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THE
ELEVEN
TEAM

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

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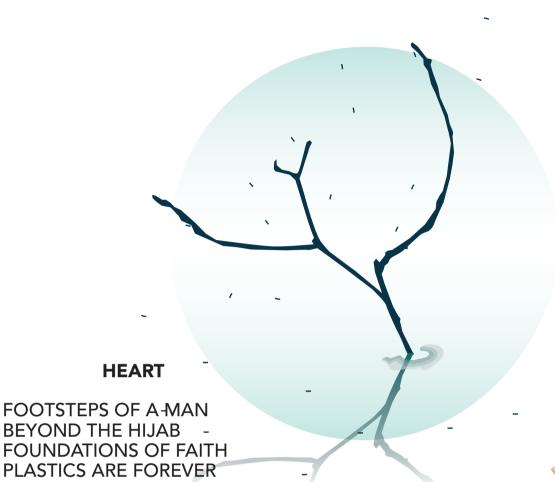
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FOOTSTEPS of a 120010

Embark on a journey with **Muzakkir Samat** as he reminisces the path on which his love grew, and continues growing, for the man who loved us even before he knew us.

"You will never love someone until you get to know him."

MY SIGHT FLOATED on the maya blue horizon while my bare feet caressed the sand of Sembawang beach. The picturesque landscape helps to tease out that potential for intimate ruminations. I hope to reconnect with the person whom I am disinclined to say I love for fear of falling short of that claim. At the same time, this person has impacted me in so many spheres of my life; it's unfair to say I am detached from him. In any case, I pray that I am able to receive the sweet recollection of his beauty.

I was in primary school when I first began to conceive him as someone significant. Unfortunately, I barely knew him other than that he was a very good person. He was consciously remembered during Sunday classes at the mosque - a man with impeccable character - yet he was a distant figure to me.

It was not until National Service that my thoughts ventured beyond popular culture towards the big questions in life i.e. Who am I? What's my purpose in life? Who should I really look up to?

I realised the need for a role model who was able to provide guidance from which I can chart my life forward. Religion at that point paved the clearest path and from this, I dived into books and lectures to discover more about this *very good man*.

Endeared in the hearts of many, the fragrance of his speech and kindness lies embedded in thought and action through generations. This man had stood up against intellectual and physical oppression, by dealing a crushing blow to ignorance through the arrow of wisdom and the shield of patience. His sincerity removed rust from men's hearts, polishing them to a mirrored perfection. His manner of walking also became an active metaphor for purposefulness and humility. Trustworthiness is another hallmark of his character to the extent that even his enemies entrusted him with their belongings.

As time passed, I began to wonder too why he did what he did. To me, he was here on a mission to spread the vision of what being a human truly is. An overwhelming compassion permeates this vision. He is known to have said 'one is not a true believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself'. Thus, he prayed for his community fervently, frequently and selflessly. This continued despite the stones that pelted him, spilling painful red. The same red also spelled sacrifice for he slept only a little. In those nights, his swollen feet and welled eyes bore witness to his passionate desire for goodness.

For whom one might ask?

The sky turned orange. The clouds hovered above in an attempt to conceal the majestic sunrise. Not only am I as reticent as these wondrous works of nature seem to reflect, the realisation dawned that the message this man brought was intended for *me*.

It made sense, then, why he was significant to many



people around the world. He connected to them in spirit and in person. 'In spirit' because of his ability to provide timeless lessons on transcending life's obstacles, diffusing these situations with the sweet scent of contentment, forbearance and patience – a beautiful struggle. He taught that all things that happen to Muslims are good; if he is patient (during calamities), he is rewarded and if he is grateful (in blessings), he is also rewarded.

'In person' because of the legacy he left behind. He inspired generations of people that came after him to aspire to purify their character and be adorned with true knowledge. Till today, I have personally benefited from being in the presence of his inheritors, whose hearts stored tomes of knowledge and true understanding that are manifested in their interactions with people. They were gentle like how he must have been. They taught me with patience and overlooked my shortcomings like how he must have taught the ignorant. They loved and cared for me like how he would have loved me and the rest of humanity.

Thus, he prayed for his community fervently, frequently and selflessly. This continued despite the stones that pelted him, spilling painful red. The same red also spelled sacrifice for he slept only a little. In those nights, his swollen feet and welled eyes bore witness to his passionate desire for goodness.

This man whom I have contemplated upon at Sembawang beach is none other than our beloved prophet Muhammad (saw). I sat on the beach and pondered about my presence, staring at the wide expanse of blue, above and below. The air I inhaled was not my own doing, not even the beating of my heart. These are immense blessings conferred upon me even without my asking. Tracing my footsteps through experience and time precipitates a sense of joy and gratefulness to the Divine, for my hands

could not have possibly arranged all of this. Getting to know him (saw) has been a tremendous blessing to me as his teachings have inculcated a type of love that simply transcended worldly forms.

The way forward in gratitude as advised by a wise man is threefold: acknowledge the true Giver of the gift, learn to appreciate it and finally utilise it according to how the Giver intended. The gift of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), to me, requires us to embark on a lifetime journey of learning how to appreciate him. I believe that this journey will take time, patience and the accompaniment of his sincere followers. My understanding (and love) for him is minuscule compared to others but after today's introspection and attempt at knowing him, I am thankful for my feet found itself on the path of lovers.

Terms

(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 "Sallahu Alayhi Wasalla" which means "May Allah honour him and grant him peace" specifically for our last prophet, Prophet Muhammad (saw).





BY HAFSA LEE

Personal journeys towards donning the Hijab never fail to serve as both an inspiration and a reminder. **Lee Hafsa Afandi** shares her story.

THE SIMILITUDE OF a Muslim woman is that of a pearl, the jewel of the sea that has been given a covering, the oyster shell. It protects the delicate pearl from danger and keeps it sparkling and shining inside. Likewise, there are many benefits for the Muslim lady that covers. In certain faiths such as Christianity, the covering is selective for a few such as the nuns, however in Islam, the hijab applies to all believing women. Men themselves also have a certain dress code to follow. Allah (swt) mentions in Surah 24: Al-Nur (or The Light), verses 30-31 which says:

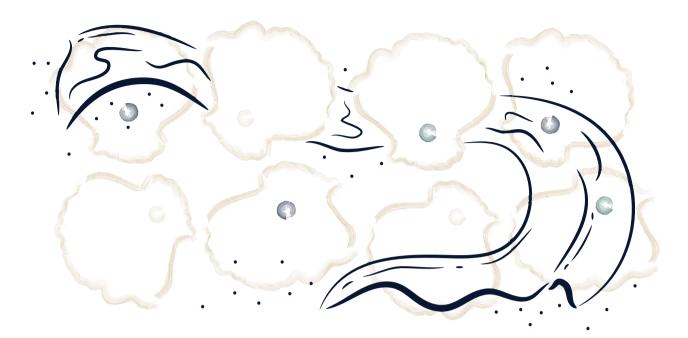
"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity of them: And Allah (swt) is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: they should not display their ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms..."

Hijab literally means a cover or something that conceals. Contextually, though, it varies across the globe. To an Asian woman, hijab may be interpreted as covering her entire body with the exception of her face and hands. To someone living in The Gulf, it could mean covering herself from head to toe. Despite variances, both practices are well in accordance to the religion and are there to suit the needs of each community. What is more important, is the concept of decency and modesty in the interaction between men and women. Moreover, a woman dressed modestly allows herself to be assessed not just on the basis of superficial traits but for her intellect and inner beauty.

A common misconception people have about the *hijab* is that women who cover are restricted from engaging in outdoor activities. Many view our outer covering as a hindrance but the truth is we enjoy sports as much as our counterparts, if not more. Though our attire may be a tad bit looser or less revealing, it does not mean that our ability to perform is compromised. No doubt, the heat may be unbearable at times, but one can easily choose to work around the cooler hours of the day or night. I personally know of one too many *hijabi* sisters who have taken part in numerous marathons amounting to hundreds of kilometres while others are martial artists representing their institutes.

Another misconception is that women are generally forced by their parents to don the headscarf. While it is the duty of parents to teach their children the importance

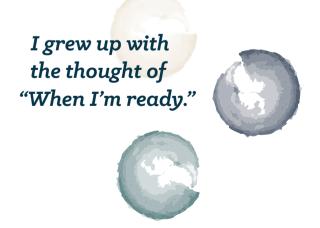




of dressing modestly, it is incumbent that they use reason rather than compulsion. While my parents encouraged me to cover, the decision was entirely up to me; and I grew up with the thought of "When I'm ready." In my early years of studying in a Roman Catholic school, I grappled with the age old question of why I had to cover. As much as I wanted to wear the hijab to and from school, it was a daily struggle between wanting to keep the hijab on and wanting to fit in. I have memories of a classmate who would talk and laugh with me in school but give me the cold shoulder once outside. When asked why, she bluntly responded that she was embarrassed to be seen with someone in hijab. I felt disheartened at that point but looking back now, it was Allah's way of discerning who my true friends were.

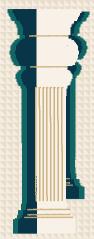
Daily, I would make my way into its compounds to change into and out of my school uniform. In its front portion, there stood a life sized statue of a lady dressed in a long white gown (very much like an Abaya) with a scarf that draped over her hair and shoulder. Who was this lady? She was none other than the blessed mother of our prophet Jesus, Mary (peace be upon them). SubhanAllah, there I was standing in a church and yet we both had something in common; our dress code. This had been the conviction that I had been looking for and my love for the hijab deepened. No longer did I have to go into lengthy discussions about the hijab, all I had to do was to point and say, "I aspire to be like her."

As such I would say that though every religion regards the values of modesty and decency as important, the beauty of our religion lies in teaching us explicitly how to cover ourselves. To me and many of my *hijabi* sisters, our hijab is what defines us and we are proud to have it as a part of our identity.



So what led me to donning the *hijab*? You see there was a church, St Anne's Church right next to my school.





FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH

BY ARIF TAN



Through life's ups and downs, how does one remain steadfast in his faith? Perhaps this question has been burning in some of our minds. **Arif Tan** shares his thoughts on this question, and may it be a stepping stone for us to find our answer.

THE QUESTION OF identity concerns not just Muslim youth but any youth in general. This question becomes pertinent because it shapes how one perceives success, reacts to it, and responds to failures. Many of us still question ourselves: What am I doing in this world, and what is my ultimate goal?

In an epoch dominated by capitalism and narcissism, it is easy to lose sight of purpose, goal and identity. Perhaps through a random questioning of friends, one would find that oft-cited measures of success include a stable career, a thriving business or a happy family. Let's be clear that none of these success indicators are in contradiction to Islamic teachings. Yet, as Muslims, we have to concede that all these are a means to an end. So, what is our end?

In moments of an 'identity crisis', we tend to search for a point of return, not just as room for solace but a compass of guidance. I believe that nobody is fully immune to encountering such sentiments in their lives, no matter how successful they have become. The misfortune is that we sometimes choose escapist solutions (a.k.a. non-solutions) instead, such as taking a hedonistic carefree lifestyle or avoiding the identity issues we are facing. What is the right solution to such a crisis then?

Contrary to relatively superficial descriptors of identity such as race, age and lineage, the true measure of identity and worth, I feel, lies in the foundations of our faith.

To understand where our foundations lie, let's consider how we would react to success and failure. Undeniably, success is a goal we all want to achieve. Conversely, failure is something we would prefer to

avoid. Of course people measure success and failure differently. Thus, I would like us to challenge ourselves to define what our purpose in life is and what success (and therefore failure) means to us.

I really believe it is perfectly fine to fail many things in relatively trivial matters such as school exams and jobs (unless they stem from an attitude problem). We ought to understand that, while our actions tend to influence consequences to some extent, all is made possible only because Allah (swt) wills it to happen. Merely for the purpose of sharing, I will highlight three principles through which Allah (swt) has guided me, in times of success and failure.

The first principle I would like to remind ourselves is: There is no might nor power, except Allah's; or in its Arabic version: laa haula wa laa quwwata illaa billaah. When we achieve something, it is important to not just acknowledge Allah's will in the process, but to attribute praises and gratitude to Him. Likewise, when we see people (including non-Muslims) succeed, it is essential to understand that Allah (swt) is the Enabler of the success. Effort is merely a natural expectation of us by Allah, who has given us free will, energy and capacity. Even animals put in effort to get their food, what more human beings. Yet, let us not think that effort holds supreme power to consequence. That, I feel, is a big fitnah of the world today — a world where people glorify human beings as the undisputable captains of their destiny.

If we read enough into history, we will see that some of the greatest efforts to harm have failed miserably, such as in the case of Abrahah who had a strong army to destroy the Ka'bah but were defeated; and Fir'aun and his subjects who pursued Prophet Musa a.s. but were drowned eventually. We have read how the Muslim army in the battle of Badr, despite its meagre quantity, managed to defeat an army almost three times its size. The prevalent belief today is that effort is what it's all about, and that any failure will be attributed to a lack of



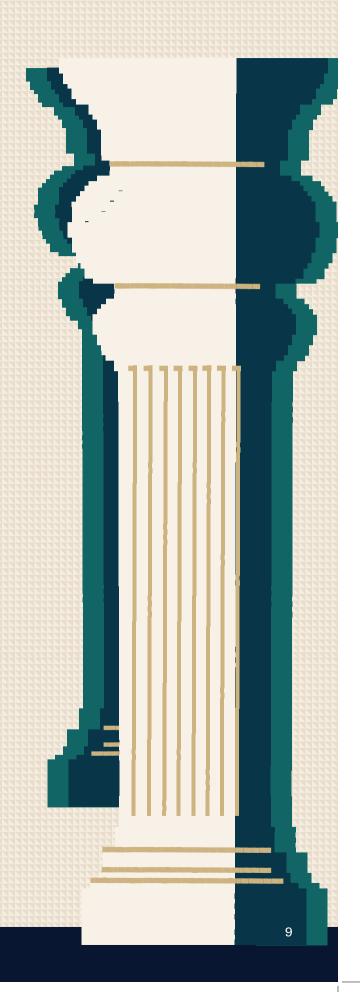
effort. In light of this, it would do well to remind ourselves that there is no might nor power except Allah's.

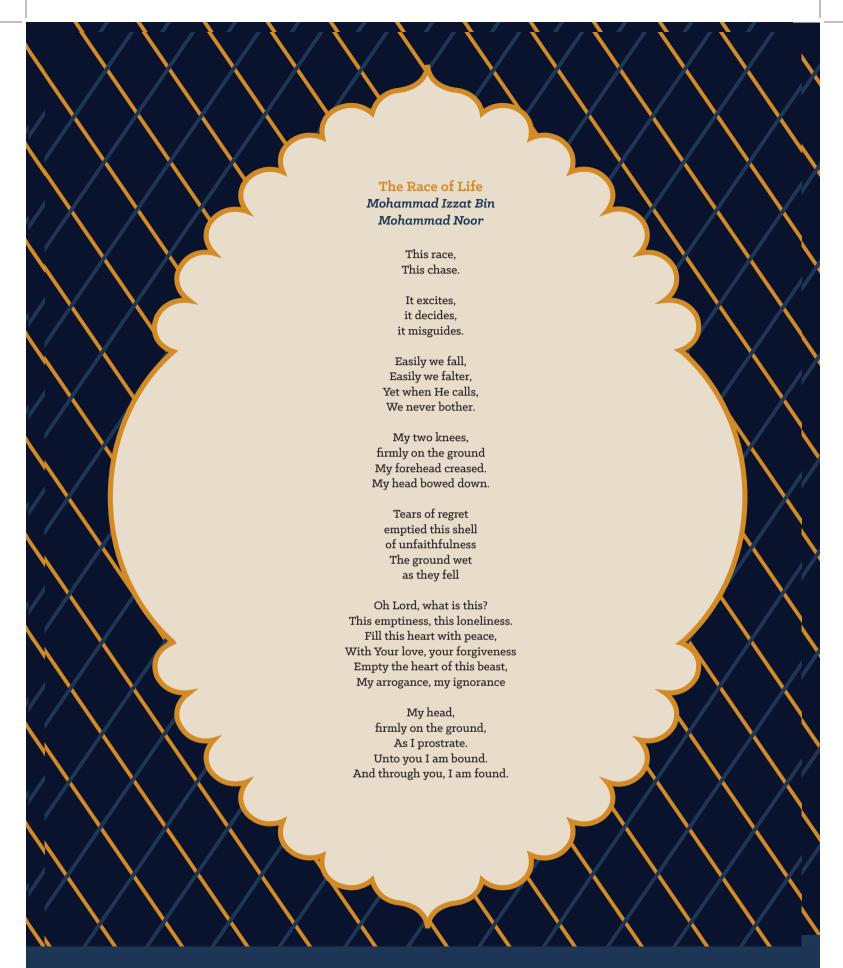
The second principle is derived from a hadith (narrated by Al-Imam Muslim) that was shared in one of my Overseas Humanitarian Expedition weekly group meetings. The hadith reads: "How amazing is the affair of the believer! Everything is good for him, and that (privilege) is for no one but for the believer: if he is afflicted by any good, he is thankful, and that is good for him; and if he is afflicted by any hardship, he is patient, and that is good for him." The two key lessons here are gratitude in ease and patience in hardship. In this rejoice for the grace that Allah (swt) bestows upon believers, again we remind ourselves the importance of thanking Him even for making us Muslims. If that blessing is taken away, what a scary life one would live. We seek Allah's refuge from such an instance.

The last guiding principle relates closely to our understanding of life and what comes after. In the fourth (some say third) verse of The Opening (Surah Al-Fatihah), we would notice the existence of an afterlife (vaumiddiin). At the end of Time, we will all be under one umbrella of the final analysis - Judgement Day. No scrutiny of this world can match the degree of scrutiny that holds on that day. Every single deed – even the good or bad that one does in a dark forest, with no witness - will be accounted for by Allah. This is in line with the message of the last two verses of the chapter The Earthquake (Az-Zalzalah): even an atomic size of deed, good or bad, will be seen by Allah. Thus, whatever we do in this world, whatever choices that we make, just keep the thought of Judgement Day somewhere in the dominant part of our thinking system.

When we achieve something, it is important to not just acknowledge Allah's will in the process, but to attribute praises and gratitude to Him.

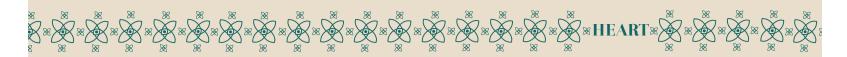
All of us may have had credible pointers to our accomplishments and excuses for every failure, but I hope that the core message of this article - that all successes and failures fall through only by Allah's will – becomes a reminder for us. To conclude, I hope that we always strive to make the Quran and the teachings of our Prophet (saw) our source of guidance, with the guidance of the right scholars. At the very least, I seek that we all attempt to answer the questions at the end of the first three paragraphs. When we get the right answers to those questions, I hope I have played a small part as a member of our Muslim community.





93:7

These numbers correspond to a verse in the Quran from Surah 93 (Ad-Duhaa) Verse 7 which states "And He found you lost and guided [you]". In our own ways, many of us can relate to the notion of being lifted out of darkness and into light. Hence, we embarked on a mission to bring together your stories, through our Audience Interaction Series! To read more entries from **Mission 93:7**, flip to the back of the magazine!





Sumaiyah gives some real (not plastic...) advice on keeping it green!

OR AT LEAST they last so long they might as well be around forever. Most plastics are non-biodegradable, which means that they cannot be decomposed by natural biological agents such as bacteria. Plastics, once disposed of, remain – to occupy space in landfills, to choke some unwitting bird, or to maim some poor dolphin.

Let's start doing our part by reducing the amount of plastic we consume. Hankering for some good old bubble tea? Refuse the disposable cup — use your water bottle instead! Buying tapau (takeout)? Ask if Auntie can pack the food into your own reusable container! Don't forget your handy dandy reusable shopping bag when buying groceries. You can also make the choice to buy products that use less packaging.

If use of reusable cutlery is not a practical option, (read: dish duty from hell after Eid open house) you might want to consider biodegradable disposables such as cornware. They may be a little expensive, but they have all the convenience of regular disposable items with the added benefit of being earth-friendly. You could also opt for the rustic-chic old-but-gold: serving food on a fresh scented banana leaf. When you're done, just bury the remains.

Whenever possible, recycle your plastics. Make sure to clean them before dropping them in the recycling bin. The number at the bottom of most plastic materials will tell you whether or not it can be recycled. 1 and 2 may be easily recycled. It is extremely difficult to recycle plastics with larger numbers such as Styrofoam, so do try to avoid them when you can.

As *Khalifah* (vicegerents) upon the earth, it is important for us to do our part in protecting our earth, both for ourselves and for future generations. May Allah bless us for our efforts.



ART STILLNESS IN ISLAM OF STILLINES SIN ISLAM

Slow living in a fast-paced life – in this book review of The Art of Stillness by Pico Iyer, **Humairah** and **Sumaiyah** share with us how and why the art of seeking stillness in Islam transcends all ways and time.

IN A WORLD of constant noise and interruption, gaining quietude has grown to become a necessary art to master. Stillness is that essential missing ingredient in our recipe for a blissful and contented life. But how do we find this pocket of serenity from our hectic schedules, regain focus, and rejuvenate ourselves in an increasingly connected and fast-paced life? Iyer believes that doing nothing, being ensconced in silence, and moving away from the chaos and crowd, is the ultimate retreat that every individual seeks. It seems that disengaging from activities in life and pirouetting in a space of idleness, is an ideal way of finding quiet.

The Art of Stillness had us question and make continuous referrals and connections with Islam; and how much it teaches us about attaining peace and inculcating this practice in a daily basis. There are several differences between the Islamic ways and views on seeking peace and quiet, and those as addressed in the book. But one thing that we can all agree on is this: we need a break. Seeking solace in quiet is a conscious, universal goal in the modern age. We need to find some time to de-tech, de-stress, and detach. And we are all constantly searching for various ways we can seek peace in this life.

"The idea of going nowhere is, as mentioned, as universal as the law of gravity; that's why wise souls from every tradition have spoken of it...It's easy to feel as if we're standing two inches away from a huge canvas that's so noisy and crowded and changing with every microsecond. It's only by stepping farther back

and standing still that we can begin to see what that canvas (which is our life) really means, and to take in the larger picture." Iyer mentioned that this idea of 'doing nothing' and 'going nowhere' is a common, long-standing tradition. This constant need to retreat is a fundamental desire, something innately embedded within our soul. By taking a productive pause from partaking in the brouhaha of this life, we are able to relax our mind and soul, and refresh our perspectives, purpose, and goals in life.

In doing so, Iyer describes disconnecting, to the point of even completely separating himself from the world (through physical separation and meditation) in order to seek his purpose and his direction in life.

In the commonly used sense of the word, the highly popular practise of meditation involves withdrawing yourself from society, closing your eyes and thinking, quite literally, of nothing. It seems no great surprise that monasteries or "meditational facilities", such as the ones Iyer travels to in the book, are often located up a mountain, or in a forest, or in some other suitably secluded location. Living the life of the ordained or 'holy' also often requires separating oneself from things perceived to be parts of normal life, such as marriage or owning property. Spirituality and worldliness are seen as two mutually exclusive entities - to attain the one requires giving up the other.

By direct contrast however, Islam is designed to be practised side by side with our daily lives. Every Muslim practices prayer five times a day at the minimum. Whether we are in school, the office, or at home, we take short 5 to 10-minute breaks at designated prayer times to reconnect with our purpose; reconnect with Allah (swt)

We pray with our eyes open - with complete awareness that we live in this world with all its distractions, while maintaining complete humbleness (khushu') and submission to Allah (swt), Rasulullah (saw)



himself was said to have carried his granddaughter while in prayer as narrated by Muslim (Book 4 hadith 1107-1110). We are allowed to shorten and combine prayers while travelling, and we can even pray while riding on vehicles, if the situation calls for it. Prayer does require all of our attention while performing it. However, in praying, we are not purging ourselves from the world around us; we are, by contrast, forming a conscious connection with Allah (swt) Achieving true *khushu'* in prayer, is, in fact, the awareness that you are in fact before Allah (swt) – or at the very least the awareness that Allah (swt) can see both you and your thoughts.

One of the key conclusions of Iyer's book is that finding your purpose will lead to inner peace. As Muslims, our true reason for existence has already been stated clearly in the Quran [51:56], where Allah (swt) says: And I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me.

It is thus no great surprise that people are able to find peace through prayer. Prayer provides inner peace, emotional and spiritual stability, and a sense of calmness and composure. We have to constantly remind ourselves of our purpose on this earth, and continuously seek peace in Him through prayer. By praying we are fulfilling our one true purpose in life, the reason for our creation. We are reaffirming ourselves that we are indeed Muslims – as narrated by Abdullah bin Buraidah who narrated from his father: that the Messenger of Allah (swt) said:

"The difference between us and them is the Solah, so whoever abandons it has committed disbelief." [Narrated by Tirmidzhi]

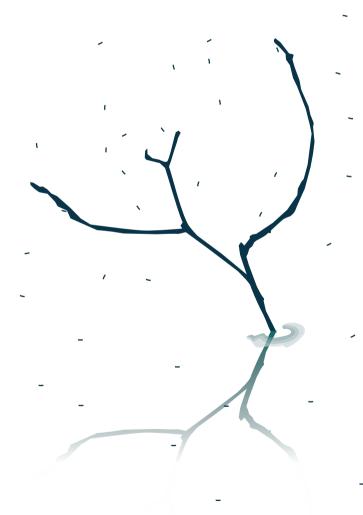
In Islam, spirituality and the far more prosaic living of daily life are not mutually exclusive. Monks, nuns, and priests are conspicuous in their absence – every Muslim is capable of attaining spirituality with effort. Far from being in remote locations, Mosques are often in the heart of an Islamic community. Islam reminds us that the fleeting time of our lives is but a test - not of how well we can run away from all the distractions of the world, but how we can survive it without compromising our faith in Him. We pray to Allah (swt) for the best of both this world and the hereafter. We do not sever our ties to the world to achieve much needed peace as prescribed by Iyer. Rather, we achieve it through living our lives, knowing that we only live once, and we live our lives for Allah (swt).

All things considered, however, *The Art of Stillness* is an interesting read – thought-provoking, introspective, and subtly beautiful. Despite its brevity and beautiful pictures, however, it is not a coffee-table book. Read it

where you can give it your full attention, perhaps in a comfortable corner of your room, paired with creamy hazelnut tea and gentle-scented potpourri.

Rating: 3.5/5 stars

Ensconce yourself in a quiet place to read, embrace the points that were laid out in the book, and gently let them question you.





THE TRAVELLER

Embark on a wonderful journey in search for your heart and soul in this melodic prose by **Noor Iskandar**.

BY NOOR ISKANDAR

A TRAVELLER IN this world is one who craves the Sunlight and the meaning behind every ray. One who questions the Maker behind land and ocean mass. One who yearns to know the artist behind each teardrop and meandering stream. One who finds himself or herself constantly in awe both at the flight of birds and the buoyancy of aeroplanes. One who understands a traveler need not be forging physically but spiritually in every sense of the word.

As a Muslim or rather a being in this world, I find myself always in nearness to this enigma of Life. Life is a mystery that you wouldn't want to solve, not that you can fathom even a modicum of it anyway. But this inevitability of a search, this grasping on to each whisper of curiosity, know that you are always a Seeker first.

The Seeker goes about with a quivering heart, restless at the thoughts of mortality and eventually envelopes himself in calmness of unknowing. A seeking heart is never still, it flutters, it wanders and wonders.

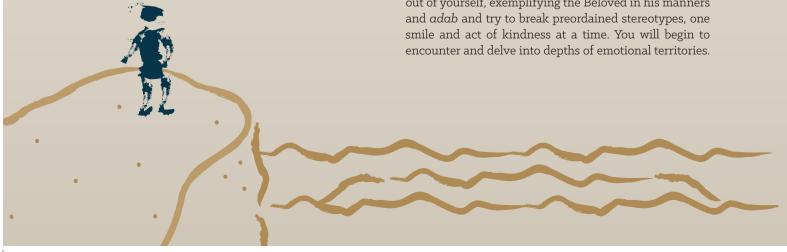
To travel is to come to terms with this consciousness of the spirit and the soul. To travel is to luck in on the epiphanies of the heart and mind. To travel is to awaken the ever elusive spirit that probes meanings to Life and its existential purpose. A spirit that feeds on doubt and thrives on discovery, a soul whose duty is to seek clarity.

A traveler in the world has eyes peeled open for images of God in faces and spaces, whilst embarking on a journey to be closer to Him. The beauty that greets

you every morning, the layers of air, the shades of purple across the sunsets across the world, lakes and dried basin. You see a quiet whiff of God in the eyes of a beggar, the passing winter fog against the train screen, the wails of a mother at the airport.

A traveler will discover in his journey that departures prove to be the most essential of reminders for him or herself. That like the inevitable goodbyes and parting of ways, this is the most resounding echo of Life. Our Beloved, peace be upon him, once said in a hadith: "Be in this life as if you are a stranger or a traveler." A traveler will be illuminated with the knowledge in the temporal nature of this life. Of this impermanence; we are not living, we are leaving. We are always in transit. We are shadows, we are strangers to attachment. We are nomads on the move, with only the slightest suggestion of a destination, but we keep moving anyway until the destination finds us instead. Mevlana Rumi speaks profusely of this void. I see this void as a Home; an empty room in your heart where only Light roams free waiting to meet his Maker. A space where that outward travelling helps to cultivate such wholeness and peace within. And only when you arrive at this epiphany, you understand all you need to about this journey. That this journey happens all inside

And in this journey, you carry everyone you have met with you. I believe many forget that when you explore the world, it also means you are putting yourself out there for the world to explore you. You are carving Light out of yourself, exemplifying the Beloved in his manners and adab and try to break preordained stereotypes, one smile and act of kindness at a time. You will begin to encounter and delve into depths of emotional territories.





Our wounds, our hopes, what keeps us shivering at night, and what makes us sigh in daytime, you start connecting the dots. You soon understand that we are all one and the same. The same dust across that desert, the same sand in someone's eye, the same flower that is going to die.

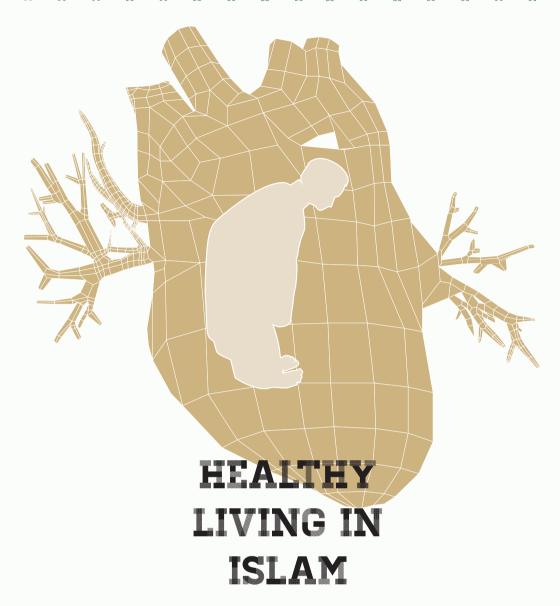
"The Seeker goes about with a quivering heart, restless at the thought of mortality and eventually envelopes himself in the calmness of unknowing."

Every time I take on this journey, Ar-Rashid, The Guide, presents the intermingling of chance under His design in both the sublime and subtleties. Like how in Fall 2012 when a dog bit me in a dark alleyway in Varanasi, it made me changed for the better. How I found solace in a cathedral turned mosque in Amsterdam, that when you travel you take Home with you. It exists right

in your heart and at the many of His houses of worship across continents. At the dawn of 2015, when I embarked on a spiritual sojourn in Iran and Turkey, I witnessed beauty at every spill of light and at every "Alhamdulillah, we are brothers" a Shiite Muslim uttered to me upon my declaring of being a Sunni. How the unparalleled warmth of a Bondowoso family blankets you even till today. See, the chances of paradigm altering events happening is less if you don't go seek it. Go on, the world is waiting to be noticed: He, to be known.







BY NUR MUHAMMAD

And it is only fitting that Eleven's Buff Bod – **Nur Muhammad** – share some tips on staying healthy the Islam way!

IT MAY BE cliché to say this, but we live in a fast paced world. With employers, employees, students, and children alike all rushing to 'live' their lives — with assignments, socialising, work and childcare — we often find ourselves spiralling down the rabbit hole of exhaustion.

Our relentless pursuit for balance in our lives comes too frequently at a price; we find ourselves forced to make a trade-off between our physical and/or spiritual health. Looking to Islam for answers yields some interesting results - perhaps unbeknownst to some. Among these are the numerous scientifically-supported health benefits of following the Islamic lifestyle.

Moderation in Eating

IN SURAH AL-'ARAF (7:31) it was mentioned, "Eat and drink, but be not excessive."

The instant one's caloric intake (eating) exceeds one's caloric expenditure (lifestyle), there is a surplus of calories; the excess. When this happens frequently enough, weight gain results.

Weight gain, however, is the least worrying consequence of uncontrolled eating (eating in excess). An unrestrained diet will often lead to a 'disease of affluence': a term associated with diseases due to the rise in wealth (and hence overindulgence), such as high blood pressure and heart disease. Worryingly, heart diseases are expected to be the leading cause of permanent disability by 2030.

Dietary discipline is an essential facet in weight loss



programmes. The Messenger of Allah (saw) once said: "No human ever filled a vessel worse than the stomach. Sufficient for any son of Adam are some morsels to keep his back straight. But if it must be, then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath." (Narrated by Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasaa'i and Ibn Majah, hadith Sahih). Researchers have echoed the essence of this hadith — a balanced, varied, and restrained diet along with exercise have been shown to be essential in attaining good health.

As is discussed in the article on Sunnah Foods, Rasulullah (saw)'s diet consisted of various healthy food items such as dates, honey, and milk. His diet consisted a large variety of items from all food groups in appropriate proportions. Whatever he did, he did in moderation, and his diet was not an exception.

We cannot all be like our Prophet (saw), but we can still enjoy our favourites in their various forms: laksa, satay, or chicken rice, as long as we have them in moderation. Perhaps rather than only focusing on the 'halal' status of the food we eat, we should also account for whether or not it is toyyib, good, for us.

The Wudhu' (Ablution)

HYGIENE IS ANOTHER strong tenet of healthy living, and also an essential trait in Islam. The importance of purity (hygiene) in Islam is apparent in the wudhu' as a necessity prior to every prayer.

Hygiene is perhaps one of man's most underrated habits, a surprising finding, given the dire repercussions when hygiene is found wanting: diarrhoeal-related diseases associated with poor hygiene claim over three quarters of a million children's lives under the age of five annually. The solution to this problem: hand washing. WHO believes the number of victims claimed to diarrhoeal diseases will fall to 65% of its current figure. Other benefits of simply washing hands include the prevention of the spread of diarrhoeal and respiratory illnesses.

The 5 Obligatory Prayers

IT IS COMMON knowledge that a sedentary lifestyle predisposes us to weight gain and heart diseases. But who knew you could still be at risk of heart disease despite hitting the gym regularly? Scientists have found that regular gym sessions may still be inadequate if our daily lifestyle involves us being sedentary for prolonged periods of time. They further revealed a surprising finding: taking more breaks from a sedentary state – walking to the bathroom, standing up when taking a call, and indeed the adherence of the five obligatory prayers will guarantee a one size drop in your pants size.

The nicely spaced prayers are an ideal set-up to avoid these negative repercussions as not only do they provide a much needed (and required) respite from the waist-enlarging effects of prolonged sitting, it will also regulate your blood flow, your breathing, and maintain joint flexibility.

The benefits of prayer are so numerous that they are difficult to quantify and summarise. Being sure to keep the five daily prayers will definitely bring more benefits to the believing Muslim than he/she might know.

Fasting

DURING THE FAST (saum), Muslims are expected to abstain from life's temptations during the daylight hours to reinforce our faith in God, as well as to empathise with the less fortunate members of society, so as to achieve taqwa' (God-consciousness). Fasting Muslims in the past experienced health benefits in the form of weight loss, which according to statistics, would amount to about 3kg.

However, in our increasingly affluent society, we often see Muslims conclude their daily fast with a veritable cornucopia of culinary delights. Iftar, once a frugal affair involving dates and a glass of water, has now evolved into a sumptuous multi-course buffet. This obviously counteracts the benefits of fasting, and even brings harm to the one performing the fast.

In many circles, the suhur and iftar are seen as an opportunity for individuals to load up with the necessary energy sources to sustain the day's work. As such, many choose to have foods high in fat such as fried chicken for both suhur and iftar. However, the ideal suhur should consist of carbohydrate rich low-fat foods, while iftar should have more vegetables.

Perhaps this is a change we ought to embrace, on top of increasing our acts of worship to Allah (swt)

An Arabic saying goes as follows," He who has health, has hope. And he who has hope, has everything." And if we hope to perform at our optimum, we'll have to stay healthy and refrain from indulgence. This year, let us resolve to lead healthier lives. Above all, however, let our actions be first and foremost for the sake of Allah (swt) Allah knows best.



So we've all heard about the 5 C's of success. But how are they relevant, if at all, to our lives? Find out Jannah's thoughts on the 5 C's that she feels are important to living the Muslim life.

IN SINGAPORE, THERE is a popular way with which some people measure success by, and that is the five C's, namely, (1) cash, (2) cars, (3) credit cards, (4) condominiums, and (5) country club memberships (I didn't know this before, but that's because I live in a cave*). It is easy to equate material things to success, perhaps due to the tangibility of such possessions. However, one cannot help but ask, "Is that all? Is that all that I want in life? Will obtaining the five C's mentioned above fulfill my needs and make me happy?"

As human beings, Allah (swt) has gifted us with emotional and intellectual capacity. We are not satisfied knowing that this life is temporary and that we are created without purpose. Sincerely we seek for the truth, and we are guided. By the generosity of Allah, we become Muslim. As such, should material possessions have any priority in our lives? What takes precedent? This is the fifth question I've asked in this article thus far. Of which I only hope to provide a perspective, and direct us to a few qualities that I believe are important for Muslims to have. (Incidentally, these qualities also begin with the letter 'C'.)



AS NARRATED BY Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood, the Prophet of Allah (saw) said, "There is nothing heavier in the scales of the Hereafter than good character." Can more emphasis be given? I think not. The Prophet (saw) said also that a Muslim is one whom others are safe from his tongue and hand (Bukhari). By keeping good character, not only are we saved from the sins that arise from hurting others, we are rewarded immensely. As Muslims, we should strive to become a source of kindness and comfort for others, to uphold truth, justice, and forgiveness. Character is something that is sometimes taken lightly, when in fact, Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (saw) when asked "And what is most likely to send people to Paradise?" he said, "Being conscious of Allah (swt) and good manners." (Bukhari, Ibn Majah, and Ahmad)



Companionship

WE ARE SOCIAL creatures, and Islam is not based on isolation. Indeed being alone is better than being in bad company, but the one who is alone hasn't yet found the right friends. We need friends in order to remind ourselves, increase our knowledge, help us better ourselves, compete with us in good deeds, so much so that our religion follows that of our close friend(s). The Prophet (pbuh) said, "A man will follow the religion of his close friend, so let each of you look to who he takes a



close friend." Reported by al-Tirmidhi. Befriending good people, and similarly being that good friend is paramount and necessary in Islam. It is all right to distance ourselves from people who are not good for our hearts, as long as we continue to treat them with respect and kindness, and to filter our circles until we meet a righteous companion, for ultimately the right person will filter others to reach us too.



Clarity

COUNTLESS TIMES ALLAH has reminded us in the Qur'an that the Hereafter is better for us than this world (93:4), the Hereafter is better and more enduring (87:17), the Hereafter is better for us if only we understood (12:109). And to be Muslim is to have the clarity and foresight that our existence serves purpose, and that is to please Allah. This clarity has to diffuse to all aspects of our lives, such that even breathing becomes an act of worship, because it is coupled with the right intention. It is amazing that whatever we do is nothing in return of and compared to the goodness that Allah (swt) has bestowed upon us. Still, He wishes to give us more; "...and whatever good you send before you for yourselves, you will certainly find it with Allah, better and greater in reward. And seek forgiveness of Allah. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most-Merciful." (73:20) Undoubtedly our reward is in the Hereafter, and it takes faith, and not eyesight, to see that.



Continuity

CLARITY IS TO intention as continuity is to deeds and actions. Deeds are investments for the Hereafter. The prophet (saw) said, "If a human dies, then his good deeds stop except for three: recurring charity, knowledge by which others benefit, or a righteous child who prays for him." (Narrated by Muslim) The deeds of a Muslim should not just stop at himself; it should leave a lasting positive impact on the people around him, animals and

other creations and the environment as a whole. Even near our last breath we should perform a good deed for the sake of Allah. Anas reported that the Prophet (saw) said, "If the Hour is about to be established and one of you was holding a palm shoot, let him take advantage of even one second before the Hour is established to plant it." (Authenticated by Al-Albani) It does not matter if we do not witness the impact of our deeds in this lifetime, because where better to taste the fruits of our efforts than in Paradise?



Consciousness of Allah

VERILY THE HEIGHT of faith is taqwa, to become conscious of Allah, such that one is constantly thinking about pleasing his Lord, fears offending Allah (swt) and takes the necessary precautions to avoid it. It seems that the purpose of worship is to attain an awareness of our Creator. Prayer is a conversation with Allah (swt), to give charity is to remember the blessings of Allah (swt) upon us, and so on. Allah (swt) says, "Verily, in the remembrance of Allah (swt) do hearts find rest." (13:28) But the best reward in remembering Allah (swt) is to be remembered by Allah; "So remember Me, I will remember you." (2:152)

It is not the aim of this article to disregard wealth, as it is a strong means of performing good deeds and showing our gratitude to Allah. Nor am I leading you to spend completely or abandon all your wealth. Allah (swt) has said, "But seek, with that (wealth) which Allah (swt) has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and forget not your portion of legal enjoyment in this world, and do good as Allah (swt) has been good to you, and seek not mischief in the land. Verily, Allah (swt) likes not the Mufsidun (those who commit great crimes and sins, oppressors, tyrants, mischief-makers, corrupts)." (28:77) Rather I wanted to bring to light the internal qualities that I feel we Muslims should strive to possess, internalize and implement in our lives. Lastly, it is important to note that working on our faith and our relationship with Allah (swt) requires work and consistency on our part, and that perfection is not the goal, but the struggle towards obtaining the pleasure of Allah (swt) is.

*This is a joke. I'm joking.

Tawakkal Tawaakul

Sri Nadia unveils the difference.

As Mu'minun (believers), we place our trust in Allah (swt) for everything we do: from locking the gate when we leave the house in the morning, to closing our eyes when we sleep at night. The question is, how do we make ourselves consciously rely on Allah? To answer this, it is necessary to define two terms: "Tawakkal' and 'Tawaakkul'.

In a nutshell, tawakkal is positive while tawaakkul is not. Tawakkal refers to actions that are done with total submission to and reliance on Allah. This means that we put in effort (kasb) and believe that whatever is meant to happen after that would be in accordance with what Allah has deemed best for us.

In exams, for example, after putting in effort through studying, we will also offer doa' and perform *sunnah* prayers such as *solat hajat* to Allah. If the results are not as well as we had hoped for, we accept *(redha)* that that is indeed Allah's will for us, and place our trust in His infinite wisdom.

Allah had commanded us to practice *tawakkal* in the Quran (27:79), "So rely upon Allah; indeed, you are upon the clear truth."

Tawaakkul by contrast refers to relying on anything that is unworthy- anything besides Allah. Tawaakkul is negative and should be avoided. We can see an example of tawaakkul in the Quran, when Allah mentioned the story of the wayward followers of Musa (Moses) A.S who

refused to enter Canaan for fear of their enemies, even though entering it was a command from Allah.

"They said, "O Moses, indeed we will not enter it, ever, as long as they are within it; so go, you and your Lord, and fight. Indeed, we shall remain right here." (5:24)

An example of tawaakkul is to take for granted that Allah (swt) will give us good results after we have put in effort in our exams, without us asking Him for help or relying on Him through doa.

Therefore, despite the similarity in pronunciations, tawakkal and tawaakkul have completely opposite meanings. Tawakkal on Allah is compulsory to us for there is no God besides Him and nothing happens except what has been written as the best for us. It exists in two levels: effort and doa'. Tawaakkul, on the other hand, should be avoided as it implies placing our primary dependence on forces other than Allah. Let us remind ourselves that nothing can happen without the will of Allah; to Him and him alone should we place our trust.

Do not forget to put in effort in all our affairs and do our best! As Allah has mentioned in the Quran, "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (13:11)



93:7

These numbers correspond to a verse in the Quran from Surah 93 (Ad-Duhaa) Verse 7 which states "And He found you lost and guided [you]". In our own ways, many of us can relate to the notion of being lifted out of darkness and into light. Hence, we embarked on a mission to bring together your stories, through our Audience Interaction Series! To read more entries from **Mission 93:7**, flip to the back of the magazine!



MISCONCEPTIONS InsyaAllah, Astaghtirullah, MasyaAllah

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



INSYA'ALLAH

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

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

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

Allah (swt) reminded Rasulullah (saw) of the

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

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

Allah (swt) did send the revelation eventually but it was not on the very next day, as mentioned by Rasulullah (saw) to the Quraisy. This verse was revealed to Rasulullah (saw) as a reminder to say *InsyaAllah* because he should not make promises that he is unsure he can fulfill.

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



ASTAGHFIRULLAH

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



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

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

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



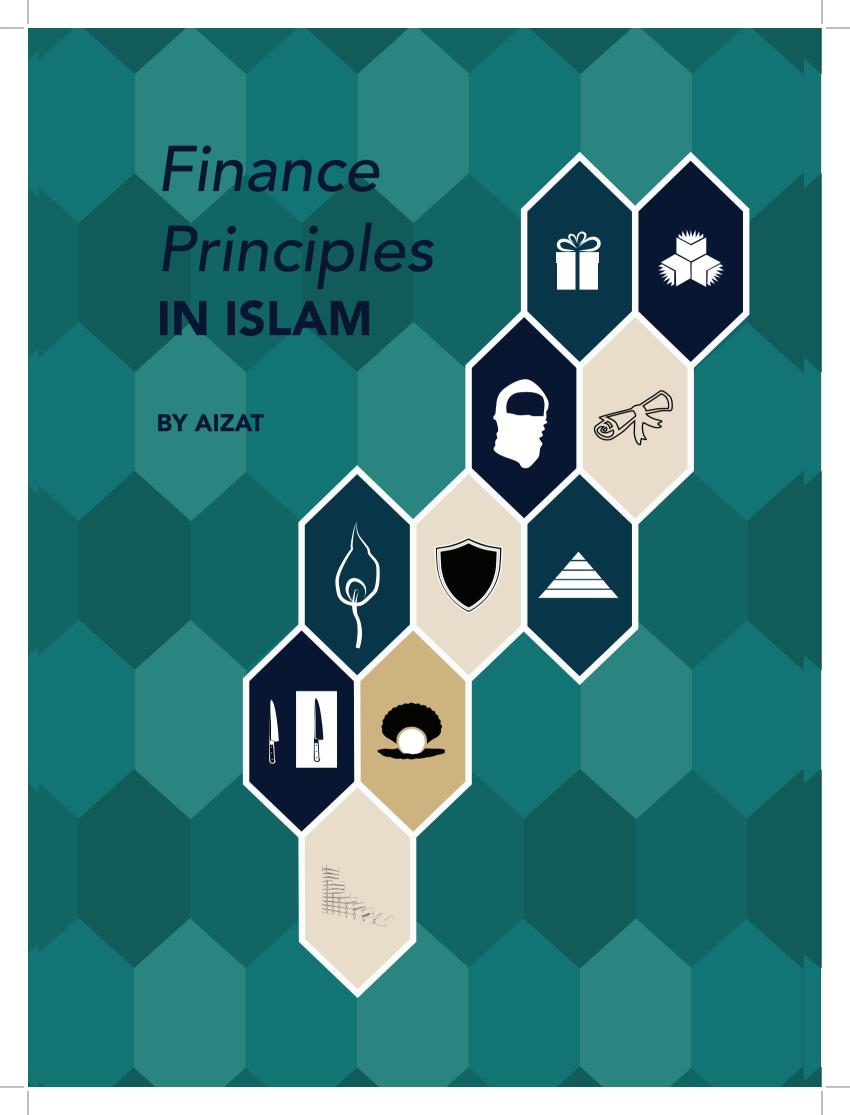
MASYA'ALLAH

IF ASTAGHFIRULLAH IS often laden with negativity, MasyaAllah is generally expressed when something good happens. In Arabic, MasyaAllah means "Allah has willed it". By attributing everything to Allah (swt), it can be used for the good or the bad that happened because He has power over all things.

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

It is essential for us to comprehend the meanings of *InsyaAllah*, *Astaghfirullah*, and *MasyaAllah*, so that we are able to express it within the right context. Let us

also internalize their significance, and adopt the right behavior and mindset in accordance to these sayings. Only then, will we realize the true bearing and power of His words.



What is the greatest wealth one should strive for? Aizat offers his two cents.

SINGAPOREAN OR PR household with at least one working individual has enjoyed an increase in average monthly income of almost double from \$5,947 in 2000 to \$11,143 in 2014 with overall unemployment rate at the lowest since 2000.

It is unsurprising that with such rapid increase in income, Forbes magazine has ranked Singapore in 2012 the third richest country in the world, ranking only behind Qatar and Luxembourg.

In 1980, only about 6 out of every 10 Singapore citizen or permanent resident (PR) own a home. But in 2014, 9 in every 10 now own a home – one of the highest percentage home ownership amongst developed nations.

According to the report on the Household Expenditure Survey 2012/13, Singaporean households are more inclined to dine in better food establishments now.

We now travel via passenger airlines and private transportation more frequently. In fact, 4 out of 10 Singaporeans own a car now.

Ownership of mobile phones and personal computers have become common to all. On average, a Singaporean has two mobile subscriptions.

While we enjoy the comfort of our homes and elevated spending power, what does this mean to us as Muslims?

In Surah Al-Ihsan verse 2 & Verse 3, Allah (swt) stated clearly of the litmus test imposed on a Muslim: "Has there not been over Man a long period of Time, when he was nothing – (not even) mentioned? – Verily We created Man from a drop of mingled sperm, so in order to test him: We gave him (the gifts) of Hearing and Sight.

We showed him the Way: whether he be (shakur) grateful or (kafur) ungrateful rests on his will"

Undoubtedly, our life in this world is only a transition to the Hereafter, and it is meant to be a temporary place where our resolve to be grateful servants to Allah (swt) is to be tested.

Herein lies the question: Surrounded by rising prosperity in Singapore, how do we be grateful servants of Allah (swt)?

An eminent 'alim amongst our local Muslim community, Uztaz Zhulkeflee Haji Ismail has laid out three important criteria to being grateful servants of Allah (swt). Firstly, as a Muslim, we must acknowledge, recognise and extol praises of the true giver, Allah (swt) who alone is God, the Bestower of all favours. Secondly, as a Muslim, we must learn to value what is given, to appreciate them and speak of them, and avoid taking

any favours given by Allah (swt) for granted. Thirdly and lastly, as a Muslim, we must utilize what is given in accordance to Allah (swt)'s command, especially to avoid sins in our accumulating, or in withholding or in the spending of wealth. These sins of commission or omission, may incur the wrath of Allah (swt) Whom we acknowledge as the true giver and owner of our wealth, so as not to obtain his wrath.

In Surah Ibrahim, verse 7, Allah (swt) proclaimed: "If you are grateful, I will add more favours unto you; but if you show ingratitude, truly My punishment is most severe"

One may quickly surmise that Allah (swt) will make one materially richer if we are grateful and be poorer if we are ungrateful. This does not entirely reflect what Allah (swt) intended to convey.

In a hadith narrated by Ibn Majah, Prophet Muhammad (saw) described:

"The likeness of this nation is that of four people: A man to whom Allah (swt) gives wealth and knowledge, so he acts according to his knowledge with regard to his wealth, spending it as it should be spent;

A man to whom Allah (swt) gives knowledge, but he does not give him wealth, so he says: "If I had been given (wealth) like this one, I would have done what (the first man) did."

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: 'They will be equal in reward'.

And a man to whom Allah (swt) gives wealth but does not give knowledge, so he squanders his wealth and spends it in inappropriate ways; and a man to whom Allah (swt) gives neither knowledge nor wealth, and he says: "If I had (wealth) like this one, I would do what (the third man) did."

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: 'They are equal in their burden (of sin).'"

Clearly, the key to success in Islam is knowledge. Without knowledge, we will not be able to recognise the true giver, Allah (swt). We will instead attribute what was attained to our "own economy of effort."

Without knowledge, we will not be able to learn the

value of what is given and will belittle the favours given by Allah (swt).

Without knowledge, we will not be able to utilize what is given in accordance to Allah (swt)'s command and instead squanders it, or to be mesmerised by our conceit and thence afflicted by pride, greed, miserliness etc. and even justify our depriving its benefits towards others especially those who have a right to receive a share of our wealth.

Knowledge is more important than wealth.

The fourth Caliph of Muslims, Ali ibn Abi Talib a.s. was once approached by a group of ten learned men who wished to ask a question to the Caliph.

They asked: "Of knowledge and wealth, which is better and why and please give a separate answer to each of us!"

Ali a.s. said:
Knowledge is legacy of the Prophets; wealth is the inheritance of the Pharoahs. Therefore, knowledge is better than wealth.

You are to guard your wealth but knowledge guards you. Therefore, knowledge is better.

A man of wealth has many enemies, while a man of knowledge has many friends. Hence knowledge is better.

Knowledge is better because it increases with distribution, while wealth decreases by that act.

Knowledge is better because a learned man is apt to be generous while a wealthy person is apt to be miserly.

Knowledge is better because it cannot be stolen while wealth can be stolen.

Knowledge is better because time cannot harm knowledge but wealth rusts in course of time and wears away.

Knowledge is better because it is boundless

while wealth is limited and you can keep account of it.

Knowledge is better because it illuminates the mind while wealth is apt to blacken it.

Knowledge is better because knowledge induced the humanity in our Prophet to say to Allah (swt) "We worship you as we are your servants," while wealth engendered in Pharaoh and Nimrod the vanity which made them claim god-head.

As Muslims in Singapore, we must understand what prosperity means to us. We must keep in mind our obligations and responsibilities to Allah (swt) and His Deen. We must strive to be grateful servants of Allah (swt). We must hope that Allah (swt) gives us the opportunity to be bequeathed the gift of knowledge and understanding of the Deen. Only with knowledge will we be able to apportion the wealth given in a just manner.

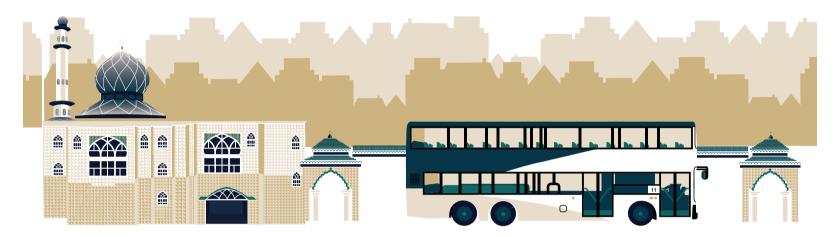
Indeed, in a hadith reported by At-Tirmidzi, Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: "Whomsoever Allah (swt) wants him goodness, He grants the person to be learned and skilled in the Deen and endowed with a deep understanding of the Deen."

Wallahu'alam



Remembering Singapore's Scholars

BY SHEIKH NABIL



In this special feature, Sheikh Nabil interviewed the inheritors of Singapore's religious scholars to learn more about them and the scholars they learnt from. Among the scholars and inheritors featured are Kiyai Ahmad Zuhri, Cikgu Yusuf, Shaykh Ibrahim and Ustaz Muhsin — all of whom have made major contributions to the spread of Islam in Singapore. As young Muslims, it is paramount for us to learn as much as we can from our present scholars while time is on our side. The Eleven Team hopes that by introducing our scholars, our hearts will open to seek knowledge and guidance from them.

Importance of Rightly Guided Scholars in Islam

MOST OF THE confusion that is happening today, with regards to our Muslim identity is due to historical amnesia and the lack of grounding we have towards our scholarly traditions. The loss of *adab* in our society has resulted in the loss of knowledge and allowed splinter groups to confuse us and disregard the teachings that has been preserved by our rightly guided scholars. Islam has flourished in Southeast Asia for the past 500-700 years, under the wisdom and efforts of our rightly guided scholars who embodied excellent prophetic character and knowledge. One may wonder, why should we place importance on learning about the legacy of the Scholars that have gone before us? Why should we look for their inheritors and why must we learn our religion from the

Scholars directly? I am sure that for all of us, we would want to know Allah, love and be loved by Him, before our last breath. To reach that level, one must first know and follow the footsteps of the most beloved creation to Allah the Almighty - The Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (saw). Can we do this on our own? Do we expect to read a few books, watch a few videos and achieve this? Of course not. To know Allah is to know His Beloved (saw) and to know His Beloved is to know his inheritors (May Allah bless them). In a rigorously authentic hadith, Messenger of Allah (saw) said,

"Scholars are the inheritors of the prophets." [Related by Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, Nasa'i, Ibn Maja, Ahmad, Ibn Hibban, and others]

This inheritance does not refer to possessions but rather to Knowledge - the *Quran*, the *Sunnah* and *Akhlaq*. Therefore, if one wishes to seek nearness to Allah and His Messenger (saw), he must visit the Scholars and learn directly from them or those who follow them.

Today, there are fewer and fewer scholars that we can acquire knowledge from and if we do not take this opportunity, we will be in great loss. The Messenger of Allah (saw) has warned us of this:



"Truly, Allah does not remove Sacred
Knowedge by taking it out of servants, but
rather by taking back the souls of Islamic
scholars [in death], until, when He has not left
a single scholar, the people take the ignorant
as leaders, who are asked for and who give
Islamic legal opinion without knowledge,
misguided and misguiding"
[Related by Bukhari]

Our Scholars

OUR RIGHTLY GUIDED Scholars placed great importance on guarding knowledge of the Islamic sciences and the sanctity of whatever that is taught by The Messenger of Allah (saw). This is achieved through observing Isnad when acquiring knowledge, which means to acquire knowledge from a long chain of transmission, from scholar to scholar going back several generations to the pious predecessors, then to the Companions of the Messenger (saw) and then to The Messenger (saw). It is critical to ensure that the knowledge of the religion, and the accurate understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah are preserved and unaltered. Our local teachers and Scholars have taught us to be careful of who we take our knowledge from; they have been guiding us to taste the sweetness of remembering and knowing Allah and His Messenger (saw).

For centuries, Singapore has been filled with circles of knowledge and remembrance of Allah and His Messenger (saw), led by them. It has been a common practice by our scholars, from generation to generation to hold gatherings that bring Muslims from all walks of life together, to impart knowledge and to engage in the remembrance of Allah and His Messenger (saw). Eulogies and the narrations of the Birth and Life of the Messenger (saw) are frequently being recited and reminded by our Scholars, in order for us to establish a strong connection with The Messenger (saw). It is in these gatherings too where they would embody the prophetic action of feeding people, especially the poor, who would also attend such gatherings. And this tradition has been preserved by their successors for decades and has brought great benefit to the lives of the Muslims in Singapore.

A majority of the Scholars of Singapore spent their entire lives calling people to Allah (swt), advising us to hold fast to Taqwa of Allah (swt). They taught us the ways to achieve inward and outward purity, to protect one's limbs from committing acts of disobedience, fulfilling the rights of our parents, our relatives, our spouses, our

children, our neighbours and all the people of piety. They elevate our understanding on the importance of the pillars of Islam, our prayer, performing the sunnahs, because every pious action entails a specific reward and a specific divine gift and connection. They remind us time and again, to constantly seek Allah's mercy and assistance, to visit the sick and assist the helpless, to treat people in the best possible way, as we would love to be treated. All these and more have been taught and passed down from generations to generations, so that we would live our lives attaining the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger (saw).

Kiyai Ahmad Zuhri bin Mutamim



KIYAI ZUHRI WAS a revered and respected scholar of Singapore. He served on the MUIS Fatwa Committee under Mufti Haii Mohamed Sanusi bin Mahmood, and later, Mufti Syed Isa Semait. He also sat in the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) Appeal Committee and taught at Madrasah Alsagoff Al-Arabiah as well. It

was during his stint there that he made two major contributions to the local Muslim community.

In 1954, with the assistance of some of his friends, the Singapore Islamic Religious Teachers and Scholars Association (Pergas) was set up. Pergas still exists and functions today; and has been instrumental in voicing the concerns of the Muslim community and convincing the State on matters that are dear to the Muslims. Following the tradition of the traditional scholars, he wrote many books to guide us Singaporeans to understanding our religion. However, his activities were not restricted to writing, teaching and preaching. He was known as an ardent badminton player. As an inheritor of The Messenger traits (saw), Kiyai Zuhri embodied his character and such as paying attention to details, giving people full attention when spoken to and always making anyone feel special, and never feel insignificant. Once, when cycling to the mosque for Maghrib prayer, he spotted some youngsters playing badminton. He stopped his bicycle, removed his cap (tarbus), and started playing with them in earnest. A few minutes later, the





Maghrib azan was heard. He told them, "Now that I've played badminton with all of you, why not we all go to the mosque now for the Maghrib prayer?" It was this casual and friendly style of da'wah that endeared him to most people and students.

Probably, the most outstanding feature of Kiyai Zuhri was his love for astronomy and his ability to calculate the movement of Sun and Moon; and thus managing to determine in advance the dates for Ramadan and Syawal. There was no knowledge of others who had this knowledge besides him. Hence, it was not surprising that in 1979 he was awarded the Ilmiawan (Scholar) of Muis due to his contributions. In 1982, he was also awarded Jasawan (Meritorious Contributor) by Pergas. After 80 years of serving Islam, he passed away peacefully on Thursday morning, the first day of Hari Raya, 1985. May Allah (swt) bless his soul.

Cikgu Yusuf

ONE OF THE inheritors of Kiyai Zuhri whom I had the opportunity to meet is his son, Cikgu Haji Mohammad Yusuf bin Haji Zuhri. Not only is Cikgu Yusuf trained in the Islamic sciences, he was a prominent figure in Singapore's education system. He once served as Principal of Kaki Bukit Secondary School and Bedok Town Secondary School. He was also the Director of the Education Unit for MUIS. For those of us who studied in Mosque Madrasahs before the induction of the ALIVE programme, it was Cikgu Yusuf, along with the Scholars, like the late Habib Abdillah Aljufri, who designed the syllabus which has greatly benefited many of us today. Cikgu Yusuf is now in his 70s and retired but many individuals from all walks of life still visit him to seek knowledge and counsel.

Visiting Cikgu Yusuf was indeed a beautiful experience. Like his father and other inheritors of The Messenger (saw), he welcomed us with a wide smile and made us feel special in his presence. The style of speech and the mannerisms illustrated by Cikgu Yusuf was so beautiful, that it reminded us of the character of the Prophet (saw) which we often read about but rarely get to witness. He reminded us that, "As much as we sharpen our minds, learning in the Universities, we should never forget to purify our hearts. A sharpened mind with a heart that is not pure will only produce a confused individual. One should not neglect the heart if he wishes to be an intellectual because the intellect is in the heart and not in the brain. 'Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to use intellect, or ears with which to hear? For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts

[Qur'an 22:46]." That advice really impacted those who were there. There is just so much to learn from the wisdom of Cikgu Yusuf, thus, if Allah (swt) wills, I encourage our beloved readers to visit Cikgu Yusuf and benefit from his excellent prophetic character and wisdom.

Shaykh Mohamed Ibrahim Bin Mohamed Kassim



SHAYKH **IBRAHIM** WAS Vice-Oadi, Scholar and activist. Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) counsellor, who is proficient in five languages. He received his formal education in the Islamic sciences at Muslim National High School and Mosque Madrasahs in Myanmar, where he studied in depth the sciences of Al-Qur'an,

Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh), Tauhid, Persian and Arabic, alongside academic subjects. He spent his youth with individuals from other faiths. He studied Tamil from a Hindu chetty and also spent time in the Buddhist monasteries and Christian churches. These meetings with people of different faiths and walks of life, from such a young age, brought richness in his da'wah in Singapore later on when he migrated. It is these experiences and knowledge of other religions that made him play a pivotal role at the Association of Muslim Converts (Darul Arqam), where he taught the newly converts and those interested to learn about Islam.

In his early adulthood, Shaykh Ibrahim would not miss any opportunity to attend the gatherings of knowledge of the Scholars. He would visit the scholars, learn from them and serve them. One of his teachers in Singapore was the late Shaykh Omar Bagharib, a revered scholar and teacher to many of our past scholars including Shaykh Omar bin Abdullah Alkhatib. He also served as a member of the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO), under the tutelage of Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqui. The IRO was formed to foster greater understanding between the faiths and to promote the spirit and message of peace amongst the citizens of Singapore. Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddiqui was a renowned and influential global scholar. In the 1950s, the British would often announce in the newspapers to inform Singaporeans of Maulana's visits

Shaykh Ibrahim was also an activist who sought to bring change to the lives of marginalized Muslims.





He joined the Singapore Congress Party and contested in an elections during the 1960s. He was inspired to lift the spirits of the Muslims and bring them out of marginalization. His motto as an activist was verse 11 from Surah Ar-Rad, "Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves". However, he was detained for 3 years under the Internal Security Act for his activism. Despite being faced with adversities, he held strongly to the rope of Allah. He spent much of his time in prison reading the Qur'an and amongst his practices whilst in prison, was to recite Surah Waqi'ah 40 times in the Morning. He continued to benefit the people around him by teaching the inmates "bookkeeping" and economics. Shaykh Ibrahim's grandson, Ustaz Muhsin told me that we will not find anyone today like the Scholars of the past, where they were selfless and passionate in serving the people and would even compromise their own lives to help the Muslims.

Shaykh Ibrahim was determined in carrying the torch of Islam and reviving the Islamic Spirit amongst Muslims in Singapore. His da'wah initiatives were revolutionary. in calling people to Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw). He was amongst the first few local Scholars to teach the Traditional sacred texts such the Hikam (Aphorisms) of Ibn Ata'illah As-Sakandari in English, to cater to the growth of English speaking seekers of knowledge, due to the decline of Mother Tongue in the last decade. Many of the Islamic conferences we see being held in Singapore today was inspired by Shaykh Ibrahim. It was Shaykh Ibrahim who was amongst the first to organize mass conferences in English for people to attend and realize the need to be close to Allah and His Messenger. Shaykh Ibrahim was like a fatherly figure to his students. When he taught sacred texts which could be difficult, he would provide multiple level of understandings due to the vast backgrounds of his students and he would elevate their understanding further over time. Just like a doctor, he gave different prescriptions depending on the need of the patient.

Shaykh Ibrahim was also an active writer who had published many Islamic books. Amongst which are on understanding al-Qur'an, marriage and the Muslim lifestyle. Amongst the books which I managed to learn from him was the '7 Excellent Habits of a Successful Mu'min'. It was very impactful for me because much of the secular influences in our lives may cause us to chase the wrong indicators to measure success. In this book, Shaykh Ibrahim highlights the habits that we Muslims must strive to acquire, to be successful in the life and the hereafter. His writings and da'wah efforts are

deeply appreciated by the international community. He was listed among the 500 most influential Muslims in the world from 2009 until the year of his passing. After decades of serving Islam, Shaykh Ibrahim passed away peacefully on 8th May 2014. May Allah bless his soul.

Ustaz Muhsin

USTAZ MUHSIN RECEIVED training in the Islamic sciences under the tutelage of his own grandfather, Shaykh Ibrahim. He spent his youth at the service of Shaykh Ibrahim and assisting him in his da'wah. He founded Al Fathhu Traditional Learning Centre with Shaykh Ibrahim. It was at Al Fathhu, where Shaykh Ibrahim would conduct classes, mostly in English, to guide the community in areas of knowledge such as Al-Qur'an, Figh and Tasawwuf. Today, Ustaz Muhsin followed the footsteps of his grandfather in calling people to Allah (swt) and His Messenger (saw). Having returned from further learning of the Islamic sciences in Turkey, he founded the Being Centre, where he conducts congregational gatherings of Remembering Allah (swt) and teaches the traditional Islamic sciences. At the centre, Ustaz Muhsin also teaches the Islamic texts that was written and taught by Shaykh Ibrahim.

Ustaz Muhsin told me that in this hectic pace of life that we Singaporeans live in, even Muslims are caught in the web of depression, stress and anxiety. Thus, he ensures that his teaching methods are relevant to the needs of the Muslims today. With many individuals facing emotional and psychological trauma in life such as failure and anxiety, he provides students with the platform to express themselves, before providing counsel from the traditional Islamic texts that would help individuals alleviate the difficulties faced in their lives. This was inspired by his grandfather, Shaykh Ibrahim who embodied the prophetic character of giving people full attention and always making them feel special, never insignificant. For those of us who did not manage to learn under Shaykh Ibrahim, Ustaz Muhsin is one of his inheritors, whom we can learn the knowledge of our religion from.

Conclusion

With vast amount of information available on the net, we find ourselves confused on what knowledge of the *Quran* and *Sunnah* is authentic and what is not. We often question ourselves whether we are on the right path. To get ourselves out of this confusion, one must first recover from historical amnesia by learning how Islam flourished in this region for centuries, the scholarly traditions that





thrived in Singapore, who were the Scholars that were instrumental in spreading Islam and what was their creed of Faith. We must understand that our Scholars are the ones who are the custodians of the Prophetic heritage and this heritage is the heritage of knowledge. Learning about the lives of the scholars who came before us would inspire us to emulate the character and traits of Prophet Muhammad (saw), in which they embody. Prophet Muhammad (saw) taught us as he said,

"Keep the company of the elders, ask the Scholars, and mix with the wise." [Related by Tabarani]

Every generation of Scholars will leave behind their inheritors. We must put in effort to look for these inheritors and spend time with them, as it is through them that we would be able to learn the excellent prophetic conduct and inherit the knowledge taught by Prophet Muhammad (saw). To learn more about Singapore's past Scholars and their contributions, I recommend readers to visit ibnyahya.com. As Singaporean Muslims, we are blessed by Allah with the contributions of Scholars such as Kiyai Ahmad Zuhri, Shaykh Mohamed Ibrahim, Shaykh Omar Alkhatib, Habib Abdillah Aljufri and more (May Allah bless their souls). If we aspire to be individuals that make a difference in society, we should emulate them and learn from those who inherit from them. May Allah bless the souls of our past Scholars and grant us the strength to emulate them.

Terms

Sunnah - The way of life prescribed for Muslims on the basis of the teachings, practices and character of Prophet Muhammad (saw)

Akhlaq - Virtue, morality and manners

Taqwa — Having consciousness of Allah and fearing

Da'wah — Inviting and calling to Allah and His Messenger (saw)

Fiqh - Islamic Jurisprudence

Tasawwuf — the knowledge through which one purifies the soul from the blameworthy qualities and ennoble it by acquiring the praiseworthy [qualities], to draw near to Allah and His Messenger (saw)





93:7

These numbers correspond to a verse in the Quran from Surah 93 (Ad-Duhaa) Verse 7 which states "And He found you lost and guided [you]". In our own ways, many of us can relate to the notion of being lifted out of darkness and into light. Hence, we embarked on a mission to bring together your stories, through our Audience Interaction Series! To read more entries from **Mission 93:7**, flip to the back of the magazine!



QUEST REGARDING SELF

BY USTAZ ZHULKEFLEE H.T ISMAIL

Ever wondered what makes you, you? **Ustaz Zhulkeflee Hj Ismail**, a renowned local religious figure no stranger to the young generation, explores this question.

(In the Name of Allah, Most Beneficent Most Merciful)

Who am I?

THE MOST BASIC question which one should seek an answer to would be to know who we truly are. What is our identity? Even if we can ignore this questioning in our self, others would inevitably pose the same question in trying to get to know us. Although our response to this usually would be brief and very superficial, yet we know that we personally must try to grasp and seek a more satisfactory answer regarding knowledge of ourselves for our own self ... "Who am I? What is my reality?"

Reflection of a Qur'anic response

OFTEN SOME PEOPLE may regard differences in human by gender, race, and ethnicities as reasons to discriminate and despise one another. Some would try to circumvent such evil by advocating unity (or equality) artificially; they pretend that such differences do not exist or must be totally eradicated, as though imposing uniformity (sameness) would result in equality. Surely, we should humbly submit our ignorance and seek knowledge before trying to advocate changes upon what God has naturally created. For us Muslims, we have a message meant to be shared to all:

"O mankind! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God [Allah] is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God [Allah] is all-knowing, allaware."

(Qur'an: Surah Hujurat: 49: 13)

Vocation/profession

IN SOCIAL INTERACTION, we tend to inform others of our present vocation – whether we are still a student, or working, or serving in NS (national service). Yet this does not say much of oneself, only what one is presently involved in. If we are honest towards ourselves, we should probe further such as, "So as a student, what does this mean to me?" Or "As an engineer what is my purpose of being one?" or "Is this all there is to my life?" Surely, identifying ourselves with a vocation or profession does not really define us at all. Yet, in today's competitive life - analogously referred to as 'rat-race' culture - everyone seems to be concerned about their career status to the point of obsession, striving to 'forge' their identity upon these. Are we satisfied to be relegated as mere digits identified like the identical spokes on the fast spinning economic cog-wheel? Are we devoid of other more important individual and unique human personality? After all humankind is manifested with such diversity, yet we can celebrate unity as people if we learn to know one another and respect such innate differences. Lest we forget, we are all equally brethren in humanity.

"O MANKIND! Be conscious of your lord [Sustainer], who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a





multitude of men and women. And remain conscious of God [Allah], in whose name you demand [your rights] from one another, and of these ties of kinship. Verily, God [Allah] is ever watchful over you!"

(Qur'an: Surah An-Nisa': 4: 1)

Affiliation

OFTEN WE WOULD respond to those who wish to know us by bringing in our 'affiliation' – either pertaining to our race, tribe, country of origin, religious belief, ideology, party, organization, etc. Perhaps we need to do this in order to let others know, aspects of our self which we hope they may begin to appreciate about us. Although what we may convey of our self is something commonly shared with the other people, it may be useful for purpose of bonding – sort of a platform in 'introducing or extending a bridge' – as this can help to break barriers in our social interaction. We do this perhaps from the inner desire towards facilitating acceptance of each, as it tends to induce an atmosphere of inclusivity in normal conversation.

As regards to informing them of our different or distinguishing traits (exclusivity) from traits found in theirs, it may be due to our hope that this can perhaps spark interest which may open up further searching questions in them in wanting to know us. This inquisitiveness possibly would promote dialogue and respectful conversation. Therefore, whichever aspects of our self in which we choose to respond with, we should have done some thinking through of the possible

follow-up questionings and be ready with appropriate answers. Being ready our self is the key to every success. Concerning this matter of identity, even before it is raised while engaging with others, we should seek the answer to it ourselves. Our response, if intelligently crafted, would ultimately be linked to something useful to define us; not only for others to know us, but hopefully for them to understand, appreciate, respect or even be drawn to accept or emulate some positive values we may wish to share.

Foremost a Muslim

Should you ask me, "How would you identify yourself?" I am guided to respond with the identity I hold dearly of myself: "I am foremost a Muslim." After all, this is what I am being commanded to be steadfast on and I am committed to verbalise repeatedly this claim, every time I stand in my solat:

(Say:) "Behold, my prayer, and [all] my acts of worship, my living and my dying are for God [Allah alone, Who is], the Sustainer of all the worlds, in whose divinity none has a share: for thus have I been bidden — and I shall [always] be foremost among those who surrender themselves to Him (Muslimeen)."

(Qur'an: Surah al-An'am:6:162)

Amongst many aspects of identities I can assume, my identity as a Muslim is foremost as we Muslims are

commanded by Allah (swt) to live and not to die unless we remain as Muslims. Other aspect of my identities is but temporary stages which I may have to assume in life but it would not truly define my essential Self, unlike that which my religion defines. This identity transcends even my death to eternity. May Allah (swt) grant me husnul-khatimah (a good ending).

"O you who have attained to faith!
Be conscious of God [Allah] with all the
consciousness that is due to Him, and do
not allow death to overtake you ere you
have surrendered yourselves unto Him [as
MUSLIMS]."

(Qur'an: Surah Aali-'Imran: 3: 102)

Also, if we were to understand our religion as "Ad-Deen" — it implies significantly that "Al-Islam" is not to be understood as merely a religion in a superficial sense but as "a total way of life"; because our entire life is just like a Debt (dyn) i.e. it being our asset as well as our liability, granted by Allah, in which we shall have to account for on the Day of Judgement (yaum-al-deen) before our Maker who is the Judge (ad-dayyan).

"Ad-Deen" also implies a system of Divine guidance seeking to transform and uplift mankind towards a higher order, and a perfect way of life, referred to as tamad-dun (Civilization). This requires a Muslim to strive to manifest its teachings with an identity as a person with virtues of goodness, learned, cultured, moral and truly civilized. As such, my identity as Muslim requires effort on my part to be mindful of these.

Meaning of Life: Reality and the Self

MY IDENTITY AS a Muslim requires me to manifest what I believe to be true, as a witness to others. Islam has taught me that the meaning and reality of my Life has its beginning in the realm of the spirits. Now in this world, prophets were sent to remind us (mudzakkir) of our essential self, and also the Qur'an as the book of Reminders (dz-dzikr), because man (insan) is forgetful (isyan).

Spiritual dimension and the covenant

A MUSLIM IS actually a person who re-affirms a covenant he/she has declared in previous (spiritual) existence, acknowledging Allah as his/her only *robb* (Lord; Sustainer) who has no partners – *tauheed*. He then strives to remain true to his affirmation till he returns to his God.

"And recall (O Prophet) when your Lord brought forth descendants from the loins of the sons of Adam, and made them witnesses against their own selves, asking them: 'Am I not your Lord (ROBB)?' They said: 'Yes, we do testify.' We did so lest you claim on the Day of Resurrection: 'We were unaware of this." (Qur'an: Surah Al-A'raf: 7: 172)

Life is but a journey — back to our Maker — a Muslim is but a traveller

A MUSLIM IS always reminded of the temporary nature of this earthly life. Yet, he is not taught to renounce this world but rather to be grateful; living to his fullest but striving with true consciousness of God [Allah] by doing what is commanded and avoiding sinning in this world. Like a traveller in transit awaiting the passage to return to the final destination, a Muslim as such is to "be in this world but not of this world."

"Seek instead, by means of what God
[Allah] has granted thee, [the good of] the life
to come, without forgetting, withal, thine own
[rightful] share in this world; and do good
[unto others] as God [Allah] has done good
unto thee; and seek not to spread corruption
on earth: for, verily, God [Allah] does not love
the spreaders of corruption!"
(Qur'an: Qasas: 28: 77)

So any person's identity needs to also be defined by what the person believes in, and what worldview he holds. Life and our existence does not end with death. Muslims are reminded that:

"The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - [those] from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought."

(Our'an: Surah Yunus: 10: 24)



In trying to blend in with others with differing belief, socially, we must not forget who we are and what our belief and values are. We must be careful not to be overawed of others and their ways. Holding on to our principle and Islamic values is crucial, especially amongst the impressionable young.

Allah (swt) reminds us:

"LET IT NOT deceive thee that those who are bent on denying the truth seem to be able to do as they please on earth: it is [but] a brief enjoyment, with hell thereafter as their goal - and how vile a resting-place! - whereas those who remain conscious of their Sustainer shall have gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide: a ready welcome from God [Allah]. And that which is with God [Allah] is best for the truly virtuous." (Qur'an: Surah Aali 'Imran: 3: 196-198)

And remember, "to Allah we belong and to Him shall be made return to" – innaa lillaahi wa inna ilaihi roji'uun.

Concluding remark

LET US PRAY that as Muslims, Allah (swt) strengthens our resolve and that keeps us in the Faith. May He grant us a tranquil Self, well-pleased and to return Him with His *Redha*. Let us pray that Allah (swt) include us all among people of righteousness as in this verse.

"Among the believers are men who have [always] been true to what they have vowed before Allah: Of them some have fulfilled their obligations (with their lives), and some of them are still waiting (for its fulfillment) without having changed [their resolve] in the least."

(Qur'an: Surah al-Ahzab: 33: 23)

As we Muslims are travellers, we beseech Allah (swt) to show us the right path and to not leave us to go astray. As travellers we need to know what we should have.

WaAllaahu A'lam



SUNNAH FOODS AND ITS BENEFITS

BY ZARIFAH



We've heard of dates being a Sunnah food, but there are surely many more for us tto try. **Zarifah** shares with us other Sunnah foods and who knows, they might become a daily staple in our everyday diet! Happy tummy, and a happier soul!

"O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship."(2:172)

THERE ARE SO many different varieties of food around us today, and the number is ever increasing. Of course it is all right to indulge and enjoy whatever food we want, as long as it is halal. However, we should also not forget to eat healthily. So let us take a look at some of the foods and dining etiquettes of our Prophet Muhammad (saw).

Before we start eating, remember to always say Bismillah, and eat with our right hand. Ibn 'Umar reported Allah's Messenger (saw) as saying:

When any one of you intends to eat (meal), he should eat with his right hand. And when he (intends) to drink he should drink with his right hand, for the Satan eats with his left hand and drinks with his left hand. (Narrated by Sahih Muslim) Therefore, to do so would be imitating syaitan. Now that we are all set and ready to eat, let's take a look at some of the foods that the Prophet (saw) likes.

The first food that I'm sure most of us are familiar with is honey. In Surah al-Nahl, or "The Bee," Almighty Allah alludes to bees and honey in the following verse: "There emerges from their bellies a drink, varying in colours, in which there is healing for people. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who give thought." (16:69). The Prophet (saw) himself used to drink a glass of honey and water every morning on an empty stomach. Therefore,

drinking honey water in the morning is a sunnah. Honey is a natural sweetener. It is fat-free, cholesterol-free and sodium-free. It can be used to treat diarrhoea, coughs, and can alleviate allergies. It can even be used to treat wounds and burns due to its antibiotic nature. A quick google search will tell you that there are many more benefits to honey. It is no wonder that people have been consuming honey for thousands of years.

Secondly, we have milk. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: "There are three that are not refused: Cushions, oils [Duhn (fragrance)], and milk." (Narrated by Ibn' Umar, hadith Hasan) This just goes to show how beneficial milk is for us. Milk is able to strengthen the bones and improve the immune system, among other things. In fact, milk is a drink that is included in the description of Paradise as stated in the Quran (47:15), although it may not necessarily resemble the milk of dunya.

Lastly, we have vinegar. A'isha reported Allah's Apostle (saw) as saying:

The best of condiments or condiment is vinegar. (Narrated by Muslim and Jabir, hadith Sahih) This cannot be truer. Vinegar can be used to enhance the flavours of many foods. Not only is vinegar used in cooking but in medicine as well. Ibn Sina (Avicenna) wrote in his famous book Al-Qanoon fit Tibb (the Canon of Medicine), that vinegar is a powerful clotting agent. If poured on an external wound, it will stop the bleeding and prevent swelling. This is due to its antimicrobial properties.

There are many other sunnah foods out there that you can find, three of which are mentioned here. Honey, milk and vinegar are all very basic sunnah foods that are often overlooked. Not only are they very beneficial to our health, but these foods are also encouraged in Islam. Remember, it is always important to eat healthy so that the mind and spirit are also healthy to carry out ibadah.

Wallahua'lam bissowab.





looking to Islam's fundamental principles of gender equality. This revival could have stemmed from the fear of our Ummah slipping back to pre-modern Islamic times, when men often overpowered women's voices. Back then, it was found that there had been queens ruling dynasties in Muslim countries like Morocco and Indonesia but even so, patriarchal norms like marrying off women to secure family business deals had existed.

Though a woman's place in the world has improved generally, we should aim to achieve the standard of Prophet Muhammad's (saw) lifetime. Feminists throughout history have fought and achieved a better social position for women but most use men as standards for women to model after. However, a woman's place in Islam is not molded by men. She recognizes her natural differences from him and strives to succeed in her own right. It would be of great advantage for us to turn to Allah (swt), Al-Adil, the embodiment of justice, through his words in the Quran. After all, He (swt) is the one that created men and women. If we turn to our only Creator (swt), only then, would we be able to understand our similarities and differences and use them to coexist harmoniously.

In marriage especially, the role of a woman is distinguished from a man so that the smooth running of a family can be achieved. Men are described more as the providers of the family and women, the homemakers and this we can see in surah Al-Bagarah (2:233) where Allah (swt) says, 'Mothers suckle their children for two years, if they wish to complete the term, and clothing and maintenance must be borne by the father in a fair manner'. Biologically, men are different from women. The most obvious difference would be that, most women were created with the ability to procreate with the help of the sperm from the father. Allah (swt) has given women the honour to become mothers and have that special connection with her child when he or she becomes a part of her for nine months. Only women can go through menstruation and pregnancy, which are challenging processes, to say the least. Hence in marriage, men serve as helpers or providers to ease these tasks that women are ordained with.

It is said in surah Ar-Rum (30:21), 'He created for you mates that you may find tranquility in them'. Indeed, Allah (swt) created men and women to help each other tackle the challenges of this world.

However, in Islam, a woman's role does not necessarily have to stop at being a mother or a homemaker; she can also be a scholar, an educator or even a leader. Islam does not bind a woman to her household. The religion encourages Aisha, who was educated in medicine, history and rhetoric. With her scholarly knowledge, she helped

Prophet Muhammad (saw) propagate the teachings of Islam even after he passed on. Another example emerged later in history by the name of Anas Khatun, a female scholar in the 15th century. Khatun regularly gave public lectures that were attended by both men and women. These examples only proved that in Islam, the playing field to achieve success in this world and the hereafter is a levelled one. Islam does not give preference to a specific gender's opinions but treats both with justice. A woman is free to play other roles beyond her biological capabilities as a mother or a wife.

A woman's position in Islam is in accordance to Allah's (swt) standard and is not measured by society or family. The Ouran, as a timeless guidance, also helps women maintain her dignity. One of the ways it helps women is through the ordinance of the hijab. Sadly, there are still many societies in the world that sees the hijab as a symbol of repression. Even in Singapore, where there is freedom of religion, some Muslimahs face difficulty in practicing this aspect of Islam. Nurses working in government hospitals and the police force, for example, are not allowed to put on the hijab. While this is done to uphold the secular identity, it could impede a woman's efforts in becoming a good Muslimah. Allah (swt) has commanded both men and women to dress modestly because He (swt) knows of our desires and helps us control them. Contrary to common views that see veiling as a repression towards women, Islam sees it as liberation. The Quran views women to be as precious as treasures and possess alluring beauty. Thus, veiling can help protect against unwanted male gaze but more importantly, it is for the woman to remind herself that by following God's orders, she elevates her worth to something more than just physical appearance. In Surah An-Nur (24:31), women are told to 'not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal.' If Allah (swt) sees women as precious treasures, then it is only logical that the veil had been ordained to protect these treasures. There may still be some naysayers who say that women should be free as individuals to bare as much as they want. However, Islam teaches fitrah or naturalness, which sees modesty as human inclination and a means to achieve blessings from Allah (swt). Ultimately, Islam teaches us that Allah's (swt) commands are higher than our wants and only He (swt) knows best.

A woman is given equal chance as a man to work for this world and the hereafter because Islam believes in efforts according to one's capabilities. Biologically, she is different from man and hence, certain predispositions might differ from him due to this. Nonetheless, history has shown that women can perform roles beyond mothers and wives. The fight to re-establish the rightful woman's place according to the Quran should continue to achieve that akin to the Prophet's (saw) time. Both men and women should not fall prey to their own rules and beliefs, which are secondary to Allah's (swt) words.





The view from outside the looking glass- experiences of an exchange student, **Syed Kashif**, in Singapore.

Which country/province are you from?

I AM FROM Hyderabad, a city in Southern India. Hyderabad is very famous for the beautiful *Charminar*, pearls, bangles, Hyderbadi Dum Biryani,Irani tea (chai), its special Urdu slang, very friendly people, hospitality and the only Microsoft office in India. It got its name from the king's name Hyder Ali, who ruled the city many years ago. In Hyderabad, we don't speak or understand Tamil. Urdu is the official language along with Hindi and Telugu.

What are you pursuing in NTU?

I am pursuing Masters in Information Studies in Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information.

Why did you choose Singapore to further your studies?

The most important reason I choose Singapore is its unique culture. Each country has its own unique 'identity' because of the culture, which countries like US, Canada or Australia may lack. The weather in Singapore was another reason. I find it rather difficult to stay in places where there is winter or is extremely cold, making Singapore an ideal destination. The distance is also quite an advantage as it is just four hours of journey to Hyderabad.

What was your first impression of Singapore when you arrived?

This is quite funny. When I first attended the Friday prayer, I thought the Muslims also speak 'Chinese' here and I was completely unaware of the language called 'Malay'. When I listen to the *khutbah* for the first 2 weeks, I thought they were delivered in Chinese. But then I met some Muslims in NTU and then I was told that Muslims in Singapore typically speak the language called Malay. It's nice to know that Urdu and Malay have a lot of similar words and I

was amazed when I found that a lot of Malays watch Bollywood movies and they are familiar with Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan

How are the ways Muslims practice Islam in Singapore different from your home country?

First 2 weeks, the *Solat* looked very different from my home country. In India, majority of the Muslims practise the Hanafi school of jurisprudence which is quite different from the way it is in Singapore. It added to my curiosity to explore more about it. Apart from this, Islam in India is still practiced in a very traditional and orthodox style, unlike in Singapore. Unlike Singapore where festivals are peaceful affairs, festivals in India are typically boisterous affairs.

During Mawlid for example, the city literally turns green with all the green flags posted on the streets; Islamic songs are played; communal meals are held and everyone is invited; exhibitions are held to showcase the relics of the Prophets like blessed hair and streets are lit to celebrate the greatest gift that is the birth of the Prophet (saw). Hari Raya Haji celebration is also quite different compared to India. A week before Hari Raya Haji, the streets are filled with stalls of goats for the public to buy. In majority of the cases, the obligatory animal sacrifice is executed by the owners themselves; which can be rather fun and adventurous.

Also during Muharram, many Sunni Muslims distribute free water to people on the roads just as the Sunnah of Imam Hussain as he distributed water to his fierce enemies on the battlefield of Karbala.

How are the mosques here different from those in your home country?

Typically, the architecture of the mosques in India have strong cultural influences, home to some of the most beautiful mosques, erected by the Murghal Kings.

Women are not generally allowed in mosques in India due to various reasons. First, due to India's high population, most of the mosques are insufficient space for the men and in most cases these men end up praying on the stairs or floors. Parking is also a big issue due to some narrow roads. Secondly, culturally, the Hanafi jurispidence is a bit strict towards allowing women to pray in mosques. Apart from these, security is also a concern in some areas, especially sub-urban and rural areas though it is generally safer in the cities.

The Friday prayer in India starts at many different timings in different mosques. It can start from 1PM and goes up to 3:30 PM in some mosques to cater for different people. (Unlike in Singapore, where all mosques are synchronized with regards to the Friday prayer).

Is it difficult to cope with the cultural differences?

Yes, it is to be honest. It can confuse a person who is new to Singapore and it took me some time to understand the cultural differences, the way people think, the way they understand Islam, the type of knowledge of Islam people possess is all different when compared to India.

When I was new to NTUMS, I received a lot of stares for saying or doing things which people didn't expect but they were quite normal in India. But then I learnt the cultural differences and I feel now I understand NTUMS and Malay Muslims in a much better way than before.

What are some of the similarities that you see here which you remind you of home?

Masjid Pusara Aman sends salawat on the prophet after every Friday prayer by reciting Ya Nabi Salam Alaika. This practice is very common in India; we recite this and some other Urdu salawat with beautiful poetic lines in Urdu written by Imam Ahmed Raza Khan. One of the most famous being 'Mustafa Jaane rehmat pe lakhon Salam', which translates as



On Mustafa (The Prophet (saw)) the merciful, we send a million salaam.

Another similarity would be popular beverages. People in Singapore are very fond of drinking teh and teh tarik and it is quite the same for the people in Hyderabad. We have a special famous tea called as Irani Tea which people in Hyderabad really love drinking.

How do you think living in a different country has impacted your identity as a Muslim?

Living in a country like Singapore has given me a totally new identity as a Muslim. Coming from a different culture, I feel I have improved myself as a Muslim by realizing my shortcomings and it has enabled me to pick up positive traits from the Malay Muslims. While I may not be able to speak Malay, it (practicing Islam) gave me an opportunity to mingle with the Malays (Malay Muslims) here and forge friendships. There have been instances when I talk with a bunch of people for an hour, we laugh, we smile and enjoy together and then when I say I am from India, and they will say, "Oh you're not a Malay? Really?" This is what I like the most; I have adapted the beautiful Malay culture without losing my identity as an Indian Muslim.

What will you miss most about Singapore when you return?

I would surely miss all the lovely people, all the friends I have made in NTUMS during my journey in Singapore. It was great meeting all of them. They overlooked the mistakes I made when I was new to NTUMS and the Malay Muslim culture in Singapore. They helped me learn and understand the culture as well as the identity of the Malay Muslims which was a great learning experience for me as an Indian Muslim.

Mission 93:7



93:7; these numbers correspond to a verse in the Ouran from Surah 93 (Ad-Duhaa) Verse 7 which states "And He found you lost and guided [you]". In our own ways, many of us can relate to the notion of being lifted out of darkness and into light. Hence, we embarked on a mission to bring together your stories, through our Audience Interaction Series! We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has taken part. May we find that different as we are, a common thread weaves through us and unites us in faith, InsyaAllah.

Allah, My shining Knight

White Petals

I was standing. On the edge of a sword. I plummeted in darkness. Swallowed by loneliness.

I find no cure. In the depths within. And in between, I lost, myself.

To no avail, I find no way out. Suffered in pain, No one to rely. But myself.

My strengths regained.
Alhamdulillah!
You pulled me in.
You never gave up on me.

That's Your love. How foolish I was. To delve in thorns. When You offered me light.

Now I will fight.
For whatever, fear not.
To rely none other, than You.
My shining Knight.

:) How can I not love You?

Liberation

Nur Qamarina Ilham

Earrings
Check
Make up
Check
Hairdo
Check
Her quotidian affair
Beautiful, she thought to herself



She felt free
Free to dress
All so she could impress
Free to whip that hair
All for an awesome stare

Free...
Was she really?
Deep down, she felt
Caged
By society's definition of beauty
Pretty body
Silky hair

Without her fashion flair Would they still care?

Then, things changed Her heart grew fond Of the many girls With hijab donned

Free were they
From what others had to say
Free were they
From a bad hair day
No one could tell
No one could see
For only they, were privy

So she tried Donned the hijab That very night Freedom...redefined

Here's a story of a girl
Who was caught in a quandary
Sought to seek beauty
Defined by society
Now she is free
That girl is me....

Awake

Nur Hidayah Abdul Hamid

Crystal clear as it is No doubts No worries Every day is like a breeze

She laughs She cries Never once did she ever pry

The world stays
She is that very same
Sound and sane

One day everything's changed She blames She hates Almost to stay at quit

Human she is Deliberately cease to think At anything

As sane as it would be, The sound that reaches to every peak Wakes her up from her sleep

She stares
She thinks
She hopes
And remember...

How could I forget? Her heart speaks Oblivious she is, not to the world But to Him

"As-salatu Khayrun Minan-nawm"

Indeed, it is

Awaken from her sleep Back to the place she has longed

There she is Upright and straight For whom she's stayed away To be before Him Again

She is awake

The Guiding Wind

Muzakkir Samat

We marvelled at spiders, balsam bombs, yo-yos and everything that made us laugh. Empty spaces were battlgrounds Trees were Tarzan Territory and no Child of Adam needed any passport to enter—only a child-like heart and to see what we see.

Our eyes were portals into worlds unchartered. Our smiles had a fragrance indistinguishable from the flowers we adored. Our faces drew annoyance

from adults who cannot recall what it felt like to be free; f loating—living in the gentle breeze of wonder.

Now, I seek the times when our spirits were as light like helium balloons

floating pressed against curved rays hugged by the cool air singing the tune of whistling winds...

That marvelling was not present where Beauty was not present and You are the Beautiful.

I wish to learn to be like me and see through the same pair of eye the sublimity in simplicity and to float guided once again by the wind of innocence.

I was lost and You guided me.

I was lost

wrdnee

You found me help and I was contented. But I forgot. I forgot too fast And I held on too tight To Your creation. I got lazy. I got complacent. I lose sight, I lose focus, and I lost hope. And now I'm ashamed. For here I am, crawling back to You With the same issue -asking for mercy. I told myself that I'd never learn. Still, You found me help and guided Oh, how ashamed am I for always being blinded by dunya. Ya Rabb forgive me. Ya Rabb blessed upon those You send to guide me. Ya Rabb.



AND HOLD FAST TO THE ROPE OF ALLAH

This year, **the Eleven Team** makes its debut as an ad-hoc committee consisting of members across the years and faculties. As the saying goes, one should never judge a book by its cover; may you then understand us better through the words we hold dear to our hearts.

"For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease."
Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease."
Surah 94 (Ash-Sharh)
Verses 5-6

Nuraznita - It's not about what precedes or what follows after. Hardship bears ease. The hardship He put us through is the same hardship He spares us ease with. And He didn't just promise us once. He promised us twice. So take heed, dear heart.

Maisharaqh - Growing up, life has taught me the greatest and invaluable lesson of life, death and grief. But I've learnt from the strongest pillars in my life that He does not forget those who remember him. For every bad, there is good. Be patient, have faith and insyaAllah, things will always look up in the end.

"And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed [Our message]. So ask the people of the message if you do not know." Surah 16 (An- Nahl) Verse 43

Idzhar - A reminder to myself to seek knowledge from its proper places. This is especially important in this day and age where claims of going back to the Quran and Sunnah are abound, but on whose understanding of the Ouran and Sunnah do we follow?

"...Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves..."

Surah 13 (Ar Ra`d) Verse 11

Atiqah - Every new day is a conscious struggle to be a better person than we were before. Work hard, pray harder.

"If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you; but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him? And upon Allah let the believers rely."

Surah 3 (Ali 'Imran)

Verse 160

Syahida - I realised that people whom I rely on are temporary; that one day they will cease being my pillar of support. It becomes comforting to always turn to Allah and place complete reliance and trust only in Him, for He is the best Disposer of all affairs.

"O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful." Surah 3 (Ali 'Imran) Verse 200

Huda - Essentially we are all struggling through life. But if you can find it within yourself to trust Allah, work hard, and be the absolute kindest you can be, in the end it might all be worth it.

To read more quranic verses significant to our members, keep a look out for our digital issue!