



themu**slim**reader

this *reflection* of *me*

features

Who am I?

Iqbal - The Concept of *Self* & Sufism

From the Creation of Mankind

Mufti Dr Fatris visits Darul Arqam

Creation is about man in
as much as it is about God.



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A sacred Hadith is from Allah (SWT); as to the wording, it is from the Prophet (SAW). It is that which Allah (SWT) has communicated to His Prophet (SAW) through revelation or in dream, and the Prophet (SAW) has communicated it in his own words.

Abu Hurayrah (RA) narrated that Muhammad (SAW) said:

Allah (SWT) will say on the Day of Resurrection:

Where are those who love one another through My glory?

Today I shall give them shade in My shade, it being a day when there is no shade but My shade.



HADITH QUDSI (SACRED HADITH)
RELATED BY AL-BUKHARI, AND MALIK



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This Reflection of Me

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common terms

ABBREVIATIONS IN TMR

AS: 'Allayhis Salam –
Meaning: Peace be upon him;
Used for Prophet who came before Prophet
Muhamad (SAW)

DA: Darul Arqam Singapore / The Muslim
Converts' Association of Singapore

RA: Radiyallahu 'Anhu/'Anha/'Anhum –
Meaning: May Allah be pleased with him/her/them;
Used for Companions of Prophet Muhammad
(SAW)

SAW: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wassallam –
Meaning: Peace be upon him;
Used for Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

SWT: Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala –
Meaning: Glorified and Exalted One;
Used for Allah (SWT)

TERMS IN THIS EDITION

Adzan: Call to prayer
Alhamdulillah: Praise be to God
Da'wah: Invitation to understand Islam
Deen: Religion; way of life
Dzikr: Remembrance of Allah (SWT)
Hadith: Narrations about the words and deeds of
Prophet Muhammad (SAW)
Insha' Allah: If God wills
SubhanAllah: Glorious is God
Sunnah: Practices of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Arabic terms have been represented by simple
Roman alphabets, and their meanings briefly
provided, to ease your reading. For accurate
pronunciation and detailed meanings, it is highly
advised to refer to the original spelling and
meanings in Arabic.

TMR contains some of Allah's names and Quranic
verses. Please do not dispose in the trash. Kindly
keep, shred or recycle the magazine.

editorial note

This Reflection of Me

"We have indeed created man in the best of moulds, then do we abase him (to be) the lowest of the low, - except such as believe and do righteous deeds: For they shall have a reward unfailing"

(At-Tin, or The Fig / The Figtree, 09:04-06).

Everywhere and anywhere we turn; we seek connection of things, people and meanings – matters that carry relevance to our self. Evidently in the Quran, man has been created in the best of make, and to avoid falling to the lowest stature, we are told to believe and be righteous. With our creation, comes the purpose of our existence – as the righteous vicegerent of God on earth.

In this edition, TMR explores the aspects that make us human beings. Perfect, we are not; yet nobly endowed with the responsibility as vicegerent. As we learn that the insufficiencies we have can lead us towards the righteous characteristics, we understand better the blessed gift of conscience. Equipped with knowledge of creation and the Creator, as well as reminders of the relationship between these two, conscience gives human beings the unique advantage to be worthy of its purpose in creation.

Through the Mercy, Guidance, and Forgiveness – amongst other blessings – that we can seek from Allah (SWT), we realise that we are not left alone to deal with our efforts to be righteous. Our acknowledgement as weak beings helps to cultivate our remembrance of the Creator. And who else do we depend on to meet the purpose of our existence? Insha'Allah, while we strive towards righteousness, Allah (SWT) keeps us from falling to the lowest stature.



editor

aishah hussein
aishah@darul-arqam.org.sg

consulting editor

dr yamin cheng

contributors

ust bani m ali
carol 'aliya widjaya
hamid rahmatullah a razak
nur azreen a kalam
s k husain
shaik kadir

special thanks

carol 'aliya widjaya
dr fatris bakaram
ust irwan hadi
junaidi ali
munshif hussain
noormala saleh
razali tompang
dr yamin cheng

cover concept

sundance

technical advisor

zainal abidin nordin

publisher

darul arqam singapore
32 onan road, the galaxy
singapore 424484
phone: +65 6348 8344
fax: +65 6440 6724
www.darularqam.org.sg

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Who am I?

REALISE THE MEANING OF
OUR EXISTENCE AS HUMANS,
WHEN OUR HEARTS ALLUDE
TO GOD.

text | yamin cheng



For Muslims, God is the centre of life. God is everything to a Muslim such that in knowing God, we know what it is to be human.

As we stand before our very own creation as humans, we bring ourselves into the centre of our existence and ask: Why did God create me? Why did God bring me into this world? What does it mean for me to exist?

“Wa ma khalaqtu al-jinn wa al-insa illa li-ya’buduni: I have not created the Jinns and the humankind except that they should worship Me,” so says the Quran (Al-Dzariyyat, 51:56).

Worship God. So the purpose of creation is to worship God. Imagine yourself sitting in prayer all the time before the Almighty, moaning over the insufficiencies you have, repenting over the wrongs you have committed, wondering if you are going to heaven or hell. Is this worshipping God?

Is creation all about God, about every single thing bowing to Him, glorifying His Greatness, and singing praises in adoration of His splendid creation? Is existence everything about God and little about man?

Creation is about man in as much as it is about God. What is the point of my creation? What is the story of life? What does devotion to God entail upon my human meaning? How free am I to do things and to express my thoughts and feelings?

The first and most important thing to know is, we are God’s *Khalifah* (Vicegerent), on earth. “And your Lord said to the Angels: Certainly, I am to raise on earth a *khalifah*, a vicegerent,” says the Quran (Al-Baqarah, 02:30).

We are therefore God’s vicegerent on earth, bestowed with a special appointment to be leaders on earth, to turn earth into a garden of delight for living and habitation, and also to bring human beings together into a spirit of universal love among us. Our journey in life is to discover this special endowment of our creation, to realise this gift of life, and to portray the very meaning of humanity that we stand for.

ONE WHO WOULD SPREAD MISCHIEF

What makes us worthy to be vicegerents on earth? When God said to the Angels about wanting to raise on earth a vicegerent, the Angels became alarmed and said, “Alas! Why do you want to raise on earth one who would spread mischief and cause blood to spill, but we (the Angels) glorify you with praises and chant your Oneness?” And to which God replied, “I know what you know not.”

The Angels knew of this species of creation that when put on earth, will have in them the tendency to turn earth upside down. And when they were informed

I have not created the Jinns and the humankind except that they should worship Me

(Al-Dzariyyat, 51:56)

that this was going to happen, they could not hide their worst fears of this possibility.

Then God said to the Angels, after having created this species and Adam is his name, to name the things that God had taught them. The Angels said, "Glory be to You, no knowledge do we possess except those that you have taught us, for you are indeed most knowledgeable, most wise."

Then God turned to Adam (AS) and said, "O Adam, tell them the names of these," and to which Adam (AS) did. And when Adam (AS) finished telling the angels the names as instructed by God, God said to the Angels, "Did I not tell you that I am in knowledge of the hidden mysteries of the heavens and earth, and I am in knowledge of what you reveal and what you conceal?"

Thereafter, God instructed the Angels to bow in honour to Adam (AS), and the Angels did accordingly.

MORE WORTHY THAN THE ANGELS TO INHABIT EARTH

Earth is the place where we, human beings, dwell. Earth is also the place where we witness the mischiefs and spilling of blood by our very own species, echoing the worst fears of the angels. Yet, we are, in the sight of God, more worthy than the Angels to inhabit the earth, so that the Angels bow in honour of us. What therefore is special about us, the human race, that, despite our tendency to run down the earth, we are still honoured in good books by the Angels and appointed as God's vicegerents on earth?

What is it about knowledge that in naming them, we are worthy to be God's vicegerent, despite our nature as humans to spread mischiefs and spill blood?

As humans, we know what it is to be wise, what it is to love, what it is to be virtuous, and what it is to be perfect and beautiful. It is our human nature to be wise, loving, virtuous, and perfect. These are qualities that make us worthy to be vicegerents on earth. So how is it that we can be otherwise?

We can be otherwise – that is the opposite of the qualities of being wise, loving, virtuous, and perfect – when we assume that we are sufficient in every aspect of our human being-ness, with no need to be told of who we are and what we do with our life, and feeling no necessity to recognise our dependence on a higher source for our philosophy and direction of life.

SELF-CENTREDNESS IS THE CONSEQUENCE

When life is my own to decide, what is there to tell me who I am and what I should be doing? When everyone thinks the same along this line of thought, self-centredness will be the consequence, and as a result, humans will try to outdo one another to protect their self-interest, or to advance their self-interest, at the interest of others. And why not, since I am master of my own life and destiny?

Being humans, we are endowed with conscience – that aspect of our humanity that makes us uniquely human. Conscience is knowing, but knowing in such a way that we are aware what a thing is without being influenced by our passions and self-interest; and knowing through feeling the thing in terms of its true or not, right or otherwise. It is knowledge sinking into the depth of our intellection, judgment, feeling, and sense of right and wrong, true and false, at the same time. Conscience is the sum of wisdom, love, virtue, and perfection. A person, who steals, knows that stealing is wrong and will not advise his children to do the same. This is conscience.

Conscience is such that when we plunge into the darkness of the soul and do things against our good nature, we are able to bounce back against this state of the self and bring ourselves back into our good nature.



Our journey in life is to discover this special endowment of our creation, to realise this gift of life, and to portray the very meaning of humanity that we stand for

RETURN TO THE PATH, WISER

This is perhaps why humans are endowed as vicegerents on earth because, in swerving away from the path of wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and perfection, they can return to this path to become wiser, more loving, more virtuous, and more perfect in their human character.

But to return to this path, the *sirat al-mustaqim*, requires, first and foremost, the immediate recognition of oneself of his insufficiencies, that he could succumb to his own frailties and to cause grievances to himself and others. As he reflects upon these insufficiencies, he brings himself into the questions about what these insufficiencies are, why he could succumb to them, how these would affect his life, and what it means to be a wise, loving, virtuous, and perfect human being. Who am I and what am I for?

REALISING HIS HUMAN QUALITIES

Eventually he comes face to face with the answer. He is God's *khalifah*, vicegerent, on earth. He is a special creation of God that when he truly realises his qualities of the wise, loving, virtuous, and perfect, he is a being worthy to be called a human being in

the true sense of its meaning. He becomes the mirror reflection of all that is best, but most importantly, he becomes the mirror reflection of the beautiful names of God, so that in understanding the names he were taught, he understands the names of God, and in the final analysis, God Himself.

As such, to worship God means to bring oneself in contact with God and His Beautiful Names. In knowing God's Beautiful Names, one knows the sufficiencies of these Names as they are reflected in His creation, namely, in Nature and in man himself. When one sees how God is sufficient through knowing how splendidous the world is, one begins to recognise the insufficiencies of oneself, and to see how he is in need of God to guide him and provide for him the necessary fulfilments of life, without which he would drift away from his ideal self.

But why are the insufficiencies, and not the sufficiencies, that would make him feel complete and lofty in every sense of his human being-ness? Helen Keller (1880-1968), who became deaf and blind when she was little, had this to say, "The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart". It is the heart that alludes to God, prompting one to see more clearly who one is, what life stands for, and how one should go about with the gift of his mind, body, and senses. Keller said, "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision." It is the 'vision' of God that carries Keller through the 88 years of her deaf and blindness, and to which she said, "I always knew He was there, but I didn't know His name!" Keller may not be a Muslim, but her words do reflect what a Muslim heart stands to echo.

Perhaps these words could tell us much about insufficiencies, and about how humility could make us wiser, more compassionate, better, and more beautiful as a human being, and for which the title *Khalifah* significantly alludes to. TMR



From the Creation of Mankind

UNDERSTAND THE LESSONS
INSPIRED FROM THE
BEGINNING OF HUMANITY.

text | ust bani ali

It all began when Allah (SWT) decrees that, He will create a *Khalifah* (Vicegerent) on Earth. Behold, your Lord said to the Angels, “I will create a vicegerent on earth”. The Angels said, “Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? While we do celebrate Your praise and glorify Your holy (name)?” Allah (SWT) said, “I know what you know not” (Al-Baqarah 02:30).

Allah (SWT) informed the Angels about matters in creation as Allah (SWT) has vested the Angels with powers to serve in administering creation. The Angels, whom Allah (SWT) created with intelligence, merely enquired about a creature that is to be placed on earth by comparing their own nature with that of a creature on earth. The Angels knew that some creatures on earth are carnivorous by nature. The Angels, by nature have no desire, thus having no jealousy, envy or vainglory, only wanted to learn more about the *khalifah*. Furthermore, the Angels understood that this is a *Qada'* (Divine Decree of Allah) that is beyond question.

ADAM, THE KHALIFAH

Allah (SWT), in His Infinite Wisdom, created human's physical form, from clay. “We created man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape” (Al-Hijr, 15:26). Ibn Mas'ud (RA) said that Allah (SWT) sent Jibril (Gabriel) to the earth to get Him clay. The earth said, “I seek refuge in Allah from your decreasing my quantity or disfiguring me.” So Jibril returned without taking anything and he said, “My



With intelligence and a capacity to learn about the Creator and creation, Adam (AS) was entrusted as *Khalifah*

Lord, the land sought refuge in You, and it was granted.” So Allah (SWT) sent Mika’il (Michael) for the same purpose, and the land sought refuge with Allah (SWT) and it was granted. So he went back and said to Allah (SWT) what Jibril had said before him. Then Allah (SWT) sent the Angel of Death and the land sought refuge in Allah (SWT). The Angel of Death said, “I also seek refuge with Allah from returning without carrying out His command.” So he took clay from the face of the earth and mixed it. He did not take from one particular place, but rather he took white, red, and black clay (from different places).

The Angel of Death ascended with it, and He (Allah) soaked the clay till it became sticky. “He created man (Adam) from sounding clay like the clay of pottery” (Ar-Rahman, 55:14). Ibn Mas’ud (RA) further narrated, “So Allah shaped Adam, but he remained a figure of clay for forty years. The Angels went past him and were seized with fear by what they saw and *Iblis* (Satan) felt this fear most. He used to pass by the figure of Adam, buffeting it, which would make a sound like pottery.”

In a Hadith narrated by Sa’id bin Jubair, Adam (AS) was named ‘Adam’ because he was created from the skin of the earth (or earth’s crust). Abu Musa Ash’ari (RA) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “Allah created Adam from a handful of dust taken from different lands, so the children of Adam have been created according to the composition of the land. Therefore, from mankind we have white, red, black and yellow ones; we have good and evil, ease and sorrow, and what comes in between them.”

ALLAH GIVES LIFE

Creation’s existence is relative to non-existence, as in, it did not exist before. Allah (SWT) is *Al-Hayyu* – The Living, and *Al-Muhyi* – The Life Giver, as creation is alive through Allah’s Will, Power and Permission. Allah (SWT) begins life and describes it as, breathing His *Ruh* (Spirit) into Adam (AS) as the Quran relates, “When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathe into him (Adam) of My *Ruh* (spirit), fall you down in obeisance unto him (Adam)” (Sad, 38:72).

The *Ruh* (spirit) carried with it the faculties of human as mentioned in another verse of the Quran, “But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding), little thanks do you give!” (As-Sajdah 32:09).

Ibn Abbas (RA) narrated that Allah (SWT) breathed His spirit into Adam (AS) and when it reached his head, Adam (AS) sneezed. The Angels said, “Say *Alhamdulillah* (All praise belongs to Allah),” so Adam repeated, “*Alhamdulillah*”. Allah (SWT) said to Adam (AS), “Your Lord has granted you mercy.” When the spirit reached his eyes, Adam (AS) looked at the fruits of Paradise. When it reached his abdomen Adam

(AS) felt an appetite for food. He jumped hurriedly before the spirit could reach his legs, so that he could eat from the fruits of Paradise. Allah (SWT), therefore, said, “Man is created of haste” (Al-Anbiya’ 21:37).

Abu Hurayrah (RA) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said, “Allah created Adam from dust after He mixed the clay and left him for some time until it became sticky mud, after which Allah shaped him. After that Allah left him till it became like potter’s clay. *Iblis* (Satan) used to go past him saying: ‘You have been created for a great purpose.’ After that Allah breathed His spirit into him. The first thing into which the spirit passed was his eyes and then his nose. He sneezed. Allah said: ‘May your Lord have mercy upon you, O Adam! Go to those Angels and see what they would say.’ So Adam went and greeted them. They replied saying: ‘Peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of Allah.’ Allah said: ‘O Adam! This is your greeting and that of your offspring’” (Al-Bukhari). The *Salam* (greeting of peace) is a common practice for Muslims, a tradition since the beginning.

ALLAH GIVES KNOWLEDGE

Allah (SWT) granted Adam (AS) the ability to know the nature of all things and to summarise them by names, like the celestial bodies, elements in nature and the likes. Allah (SWT) implanted in Adam (AS) an insatiable need for love of knowledge and a desire to bequeath knowledge to his children. This was the reason for his creation and the secret in his glorification.

Furthermore, we understand that only mankind is given *Al-Bayan* (speech, intelligence, ability to reason). “(Allah) Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Quran. He has created man: He has taught him *Al-Bayan*” (Ar-Rahman, 55:01-04).

After being given the ability, the first experience that Adam (AS) went through was learning: “And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the Angels, and said: “Tell Me the names of these if you are right” (Al-Baqarah 02:31).

After Adam (AS) had learned the names of all things, along with their properties and uses, Allah (SWT) presented them to the Angels and asked them to name them. The Angels admitted their inability: “Glory be to You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Verily, You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.” O Adam! Inform them of their names and when he had informed them of their names, He said, “Did I not tell you that I know the unseen in the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing?” (Al-Baqarah, 02:32-33).

While *Iblis* revealed his disobedience and ingratitude, the Angels glorified Allah (SWT), submitted to Allah’s Divine

Will and accepted Adam's status in creation. The Angels are in need of knowledge too and Allah (SWT) did not deprive the Angels of knowledge, as the Angels also gained what Allah (SWT) taught through Adam's explanation.

VIRTUES OF NOBILITY IN ADAM (AS)

The Angels realised that Allah (SWT) bestowed upon Adam (AS) with an honourable characteristic. Adam has all the virtues of nobility within his physical form. With intelligence and a capacity to learn about the Creator and creation, Adam (AS) was entrusted with responsibility and accountability, as a *khalifah*. Above all, the Angels knew of Adam's extra feature of having desire essential for a worldly life, something the Angels could not experience. Thus Allah (SWT) created man as a rational and intelligent being with *Iman* (Faith) and *Akhlaq* (good nature). It is the very demand of His Mercy that He should provide guidance to mankind through this teaching.

HAWA'S (EVE) CREATION

Ibn Abbas (RA) narrated that Adam (AS) was alone in Paradise and did not have a companion from whom he could get tranquillity. He slept for some time and when he woke up, he saw a woman whom Allah (SWT) had created from his ribs. Ibn Abbas and Ibn Ishaq (RA) related that Hawa (Eve) was created from the shortest left rib of Adam (AS) while he was sleeping, and after a while she was clothed with flesh. So Adam (AS) asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "A woman." He asked, "Why have you been created?" She replied, "So that you could find tranquillity in me."

The Angels, trying to find out the extent of Adam's knowledge, asked him, "What is her name, O Adam?" He replied, "Hawa." They asked, "Why was she named so?" He replied, "Because she was created of me and I am a living being" (*Hawa* means 'living being'). Thus Adam (AS) responded with intelligence as he was taught by Allah (SWT) to name things and he appropriately named his companion, Hawa.

The Quran relates, "It is He Who has created you from a single person (Adam), and (then) He created from him his wife (Hawa), in order that he might enjoy the pleasure of living with her" (Al-Araf, 07:189). Thus Allah (SWT), the All-Wise, created a pair, a male and a female, for the purpose of sharing and living life with pleasure and for procreation.

ALLAH'S FIRST REMINDER

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 with comfort and warned them of an impending danger. "Then We 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 20:117-9).



Now, Adam's task is to remember and to guard themselves from *Iblis*' plots, for Adam (AS) himself had witnessed *Iblis*'s enmity, when he refused to bow down before him and declared that he is better. *Iblis* did not rest in content with this bragging of superiority but vowed to mislead Adam (AS) and his progeny.

LIVING IN THE GARDEN OF PARADISE

Adam (AS) and Hawa were admitted to the Garden and they lived freely: And We said: "O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Paradise and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight of things therein as wherever you will, but come not near this tree or you both will be of the wrong-doers" (Al-Baqarah, 02:35).

The location of this *Jannah* (literally, Garden or Paradise) is unknown to us as the Quran did not mention clearly and the commentators (on *Tafsir* [Interpretations] of the Quran) had different opinions. One opinion suggested that it was a paradise on the earth, located on a high place. Some said that it was the paradise of our refuge and that its place was in the heavens. Others said that it was another paradise that was created for Adam (AS) and Hawa. Others negated that statement because if it was the paradise of refuge, *Iblis*



Amanah is attaining inner peace that enhances faith

would have been forbidden entry and disobedience would have been forbidden as well. Caught in this dilemma, some scholars opined that it is possible that *Iblis* led Adam (AS) and Hawa astray on his way out of Paradise. An ethical approach is to accept what is in the Quran without questioning or presupposing where this paradise was located, as it is immaterial compared to the lessons from the incident that took place. Allah (SWT) knows best.

ALLAH'S MERCY ON ADAM (AS) AND HAWA

They left the Garden and descended upon the earth in sadness because of the error they had committed by disobeying Allah's command to stay away from eating the fruit of a particular tree. Adam (AS) and Hawa sought for forgiveness and Allah (SWT) accepted their repentance.

"Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful. We said: 'Get you down all from here (the Paradise); and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from Me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be companions of the Fire; they shall abide therein'" (Al-Baqarah, 02:37-39).

Allah (SWT) raised them up when they were downtrodden and further Allah (SWT) blessed them with *Maghfirah* (Forgiveness) and *Hidayah* (Divine Guidance), as mentioned. "Thereafter his Lord exalted him (i.e. Adam), accepted his repentance, and bestowed guidance upon him" (TaHa, 20:122).

The Mercy and Blessings from Allah (SWT) assured them not to be in despair and as such they gained a peaceful state of mind, free from regrets, to start a new life on earth. Allah (SWT) also makes it very clear that the benefit of following *Hidayah* is peace and salvation, for Adam (AS) and his progeny.

LESSONS FROM THE BEGINNING

The earliest events in the history of mankind are indeed full of valuable lessons, as they triggered the momentum of the life to come. There is a sequence and the consequences of events unfolding, caused by choices and deeds, which can be learnt. Adam (AS) represents all of humanity, so humanity's role as a species is clearly defined from the beginning.

In sequence, Adam (AS) was decreed to be the *khalifah* on earth, was given *Ilm* (knowledge), and blessed with honour by Allah (SWT). Then Adam (AS) was made to witness for himself obedience and disobedience as portrayed respectively by the Angels and *Iblis*. Adam (AS) also learnt of the consequence of being disobedient to Allah's command. Eventually, Adam (AS) was given a mate in Hawa and both of them were admitted into *Jannah* (the Garden) as a sign of Allah's Mercy. Allah entrusted Adam and Hawa to safeguard themselves from being *zalim* (those who wronged themselves), by giving *Hidayah* of being obedient to Allah's command for their own well-being and benefit. Events that unfold gave us a clear picture of the consequences of choice and deeds and the Will of Allah (SWT).

Allah (SWT) made *Rahmah* (Mercy) above everything else, incumbent upon Himself. Thus, Allah is *At-Tawwab-ur-Rahim* (Most assuredly the Acceptor of repentance). Thereafter, *Hidayah* – the key to salvation, is promised by Allah (SWT). Hence both Adam (AS) and Hawa understood from experiences the importance of *Iman* (Faith) in Allah (SWT) as the One and Only Protector, and to enjoin *Tawakkal* (putting complete trust in Allah) and depending on *Hidayah*, in order to see the clear difference between truth and falsehood.

These are the basis in life, in keeping the *Amanah* (Trust), which Allah has bestowed upon humanity and the consequence of keeping and fulfilling *Amanah* is attaining inner peace (*aman*) that enhances *Iman* (faith). Experiencing it with satisfaction and pleasure can propel us to excel further towards a virtuous life, while trusting in Allah (SWT), *Al-Wakil*, the Sole Benefactor. TMR

DEATH

text | mohamed sameer zuhoori

Death is coming, without any warning
But our desires are never ending
False hopes ever growing
Allah's bounties never finishing
The Most Loving, Never Charging
Though our ingratitude is ever increasing
Ya Allah! Most Forgiving,
Oversee our faults, All- Encompassing
Worthless water we were, made from nothing
Ever contending with the Self-Existing
Who fashioned us into something
Flesh & bones, What a beautiful coating!
Ingrates we are, Ego ever rising
Begin repenting
Everlasting bliss will only arrive after enduring.....
To you, Death is racing!
Only HE is Ever Living.
Ya Hayyu Ya Qayyum...
Most Forbearing, forgive my pretending.
Nastaghfirullah al-Azeem

Heart filled with Islam

AMERICAN MUSLIM AUTHOR,
LIFE AND BUSINESS COACH,
ZOHRA SARWARI, SHARES
ABOUT HER INSPIRATIONS
AND ABOUT HOW WE CAN
INTRODUCE THE PROPHET
(SAW) TO OUR CHILDREN.

interview | aishah hussein

transcription | carol widjaya

The Muslim Reader (TMR): What inspired you to be a life coach?

Zohra Sarwari (ZS): How I started really was when I changed my life. I had everything in my life, *MashaAllah*. I was working on two doctorate degrees, I had three houses, I had two nannies, I had the *dunya* right here in my hand. I have a great husband who helps, who cooks and does things, and three beautiful children. I mean, people were jealous of my life and they said, “You have everything.” But I did not know Allah, I did not know my purpose of living, even though I was a born Muslim. The fundamental was the five pillars, but that was the basic, and that was all I knew.

I started searching for happiness. What do I need to be happy? I got all this but I was not happy. So I started some soul searching and that was when I realised I needed Allah. I needed to know who He was; I needed my heart to be filled with Islam, with my *deen*, and to submit to Him. I knew I was not submitting. Imagine working on two PhDs yet never having read the Quran with meaning. And I was afraid to read the Quran with meaning because I knew the moment I read the Quran with meaning I had to submit. I knew that if I read this book and this is the words of Allah, then there is no excuse for me not to submit. So that was my first big step. The moment I did that, my life changed.

TMR: Beside your own experiences, where do you get your inspirations from?

ZS: You know, I read the best books, *MashaAllah*, whether it is Islamic books or non-Muslim's books. I read the best books and learn from the best teachers. One of my teachers was actually a speaker-millionaire. He was an official on ABC (American Broadcasting Company), and he was a multi-millionaire. He was a big speaker and an author, and I actually had a coaching session with him. I paid US\$15,000 for him to coach me; it was for six hours at his house. His sister was there, my daughter was with me. Six hours of one-on-one coaching right there with him. And I said 'Look, you read through my book, I am not a terrorist, what do you think?' And then he saw me as a Muslim woman and what is in my dream and ambition, Islamically.

I do have coaches that are non-Muslims, who are men, and who have achieved a lot. I go to learn from wherever I can; the stuff I do not need I throw in the garbage, and the haram I leave them. The good stuff I take them and try to move up to another level. The same goes for Muslims. I try to find the best Muslims out there who are doing it, and learn from them. The problem is, there are not a lot of Muslims that do it. It is in the sense that I see a lot of great Muslims, but they are lacking. They are not trying to balance themselves. If it is a sister, she is lacking in areas. If it is a brother, he is great outside but in the house, he is neglecting his wife and kids. I believe you need to be the best all-around and you need to start here. And so if I notice those things I just pick whatever I can. I always try to look at where I can get the most amount of benefit from these people, *Insha'Allah*.

Every year I still pay, I still read more books, I still get more CDs, I am always learning. And I tell people if you are not learning, especially the moms, then shame on you. How are you going to raise your kids? Every single day, you should be learning to be helping in teaching. *Masha'Allah* my kids, in so many ways know more than me. We are opening up this whole online school and my daughter is doing the foundation work. I have no clue how to do it. She is like "Mom, I got it."

TMR: Do you have anyone, with very valuable experience, that you would share about with everyone?

ZS: The Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim, I always talk about Prophet Muhammad (SAW). I bring him up in everything because he is my role model. And Allah (SWT) is everything to me. My biggest role model that He gave to us is Prophet Muhammad (SAW). So yes, I share him with everyone, whether they are Muslim or not. I do not care what their religion, nationality is. "This is my hero, this is why I am who I am." And they say "Why, what motivate you?" and I say, "This is the greatest man that lived. You have got to



The biggest asset in my house – not my furniture, not my clothes, not my shoes – it is my library, my Islamic library

read his biography.” Because he is. He is my inspiration and everything, because he taught me everything. He has the best character. And every now and then I go back to him, how did the Prophet (SAW) do this, how did the Prophet (SAW) do that, how did the Prophet (SAW) deal with this situation. He is whom I show to everyone. There is no one else greater than him, definitely.

TMR: How would you introduce the Prophet (SAW) to your kids? It is easy to educate them about Allah (SWT). He made everything, He decides everything for you, you must love Allah (SWT). How do you introduce the Prophet (SAW) to your children?

ZS: SubhanAllah, you start it out with anything else I would like to do with, besides saying that he was the Messenger of Allah and that he came to teach us. I get them books. I buy them books. I taught my kids to read at an early age. My daughter was the only one that actually went to school for almost two years. She went to kindergarten to read. But my son, I taught him how to read. And my younger one, he started reading at two and a half, MashaAllah. The other one that started reading at four, when he was about 6, came to me crying. So I asked “Habibi, what is wrong? Why are you crying?” And he goes “Mom, I am not crying because anyone hurt me. I was just reading Prophet Yusuf’s story. How can his brothers do this to him? How can his brothers be so cruel when Yusuf (AS) was just a kid? And look how forgiving he was.”

So I introduced it to them through different multimedia. Be it books, be it telling them and showing them examples. These were all the Messengers and I started off with Adam (AS). So you go down the list, and when it is time for the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), it is so different because their hearts have already been knowing about the Messengers of Allah. Being the teacher teaching us, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is the one that is greatest of them all, the greatest teacher.

You start with the beginning of life and then you go down slowly. And you give them different multimedia. The biggest asset in my house – not my furniture, I do not have any; it is not my clothes, I don’t really care about it; it is not my shoes, I have maybe two pairs – I am being really honest, it is my library, my Islamic library. I buy the best books for my kids from all over the world.

They themselves invest their money in books. My daughter just spent this year maybe US\$800 on books. She has nothing left right now. She is writing two more books and the editor needs like US\$150 to edit her books and she says, “I do not have any money for editing.” I told her that she spent everything she had on books. She needs to think how to balance. So now, she knows that she needs to work more so she can save money to get her books edited.

I teach them that and they say it is not a loss to see the Prophet (SAW). The book is 1,000 pages and it is like US\$60 of an investment. They say so. I show them the difference of an investment and a waste. So I tell them “You make the decision.”

You need to start from the beginning. Do not come to me when your child is 18 years old and ask “Why is my kid being disobedient”, “Why are they yelling at me”, “Why are they not obeying me”. What were you doing at the beginning? What you do at the beginning is what happens at the end. Putting garbage, you are going to get garbage. It is up to you to make that decision. Now if you are at the end, you put all the things together because it already happened; now, what can we do to change these things? That is a whole different class. **TMR**

This is an excerpt from the entire interview. Insha’Allah, TMR will publish more from the interview with Zohra Sarwari in future editions.



Iqbal: The Concept of **Self and Sufism**

SIR MOHAMMED IQBAL,
THE POET AND SCHOLAR,
BELIEVES THAT LIFE IS AN
ACTIVITY, NOT PASSIVITY.

text | sk husain

*Khudi ko kar buland itna ke har taqdeer se
pehle
Khuda bande se khud poochhe bata teri raza
kya hai.*

(Elevate the Self to such heights that, before issuing every decree of destiny, God Himself should ask (His) servant tell me what is your wish.)

*Ae Tair-e-Lahooti! Us rizq se maut achchhi
jis rizq se aati ho parwaz mein kotahi.*

(O bird who flies to the Throne of God, you must keep this truth in sight:

To suffer death is far nobler than bread that clogs your upward flight.)

The above couplets in Urdu, the language of some 400 million people in South Asia and across the world, are from the poetry of Mohammed Iqbal, one of the most outstanding and influential poet-philosophers, Islamic thinkers and scholars of the 20th century.

The first couplet highlights the significance of the Self in an individual as the source through which one can take oneself closest to the Ultimate (Allah Almighty), and the second couplet explains Iqbal's philosophy of the purpose of life, which is effort and struggle, and not passive attitude like that of some mystics.

Both these couplets are from *Bal-e-Jibril* (Gabriel's Wing), one of Iqbal's three books of poetry in Urdu, published in 1935. The other two books are *Bang-e-Dara* (The Call of the Marching Bell), published in 1924, and *Zarb-e-Kalim* (The Rod of Moses), published in 1936.

Before discussing the twin subjects of the Self and Sufism (*tasawwuf*, or mysticism) and what Iqbal means by them, it seems necessary to give a brief introduction of the poet and his work.

POET OF THE EAST

Iqbal was born in 1877 in Sialkot, a town of the Indian subcontinent that went to Pakistan after partition in 1947. Educated initially by private tutors in languages and writing, history, poetry and religion, Iqbal became proficient in several languages and the skill of writing prose and poetry. Iqbal studied philosophy, English literature and Arabic at the Government College in Lahore (now in Pakistan) and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1892, graduating *cum laude*.

While studying for his master's, Iqbal came under the wings of Sir Thomas Arnold, a scholar of Islam and modern philosophy at the college. Sir Arnold exposed young Iqbal to Western culture and ideas, and served as a bridge for

him between the ideas of East and West. At Sir Arnold's encouragement, Iqbal travelled to and spent many years studying in Europe. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Trinity College at Cambridge in 1907, while simultaneously studying law at Lincoln's Inn, from where he qualified as a barrister in 1908. The same year he returned to India. A doctorate in philosophy, Iqbal was knighted in 1922 by King George V, who gave him the title of 'Sir'. Iqbal died in 1938.

Commonly known as the Poet of the East and *Hakeem-ul-Ummat* (sage of the global Muslim community), Iqbal's poetry in Urdu, Arabic and Persian is considered to be among the greatest of the modern era, and his vision of an independent state for the Muslims of British India inspired the creation of Pakistan.

Referred to as *Ulama* (Scholar), Iqbal showed thoughts in his work focused on the spiritual direction and development of human society, and centred on experiences from his travel and stay in Western Europe and the Middle East. He was profoundly influenced by Western philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Henri Bergson, and soon became a strong critic of Western society's separation of religion from state and what he perceived as its obsession with materialistic pursuits.

SPIRITUAL AND POLITICAL REVIVALISM

Iqbal was a strong proponent of the spiritual and political revival of Islamic civilisation and culture. The poetry and philosophy of Maulana Rumi, a 13th century Persian poet, jurist, theologian and Sufi, bore the deepest influence on Iqbal's mind. Deeply grounded in religion since childhood, Iqbal would begin intensely concentrating on the study of Islam, the culture and history of Islamic civilisation and its political future.

Iqbal would feature Rumi in the role of a guide in many of his poems, and his works focused on reminding his readers of the past glories of Islamic civilisation, and delivering a message of a pure, spiritual focus on Islam as a source for socio-political liberation and greatness. Iqbal denounced political divisions within and among Muslim nations, and frequently alluded to and spoke in terms of the *Ummah* (Community).

In 1915, he published his first collection of poetry, *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self) in Persian. The poems delve into the concepts of ego and emphasise the spirit and the Self from a religious and spiritual perspective.

Iqbal has gone so deep into the ocean of the Self that it has become difficult for a common person to dive with him to that depth. Various prominent Islamic scholars have defined the complex and complicated concept of the Self

as enunciated by Iqbal in the light of the Quran, Hadith and certain incidents that occurred during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

To writer and academic Asif Iqbal Khan, the Self by Iqbal is taken to mean a sort of system or unity of psycho-physical experiences. He says, "We may analyse our mental states, at any moment of our life, into certain elementary experiences, which, however, never exist in a vacuum. These experiences are found as parts of an organic unity but this unity does not exist apart from its constituent states."

Prof Muhammad Munawwar, a prominent Iqbal scholar, notes, "One must think of the highly negative significance in Persian of the word *Khudi* (Self) with its implications of selfishness, egotism and similar objectionable meanings. Iqbal gives this word a new meaning as Self, Personality, Ego in an absolutely positive meaning."

Asrar-e-Khudi, Iqbal's first philosophical poetry book, deals mainly with the individual and is concerned with the philosophy of religion. The poems emphasise the spirit and the Self from a religious and spiritual perspective. *Rumuz-e-Bekhudi* (The Secrets of Selflessness), his second book in Persian published in 1918, discusses the interaction between individual and society.

In *Asrar-e-Khudi*, considered to be his finest poetic work, Iqbal explains his philosophy of the Self. He proves by various means that the whole universe obeys the will of the Self. Iqbal condemns self-destruction. For him, the aim of life is self-realisation and self-knowledge. He charts the stages through which the Self has to pass before finally arriving at its point of perfection, enabling the knower of the Self to become the vicegerent of Allah on earth. He believes the answers to essential questions regarding the Self are important in determining morality for both the society and the individual.

In *Asrar-e-Khudi*, he says that the system of the universe originates in the Self and the continuation of the life of all individuals depends on strengthening the Self:

*The form of existence is an effect of the Self,
Whatsoever thou seest is a secret of the Self,
When the Self awoke to consciousness.
It revealed the universe of Thought.
A hundred words are hidden in its essence:
Self-affirmation brings not-self to light.*

To Iqbal, the Self is strengthened by Love:

*The luminous point whose name is the Self
Is the life-spark beneath our dust.
By Love it is made more lasting.*

*More living, more burning, more glowing.
From Love proceeds the radiance of its being.
And the development of its unknown possibilities.*

Iqbal further says that when the Self is strengthened by Love, it gains dominion over the outward and inward forces of the universe:

*When the Self is made strong by Love
Its power rules the whole world.
The Heavenly Sage who adorned the sky with stars
Plucked these buds from the bough of the Self.
Its hand becomes God's hand,
The moon is split by its fingers-
It is the arbitrator in all the quarrels of the world.*

Iqbal says that the purpose of the Muslim's life is to exalt the Word of Allah (SWT) and that the *Jihad* (physical struggle), if it be prompted by land-hunger, is unlawful in the sight of Islam:

*Imbue thine heart With the tincture of Allah,
Give honour and glory to Love!
The Muslim's nature prevails by means of love:
The Muslim, if he be not loving, is an infidel.*

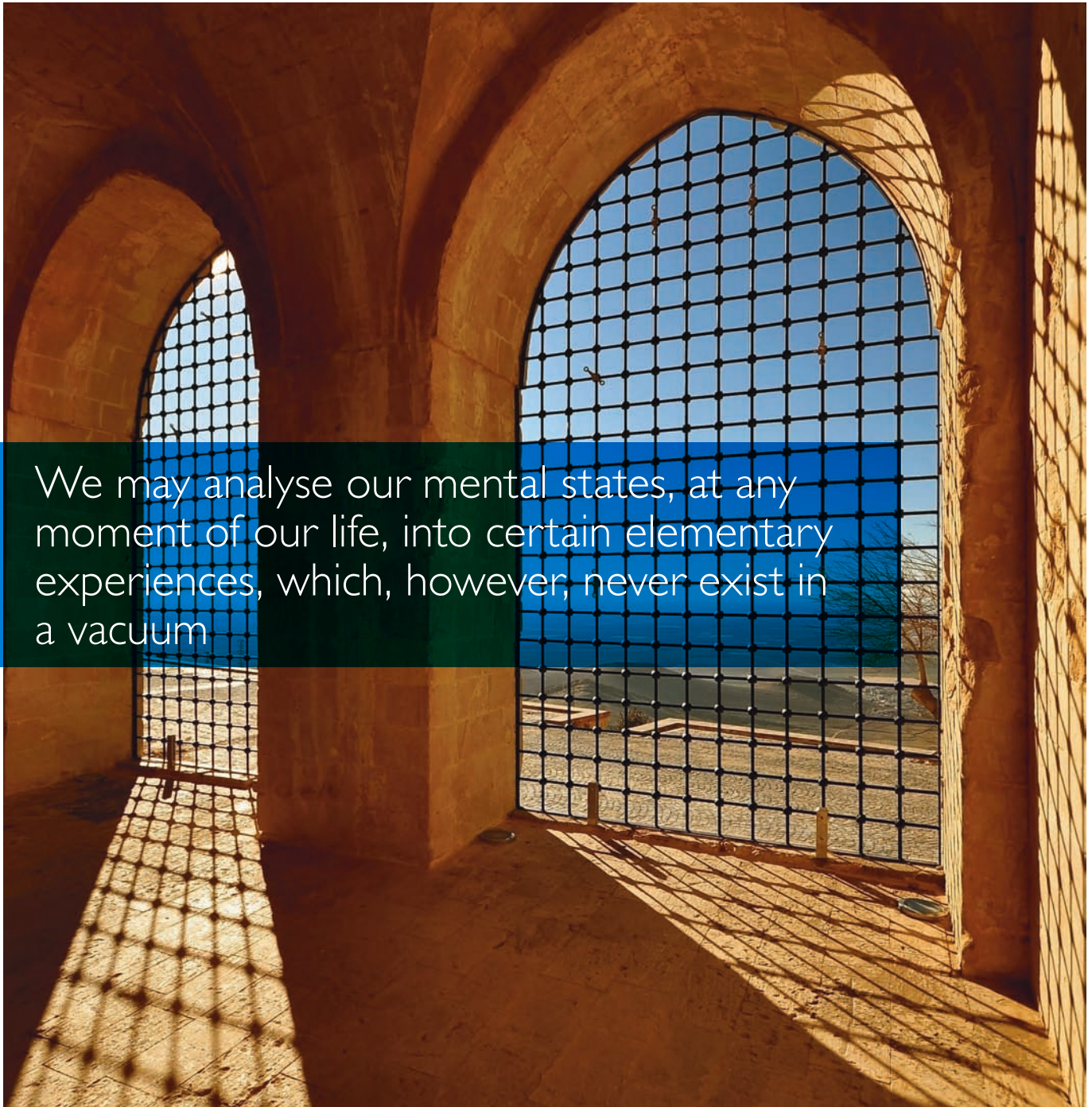
VIEW ON SUFISM

Looking at his book the *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, a timeless intellectual challenge of the first rank, it appears that Iqbal is inclined to accept mysticism as an experience. It is the nature of mystic experience which has always been a point of discussion among the scholars and Sufis.

Pakistani Islamic scholar Dr Khalid Alavi says Iqbal's treatment of mysticism is twofold. He accepts mystic experience as a source of knowledge and a useful way of approaching reality. Since his concept of Islam is not of a monastic order, and he perceives Islam as a unifying force between the spiritual and temporal world, so he does not accept a passive attitude. To him "the function of Sufism in Islam has been to systematise mystic experience; though it must be admitted, that Ibn-i-Khaldun was the only Muslim who approached it in a thoroughly scientific spirit."

Iqbal's philosophy of the purpose of life is Sufi: he defines the human being as *Tair-e-Lahooti* (a traveller to the Realm of the Unknowable and Unlimited). *Lahoot* is a Sufi term, and the purpose of our Creation is to know and draw near our Lord. This is pure Sufism.

Iqbal has a critical view of mysticism. His criticism is on two different bases. He believes that life is activity, and a person having communication with God cannot be a passive individual. A human being coming in touch with the



We may analyse our mental states, at any moment of our life, into certain elementary experiences, which, however, never exist in a vacuum

Supreme Being is illuminated. He becomes a moving spirit in the society. It seems that such an individual is having a burning fire within him and he is part of God's activity in this world. To him, a Sufi is a creative and active agent of Divine Will. He criticises those who cause passivity and create inactiveness among the Muslims.

Iqbal says:

"If a devotee is free, his spiritual stations are self-restraint, self-respect and a shout of joy that 'I am the creative truth'.

But if he is subjugated and enslaved, his pantheism shows that he is dead, he himself is a grave, and also a sudden death."

His message to the Sufis is very clear:

*"Come out of the monasteries and follow the example of Shabbir (martyrdom);
for the monastic life is just grief and affliction.
Your religion and morality show signs of monasticism.
This is the state of decay which is the symptom of every
dying nation."* TMR

Spirituality behind Prayer and *Dzikr*

EXPLORE THE DEEPER
MEANINGS OF SOLAT
(PRAYER) AND *DZIKR*
(REMEMBRANCE OF GOD)
AND FEEL CLOSER TO OUR
CREATOR.

text | hamid rahmatullah a razak

How many of us have had days when all we gained at the end of multiple *raka'ats* (units of prayer) of a supererogatory (*sunnah*) prayer were merely sore ankles and creaking knees?

Or have there been instances when our throats were left dry and yearning for a gulp of ice-cold water after a long session of *dzikr* (recitation of names of God). Where we were supposed to fill our hearts with spiritual food, all we were left doing was merely paying lip service.

The above questions are not posed with accusatory intents, but they merely illustrate what happened to all of us at some point in our lives.

A CENTRAL ELEMENT

Prayer (*Solat*) is one of the central elements of Islamic practice and worship. Indeed, it is the second of the Five Pillars of Islam and, along with the testimony of faith, the pilgrimage of *Haj*, fasting the month of *Ramadhan* and paying the poor tax, forms the essential framework of religious life for Muslims around the world. More than that, the observance of the ritual prayer forms the framework of each Muslim's day, from the pre-dawn prayer to the night prayer that precedes slumber.

Being something so basic and fundamental, therein lies the risk of it being interpreted and performed purely in its ritual manner. Although the individual reaps the full rewards of performing the prayer in its ritual sense, is

there something more to be attained out of it? Let us explore the spirituality behind the prayer, as we know it, and *dzikr*, the remembrance of Allah (SWT).

PRAYER IS ASCENSION

The five daily prayers were a gift handed by Allah (SWT) to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during the blessed journey of *Mi'raj* (The Ascension). In contrast, the other pillars of Islam were received through revelation with the intermediation of the Archangel *Jibril* (AS). This shows the unique nature of the prayers and its specialty in relation to the other four pillars of Islam. In fact, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself says, "Prayer is the ascension (*Mi'raj*) of the believer." With this in mind, what is our approach to prayer?

In order to fully comprehend and assimilate a concept, one has to seek meaning in it. Not everything in creation can be defined but every fold of creation has a meaning to it. Similarly, what is the meaning to prayer? Why pray? I see prayer as a dialogue between My Creator and me. It is during prayer that I express my love for Him and it is during prayer that I tell Him of my needs. It is this intimate communication with Allah (SWT) that fills a need in my soul that cannot be met in any other way. By *Fitrah* (Nature), Man has always felt the need to be more intimate with His Creator and He has given us the prayer to fulfil this special need.

Allah (SWT) says in the Quran, I have not created the Jinns and the humankind except that they should *worship Me*" (Al-Dzariyyat, 51:56). Ibn Abbas (RA), an esteemed *Mufaasir* (Quranic interpreter), explained the deeper meaning behind the above-mentioned verse that "... except that they should *know Me*." This is the spirituality behind the prayer. Through prayer, we acquaint ourselves with Allah (SWT). With every prayer, we get to know Him better. With every well-performed prayer, we seek His Intimacy. Allah (SWT) says in a Hadith Qudsi (Sacred Hadith), "O My servant! If you take one step towards Me, I take ten towards you." Allah (SWT) is not in need of our prayers; we are the ones in need.

ELEMENTS OF THE PRAYER

Prayer essentially comprises three basic elements - (i) feeling of respect, reverence and awe of Him in the heart, (ii) remembrance of Allah (SWT) by tongue and (iii) showing bodily respect and reverence to Allah (SWT) at the utmost degree. In Sufistic terms, this is called *tazallul* (excessive humility). In order to achieve the spirituality of prayer, *tazallul* is pertinent. It is only through humility that we realise our truest form and reality. After shedding all

the "skins of *Duniya* (the world)", we stand as nothing but in awe before the presence of our Creator, arms folded and back arched forward, our tongues reciting His praises. It is at this moment when ascension occurs. It is at this moment that we truly know the reality of Allah (SWT).

However, not everyone is able to explore and achieve the spirituality in prayer. Allah (SWT) says, "So woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers" (Al-Maun, 107:04-05). Of the same, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is reported to have said, "There are many worshippers who perform the prayer but what they obtain is nothing but sleeplessness and distress." Why is this so?

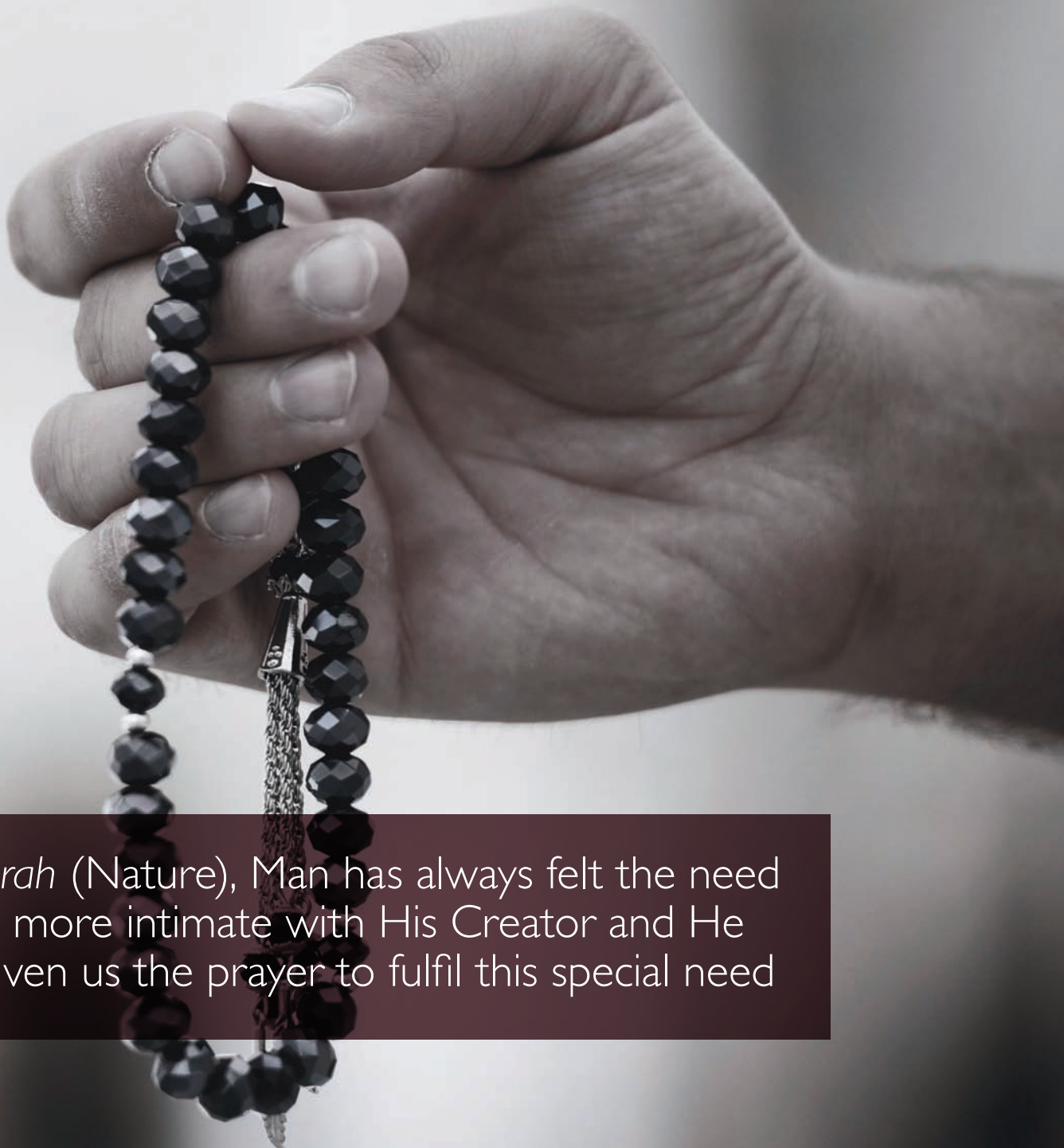
We are trapped in the world today – both physically and spiritually. When was the last time we had some absolute peace of mind, some time to ourselves or a period of tranquillity to cast our thoughts on creation and The Creator? The accountant is busy calculating to the last dollar and cents during the third *raka'at* of the *Maghrib* (Sunset) prayer while the businessman is thinking of whom he can next deal with during the first *raka'at* of the *Fajr* (Dawn) prayer. We are indeed caught in this vicious cycle and what we need is a weapon to break it.

DZIKR IS THE WEAPON

I see *dzikr*, as an extension of the ritual prayer. *Dzikr* is a dynamic phenomenon that should be on-going in the hearts and minds of Muslims. It is simply not sufficient or justified by any means to remember him for only five times a day. Allah (SWT) warns, "And whoever turns himself away from the remembrance of the Most Gracious One, We appoint for him a devil to be his associate. And (these devils) turn them away from the way (of Allah) while they think that they are guided right" (Al-Zukhruf, 43:36-37).

Allah (SWT) also says, "So remember me and I remember you. Give thanks to Me and do not be ungrateful" (Al-Baqarah, 02:152). Allah (SWT) is always thinking about us. How much of our time are we willing to spend in His Thought?

Let us not confine prayer to the physical act of performing the prescribed five times in a day rituals. Prayer is deeper than that. When perfected and performed with full knowledge of its essence, prayer will bring us to the heights of spirituality. May our exploration of the spirituality of prayer and *dzikr* continue beyond this page. May Allah (SWT) reward us with a smile of spiritual satisfaction at the end of our next prayer. TMR



By *Fitrah* (Nature), Man has always felt the need to be more intimate with His Creator and He has given us the prayer to fulfil this special need



Spreading Love and Peace with Roses

DISTRIBUTE ROSES TO SHARE
ISLAM WITH FRIENDS OF
OTHER FAITH.

text | shaik kadir



The rose, the ‘queen of flowers’, is fragrant and soft, and is among the most beautiful and admired flowers with a number of uses (like in cosmetics, medicines, drinks and cooking) that raise the flower to a great height of respect and appreciation.

The rose is also a symbol for beauty and purity. So, it is an appropriate flower adopted as a gift to spread love and peace and promote a better understanding of Islam. Muslims, at least at three different places in the world, have used the rose to share Islam with non-Muslims in recent time.

Singapore Muslim youths did it in November 2012 in an event called ‘Roses of Peace’. Similar rose-distribution events with the same purpose were held in Birmingham, UK, and in Oslo, Norway in 2012.

In the last decade or so, there have been many offensive incidents by unscrupulous people that include the burning of copies of the Quran and the ridiculing of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through cartoons. Recently, an Islam-hate movie made news headlines around the world.

There have also been wrongdoings by so-called Muslims, such as revenge terrorist acts and suicide bombings that had killed both Muslims and non-Muslims. Then, just in October 2012, there was the attempted killing of a young Pakistani woman who promoted education for girls in Pakistan.

All these mindless and outrageous acts have greatly angered Muslims around the world.

Some Muslims in some parts of the world had responded by holding demonstrations, usually well-intentioned protests that sometimes went awry, becoming unruly.

Sometimes the protests became violent, resulting in the destruction of vehicles and properties and serious injuries. Such wild protests and unruly behaviour do not gain the sympathy of non-Muslims, instead they may wonder if Islam is an aggressive religion. Muslims get a bad name.

The truth is, Islam is not an aggressive religion but a peaceful one. It allows retaliation only when attacked by enemies and that too after peaceful settlements had failed.

Religious conflict, especially provocations on Muslims, would always go on from time to time. These provocations are usually based on ignorance, and sometimes with the excuse of freedom of speech, but should Muslims go out into the streets to protest at every provocation?

No. What Muslims ought to do is to have peaceful means to convey the message of Islam. Destruction of properties and killing of innocent non-Muslims or Muslims is wrong and unIslamic.

AS IF KILLING OR SAVING MANKIND

Muslims have the Quran, a divine book that teaches Muslims to be good, compassionate and loving to all in the spirit of *Rahmatan Lil ‘Alamin* (blessing for the whole world and its content). Its instructions are to be read, understood and followed. We are told in the Quran that the killing of an innocent person (Muslim or non-Muslim) is

like killing the whole of mankind and saving a person is like saving the whole of mankind.

Therefore, Muslims ought to have good attitude and behavior so that people would not find fault with them and their Holy Book. When they say the Quran is a guide for them, then they ought to follow its instructions carefully, including being patient when provoked.

Muslims need to correct and improve themselves better and be exemplary Muslims. Let's take a bad habit of some Muslims as an example.

Muslims are enjoined to consume *halal* (permissible) food and abhor wastage of food and money. One of the focuses of *halal* and non-*halal* rules is to avoid any substance that can make one dependent or addicted to it, like alcohol and drugs. But the most commonly-seen practice is smoking. Smoking has been known to be *makruh* (good to avoid). Smoking not only wastes money but also causes a host of health problems according to research. Because of this ill effect on health, some religious scholars say that smoking is *haram* (forbidden). Yet many Muslims smoke with the excuse that it is only *makruh*, totally ignorant that indulging in a *makruh* act purposely and till addiction sets in is actually *haram*.

Sure, it is not possible to have not a single Muslim smoker in Singapore but suppose only 5 percent of Muslims smoke, and so when a study or the press asks for the reason, how nice it would be if the response is, "In Islam, we are not allowed to indulge in wastage or consume anything that is harmful to us. Also, abstaining from smoking brings a lot of benefit by way of economy and health."

SEIZE CHANCES TO EXCEL

Muslims need to correct and improve themselves attitudinally because what is external is easily seen. We need to upgrade ourselves in all fields and seize every opportunity to excel in education, career and character.

Our Prophet (SAW) instructed to convey Islam in any small way to those who do not know Islam. If non-Muslims know and understand Islam, they would not hold Islam in contempt.

This is exactly the aim of the group of Singapore Muslims youths for organising the 'Roses of Peace' event on 10 November 2012.

To uphold the good name of Islam,
Muslims need to have patience

ROSES OF PEACE IN SINGAPORE

Nadzirah Riduan, an accountancy student at the Singapore Management University, who spearheaded the event, said, "From this event, we hope that people who have misconceptions about Islam would understand it and know why Muslims so dearly love Prophet Muhammad. We love the Prophet because he showed love to people, and his teachings involve peace."

Volunteers freely gave away more than 3,000 roses to the public nationwide, distributing them near MRT stations.

A card, bearing quotes of universal messages on peace and harmony, was attached to each stalk of the rose. Information on Islam is disseminated through writings and videos via social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

The Youtube video of the Norway event, entitled 'Roses, not protest – Norwegian Muslims respond to *Innocence of Muslims*', shows a group of Muslims in Oslo distributing roses to the general public.

The video shows a female Convert to Islam quoting a *Hadith* about Prophet Muhammad who, one day, found dirt thrown at the door of his house. The culprit was an old woman who did it daily, but the Prophet (SAW) did not get angry with her.

One day, the Prophet (SAW) found no dirt at his door and was told that the woman was sick. He immediately went to see her and, instead of asking her why she had daily thrown dirt at his door, took care of her and cleaned her house. The old woman regretted her action and became a Muslim.

The story, said the Norwegian Convert, touched her heart, too.

There is another well-known story of immense patience of our Prophet (SAW). One day, the Prophet (SAW) went to Taif to meet some of the tribe leaders there but was greeted with hostility. They asked children to throw sticks and stones at him. But the Prophet (SAW) was patient and prayed for the well-being of the people of Taif.

To uphold the good name of Islam, Muslims need to have patience and persevere in doing good works and practise the principles of Islam in public and in private.

COMPASSIONATE, LOVING AND PEACEFUL

They must win hearts by being compassionate, loving and peaceful with all. Any negativity would bring bad name to Islam; and any positivity would be Da'wah and promote Islam.

TMAR

Knowledge and Humility

REMINDERS ABOUT OUR WEAKNESS WILL COME IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

text | nur azreen a kalam

Where is the best place to meet him? I was contemplating between the long-standing and notable En-Naeem Mosque and the new and swanky Al-Mawaddah Mosque. My guest is staying in the Northeast area. I picked the latter after a colleague of mine mentioned that the mosque has a good 'hangout' corner.

Before meeting my mystery guest, I had already heard stories about him, good and inspiring anecdotes about his journey to knowing Allah (SWT). Little did I know that his first-hand narration was much more inspirational, *Masha'Allah*.

When he settled down after performing the *Maghrib* (sunset) prayer, I did not waste any minute. I passed him a bottle of passionfruit tea to quench his thirst, and some fried fritters from the infamous 'Teh Tarik' eating place. I eagerly probed him to share his story.

Throughout the whole two hours, he shared a lot of his experiences which served as a useful reminder for my spiritual soul. One of his experiences left a deep meaningful mark in me.

I have heard about this from various teachers but I have never thought that I would be able to 'walk' the experience so closely through someone I know.

One night, he went to a mosque for *Isya'* (night) prayers and was approached by an elderly man who requested him (i.e. my guest) to be the *Imam* (leader of prayer congregation). The remarkable truth was, he had only recently learnt about congregation prayer. He tried to decline the offer, but was unable to refuse in the end. Hence, he took up the challenge to lead the *Isya'* prayer with the congregation at the mosque.

In his mind, he knew that recitations for the first two *raka'ah* (units of prayer) were to be read aloud. However, he had the impression that although recitations for the

third *raka'ah* should be read softly, it should be read aloud again for the fourth *raka'ah*.

Right after completing the prayer with the congregation, a five-year old boy, surprisingly, came up to him. "Uncle, the fourth *raka'ah* should be read softly..." piped the kid. He insisted to the kid that his version of reading the fourth *raka'ah* aloud as correct.

Despite standing on his ground in front of the five-year old boy, he was still discontented. He wanted to ensure that he was correct; hence the next day he approached his prayer tutor to reaffirm his stand.

"No, the boy is correct." It is a truth that he had denied adamantly because it came from a five-year old kid. He told me that he had his arrogant moment (Who doesn't?). However, this particular experience snapped him out from being too conceited.

He told me that the child had taught him many valuable lessons that night. He realised that Allah (SWT) would place anyone to give us a lesson about life. And that fateful night, he learnt of the importance to inculcate humility in his heart. He left me with a sound advice – Knowledge should be paired with humility. Wise words, *SubhanAllah*.

Who would expect to learn something insightful from a small child? That night, I learnt something from him too, indirectly. Little did I know that the quick meet-up would remind me of my own moments of arrogance. I thank Allah (SWT) for allowing me to be reminded of my weaknesses and realising them.

Truly, lessons can be taught by anyone and it is important to educate ourselves with humility constantly. May this remarkable experience mould us to be a better follower of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), our exemplary leader who always was grounded in humility, in our journey to obtain Allah's blessings. TMR

As part of its programme to encourage the fostering of bonds between Converts and to develop the spirit of continuous learning about Islam, the Converts' Development Division (CDD) organised a trip to the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) on 10 November 2012.

Through the exhibitions entitled 'Islamic Arts From Southeast Asia' and 'Treasures From The Aga Khan Museum', the participants interacted with the CDD staff and each other while learning about the practices of Islam in various cultures. The programme aims to enlighten the Converts about Islam through experiences beyond the classroom settings.



MAIN PHOTOGRAPH BY NOORMALA SALEH

Visit to ACM for the
Islamic Arts Exhibition

On 7 December 2012, Ust Irwan Hadi, Head of the Mufti's Office at MUIS, delivered a talk that discussed the ethics, adab (correct etiquette) and maqasid (objectives) of Islamic wealth distribution and the background for the latest fatwa on revocable insurance nomination. He elaborated on the thinking of the Fatwa Committee and how it derived at the decision.

Awarded a MUIS Scholarship to further his studies in Islamic Law at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Ust Irwan Hadi was included in the Dean's list for 4 consecutive years. He has an Honours' Degree in Syariah Law from Al-Azhar University, and a Masters Degree in Law, Culture & Society with distinction from London University.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUNAIDI ALI

Lecture by
Ust Irwan Hadi



On 9 September 2012, Darul Arqam organised its annual Eid Fitr Celebration. With highlights that included a contest for fathers to dress up their sons in the traditional Malay garment of 'Samping', the joyous occasion was a simple yet meaningful event.

Converts from various Multi-National Clubs (MNCs) joined in the merriment of the celebration, which was organised by the Corporate Affairs Division.

The celebration was especially memorable for its feature performances of the children from several of the MNCs.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAZALI TOMPANG

Joyous Celebration
during *Eid Fitr*



On 21 April 2012, the English Islamic Bookshop organised its first storytelling session for children between the ages of 4 and 10. With colourful and exciting props, a volunteer of Darul Arqam, Hilyah Ahmad, told a few stories and read a poetry book to about 40 children within the premises of the bookshop.

In addition to the storytelling session, there was also a colouring competition and quizzes to encourage the children to be active participants.

If interested to receive announcements on dates of the upcoming storytelling session, kindly email to bookshop@darul-arqam.org.sg.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAZALI TOMPANG

Storytelling and Colouring for Kids at the Bookshop

On 29 November 2012, Munshif Hussain, the Chief Executive of Life Skills Training International from Sri Lanka, conducted a workshop at Darul Arqam for the staff and volunteers.

Addressing the topic of 'Dawah Excellence', Munshif elaborated on the 5M Road Map, i.e. Message (Convey), Messenger (Person), Method (Approach), Masses (Recipient) and Measurement (Effectiveness).

The workshop also touched on the lesson to be learned during the formative years of the Prophet (SAW) in Madina and made references to selected verses of the Quran for emphasis.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUNAIDI ALI

Workshop by
Munshif Hussain

Dr Fatris Bakaram is appointed as Mufti by Singapore's President, in consultation with the MUIS Council, on November 2010.

On 3 November 2012, Dr Fatris Bakaram made his first official visit to Darul Arqam. Through an informal session that included a short talk by the Mufti and a Question-and-Answer session with some Converts, Dr Fatris wanted to know the challenges that our new Muslim brothers and sisters are facing. He also shared his thoughts on how to go through these challenges successfully.

Before joining the office of Mufti, Dr Fatris served as principal of Singapore's Madrasah Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiah from 1997 to 2003.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUNAIDI ALI

Mufti Dr Fatris Bakaram
visits Darul Arqam



Founder of Akademi Aidit Sdn Bhd and pioneer CEO of Institute of Mind Development, Dato' Aidit Ghazali, delivered a lecture entitled 'Understanding Allah's Promises' on 30 November 2012 at Darul Arqam.

He has trained various levels of societies (domestic and international) in Islamic soft skills, amounting to more than 200,000 persons (both Muslims and friends of other faith).

Dato' Aidit shared about what Allah (SWT) has promised us and how we, as a Muslim, can firmly make a resolution to enjoin good deeds and forbid doing the bad ones.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JUNAIDI ALI

Lecture by
Dato' Aidit Ghazali



Everything in the heavens and the earth
glorify God. It is in the formation of the
clouds. It is in the movement of the animals.
It is everywhere.



Do you not see that all that
is in the heavens and the
earth, and the birds flying in
patterned ranks with wings
spread out glorify God.

Each knows the way of its
prayer and glorification.
God has full knowledge of
all that they do.

AN-NUR
THE LIGHT
(24:41)

