



teens' crossroads

Singapore's 1st Muslim Teenage Magazine

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Standing Out

features

The Truth About Peer Pressure

Education Without Borders

We Are The Forgetful Ones

**"Righteousness is good morality,
and wrongdoing is that which
wavers in your soul and which you
dislike people finding out about."**

MUHAMMAD (SAW)
as related by Abu Hurayrah (RA) ■
Imam Nawawi's Forty Hadith, No 26

teens crossroads

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Editor's Note

When we believe in something, we uphold those principles that keep us grounded in that which we believe in. Whether it is our faith, our passion, or our motivation, we learn to uphold them in varying degrees, outwardly and inwardly, since it is part of our personal values, part of our identity. In many situations, we may even find it hard to 'defend' our beliefs when 'confronted' with other views. Standing out, may mean stand out alone.

This edition of TC presents an enlightening perspective to discovering and upholding the identity that is truly our own. Learning how not to accede to peer pressure, discovering a colourful world that appreciates your unique experiences, and remembering our makeup as humans who forget and err are several means towards realisation of our self and embracing it, with grace and modesty.

As we journey on to discover our individual identities, may God lead us closer to Him so that as we learn to embrace our self, we learn to understand the Creator better too, *Insha'Allah*.



The Truth about Peer Pressure

Understand how peer pressure detracts you from your true identity.

TEXT BY SIM KHADIJAH MOHAMMED

We have all been warned by our elders about a danger known as 'peer pressure'. We have all been lectured about the ills of following our friends when they do undesirable things; we have been told that we will regret it when those who call themselves our friends now will one day abandon us after getting us into serious trouble. Yet many of us do not consider these to be sufficient reasons for staying away from characters we consider influential and trends we consider 'cool'. The question we often ask ourselves is, "What's the big deal?"

Views on Peer Pressure

Let me first start by highlighting the difference between how an adult views peer pressure and how a youth might view it. You see, as adults who have come to be very secure in their own identities, peer pressure is something examined in hindsight. Adults therefore view peer pressure in a negative light, because over the years, they have come to know who they are and what they stand for and therefore, have no need for the approval and acceptance of others.

But as youths, struggling to find your own identity and trying to build a reputation for yourselves, needing to feel a sense of belonging and being liked and accepted by your peers is a very serious and real concern. Nobody likes to feel like an outsider; nobody wants to be put down or be made to feel different. To youths, therefore, peer pressure is nothing more than the need to feel like you belong; that you have a shared identity.

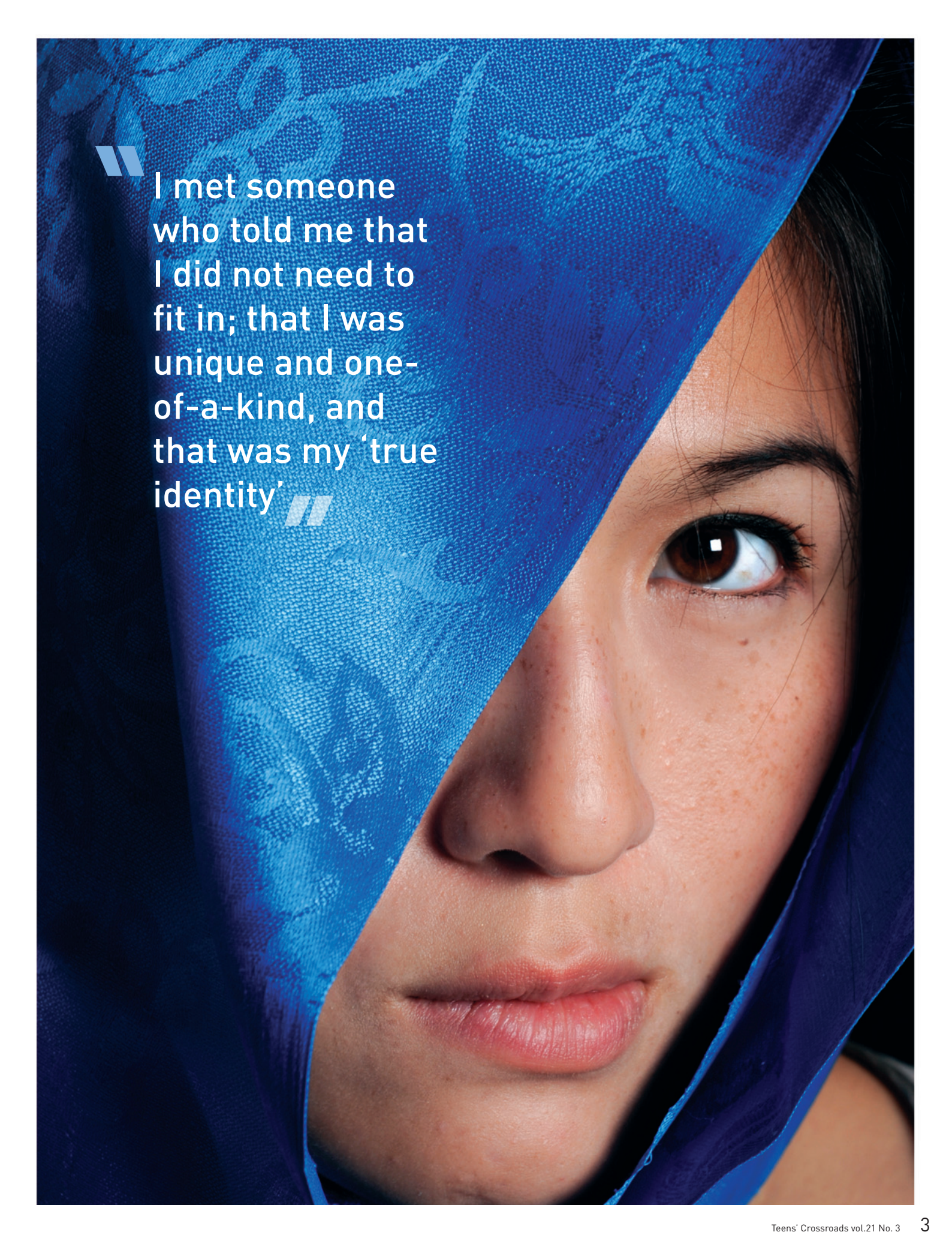
I remember how, growing up of mixed parentage, I often longed to find my true identity. I could not find it amongst my Chinese classmates, because even though we shared the same language, we had different religious beliefs. I

could not find it amongst my Malay classmates either, because even though we shared the same religious beliefs, language would always be a barrier between us as I spoke little or no Malay. I remember feeling like I could not really connect with anyone, no matter how hard I tried; and that in order to belong, I would need to sacrifice a part of who I was. It was a painful burden which I carried with me throughout my teenage years. But everything changed when I turned 17 and entered junior college.

Found my True Identity

There, I met someone who told me that I did not need to fit in; that I was unique and one-of-a-kind, and that was my 'true identity'. I could have friends who were close to me, but I did not need to be like them, as long as they could understand and appreciate me for who I was and what I stood for. I was stunned. It was as if someone had freed me from the notion that I needed to belong in order to be happy; that I could be happy, just by being who I was. That advice changed my life, and was the impetus I needed to decide who I wanted to be.

I began to think about what makes me, me; about my likes and dislikes, independent of the preference of others. I began to question whether my daily activities were really things that I had wanted to do, or whether I had just wanted to belong to a group and had, therefore, tagged along with everything that they did. I asked myself whether the way I dressed was really something that was representative of who I was, or whether I had let myself become influenced by what others perceived as fashionable. With time, I began to develop my own sense of style, my own sense of what was 'cool' and 'un-cool', and my own sense of self.



“ I met someone
who told me that
I did not need to
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Because I choose to

Today, if asked about myself, I will proudly identify myself as a Chinese Muslim, who is fluent in English and Mandarin. I will identify myself as a person who has never before stepped into a club, and who has never drunk a drop of alcohol or tried a cigarette – not because I have never been asked to, but because I chose to decline the offers. It was not easy growing up, going from college to university and then to the working world, repeatedly having to choose what I stood for, and repeatedly being told that I was being ‘un-cool’ or a ‘party pooper’. It was not easy, not getting invited to social events or feeling left out of the inner circle. But I made my choices based on who I knew myself to be and what I knew I stood for.

Over the years, I have gained the respect and mutual understanding of my peers, colleagues and bosses. Now, I am invited to functions but no one tries to pressure me into doing anything, because it is very clear to them what my answer will be. Everything I do, I do because I want to. And everything I do not do is a conscious choice on my part. I am known now, not for being ‘un-cool’ or ‘un-happening’, but for being steadfast in my beliefs and for being true to myself.

Robs you of your identity

You see, the truth about peer pressure is that it robs you of your own unique identity. You end up following trends that you do not necessarily want to be known for, and following in the footsteps of people you do not necessarily want to be. What you become is someone who blindly follows the crowd; a slave to the latest fads, be they good or bad. Your

personality and identity become malleable and inconsistent, and never as a result of your own choice or bidding. At the end of the day, you are not respected for having your own opinions, or for staying true to who you are, because nobody really knows who you are at all – including yourself. I know of so many adults today who are still unsure of their true identity and who are slaves to the pressures from their peers to act in a certain way or to be a certain person. But even though an identity crisis is a painful thing to experience, it is not irreversible. What is important is the will to take control of your own life and to chart your own future.

My advice to you? Figure out who you are and what you stand for, independent of the influence of anyone else. If it turns out that the people you socialise with share the same ideals as you, that is good news because you can be yourself freely around them. If, however, it turns out that you do not stand for the things that they stand for, make sure you do not let them change who you are – not even by an inch. Your identity and the dignity that comes with preserving it is a very valuable thing, and you should not compromise it for anyone. The only thing you need to be sure of, beyond any doubt, is that your identity is something you chose for yourself and not someone else’s choice for you – particularly someone who has no sense of his own identity. Remember: you have every right to decide what is ‘cool’ too – that right does not belong to anyone. **TE**

The writer is a practising lawyer in Singapore, and is a born Muslim of Chinese-Malay descent. Her father was a Convert to Islam in the 1970s.

“Your identity and the dignity that comes with preserving it is a very valuable thing, and you should not compromise it for anyone.”



Education without Borders

An exchange that is making a difference in the world, this conference is for students and is organised by students.

TEXT BY SITI ZUBEIDAH A KADIR

With Dubai's pride, the Burj Khalifah, standing magnificently in the background, we faced a massive open air stage. The crew was rushing to put the finishing touches for the opening ceremony of the *Education Without Borders* conference 2011.

Meanwhile, somewhere on the Burj Khalifah, the French Spiderman, Alain Robert was embodying determination by scaling what is currently the tallest building in the world – with a height of 828 metres, or to put it into perspective, more than 160 storeys.

Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony turned out to be just as breathtaking, with dazzling lights effects and amazing fireworks on a massive scale. From the moment the first item – a drum routine by African drummers – was performed, everybody's eyes were fixed to the stage. What resonated and summed up the *Education Without Borders* conference the most were the lyrics of the closing number – a song dedicated to world peace by two Emiratis, Khalifa Al Romaithi and Manal Al Ahli. Entitled 'The World', those lyrics were "Catastrophy, people living in hunger because of poverty... Here in UAE, supporting the project, EWB, to stop ignorance and fight it, a message the whole world now has gotten".

Amidst the crowd of thousands, the elaborate set up, and the passionate and eye-opening conversation I just had with my new friend Seren, feeling small and humbled was but an understatement.



What is EWB?

The *Education Without Borders* (EWB) conference hosted once every 2 years by the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) in Dubai, was conceptualised to encourage open communication and sharing among tertiary students who are passionate about making a difference in the world. From the inaugural conference in 2001, the event has grown to host 1,000 students from 300 Universities in over 131 countries. The theme of the conference has evolved from focusing on 'E-learning and its impact on the global education community' in 2001 to 'Innovative Solutions for Global Challenges' in 2009. The conference I attended in 2011 revolved around the theme 'Innovative Solutions to Global Challenges... Diverse Perspectives; Unified Action' and it was diverse indeed. Coupled with elaborate Arabian hospitality, the conference not only left its mark on me, but also, raw scars. I learnt about how passionate the student delegates were and the lengths they have gone through to solve what they felt were problems of the world.

This being the first overseas conference I have ever attended, the excitement was pretty much indescribable. From the time I received the email from the organisers indicating that my draft summary was accepted and that I was on my way to Dubai attending the conference 'for students by students', I was pretty much buzzed with euphoria.



How to apply

Although the application process on the website (<http://ewb.hct.ac.ae/>) may have looked daunting, it was actually a breeze. You need verification that you are a student of a tertiary institution, submit a draft based on the theme and several sub-themes of the conference and, if it is judged to be one of the best of the submissions, your trip to the conference in Dubai would be fully sponsored. For those who submit an essay, the chances of getting an invitation to the conference is higher than those who just submit an application without an essay. Delegates whose essays are selected would then be required to make a presentation at the conference. For those whose essays do not get selected (like me), room and board during the conference would be provided.

Arriving in Dubai, I was pleasantly surprised by the cool March weather, which upon glancing at the packed conference schedule, I knew I would not be able to savour. But it did not really seem to matter considering that this was not going to be a conventional holiday. Being the nerd that I am, I was actually looking forward to the workshops, presentations and seminars. The broad theme of the 2011 conference was broken down to subthemes for example, 'Education: enhancing access, ensuring success' or 'Science, engineering and technology: Solutions for a better future'. In total, 35 delegates were selected and they certainly did not disappoint the audience with their presentations. Giving passionate, well thought out presentations, these student delegates showed us that even the simplest actions can bring about positive changes.

Inspiring Activism by Students

For example, the incident of the tsunami disaster in Aceh inspired Nursing Student Sri Hindriyastuti from Diponegoro University to actively propagate participation from students. Her idea was for them to play a part in the victims' recovery stage, i.e. in helping them overcome the trauma especially if they were facing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) syndrome. Other delegates focused on issues closer to their hearts, for example, Cesar Fernandez, from USA made a documentary chronicling the challenges facing migrants as his grandparents once made the journey themselves.

Apart from listening to the delegates present, we also attended breakout groups led by mentors from various industries. I was privileged to attend a session with previous UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and the Former President of Sri Lanka Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga that discussed issues of equal access to education worldwide. Another memorable session I sat in was led by Yolanda Kakabadse, the President of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International. Listening to her narration about her personal journey – equipped only with her background in Educational Psychology and embracing her passion for environmental conservation – was beyond inspiring. At the same time, it was the question and answer (Q&A) session that boggled my mind. One particular question came from a student delegate who asked how she could encourage her community to conserve the snow leopards that roamed in her village. Imagine that!

Passion and Enthusiasm

Indeed it was the passion and enthusiasm of student delegates that left the deepest mark on me. In fact, I was introduced to it early as my roommate Seren was as accomplished as any 24-year-old could be. Saddened by the injustices done in the world, Seren was tireless in recruiting members and mentors for the global youth leadership movement she started, 'Peaceful Warriors for Change', which has united youth leaders in various societies who are passionate about addressing critical issues in their societies. Seren believed that individuals closest to the community are in the best position to solve the issues related to it, and that problem solving should always be a bottom-up, instead of a top-down effort.

To say the least, each person I spoke to at the conference resonated intelligence, compassion and a sheer determination to be a changing force in society – be it Seren and Dilan from Netherlands, Austin from USA, Keevee from South Africa, as well as Aminah from Zimbabwe. There was a certain unity that bound us together despite the vastly different backgrounds we came from.



Diversity

Pleasantly ironic, at the closing ceremony, diversity was the keyword. We were ushered to a formal dinner in the premises of the Palace in Abu Dhabi, and all delegates were encouraged to dress in the traditional costumes. All the colours of the costumes were a sheer feast for the eyes, and to top it off, another repeat performance of Arabian hospitality – a multi-course dinner under the moonlight, accompanied by sensational fireworks and a cultural dance and light display on the façade of the Palace, that left most of us in awe.

It was a short conference but nothing could have prepared me for the range of emotions I felt throughout the three days: awe, empowerment, privileged, and most importantly, humbled. The conference really opened my eyes to how big and diverse the world really is. If there were a key takeaway from my experience at the *Education Without Borders* conference in Dubai, it would be: to have hope that problems in the world could be eradicated if only we actively work to make it a better place. There is strength in diversity, more than we have ever realised. If you have ever dreamed about making a difference in the world, this conference may be a good place to start. **TE**





Stand up against peer pressure

"Your identity and the dignity that comes with preserving it is a very valuable thing, and you should not compromise it for anyone."

Reflections on the Malays

Alfian Sa'at's book, *The Malay Sketches*, leads readers to the answers for some long-standing questions about aspects of being Malay.

REVIEW BY LULU RAHMAN


The Malay Sketches contains various short essays written by the talented playwright and author, Alfian Sa'at. The words he used are simple yet they stir up such provoking thoughts. At every turn of the page, one is able to discover a gold nugget as each story tells a different experience and touches on different aspects of what it is like to be Malay. For the Malay readers, the stories order them to self-reflect on issues that they might have taken for granted previously or try to avoid. For the others, they allow them to discover facts unknown before and the changes the community had undergone over the years. The stories are written simply, in a singular linear narrative, and it is also through this that I have learnt of a new genre in writing – flash fiction pieces.

Whether intentional or not, the first story definitely caught my attention. *The Convert* is the story of a military combat engineer who fell in love with a Malay woman and converted when he married her. He wanted the whole she-bang of a wedding, complete with the traditional customary rites. However upon returning to his duties in the force, he found out he was side-lined for promotion and was even removed from a 'sensitive' department he was attached to. He noticed the changes even as they tried to make them as subtle as possible, and still he takes everything in his stride. The most striking thing about this story is its ending – his heartfelt reply when he was interviewed for the National Day celebrations video montage:

Q: "What will you defend?"

A: "I will defend my family. My beautiful wife and my one year old son."

Another story that stands out is *Cold Comfort*, a tale of a Malay medical student who treated a pregnant Malay girl in a hospital ward. He mulls over his less-than-common position and his thoughts on his patient at the same time as the girl was admiring him for his success. Their encounter was short yet impactful as readers are able to witness how these two vastly different individuals communicate using different value systems and conflicting outlooks in life. Alfian Sa'at has managed to transform this simple encounter between these two individuals into an assessment of the Malay community, the diversity within diversity itself, how multi-faceted the whole community actually is.

As readers delve deeper into the book, they are able to basically come up with answers to the long-standing questions that could have plagued their minds at one time or another. Are the Singaporean Malays just a bunch of lazy people leading a hedonistic lifestyle? No, we are a pretty diverse bunch. Are we too laid-back? In a fast-paced society like ours, that is actually a plus point. Are we stupid? Definitely not, though the stigma is just too strong that sometimes we actually believe it. The beauty of this book is the answers to the above questions are implied rather than blatantly thrown at our faces, left open for the readers to interpret in their own way. Will I recommend this book to other Malays? I do not need to since they will pick it up anyway. However, I strongly suspect they are not exactly the target audience. 

About the book

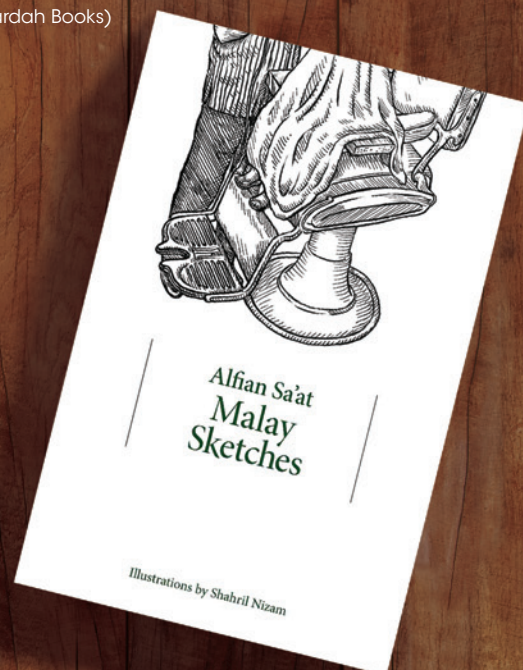
Title: *The Malay Sketches*

Author: Alfian Sa'at.

Illustrations: Sharil Nizam

Price: \$24.93

(Kinokuniya, Wardah Books)



Islam, Science, Philosophy

Learn about one of the Islamic
views on the roles of Science
and Philosophy.

TEXT BY DR WAFFIE MOHAMMED

The first revelation for Prophet Muhammad (SAW) commanded us to read and to research. "Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, Who created. Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful, - He Who taught (the use of) the Pen, - taught man that which he knew not" (Al-'Alaq, 96:01-05).

Imagine the Arabs at that time, who were not concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, were now called upon to learn to read and to research. The result of this led them to not only learn to read the Quran but also to collect the philosophies of the then known civilizations, translate them into Arabic, and begin building upon some and refuting others. An example of one who performed these was Imam Ghazali.

The Laws of Nature remains constant

Allah (SWT) says that the laws of nature remain constant (Yunus, 10:64). It was because Muslims in Spain understood this principle, and also knew from the Quran that the earth was round, that they worked with Columbus to discover a route to the East by going West.


The night cannot overtake the day, nor can the sun outstrip the moon, as they both function according to the set laws of nature. Allah (SWT) says, "It is not permitted to the sun to catch up the moon, nor can the night outstrip the Day: Each (Just) swims along in [its own] orbit (according to Law)" (Yasin, 36:40).

The Laws of Nature is perfect

Allah says, 'He Who created the seven skies one above another: no want of proportion will you see in the creation of (God) Most Gracious. So turn your vision again: see you any flaw? Again turn your vision a second time: (your) vision will come back to you dull and discomfited, in a state worn out" (Al-Mulk, 67:03-04).

Allah has placed at man's disposal whatever is in the skies and the earth. "Do you not see that God has subjected to your (use) all things in the skies and on earth, and has made His bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen? Yet there are among men those who dispute about God, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a Book to enlighten them!" (Luqman, 31:20).

It became the mission of man to investigate nature for the purpose of acquiring sustenance, survival, protection, etc. As he investigates, he discovers. For example, the electromagnetic barriers in the atmosphere, which were discovered centuries after the Quran was revealed, are mentioned in the Quran. Allah says, "And We have made, above you, seven tracts; and We are never unmindful of (Our) creation" (Al-Mu'minun, 23:17).



While investigating nature, Muslims remain guided by the scientific laws recorded in the Quran. For example, the moon's light is as a result of a reflection. "It is He who made the sun to be a shining glory and the moon to be a light (of beauty)" (Yunus, 10:05).

Allah (SWT) invites man to continue to investigate nature both scientifically and philosophically. Scientifically: "Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, – there are indeed Signs for men of understanding, – Men who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought): 'Our Lord! Not for naught have You created (all) this'" (Al-Imran, 03:190-191).

Philosophically: "Among His Signs is this, that He created you from dust; and then, – behold, you are men scattered (far and wide)! And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know. And among His Signs is the sleep that you take by night and by day; and the quest that you (make for livelihood) out of His bounty: verily, in that are Signs for those who listen" (Ar-Rum, 30:20-23).

Science is based on conjecture

- **Subject beholding object**

In scientific investigations, it is the subject (man) that is trying to behold the object. He may have many constraints, and as a result, he may have some knowledge of the object. Later on, others may discover more about the same object with improved apparatus and conditions.

- **How a thesis is produced**

- a) collection of data, from random samples
- b) classification of data, according to the scientist's own method
- c) preparation of a hypothesis
- d) different methods used to prove the hypothesis
- e) accepting the hypothesis as being correct under the conditions specified, and finalising it as a thesis

- **Finite cannot behold infinite**

While the scientific method may give us knowledge of the working of nature, it cannot give us sure knowledge of Who is Allah. A man is a finite being, and Allah (SWT) is infinite. As a result, anything said about Allah (SWT) by man is based on conjecture, and as Allah (SWT) says, it is not sure knowledge. "But they have no knowledge therein. They follow nothing but conjecture; and conjecture avails nothing against truth" (Al-Najm, 53:28).

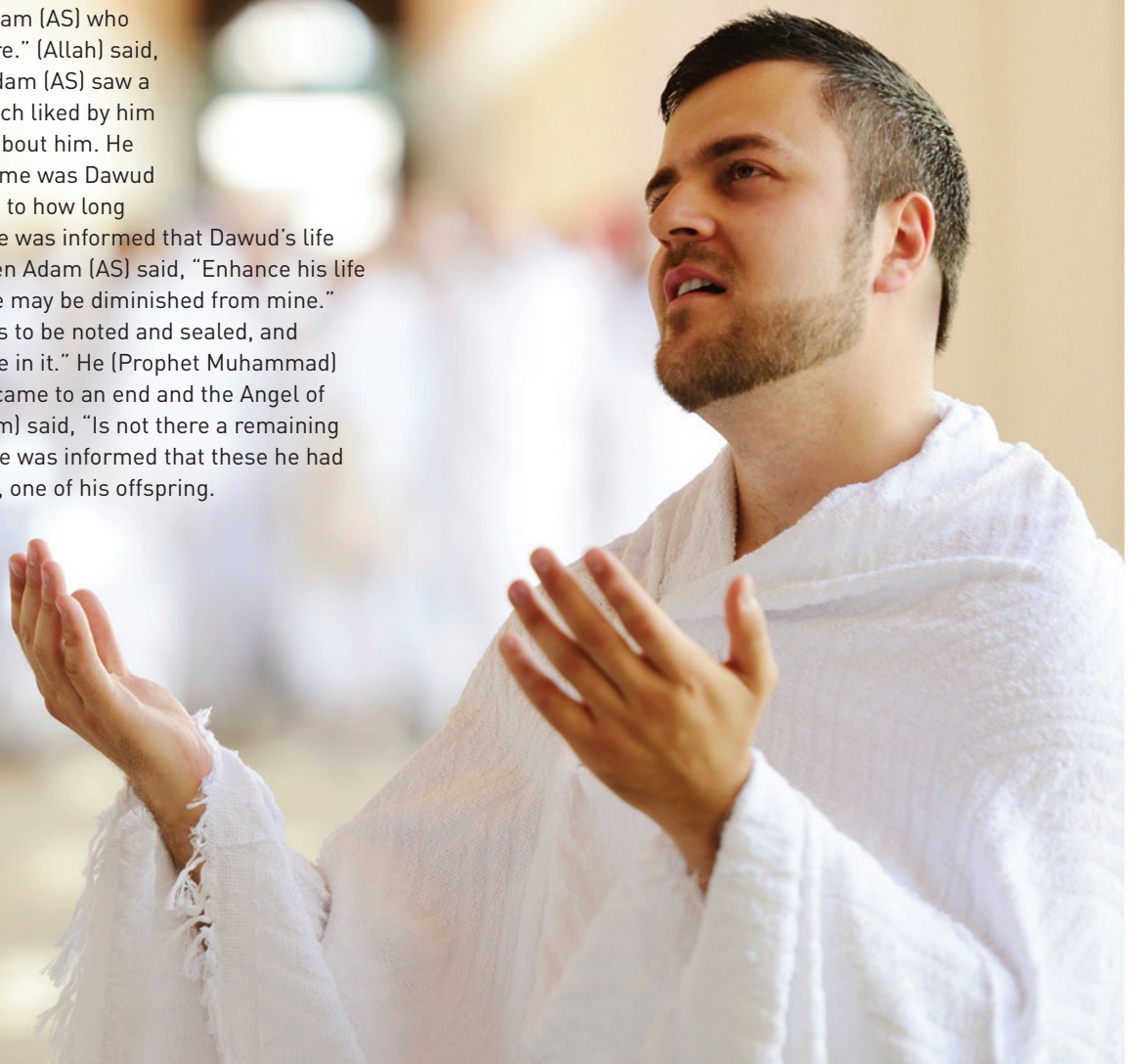
We can conclude that, science and philosophy are both necessary in this material universe, as they help us to understand nature and to harness it for our existence. We also know of their limitations, and the good Muslim concludes by believing that: Indeed it is a fact that only Allah (SWT) has knowledge and power over all things. **TE**

We are the Forgetful Ones

Understand the reason why we constantly need reminders of God.

TEXT BY UST BANI ALI

According to Abu Hurayrah (RA), Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, "When Allah created Adam (AS), He touched his back and all souls which are to be created up to the day of resurrection fell from his back, then He created a glow of light between their eyes, then He presented them to Adam (AS) who asked as to who they were." (Allah) said, "Your offspring." Then Adam (AS) saw a man whose light was much liked by him and he (Adam) inquired about him. He was informed that his name was Dawud (AS). Then he inquired as to how long Dawud (AS) would live; he was informed that Dawud's life would span 60 years. Then Adam (AS) said, "Enhance his life by 40 years and the same may be diminished from mine." He (Allah) said, "That was to be noted and sealed, and there would be no change in it." He (Prophet Muhammad) said, "When Adam's life came to an end and the Angel of death came to him, (Adam) said, "Is not there a remaining of 40 years in my life?" He was informed that these he had bestowed on Dawud (AS), one of his offspring.



Deny, forget, err

The Prophet (SAW) remarked that Adam (AS) denied it and, like him (Adam), his children also deny, and Adam forgot, so his children forget, and Adam committed a mistake, and so his children commit mistakes. Allah (SWT) refers to mankind as “*Insan*” in the Quran, which is connected to the word “*Nisyan*” meaning – forgetfulness. This is the definitive of human characteristics, a reality in human nature.

Thus, *Insan* is one who requires reminders – a challenge in human life when reconciling about the purpose of life, their origin and their final destination. As such Allah (SWT), the Merciful, sent down Wahiy (Revelations) as a form of reminder and appoints Prophets and Messengers (AS) throughout the history of humanity, perchance that human remember their Lord, Creator and Cherisher.

Allah’s first Reminder to Man

By His Mercy, Allah (SWT) gave Adam (AS) clear guidance, preparing him to shoulder the trial of life. Further, Allah (SWT) provided Adam (AS) and Hawa (Eve) with comfort and warned them of an impending danger.

Allah said, “Adam! He (*Iblis*) is an enemy to you and to your wife. So let him not drive both of you out of Paradise and

plunge you into affliction. (For in Paradise) neither are you hungry nor naked, nor face thirst or scorching heat” (Ta Ha, 20:117-119).

Now, Adam’s task is to remember and to guard themselves from Satan’s plots, for Adam (AS) himself had witnessed *Iblis*’s enmity, when he (Satan) refused to bow down before him (Adam) as commanded by Allah (SWT). Satan did not rest contently with his arrogance and feeling of superiority; he vowed to mislead Adam (AS) and his progeny.

Naturally, the progeny of Adam (AS) will continue to be tempted and tested till the end of time. “And if there comes to you from Satan an evil suggestion, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing” (Fussilat, 41:36).

The most beneficial form of protection from Satan is an abundance of remembrance of Allah (SWT). Ablution (*Wudu’*) and prayer (*solat*) are among the greatest means of protection, especially at the time of the emergence of anger and desire. It is also reported that recitations of the two Surahs (Al-Falaq and An-Nas), the recitation of *Surah al-Baqarah*, and especially the recitation of *Ayat Al-Kursi* (from *Al-Baqarah*, 02:255) are beneficial forms of seeking refuge in Allah (SWT) from evil. **TE**

“The most beneficial form of protection from Satan is an abundance of remembrance of Allah (SWT)”



FEELINGS

POEM BY MOHAMED SAMEER ZUHOORI

What is this pain which I feel?
Sealed inside, impossible to peal
So Mystifying...
Overshadowing a Pandora's Box

At times it's as easy as finding the same pair of socks
Other times, like I'm being eaten raw
Full course by the wildest fox,
Hands all locked.

No shade, gasping for breath
But when the fox goes away
Be thankful,
The light is on the way.
Though only for a while,
We would love it to stay
How can it stay?
When haste is present when we pray?

Haven't we noticed the paper takes it all in its stride?
Whether anger, love, joy or pain is being scribbled all over its side
Shame on me who claims
To love but not to obey
Then why should the fox be kept away?

You've got to taste both bliss and ruin
Only then you'll understand the worth of a win
Sure it comes and goes away
But what you've strived for
Rest assured it will be there to stay.

Hey, have you forgotten
We're just made of clay?
Be patient
When you're moulded this or that way
Follow the Mercy of The Worlds in deeds and say,
Do not disobey to have your own say

Oh Merciful One Never let us astray
From Your Straight Way.
Even though we might have questioned Your Ways
When it actually was, to keep us safe at Bay. **TC**



Soothing for the Soul

Yasmin Mogahed's book, *Reclaim Your Heart*, is a guide that speaks to the soul of the reader.

REVIEW BY LULU RAHMAN

This book comprises of a collection of brief essays on the various aspects of understanding and practising Islam. The book is divided into six topics – attachment, love, hardships, relationship with the creator, women's status and *ummah* (community) – while the last chapter is solely dedicated to poems. Though the book can be read and understood by both genders, I feel that the target audience is actually the *Muslimah* (female Muslims) as Yasmin writes as if she is actually confiding to a bunch of girlfriends while having an afternoon tea.

Her writing style is simple and concise but it does not stop her from conveying her points persuasively. The imagery used is uncomplicated and relatable as she chooses metaphors to illustrate her points effectively to her readers. All the essays are peppered with quotes from the Quran, the various Hadith and Sunnah, offering invaluable lessons in practising the teachings from these texts in an uncomplicated yet poignant way.

Why do People have to Leave Each Other is the essay that I feel most connected to. In it, she points out how highly we place our relation with the *dunya* (world) and get too easily attached to all its so-called beauty and glamour but in fact the *dunya* itself is not what we should aim for.


"What I didn't realise is that all the pain I had experienced in life was due to one thing and one thing only: love of the *dunya*. And that's why if we live in *dunya* with our hearts, it breaks us." (p.16)

"As soon as I began to have that realisation, a veil was lifted from my eyes. I started to see what my problem was. I was expecting this life to be what it is not, and was never meant to be: perfect." (p.17)

Another topic that a few of her essays dealt with is on bearing hardships and tackling calamities, speaking about her own experiences candidly on the daily life in a non-Muslim country in a transparent and benign manner. Through her essays, we realise why hardships are thrust upon us and how to make sense of them, and deal with them in a way that makes it a productive experience.

"And yet most people cannot fathom how adversity could possibly be good. Many do not recognise that hardship is in fact a purifier, which brings people back to their Lord." (p.85)

And to get through this, according to Yasmin, Allah (SWT) has provided the exact recipe: Allah (SWT) says: *"The present world is only an illusory pleasure: you are sure to be tested through your possessions and persons; you are sure to hear much that is hurtful from those who were given the Scripture before you and from those who associate others with God. If you are steadfast (have sabr) and mindful of God (have taqwa), that is the best course."* [Al-Imran, 03:185-186].

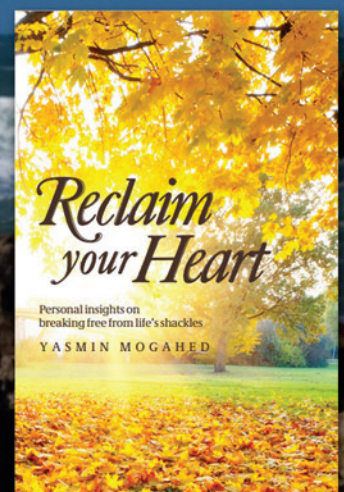
Thus is the beauty of this book. It keeps things simple so readers are able to make sense of how things happen the way it does – connecting the pieces of puzzle that we perceived were unrelated before and how these are all related back to the Creator. Personally, I feel this book is not just a collection of personal essays and anecdotes but can actually act as a daily instruction manual for its readers. For someone like me who is lacking in every way, I love the fact that this gem of a book does not 'lecture' or point out my weaknesses. It speaks to me, soothes my soul and acts as a guide. Best of all, it provides me with comfort and a renewed faith. 

About the book

Title: *Reclaim Your Heart*

Author: Yasmin Mogahed

Price: \$24.29 (www.bookdepository.com & Wardah Books)



**But those who believe and work
righteousness,- no burden do We
place on any soul, but that which it
can bear,- they will be Companions
of the Garden, therein to dwell
(for ever).**

TRANSLATION OF THE QURAN
AL-ARAF, THE HEIGHTS
(07:42)

teens crossroads

KINDNESS is the LANGUAGE which the DEAF can hear and the BLIND can see.

teens' crossroads

VOLUNTEERS needed

if you enjoy
research and writing, and
would like to be actively
involved in
producing our publications,
email to
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