness and excesses of the palaces were corrupting Islam from within. Under these conditions, the early sufi's turned to ascetism as a way of deepening their piety. However, their ascetism was based on inner detachment rather than on complete withdrawal from the world.

Added to this was the concept of fervent and selfless love culminating in the mystic Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah of Basra. She loved Allah (swt) with no other motive but love itself. In one of her famous prayer, she lamented: "My Lord, if I worship You in fear of the Fire, burn me in Hell. If I worship You in desire for Paradise, deprive me of it. But if I worship You in the love of You, then deprive me not of Your eternal beauty."

For clarity, mystical love is not a metaphysical principle but an outpouring of passionate love. The love that Rabi'ah spoke was a devotional love of the worshipful servant for his/her Lord. It did not imply an absolute union of the servant with God; that idea belonged to ecstatic mysticism of which there were many well-known and controversial proponents such as al-Bustami and al-Hallaj. In any case, ecstatic mysticism was too esoteric for the masses and highly suspect in the eyes of the reli-

gious establishment. Sober devotional sufism, however, continued to appeal to Muslims who found the hair-splitting arguments of the jurists and theologians irrelevant to their spiritual needs.

The crystallization of the current understanding of sufism and its general acceptance reached a significant point through Imam al-Ghazali. His great work, *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (The Revivification of the Religious Sciences), deals with legal religious learning from a deeply mystical point of view. Through this work and al-Ghazali's own combination of mysticism with his impeccable Sunni orthodoxy, "sufism" secured a more acceptable place within Muslim society.

Method

A disciple is called a traveler (*salik*). He will need to be initiated into one of the various distinct tariqas (esoteric sufi orders) for trainings to be instituted. His/her spiritual journey consists of many stations (*maqamat*) and psychospiritual states or conditions (*ahwal*). To avoid dangers of egotistical delusions inherent in the mystical path, there is strict insistence on testing and training by a sufficiently trained, tested and illumined murshid (teacher) or shaykh (spiritual master). It is through the shaykh that the barakah (blessings) was passed down, from shaykh to shaykh, in an unbroken chain (*silsilah*) reaching back to Prophet Muhammad (saw). Viewed in another way, the disciple hopes to experience divine love through the shaykh who has melted in that love.

There are many paths of the sufi's. Some tariqas focus on purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), the sciences of human behaviors (*ilm al-suluk*), refining one's ego (*tahdhib al-nafs*) or in achieving spiritual and moral excellence. However, these are mere categorizations as their main devotion is through the constant remembrance of Allah, done with sincere love and embodying a consciousness of His Presence deep within one's soul. Sufi's are guided by the words of Allah (swt) when He says: "O you who believe! Remember Allah with much remembrance" (*Surah al-Ahzab 33:41*).

Zikr, or remembrance by invoking Allah's names or attributes, is a daily discipline of the sufi's way of purifying oneself and to bring one closer to Allah (swt). Sufi's believe that Allah's love is at the core of the universe and the pangs of

physical separation from Allah deepen their love, and thereby draw them closer to Allah (swt). Hence, the daily zikr is a physical 'calling' by sufi's toward Allah, in order to 'reach' Him. Many of us are familiar with the famed mystical poet Jalal al-Din Rumi whose poem "Song of the Reed" is a typical example of this philosophy – the desire to unite with Allah is, but a longing of the soul:

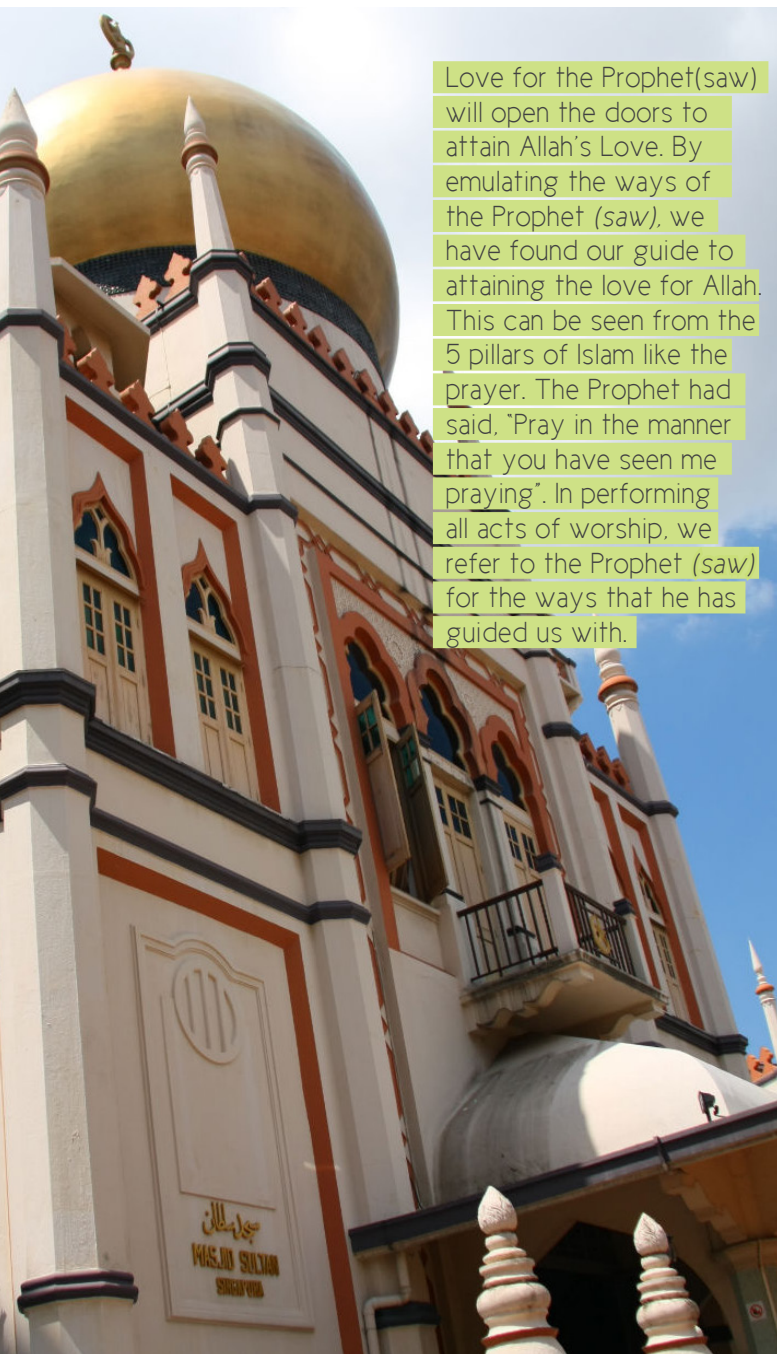
"Listen to the reed as it tells its tale – complaining of separation;
'Eversince I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament has caused men and women to moan;
I want a bosom: torn apart by such separation, so I may unfold to such a one – the pain and longing of love desire;
Everyone who stays far away from his origin wishes to get back to the time when he was united with it."

This concept of 'uniting' with the Beloved (i.e. Allah) is every sufi's spiritual objective; and zikr or other deeds of invoking Allah's names, reciting the Qur'an or prayers provide that avenue. The metaphor of 'lovers' is usually used to describe the relationship of the sufi's and God during their state of remembrance. Whereas the Syariah is manifested in the limbs, the zikr is manifested in the hearts. As a result, the outward is sober whilst the inner is drunk on divine love.

Conclusion

The human being is a threshold between two worlds: the reality of material existence where the ego dwells, and the reality of spiritual being where the essential self is held and nurtured in an All-Compassionate embrace. The sufi's believe that to be a true being, one must be a devoted lover of Allah (swt), of the Prophet (saw), of oneself and of mankind generally.

In this physical realm, the consciousness of absolute love brings to life the delicate feelings of brotherhood and of belonging together. It designs a beautiful pattern of empathy, gentleness and goodness in the hearts of man. It smoothens out all the wrinkles and rents that ugliness pulls in the fabric. The result is a harmonious whole like that of the most exquisite garment – radiant in its colour and majesty. This is the dress sufi's wish to wear when they present themselves before Allah (swt). **E**



Love for the Prophet(saw) will open the doors to attain Allah's Love. By emulating the ways of the Prophet (saw), we have found our guide to attaining the love for Allah. This can be seen from the 5 pillars of Islam like the prayer. The Prophet had said, "Pray in the manner that you have seen me praying". In performing all acts of worship, we refer to the Prophet (saw) for the ways that he has guided us with.

In a Hadith narrated by Imam Muslim, the Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

"Whoever possess the following three qualities will taste the sweetness of faith, that is, the one to whom Allah and His Messenger becomes dearer to him than anything else; and he who loves a person and he loves him only for the sake of Allah; and he who hates to revert to disbelief because he hates to be thrown into the Hellfire."

What are some of the ways that we can emulate the Prophet (saw)?

1) Read the Qur'an every single day

The Qur'an is a miracle of Prophet Muhammad (saw) that will last till the end of time. Make reading of the Qur'an istiqamah, consistent, all year round. Even if we can only afford reading one ayat, how great would it be if we reflect upon its meaning.

One of companions, Abu Darda is said to have asked the Prophet's wife, 'Aisyah (ra), about the morals and manners of the Prophet (saw) and she remarked that his morals and manners were after the Qur'an, and he was pleased with the things described to be pleasing (to Allah) in the Quran and was displeased by the things disapproved by Allah.

Ibn Mas'ud (ra) once said:

The Prophet (saw) asked me to recite the Holy Quran for him. Ibn Mas'ud said to the Prophet (saw), "Should I recite the Qur'an before you whereas it has been revealed unto you?"

At this the Prophet (saw) said, "I like it more to hear the Qur'an from someone else." Then, Ibn Mas'ud recited the Al-Nisaa, Chapter 4.

After verse 41 was recited, the Prophet (saw) said, "This is enough." When Ibn Mas'ud saw the face of the Prophet (saw), he saw tears rolling down both his eyes.

Love for Prophet Muhammad(saw)

"Say (O Muhammad) "If you do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: for Allah is oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Ali-Imran, 3:31)

By Salihin Mohamed Rahim

2) Follow his Sunnah to keep him close to our hearts

The Prophet (saw) said:

"For whoever recited Surah Al-Kahf on Friday, it will light for him a light between the two Fridays (the current and the next one)." (Al-Bayhaqi)

"Every Muslim is obligated to bathe on Fridays and wear his best cloth. Also, he should use perfume if he has any."

Abu Hurairah (ra) reported Allah's Messenger (saw) as saying: "Charity does not in any way decrease the wealth and the servant who forgives, Allah adds to his respect; and the one who shows humility, Allah elevates him in the estimation (of the people)."

(Muslim)

"Do not consider any act of kindness insignificant, even if it means meeting your brother with a cheerful face" (Muslim)

"On Friday the angels come to stand on the doors of the mosque (masjid), the angels record who comes first, if the Imam starts delivering the speech, the angles close their files and come to listen to the speech."

(Abu Dawood)

"Allah and His Angels send blessings on the Prophet: O you that believe! Send you blessings on him, and salute him with all respect." (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:56)

Jumu'ah is the best day of the week for Muslims and let's follow closely the sunnah of the Prophet as mentioned above. For each week, Muslims are urged to increase their Taqwa and remembrance of Allah (swt) and we hear the call to send blessings to our beloved Prophet Muhammad (saw) in the khutbah.

I ever had a careless encounter with a blind man in a lift. As he entered before me, he started feeling the Braille characters on the floor buttons. As I stood beside him, he apologized for making me wait. The lift was newly installed, and he wanted to familiarize himself with the button for the fourth level. Then, as careless as I was, I replied, "It's okay, it's interesting to see you read it".

In retrospect, I learnt two things from it. Firstly, is the need to be more sensitive towards others. Secondly, I realized that this man was really dependent on his walking stick, his acute sense of hearing and sharp memory and familiarity towards his surroundings.

As a Muslim, the Prophet's Sunnah and the Qur'an should serve as our walking stick that we hold dear to. Else, would we not be wandering around; lost?

To attain love for Allah and Allah's love, we need to continue emulating the ways of the Prophet in acts of worship and all aspects of life, as he is the best of example sent to mankind. The Qur'an should be more than just a source of quotes for our use, and the history of the Prophet and his Companions should not be reduced to stories that we read and then, forget.

May we receive the intercession of the Messenger of Allah on the Day of Judgement and be acknowledged as part of his Ummah. O Allah, let Your Blessings come upon Saiyyidina Muhammad and the family of Saiyyidina Muhammad. E



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Windows^{of} Perspectives

by Mohd Danial Mohd Arsad

Tariq Ramadan, a Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies at Oxford University, in his book, *The Quest For Meaning*, calls for readers to step away from our own windows through which we view the world. In order to adopt a philosophy of pluralism, Dr Ramadan says we must first have the basic understanding that “we all observe the world through our own windows. A window is a viewpoint over a horizon, a framework, a piece of glass that is always tinted to some extent, and it has its own orientation and its limitations”. Once we understand the nature of our points of view and the relativity of it, it will then fuel an insatiable curiosity about “the infinite number of windows from which we all observe the same world”. The next step after this acknowledgement would then require us to have the courage to view the world ‘holistically’ from the many other windows around us.

Praises be to the Lord Most High, for blessing me with numerous opportunities to travel in different lands. Although one does not necessarily have to physically step away in order to appreciate the richness in diversity of our perceptions, I personally have experienced stepping away from one’s homeland to be the most profound way of inching towards a more pluralistic understanding of the world.

Our Creator, the Most Omniscient, has filled the last revelation with much rhetoric. In various places in the Quran, mankind is asked to ponder on the signs ever present in His creations.

“Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day, – there are indeed Signs for men of understanding.”

(Surah Ali-Imran, 3:190)

What better way to appreciate the magnificence of His creations than to traverse continents and be awed by the beauty and perfection of one’s environment, interacting with other cultures and appreciating diversity in the human race. Standing in front of Niagara Falls and witnessing the immense force generated by the waterfall just astounds me when my associations with water previously have been that of calmness, having a cooling effect and more importantly, something within my internal locus of control.

Islam also makes exceptions for wayfarers in some of the Fiqh rulings. Such measures were taken to reduce the burden on wayfarers on the understanding that a traveller faces different challenges when he is on unfamiliar ground, outside of his comfort zone. This can only be experienced first-hand and my experiences thus



Being in a foreign country suddenly amplified my perceived importance of my relationship with the Creator.

far may bear testimony to this truth. On my recent journey to the North American continent, specifically for an exchange programme in Canada, there were times when things were not exactly smooth sailing. It is during these times that the traveller feels the lack of moral support or companionship he enjoys back in his homeland. The only friend one has and can truly turn to is his Creator. Being in a foreign country suddenly amplified my perceived importance of my relationship with the Creator. Something that is taken for granted back home when sadly, many other things take precedence. It is through these challenges that one may strengthen his Faith and learn to develop a trust in the Creator.

Psychologists have engaged in the debate of 'Nature vs Nurture' in a person's development, be it social, cognitive or personality wise. There is no questioning the influence of one's

environment in shaping an individual's mental framework. Through my experiences, I have understood Muslims living in North America to hold stronger identities to the faith, having lived in a continent where Islamophobia is a widespread notion. They exhibit qualities of openness, eagerness to present the religion to others, unafraid to express differences in opinions yet acknowledging diversity in opinions and having political awareness.

One of the more notable practices they have in North America is the role the Muslim Students' Associations play in the larger Muslim Community. Efforts such as writing encouragement letters to companies that acknowledge the needs of the Muslims through their products in the face of criticism elsewhere, setting up booths at major events to raise awareness of their activities and collaborating with

various other organizations and agencies in promoting shared values, contribute to raising their presence in the community.

As a whole, experiences gained overseas add depth to an individual's outlook of the world as well as his ability to think critically from multiple viewpoints, and in so doing accept that there are and will always be diversity in opinions. A journey across lands also strengthens one's faith in the Creator and acknowledging the presence of a Divine Supreme. Finally, it is not the writer's intention to present North American Muslims in a better light, because fundamentally, our environments are very much different and as has been said earlier, our environments play a significant role in our development. On the contrary, it is hoped that the positive virtues shared could be assimilated into our daily lives as we strive towards a unified Ummah. **E**



New Found Love for ISLAM: A Convert's Story

By Jo Shan Fu

**Every new thing
I have learned
about Islam has
helped to renew
my faith.**

***Masya Allah, there
seems to be no
end in discover-
ing the beauty of
Islam.***

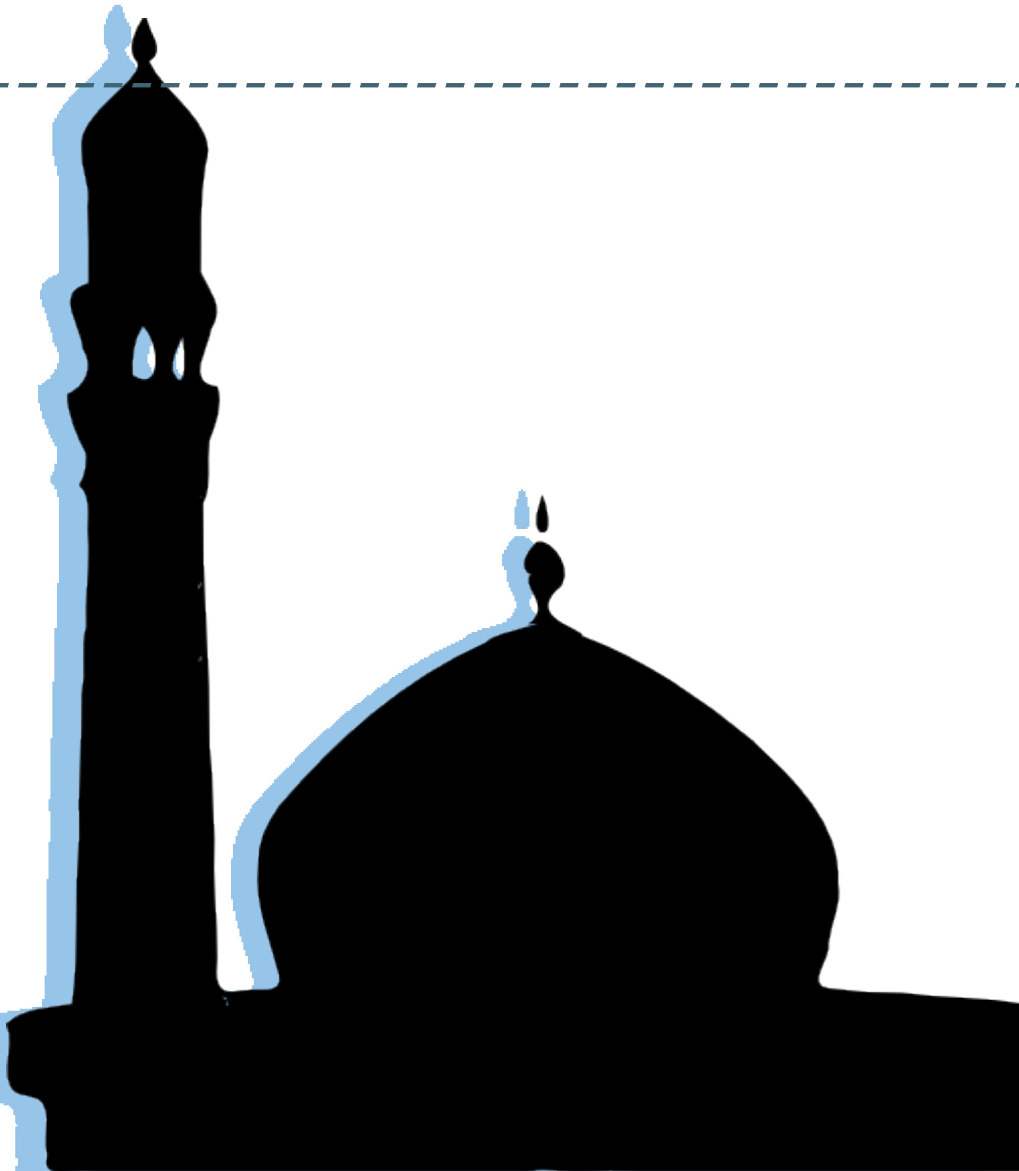
It all started with the word "pray." Selim used the word on our way back to Ambassador Hall. I was unsure what he meant by that. Even though I have just arrived in the U.S and my English was not that proficient at that time, I was certain that Selim said that he prayed five times a day; "prayed" not "played".

"I can show you how to pray, Elfy. First, you wash your hands, face, ears, hair, and toes thoroughly," said Selim. I was intrigued. "You need to clean yourself before you pray, and this is how Muslims practice their religion every day," he continued. Since the day Selim taught me about *wudhu'* (ablution), a new chapter of my life has begun in the blessings of Islam.

Selim, my best friend for more than six years eventually became my soul mate. The more I knew Selim, the closer I was to Islam thanks to his sharing. What I used to believe in and what is true to be believed were conflicting. The more I understood Islam, the more jihad I had to bear. Jihad is an inner struggle to maintain faith; one that every Muslim encounters in his life. It was initially difficult to maintain my faith because what I used to believe or practice on a daily basis must be resigned. I felt myself different than before.

Many doubts and questions appeared in my mind. I believe that people who were not born Muslims might have undergone similar obstacles as I did. Since the day I took my *shahadah*, I have decided to change the way I lead my life. I have changed my diet into a Halal one, learned to recite the opening surah, dressed in a modest way, prayed five times a day, etc.

These practices are not difficult to carry out in daily life if one is living in a Muslim country. Unfortunately, my country is not one, with Muslims being the minority.



stated in Qur'an (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:216). With patience and countless explanations, eventually my family realize what Islam truly is, how and why it is practised in certain ways. I feel pleased with their understanding although they are still not Muslims. At the very least, I have slowly lessened the tension between my deen and their feelings.

By enlightening them on the way I practise Islam, I learn more about my religion. Through halaqah and sharing of ideas with other Muslims, I have gained more knowledge. It not only updates my faith, it makes me both mentally and spiritually stronger. Now I bear jihad with more courage and patience. When I understand why I practise my religion in a reasonable and natural way, I feel good because my mind is liberated by conscience and is away from all superstition, fancy, magic, and sinister grips of occult practices.

I will not always be in the state of reason. Human beings are weak in nature and are in constant need of reminders to be righteous and bring ourselves closer to Him in everything that we do. There is always a need to update our souls, minds and faith.

Alhamdulillah, I have been a Muslim for almost six years now, and I still am passionate to learn more about my religion. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, *"Iman wears out in one's heart, just as the dress wears out (becomes thin). Therefore, ask Allah to renew iman in your hearts."* (At-Tabarani and Al-Hakim). Every new thing I have learned about Islam has helped to renew my faith. Masya Allah, there seems to be no end in discovering the beauty of Islam.

As a convert, I understand the struggles of new muslims. Insha Allah our life can only get easier from then on; a journey has just begun with Allah's blessings. Lastly, I make *du'a* for my family and everyone who have yet to get opportunities to know about Islam. May He enrich their hearts one day Insha Allah. **E.**

Having halal meal is most difficult if I do not prepare food myself. In my hometown, Taiwan, we have food with lots of diversities; however, most of them come with pork or other haram ingredients. Eating out is not easy. Even after informing the cook not to put pork in the dish, they still included ham or other pork products because this was a cooking habit embedded in our culture. Alhamdulillah, with my insistence on Islamic practice, I survived without having any non-halal food in Taiwan. However, although I succeeded with my halal lifestyle, people, including my dear family started judging me with a stigma based on their standards.

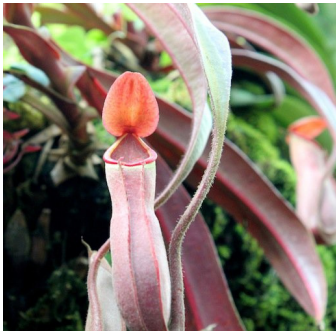
I was not surprised by this attitude because I know they have yet to understand why I have to practise my religion in a certain way. They dismissed it as strange and unreasonable. I do not blame people who have insufficient knowledge about Islam judging me with injustice, but it was really

difficult for me to endure the misunderstandings from my beloved family. I continued having faith that Allah will make things easy for me. I maintained my belief and practised with pleasure and peace. In addition, Selim, was always there for me, encouraging me to be strong and teaching me how to explain things to people who have no idea about Islam, including my family.

"I hope one day God can reach their hearts, and we can share everything possible to make them closer to God," Selim encouraged. I am thankful to have someone who understands my struggle and supports me when I am down and in doubt. Alhamdulillah, God brought Selim to me and changed my life to become the righteous one.

Things are not necessarily the way we view them. Sometimes bad things happen that might be a blessing in disguise. Likewise, good things may come with alerts and cautions as

THE (EXTRA) GREEN CHALLENGE



“Ah, this should be easy,” a rather haughty thought ran through my mind as I was challenged to ‘Go Green’. Known as Rogayah (think Mother Gaia) to some of my friends for being too anti-plastic bag and pro-recycling, I accepted this challenge with much enthusiasm.

I consulted Sofiah Jamil, a green activist from Project ME: Muslims and Environment (see <http://thegreenbush.wordpress.com/project-muslims-and-the-environment/> for more info), on how I could be green and she suggested the following.



Green Bush - Sofia's Avatar

To reduce consumption through decreasing one's carbon footprint and water footprint, one can...

- 1) Be vegetarian for a week, or at least, abstain from consuming red meat;
- 2) Check the water footprint which tells one how much water it takes to produce various food items. Consume products that use the least amount of water;
- 3) Avoid buying bottled water;
- 4) Bring one's own bag rather than asking for a plastic bag when shopping;
- 5) Avoid using disposable items such as plastic containers, plates or cups;
- 6) Reuse, reduce and recycle where possible;
- 7) Take the public transport or walk to one's destination;
- 8) Conserve electricity where possible;
- 9) Eat locally produced food where possible; and
- 10) Say no to fast food!

A challenge is not a challenge however if one does not feel challenged. I do already practise many of the things suggested by Sofiah. Thus, to up the ante for myself, I tried to look at the things I would normally do, as well as some of the things which I really like to do, that contribute to my carbon and water footprints.

The following are my list of environmental 'vices':-

- drinking bubble tea (the plastic cups and plastic straws);
- eating chocolate (the packaging waste);
- eating shrimps (shrimp farms as one of the main sources of damage to the natural water habitat);
- taking long showers (which contribute to high water consumption);
- using tissue papers (use handkerchiefs instead of tissues);
- wearing clothes only once and then, putting it in the washer (that is, I have to lessen my laundry for the week); and
- packing away food - Styrofoam packaging is a definite no-no. (This is on top of no fast food).

Thus, the challenge began on the 10th of January 2011 with the very first ayah read in the morning which coincidentally, relates very much to my challenge.

"O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess."

(Surah Al-'Araf 7:31)

SubhanAllah Al-Adzhim, Glory be to Allah, The Great, a beautiful reminder that I should not be extreme even when I am being environmentally-friendly. It also reminds me that I should be moderate in my consumption and that I should not waste. This definitely sets the tone on how I should run my life, with or without this environmental challenge.

Not telling anyone in my family that I am on this challenge. Day One was quite interesting with my mother and I playing the 'Switch Game'. Here's how the 'Switch Game' goes. Player 1 (i.e. me) will turn off the lights. Player 1 exits the room. Player 2 (i.e. my mother) enters the room and turns on the light. Player 2 leaves the room. Player 1 enters the room again and turns off the light and stays in the room. Player 2 enters the room and turns on the light. This may go on for a while until one player gives up or complains.

To be extra green during that week, I conserved electricity by waiting for the sun to provide its natural lighting to light my washroom. Hence, I would wait for a while before taking my short shower without turning on the washroom light. I also had to break the habit of putting my clothes in the laundry after using it only once. Lessening laundry load can help in the reduction of water consumption and I hoped that my water footprint for the week was reduced by these little efforts.

Also, eating out can be green if we avoid taking away food or eating with styrofoam cups and plates. A miscommunication with the auntie at Banquet led me to accidentally, use a Styrofoam cup during a meal there during the challenge week. I admit as well to eating fast food twice during the week despite not being a huge fan of it. My only saving grace in attempting to be extra green while eating fast food,

red meat (I have never had a Big Mac in my life, but I digress) and avoided using straws when drinking (a tiny effort). Also, I chose a small paper bag to contain my food instead of plastic bags and then, made sure that the paper bag was clean so that I could throw it in a recycling bin.

To end off the week's challenge with a 'bang', I sent a huge bag of recyclables to the recycling bin. Being extra green was definitely a challenge, especially if the majority of people around do not share the same commitment towards being green. Alhamdulillah, All Praises is due to Allah, things are better now than a few years ago in terms of environmental awareness. The number of recycling bins has increased, especially in NTU, and there are campaigns led by the EarthLink club to reduce the use of plastic bags. However, I feel that as individuals, we should do more. This is especially imperative for Muslims as we are Khalifahs of Allah on Earth.

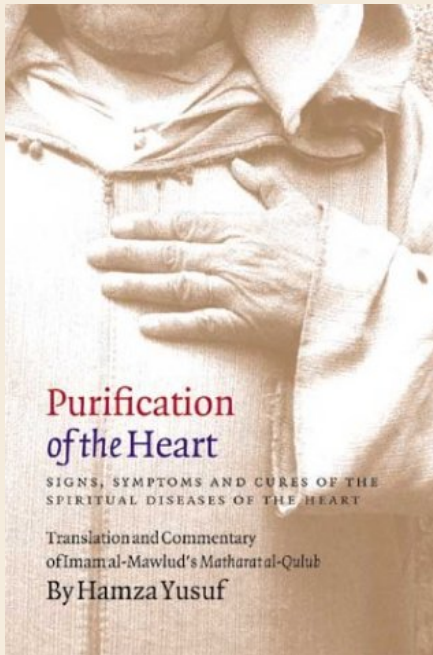


by Amirah Diyanah Kemat

(Editor's Note: The writer was given a challenge to be environmentally-friendly for a week and reflect on its relevance as a Muslim.)

BOOK REVIEW

by Muhammad Najib Bin Abdul Malik



Purification of the Heart:

Signs, symptoms and cures of the spiritual diseases of the heart.

By Hamza Yusuf

"If we examine the trials and tribulations all over earth, we'll find they are rooted in human hearts. Covetousness, the desire to aggress and exploit, the longing to pilfer natural resources, the inordinate love of wealth, and other maladies are manifestations of diseases found nowhere but in the heart. Every criminal, miser, abuser, scoffer, embezzler, and hateful person does what he or she does because of a diseased heart. So if you want to change our world, do not begin by rectifying the outward. Instead, change the condition of the inward. It is from the unseen world that the phenomenal world emerges, and it is from the unseen realm of our hearts that all actions spring."

– Excerpt from 'Purification of the Heart'

In speaking about the heart, the Prophet (saw) suggests that its corruption will also lead towards the destruction of the soul and our happiness. Purification is not a state but a continuous process. It is called the "Greater Jihad" because the struggle never ends throughout our lives. Our faith depends on winning this struggle, as well as determining the kind of life we will meet in the Hereafter.

The purification of the heart, as its title suggests, is a journey towards the cleansing of the vessel of human spirituality, character, and morality – the heart. Inspired by the poem of Imam al Mawlud, 'Matharat al-Qulub',

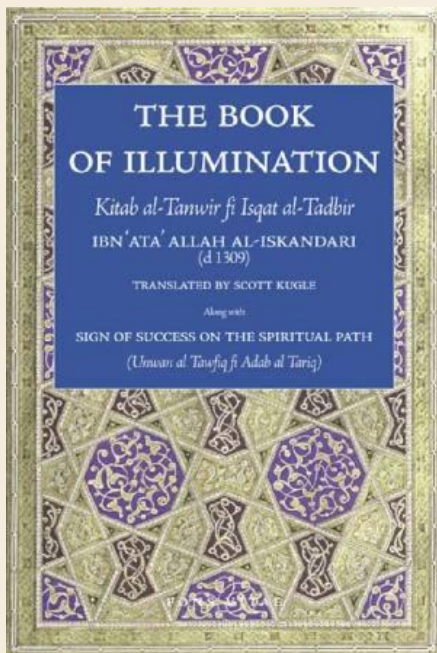
which addresses the signs, symptoms and cures of the spiritual diseases of the heart, Syekh Hamza interprets each verse of the poem in his book. Through this, he uncovers the twenty-five types of 'diseases' such as miserliness, hatred, iniquity, envy, heedlessness and anger – 'diseases' of the heart which assail people and often control them. The causes and practical cures of these diseases are discussed, offering a sharp look into how Islam deals with spiritual and psychological problems and demonstrating how all people can benefit from these teachings.

Rasulullah (saw) said in a hadith:

"Surely in the breasts of humanity is a lump of flesh, if it is sound then the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt then the whole body is corrupt. Is it not the heart?"

(Bukhari & Muslim)

The trials and tribulations around the world are rooted in the human heart. Every criminal and every act of oppression towards an individual, group organisation or, even, a country are the outcomes of a diseased heart. The very first step is to change the condition inward, the condition of one's heart. As Muslims, every single work that we do starts with an intention from our hearts and one day, we will be accountable for it in front of Allah. [E](#)



The Book Of Illumination

by Ibn Ata'illah al-Iskandari, translated by Scott Kugle

"A powerful work that speaks directly and in a practical manner on how to 'desist from self-sh calculation,' in other words, to remove oneself from trying to run one's own life by relying on Allah to do so. A provocative work that directly confronts the notion that we can strive for our own success outside of the will of God, The Book of Illumination instead leads us back to surrender to and reliance on God for all we have and do."

—Quoted from the talk on "Revival of Sufism in the West"

The Book of Illumination is a translation of al-Tanwir fi Isqat al-Tadbir, a Sufi text composed by the Muslim saint and jurist, Ibn Ata'illah al-Iskandari.

The text is concerned with avoiding the anxieties associated with rational calculation, the hoarding of wealth, and the exercising of self-interest. It consists of ethical commentary on the Qur'an, traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), and also, the examples of North African Sufi masters. The author intends for it to be an ethical introduction to Sufi mysticism, a first stepping-stone for aspirants who would experience spiritual intimacy with God within the framework of Islamic ethics and law.

While revealing important characteristics of North African Islamic thought, The Book of Illumination also addresses the concerns of contemporary audiences. The text offers deep insight into topics crucial to many people who are exploring "spirituality" in the age of late capitalism with its end-

less production of new desires and proliferation of choices. Though thoroughly medieval in its subtle elaboration on the richness of scripture and its belief in the efficacy of sainthood, The Book of Illumination is also uniquely contemporary in its piercing critique of self-sh desire and rational calculation.

What happens if you stop taking care of yourself? Will anyone else step in to take care of you? This Sufi text answers this basic existential question about the way we live our lives. In Kitab al-Tanwir fi Isqat al-Tadbir, Ibn Ata'illah proposes that if you desist from selfish calculations to secure your own welfare, then you invite Allah to step in and take care of you, materially as well as spiritually. That seems simple enough, but the text also reveals the profound depth of this proposition. It weaves together creative Qur'anic interpretation and explanation of rare teachings from the Prophet (saw)'s traditions with the Sufi master's own poetry and parables, as well as stories of past Shadhili masters.

The Book of Illumination serves as an indispensable introduction to Ibn Ata'illah's more advanced writings, such as his Sufi Aphorisms (Kitab al-Hikam). In this age of conspicuous consumption and capitalist greed, a translation of The Book of Illumination has special value. It upholds the spiritual value of work while urging readers to simplify their reliance on material means and question their obsession with possessing and craving. It argues for a spirituality of living in the world without relying on the world, a spirituality that is more relevant now than ever. [E](#)

A Night in Little India

*Pati (party)
with Naans*

The dazzling exhibition of colours, the aromatic assortments, the delectable savories of Indian cuisine – The delights that Little India boasts of are exotic and yet, they keep you coming back for more! The Foodstepeas were spoiled for choice in deciding on the possible destinations to indulge in.

Destination 1: Usman

Restaurant (No. 238 Serangoon Rd, S'pore 218085)

Located at the corner of the Serangoon Road/Desker Road junction, the throng of customers at Usman Restaurant, especially, during lunch or dinner hours, is definitely not difficult to spot. The restaurant specializes in Pakistani and Northern Indian cuisine like briyani, kebabs, tandoors and naans. The restaurant has an array of naans and side dishes to pair with.

There were many other options which ought to be tasted like the seekh kebab and tandoori chicken. So, do not miss the opportunity to bring your friends along so that more side dishes can be ordered to be passed around the table if you are interested in varieties. Enjoy the company of your friends while indulging in varieties here.

“Increase the number of halal bites in your life! Stay away from the haram and doubtful bites so that you can get the taste of worship and obedience to Allah and reach contentment and concentration of heart.”

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi

The handmade butter and cheese naan which oozes creamy butter or cheese were our highlights especially when dipped in rich butter chicken gravy. We also savoured the Kahri Pakoda which is fried, flavoured Indian fritters (Pakoda) that is made into a smooth “curry”, to complement the naans.



Destination 2: Azmi Restaurant (Norris Road Chapatti)

If you happen to crave for something fresh, hot, and cheap, do not wait any longer. Azmi Restaurant is the answer to your call of hunger. Here at this one-way Norris Road, you will find your hot and freshly made Chapatti!

As you find a seat in the cosy restaurant, witness the craft of tossing and flattening of the dough right in front of you. The warmth of the freshly heated dough-bread is best eaten at the restaurant itself, with the aroma of the flour-dusted chappatis filling the air. The soft bread matches the signature gravy, Keema which is made meaty and spicy.

This Chapatti has become an icon, a schema in the minds of people. Azmi Restaurant Pte Ltd may seem unfamiliar as people tend to refer to it with another, more obvious name – Norris Road Chapatti. Possibly this is one of the contenders for the best Chappati in Singapore. Personally, as Chapatti fanatics, we recommend this Norris Road Chapatti as a MUST!




Destination 3: Mogul Sweets (Little India Arcade) and Big Bites (70 Serangoon Road)

You have not had the full Indian experience if you have not tried the sweets that Little India has to offer. Situated at the front of the Little India Arcade entrance, the Mogul Sweets is a possible source of Indian Sweets. Another possible destination is Big Bites situated along Serangoon Road. A plethora of sweets are available, including Gulab, sweets glazed with honey, Ladoo, rich creamy sweets, or Bhari, the milky sweet cakes that will tickle your taste buds. Try at least some to have the full Indian delectable experience. **E**



by Zameer Nasir and
Muhd Ashraf Mohd Salleh

Editor's Note: The writers consist of two food enthusiasts who call themselves the 'Foodsteeps'. Purely out of interest, they enjoy chronicling and sharing their gastronomical adventures on their website www.foodstep.tumblr.com

A close-up, sepia-toned photograph of a hand with a dark wristband, pointing its index finger down towards a patterned surface. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights the texture of the skin and the intricate geometric patterns of the surface below.

**La ilaha illallah. There is only one love we should seek; the
love of the Creator.**
Credits: Haer Jam hari

"I was a hidden treasure. I seek to be found so I created creation. It entails that all creation is precious & the Creator yearns for its affection. This is more than any love known to mankind; it's The First Love even before time & anything else existed."

Aneesa Connie Teo

"Sometimes Allah hides the sun and sends us rain. We get sad and wonder where the sun disappeared to. Little did we know that Allah wants to give us something better - a rainbow."

Nina Salina

IN ISLAM

"From a story of Saiyyidina Ali & a young man who wanted to behead him so that he can marry a girl that he loves: 'To love is to simply place happiness of others above oneself.' When reward is found in God instead of man, it does wonders."

Mohammad Fauzul Bin Taha

"Love is what you feel when things go right in life and deep down you know it's because of Allah. It is at these moments in life when one truly realizes and is thankful that Allah is always watching over us."

Aishah Hamid

"Ordinary human love is capable of raising man to the experience of real love."

Sufi poet Hakim Jami, contribution by Farihin Khairunan

"Love. It seems perfect despite its imperfection. It seems tangible although it's intangible. And it seems nothing even though it's everything."

Muhd Ashraf Mohd Salleh

Who should I give my LOVE to?

By Nur Ashikin Binte Kamaruddin

Whenever I'm asked to think about love
I realize Oh no, it's not my turf
Should I come up with a checklist
To know what it truly is?

Will I be head over heels
Wanting to be skinny, and skip my meals
Or will I be thinking about you
At every ungodly hour, even at two?

So, whom should I give my love to?
You, you or to you?
When you love someone, you treat the person like king
But hold on a second, who created everything?

You think you found someone you are attracted to
And immediately, he means the world to you
Your perfect date; He's a marvel
And you forget that the third person is the devil

So, is this what true love really is?
To be in close proximity without any boundaries
'I miss you, I miss you too'
Even more than the One who created you?

When things don't go the way you want
You separate from him, whom you used to think is 'THE ONE'
What then is left of you, modesty you used to vouch?
What then have you reserved for your true zauj?

Wouldn't it be better to be patient and wait
Instead of being hasty, greedily testing the food on all the plates?
It may be that you like something, but it is bad for you.
Have faith and He will grant what is best for you.

When you are older, you think you know much more than your parents
and then there are conflicts and so much tension
But please don't wait till they leave and you are taught a lesson
So think, have you expressed your love for them at this very moment?

This temporal world is just a fleeting pleasure
And often we struggle in our ibadah, only thinking of leisure
Good deeds and being righteous might be difficult to measure
But for akhirah, this is all a treasure.

So ignore the whispers that define your existence
as only for show
You are worth so much more, that you must know
So, hide your beautiful hair under that veil
Have haya, protect your beauty from the scrutiny of a male

Open your heart, allow the hijab to be your best buddy
And then, you will realize it's not merely about modesty
You strive to seek His pleasure in every action,
consciously shunning sin
Because you know, you are now visibly an
Ambassador of your deen

So sisters, have courage and take the first step
Do it even when people tell you, 'OH MY GOD,
you must be mad!'
They want you to integrate; they want you
to be less strict
But compared to your Creator and His Messenger,
should their words even constrict?

Countless challenges often thrown at us
Opportunities to refute, that we must
No compulsion in religion, so don't force nor shove
When reminding, be tactful and patient, show the love

When a beloved deviate, don't go around and tell
Nor curse and torment them with mentions of hell
Don't make them feel they are beneath you
Cos with actions like that, what does that make you?

Do it with proper niat, do it the right way
Dua: InsyaAllah one day they will find the light
wherever they lay
Cos anyone who knows our true deen, there's
no way they can disprove
Impossible not to be moved and realize ours is
the only truth

Be a true brother and a true sister in Islam,
Only engage in productive talks; others we keep mum
Backbiting, gossiping, violence, wars; we will hesitate
Ours is a beautiful deen, so please don't give others a
reason to hate

Lailla ha illallah Muhammadur rrasulullah
Each time we say it, each time we hear it;
we are in awe
I'm a Muslim by choice, not by force
If you don't believe what I believe in, sorry but you know
that's your loss

Look around you, the creations of our Almighty
Still looking for signs? Please, just open your
eyes wide and see
Yes, the mountains, the trees, the sky, the earth
Take a moment and reflect; have you given
them enough love?

Whether it's loving myself or loving another
To even love in the first place is willed by Him,
and no other
Oh Allah, Let my love for you transcends everything else
Oh Allah Please, let it be that way even till my
very last breath.