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THE MUSLIM READER

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Journey to Recovery

Tough Times, Tougher Minds

Souls Assorted

Understanding your Spiritual Personality

Holistic Healing

Islam's Legacy of Mental Health

**The Influence of Muslims and Islam on
Non-Muslim Popular Culture and Civilization**

Path to Allah – a Conversion Story

... and many more

Published by Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore (Darul Arqam Singapore)

﴿ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ﴾

“Allah
does not
BURDEN
a soul
beyond what it
CAN BEAR”

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:286)

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THE MUSLIM READER

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TMR contains some of Allah's names and Quranic verses. Please do not dispose in the trash. Kindly keep, shred, or recycle the magazine. Thank you for your kind consideration and gesture.

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Editorial Note

Assalamualaikum and welcome to another issue of The Muslim Reader. It has already been almost two years since Covid-19 came into our lives and flipped everything we know upside down. Working from the comfort of our own home, wearing masks and limiting our interaction - everything has required us to adapt quickly, and now the 'new normal' is just another day.

In this collective Journey to Recovery, we have seen many instances of how the world is slowly recovering amidst this pandemic, and with it how people are adapting and changing, rising amidst the challenges, banding together even while apart. Borders are reopening (and closing, and reopening), the Holy land being filled again with people, and holidays are no longer a thing of the past. However, for those of us who don't have the luxury of leaving this country, this is the best time to revisit and discover gems within this tiny island.

Just as the physical requires constant change and adapting, so does the spiritual. We all know about Personality types, but did you know that there are also different Spiritual types? That is one of the most interesting pieces in this edition, and we see that our spiritual state that is always rising and falling is parallel with these spiritual types. With spirituality, we should also mention mental health and familial ties. Within the pages of this magazine, we touch on the importance of holistic healing, the sunnah in visiting the sick, and fruits of patience. In a more heartbreaking thread, we also talk about the reality of abuse and how the community can come together to stop the cycle of abuse.

In the past year, we have also seen multiple advancement in science, through vaccines and viruses, and here we also explore how Islam relates very closely to science. We also bring multiple stories of inspiration and achievement from both people of the past and present.

We hope that these articles give you a reprieve from the everyday, and let's make du'a to Allah SWT, may the world continue to recover along with us, and in this Journey, may we be blessed with strength, patience, and remain steadfast in His path. "Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear." (Surah Al-Baqarah, 286).

Until we meet again.

Managing Editor,

Nuruljannah

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THE MUSLIM READER



ONE MINUTE DAWAH

Glossary

AS: 'Allayhis Salam (Arabic)
Meaning: Peace be upon him
Other similar abbreviations: PBUH (peace be upon him), PBOH (peace be on him) Usage: For the Prophets (AS) who came before Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

MCAS: Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore
Similar abbreviations: DA (Darul Arqam)

RA: Radiyallahu 'Anhu/'Anha/'Anhum (Arabic)
Meaning: May Allah be pleased with him/her/them
Usage: For the Companions (RA) of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

SAW: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wassallam (Arabic)
Meaning: Peace be upon him
Similar abbreviations: PBUH, PBOH (peace be on him)
Usage: For Prophet Muhammad (SAW)
SWT: Subhanahu Wa Ta 'ala
Meaning: Glorified and Exalted One
Usage: For Allah (SWT)

Note: Arabic terms have been represented by basic 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.

Astaghfirullah: I seek forgiveness from God

Alhamdulillah: Praise be to God

Allahu Akbar: God is great

Bismillah: In the name of Allah

Da'wah: Invitation to understand Islam

Deen: Religion; way of life

Halal: Permissible

Haram: Forbidden

Hijab: Headgear that covers hair and neck, worn by females

Ijtihad: Independent reasoning

Insha'Allah: If God wills

Masjid: Mosque

Salam (greeting): Assalamu'alaikum (Peace be upon you)

Sharia/Shar'i/Shariah: Islamic laws

Solah/Solaat: Prayer

Subhaanallah: Glory be to God

Sunnah: Practices of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Tafsir: Exegesis of the Quran

Zakat: That which purifies; obligatory payment made annually on certain kinds of property

Addendum

*Where Hope Grows And
Miracles Happen*

Addendum to:
The Muslim Reader 37 issue 2020
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Referring to paragraph 2, the writer of this article would like to clarify that the protagonist of this article is doing well despite the challenges she was facing prior to her pregnancy. She receives love and support from her surroundings, and that her relationship with all her immediate and distant family remains good. As both the writer and the editor of this issue realized that the readers may have misunderstood the paragraph, both of them have no malicious intentions in portraying her unfavorable character outwardly. We hope that the readers will be inspired by her life-story and be motivated to find solutions to any challenge.

IN LOVING MEMORY

... of those who contributed to MCAS

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

"Indeed to Allah we belong and to Him we shall return."

Qur'an 2:156

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

They believe in Allah and in the Last Day and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and hasten to excel each other in doing good. These are among the righteous.

Qur'an 3:114



Mah Li Jaafar

1949 - 2021

Bro Jaafar Mah was one of the pioneers of MCAS. He had served MCAS as a Council Member from 1991 to 1995. He continued to serve MCAS as a Volunteer dominantly coaching Converts in Islamic practices. He was also one of the Registrar for conversion. He led lectures to our Mandarin speaking Converts. His contributions to MCAS were significant and could never be measured.



**Lily Khoo @
Shahira**

1938 - 2021

Sis Lily Khoo @ Shahira became a MCAS Council member from 1995 to 2014. One of the longest serving Council Members, Sis Shahira dedicated herself in volunteering with MCAS. She has taught solat tutorial to new Converts and being more than a mentor to them. She was an active volunteer during Ramadan especially serving food for our members during Iftar. She has contributed tremendously to develop MCAS to what it is today.



**Mohamed Salleh
bin Mohamed Abdul Hamid**

1938 - 2021

Al-Marhum Ustaz Salleh started teaching at MCAS in the late 1990s. Having studied under the tutelage of one of the great scholars of Singapore, Al-Marhum Sheikh Omar Al-Khatib, he felt the obligation to share his knowledge at MCAS to benefit and guide the Converts. Ustaz Salleh had taught various Fardhu Ain subjects at MCAS. His contributions and heritage, various thematic Fiqh based on the teachings of Sheikh Omar Al-Khatib, can still be found at the MCAS English Islamic Bookshop.

Souls ASSORTED

An Islamic Theory of Spiritual Personality

by Dr. Zohair Abdul-Rahman and Dr. Nazir Khan

Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research

Abstract

Having a sense of belonging to a faith community has a strong impact on an individual's conviction and commitment to belief. Among the first signs that a person is distancing themselves from Islam is when they distance themselves from the Muslim community. They may feel alienated or out of place when they find themselves at a mosque or a gathering of Muslims. This article explores the concept of spiritual personality in the hopes of demonstrating that Islam has the breadth necessary for anyone to feel included within its mission. Spiritual personality refers to a person's natural disposition that influences what aspects of Islamic practice, belief, and virtues naturally appeal to them. With a better awareness of this diversity, we hope that the Muslim community begins to create space for people of diverse interests, talents, and strengths to thrive and grow. We explore the concept of personality in the Qur'an and Islamic tradition as well as attempt to construct a model of spiritual personality. A preliminary typology of four spiritual personality orientations is proposed at the end.

Some may assume that following the rules of a religion makes one a robot without a personality.



It doesn't need to be that way. Islam has the breadth necessary to include all types of personalities within its mission.

What is personality?

It is difficult to imagine an aspect of our lives that is not shaped by personality. It features prominently in all of our interactions, our choices of friends, the careers we choose and our ability to succeed in them, the types of decisions we make, our personal interests and ambitions, and even the way we acquire and process information about the external world.¹ Being alive is a complex and dynamic process that requires continuous effort for self-preservation. The world presents us with opportunity as well as danger. We are constantly

confronted with dilemmas in life, requiring us to respond in ways that would achieve benefit or, at the very least, avert any harm. In response to such complexity, we develop various strategies to overcome the challenges of living in the world. These strategies ultimately influence our thought processes, emotional experiences, and behaviors. The result is a set of dispositions and tendencies that characterize our style of interacting with ourselves, the world, and others. In a word, personality.

'Personality' is a construct used to account for the variance among people in their behavior, affect, and cognition.² Essentially, it is a construct used to understand why people feel, behave, and think about the world differently. The academic field of personality psychology has "never been in better health than at the present time," with integration of data from neuroscience and genetics, and a variety of tools to measure major traits like extraversion versus introversion.³ Perhaps the most

famous personality test is the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI), which is based on the conceptual theory of archetypes developed by Carl Jung. The personality theory most commonly used in psychology research is the Big Five model which examines openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (a convenient mnemonic is the acronym OCEAN).

Sound knowledge of one's personality is indispensable. It has been said, "A genius in the wrong position could look like a fool."⁴ There is scarcely a job interview that does not require one to know their strengths and weaknesses. One of the fascinating aspects of the Prophet Muhammad's leadership is that he always selected people for opportunities that were most suited to their natural talents and skills. Some personalities have the strength to endure the grimmest challenges, some have the creativity to find novel solutions, some have the tenderness to console someone in distress, and so on. These differences we observe are not random variations but result from our innate personalities.

Our personality represents our preferred method in dealing with the world. Frustration and anxiety often manifest when a person acts contrary to their preferred methods. This is

commonly seen, for instance, when a person's job does not align with their personality strengths, resulting in job dissatisfaction.⁵ People who are high in creativity, for example, often

feel shackled in jobs that are highly structured, repetitive, and resistant to change. Conversely, someone who is high in conscientiousness may thrive in such an environment.

Personality in the Qur'an and Sunnah

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ described personality differences as being rooted in the creation process of Adam:

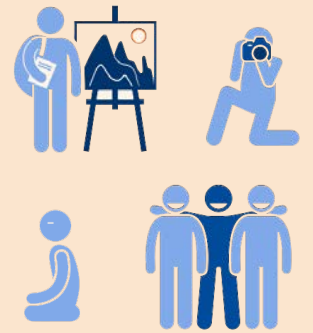
"Indeed Allah Most High created Adam from a handful that He took from all of the earth. So the children of Adam come in according with the earth, some of them come red, and white and black, and between that, and the lenient, the hard-headed, the filthy, and the pure."⁶

This hadith is profoundly comprehensive, referencing the fundamental components of the human being. It informs us of the interesting connection between the qualities of the earth and the qualities of the human being. The first category of attributes mentioned deals with the physical body, specifically skin color. The second category of attributes deals with personality, particularly on the dimension of agreeableness. The final category, according to the hadith commentator Mulla Ali al-Qari (d. 1014 AH), speaks to the akhlāq (character) of the human being in reference to spiritual purity and impurity.⁷ Altogether, the hadith references body, mind, and spirit.

The Qur'an also alludes to personality in a few places. For instance, the Qur'an states, "Everyone behaves according to their nature (shākil), and your Lord

What is personality?

A set of dispositions and tendencies that characterize our style of interacting with ourselves, the world, and others



Just as each of us are unique in our styles of interactions and preferences in friendship, we're also unique in how we develop and relate to our spirituality.



Therefore, we each have our own spiritual personality: A natural disposition affects which islamic activities we excel the most in, and which aspects have the greatest spiritual and emotional impact on us.

[1] Susan Cain. Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can't stop talking. (Crown Publishing Group 2012), pp. 2-3.

[2] Funder, D. C. (2015). The personality puzzle: Seventh international student edition. W. W. Norton & Company, p. 5.

[3] Philip J. Corr, Gerald Matthews. The Cambridge handbook of personality psychology. (Cambridge University Press 2009), p. xxii.

[4] Idowu Koyenikan, Wealth for all: Living a life of success at the edge of your ability. (NC: Grandeur Touch, L.L.C., 2016).

[5] Nicodemus, K. M. (2012). Personality type and job satisfaction. In R. D. Urman & J. M. Ehrenfeld (Eds.),

Physicians' pathways to non-traditional careers and leadership opportunities (pp. 11-17). New York: Springer.

[6] Jami' al-Tirmidhi, 3213.

[7] Mulla Ali al-Qari'. Mirqat al-Mafatih Sharh Mishkat al-Masabih. (Dar al-Fikr 2002). Vol. 1, p. 176.

[8] Al-Qurtubi, Al-Jaami' li-Ahkaam al-Quran, verse 17:84. Accessed Online.

[10] Sahih Bukhari: Accessed Online.

[9] Al-Ayni, Umdat ul-Qari Sharh Sahih Bukhari. Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya. Beirut: 2001. vol. 15, p. 297.

[10] Al-Asqalani, Fath ul Bari. Al-Maktabah As-Salafiyya. vol. 6, pp. 369-370. The subsequent statements by al-Qurtubi and al-Khattabi are cited by Ibn Hajar.

[11] This statement also points to the value of identifying and altering harmful core beliefs, which is the basis of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

[12] Al-Asqalani, Fath ul Bari. Al-Maktabah As-Salafiyya. vol. 6, pp. 369-370.

[13] Sunan Abi Dawud (Online). For an interesting derivation of 33 lessons from this hadith see al-Jubury, Kehlan. The Prophet and his daughter. Prophetic Guidance blog (June 15, 2013). <http://propheticguidance.co.uk/the-prophet-and-his-daughter/>

[14] Sahih Bukhari (Online).

[15] See al-Sha'rawi's comments as cited in Umar Ahmad Zakariyah. Hayat al-Nabi fi baytahi. (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah 1971), p. 237.

knows who is the most guided” (17:84). Imam al-Qurtubi (d. 671 AH) mentions in his commentary that the early scholar Mujahid said shākil means a person's nature (ṭabee'ah). He also quotes al-Farā' who said it refers to a person's way of being that he has been born upon.⁸

In a very intriguing narration about the human soul, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, *“The souls are like troops collected together, those that are familiar incline to each other, and those that are dissimilar are repelled.”*⁹ Badr ad-Deen al-'Ayni (d. 855 AH) mentions that the analogy means that human beings are one creation but are of different categories based on their traits (sifāt), just like an army is made up of different divisions, battalions, and squads that have their own distinguishing features.¹⁰ Thus, there seems to be a subtle reference here to the diversity of human personality.

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 852 AH) describes a variety of views in the Islamic tradition regarding the meaning of souls inclining towards each other.¹¹ For instance, al-Qurtubi (d. 671 AH) explains that souls differ by various features and those that share similar features are naturally drawn towards other members of the same category. Abu Suleyman al-Khattabi (d. 388 AH) notes that this could be due to the souls having met prior to life in this world, or it could be that their similar natures draw them together. Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597 AH) derives very valuable social advice from this narration, “One of the benefits of this narration is that if an individual finds

something in his heart against a good and righteous person, he should search for the cause of it,¹² seeking to cease the ill-feeling.”¹³ On the other hand, it is also possible that we harbor ill-feelings not due to any fault of the other person, but just because of personality differences. Recognizing and being aware of these differences can help purify our hearts from ill feelings toward others.

The Prophet Muhammad's companions paid attention to personality similarities and differences in their observations. One of the most explicit narrations comes from the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, Aisha, who made the following comments about the similarity between the Prophet ﷺ and his daughter Fatimah:

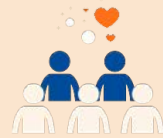
*I have not seen anyone resemble the Messenger of Allah in disposition (samtan), characteristics (dallan) and mode of conduct (hadyan), in their standing and sitting, than Fātimah, daughter of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. When Fātimah would enter upon the Prophet ﷺ, he used to stand up for her, kiss her and seat her in his place; and when the Prophet ﷺ used to visit her, she would stand up for him, kiss him, and seat him in her place.*¹⁴

Similarly, when describing whom he thought most closely resembled the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Hudhayfah used the same descriptors regarding personality. Hudhayfah said, *“I have never seen anyone more similar to the Messenger of Allah in characteristics (dallan), disposition (samtan), and mode of conduct (hadyan) than Ibn Ummi 'Abd (i.e., Abdullah ibn Mas'ud).”*¹⁵

These three terms are all considered to be similar in meaning and emphasize personality traits in interacting with people as well as some moral and spiritual traits (such as reverence/khushu' and humility/tawadu').¹⁶ The distinction between such categories of traits is examined in the subsequent section.



Imam Malik said:



“Certainly, Allah has divided good actions like he has divided His providence.



It may be that prayer has been facilitated for a person, but fasting hasn't.



Another person may have a tendency for charity but not fasting...



And I am happy with what Allah has facilitated for me (the pursuit of knowledge).



I don't think what I am focused on is lower than what you are focused on. Rather, I hope that we are both upon goodness and righteousness.”

Personality versus moral character

As described earlier, personality refers to our preferred behaviors and attitudes for interacting with the world. The key word to highlight is preference rather than responsibility. In other words, our personality tendencies are generally value-neutral or amoral, just like our preferences for food, scenery, art, and recreation. Furthermore, personalities are generally fixed, difficult to change and, as mentioned earlier, attempting to act contrary to one's personality results in negative mental health outcomes.

Contrary to personality, which is generally stable and value-neutral, character (akhlāq) is value-laden and can be changed. Our character refers to moral traits, qualities such as humility, sincerity, patience, gratitude or arrogance, hypocrisy, impulsivity, and ingratitude. Developing positive character traits is a task that we have been given by Allah and one for which we will be compensated according to our effort. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “I was sent to perfect good character (akhlāq).”¹⁷

It is known that Allah does not give an individual a responsibility that they cannot fulfill as explained in the Qur'an, *“Allah does not place a burden on anyone more than they can bear”* (2:285). Thus, our character, unlike our fundamental personality traits, can be changed according to whether we actively seek to develop it or choose to neglect it. Having said that, a person's personality can render certain akhlāq qualities easier or harder to obtain. For instance a person who is low in neuroticism (a personality trait) may find it easier to be optimistic (an akhlāq trait) compared to someone higher in neuroticism, who may be prone to pessimism.¹⁸ Furthermore, someone who is more introverted may find introspection (murāqaba) easier while an extroverted person may find it easier to strengthen relationships with family (silat ar-rahim) or host guests with grace (takreem ad-dhuyooof).

The distinction and connection between personality and character is described in the story of Ashajj, of the tribe of 'Abd Qays. When a delegation from his tribe traveled to Madinah, they raced to greet the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as soon as they arrived. However, Ashajj stayed behind, knelt his camel, and changed into a fresh pair of garments before going to meet the Prophet. The Prophet Muhammad said to Ashajj, “You have two characteristics which Allah loves: forbearance (ḥilm) and deliberation (anāh).” Ashajj asked, “Have I acquired them or was I born with them?” The Prophet replied, “Rather it is something you were born with.” Ashajj then said,

“Praise be to Allah who created me with those very qualities which He loves.”¹⁹

The narration describes forbearance and deliberation, roughly correlating to the 'Big Five' traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness, as being created as part of his innate personality. These personality traits facilitated the virtue he was able to demonstrate that was described as being loved by Allah. These included not causing any harm or inconvenience to the others or the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by not participating in the initial race towards him.

Personality psychology in the Islamic tradition

The Qur'anic terminology for the components of the psyche of the human being includes nafs (self), hawa (desires), aql (intellect), ruh (soul), qalb (heart), lubb (mind), baseera (insight), and shakal (predisposition). Although there is no specific term used in the Qur'an to describe the psychological construct of 'personality,' the concept as demonstrated in the previous section exists in both the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The first appearance of personality discussions in early Islam comes from the Muslim philosophers who were greatly influenced by Hellenistic philosophy.²⁰ Therefore, the terms that were used to discuss personality were mere translations of the terms used by the Greeks. Ishaq bin Hunayn translated Aristotle's treatise 'On the soul' into Arabic (known as Kitāb an-Nafs). Al-Farabi (d. 339 AH) wrote a commentary on this work and Ibn Rushd (d. 595 AH) later summarized it. Nafs (self), dimāgh (mindset), shakhshiyya (personality), ṭabee'atu nafs al-insanee (nature of the Human Self) are all terms that have been used by Muslim scholars to talk about human personality.²¹

One example of a classical scholar who discussed concepts in psychology utilizing Greek terms is Ibn



[16] Muwatta Maalik: Accessed Online.

[17] The precise personality traits associated with optimism are explored more fully in Sharpe, J. P., Martin, N. R., & Roth, K. A. (2011). Optimism and the Big Five factors of personality: Beyond neuroticism and extraversion. Personality and Individual Differences, 51(8), 946-951.

[18] Sunan Ibn Majah (online), Sunan Abi Dawud (online).

[19] <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/en/zohair/powerofmotivation/>

[20] Al-Ani, Nizar Muhammad Sa'id. Ash-shakhsiya al-Insaniyya fee al-Fikr al-Islamee. International Institute of Islamic Thought, Beirut: 2005, 2nd edition.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Umar Ahmad Ar-Rawi. Tibb al-Quloob. Daar kutub Ilmiyya, 2003, p. 83.

[23] The interested reader can refer to a prior article published by Yaqeen on the topic of waswās, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/en/najwa-awad/clinicians-imams-and-the-whisperings-of-satan/>

[24] Ibn Taymiyyah. Majmoo' al-Fatawa, vol. 6, pp. 651-652.

[25] Madarij as-Salikin, vol. 1, p. 132, as cited in Anjum, Ovamir. Sufism without Mysticism? Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's Objectives in Madarij as-Salikin. Oriente Moderno, 2010, 1, p. 175.

[26] Sahih Bukhari, Accessed online.

[27] See the discussion of Imam al-Ubbi (d. 827 AH) in his supercommentary on Sahih Muslim; Ikmal ikmal al-mu'lim sharh Sahih Muslim, (Egypt: Matba' al-Sa'adah), vol. 1, p. 119. Aside from the gate of fasting, however, there is no scriptural proof for which deeds correspond to which gates.

[28] Ibn al-Qayyim. Tareeq al-Hijratayn wa Bab al-Sa'adatayn, p. 385.

[29] Ibid., pp. 386-388.

[30] Al-Dhababi, Siyar an-Nubala: Accessed Online.

[31] Of course, it goes without saying that these

Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH) who described disease as manifesting spiritually, psychologically, and physically: Lust is a spiritual illness (nafsāni). But when the disease increases in strength it starts to manifest in the body. It can become a mental illness (dimāghi) such as Melancholia. And it is said regarding this that the disease of obsessions (waswāsi) is similar to Melancholia. Lastly, it can be a physical illness of the body manifesting as fatigue, weakness, and symptoms like that.²²

This quotation shows that Ibn Taymiyyah saw parallels between Islamic conceptions of psychology with Greek views as demonstrated by the connection between Melancholia and the disease of waswās.²³ Muslim scholars routinely engaged with contemporary sciences of psychology, medicine, and natural philosophy, critically analyzing the opinions in the Hellenistic traditions. Similarly, in our times, Muslim scholars must engage with the modern body of empirical research in the field of psychology to advance the study of spiritual psychology upon the edifices constructed by our predecessors.

Modern psychology and personality theories are generally focused more on description rather than prescription. In contrast, the Islamic paradigm is considerably more focused on prescription rather than description. The Qur'an presents a system of guidance that is meant to transform an individual through their relationship with Allah. *"This is the book, in which there is no doubt, guidance for those conscious of God"* (Qur'an 2:2).

Thus, the Islamic tradition is concerned with how our personalities can be utilized to strengthen this relationship and ultimately grow as individuals. If it does describe the structure of the human psyche, it is more interested in describing spiritual elements and functions of our personality. The purpose of knowledge is to act, and the purpose of knowing the self is to act in its best interests.

Spiritual tendencies

In a fascinating passage, Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH) answers the question of whether one should focus on strengthening one's faith (imān) by first starting with abstinence (zuhd), knowledge ('ilm), or acts of worship (ibādah). He replies: *People differ in this regard. From amongst people, some find knowledge easier than zuhd, some find zuhd easier than 'ilm, and some find ibādah easier than both of them. What is prescribed (mashroo') is that everyone acts according to what they are capable of goodness based on the verse "Have taqwa of Allah as much as you are able" (64:16). So when the branches of faith become crowded, a person proceeds with what is most pleasing to God by acting according to what he is most capable.*²⁴

Ibn Taymiyyah goes on to explain that what becomes the most virtuous action for a person is whatever comes more readily to him and provides the greatest benefit to his faith, even if that action might not be intrinsically better than other actions. For instance, a person who finds voluntary prayers at night onerous might benefit far more from engaging in more recitation and contemplation of the Qur'an, or more dhikr (remembrance), and these actions may be considered more virtuous for this individual. As a corollary, no one can belittle the good deeds of others, since only Allah knows which of them are most valuable and most virtuous for which person. Moreover, Ibn al-Qayyim discussed the concept of spiritual stations (maqamat) in his work Madarij al-Salikeen and notes that while these are frequently presented in a chronological sequence by many authors, one person may pursue the stations of love, contentment, and tranquility at the beginning of one's

spiritual journey while for someone else those stations may only be fully actualized at the end of the spiritual journey.²⁵

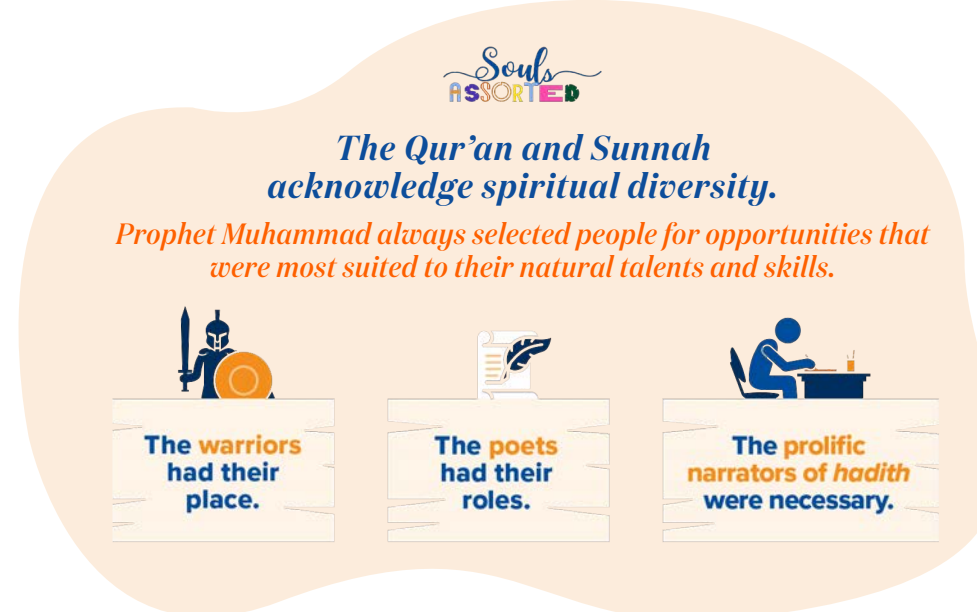
Indeed, even the structure of the cosmos bears witness to the plurality of spiritual personalities. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ informed us, "Paradise has eight gates, and one of them is called Ar-Rayyan through which none will enter but those who observe fasting."²⁶ Each gate relates to a different virtue, and whoever increases in the deeds of a certain gate becomes from the people called to enter it.²⁷ Thus, different people may have propensities for different types of virtue and will, therefore, enter Paradise from different routes.

Every human being is different. We see this all around us in the diverse pursuits individuals find spiritually rewarding. Some are more involved in community activism, some in studying the Qur'an, some in sadaqah, and so on. Many diverse individual paths to God are encompassed by the Straight Path of the Islamic religion. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH) writes: *The path to Allah is one path, inclusive of all that which pleases Allah, and what pleases Him is numerous and diversified according to times, places, people, and situations. All of these are Divinely pleasing paths, which God made numerous out of His Mercy and Wisdom for the differences of people in their dispositions (isti'dadat) and their hearts (qulub). And had God made them all one category despite the differences in people's minds (adhḥān), intellects (uqul), and strengths and weaknesses of their dispositions, none would traverse the path to Him except [a few individuals,] one by one.*²⁸

Ibn al-Qayyim then describes how this may manifest differently depending on one's spiritual personality. He says, "there are people whose chief action and

"The path to Allah is one path, inclusive of all that which pleases Allah, and what pleases Him is numerous and diversified according to times, places, people, and situations."

"This is the book, in which there is no doubt, guidance for those conscious of God" (2:2).



path through which they worship Allah is the path of knowledge and learning."

Such people may spend all their time in this pursuit, exhausting all of their resources and time in the thirst for knowledge of God. On the other hand, there are those "whose chief

"Thus, different people may have propensities for different types of virtue and will, therefore, enter Paradise from different routes."

action is dhikr" and "whenever they find themselves lacking in it, they feel cheated and in loss." Still others may strive towards God with voluntary prayers, others with alleviating the afflictions and calamities that beset people, others with enjoining good and forbidding wrong, others with fasting or reading Qur'an. Others focus on spiritual introspection (murāqabah), examining their internal thoughts (khawāṭir), and preserving their time from being wasted.

[33] Ibn al-Qayyim, Madarij al-Salikin, vol. 1, p. 166. Online. He also further classifies a subtype of the second category which is thinking about how best to achieve benefit or avoid harm, or the means to the goal, and then mentions that "These are the six categories of thinking, for which there is no seventh."

[32] Ibn al-Qayyim. Tareeq al-Hijratayn wa Bab al-Sa'adatayn, p. 403.

And some are able to combine multiple categories.²⁹

Imam Malik was once asked why he was busy in circles of knowledge and not other aspects of Islam. He replied by explaining the diversity of spiritual personalities, "Certainly, Allah has divided good actions like he has divided His providence (rizq). It may be that prayer has been facilitated for a person, but fasting hasn't. Another person may have a tendency for charity but not fasting... And I am happy with what Allah has facilitated for me (the pursuit of knowledge). *I don't think what I am focused on is lower than what you are focused on. Rather, I hope that we are both upon goodness and righteousness.*"³⁰

From the foregoing discussion, we see that people naturally differ in what their spirituality drives them towards, and what activities in the faith they find themselves most passionate about—some towards the social aspects of faith (e.g., feeding the hungry, sheltering the

oppressed, etc.), and others towards the solitary and reflective practices (e.g., recitation, contemplation, etc.).³¹

It also influences how they experience spirituality and to which reminders their faith is most responsive. Two people may listen to the same reminder or khutbah and find different aspects of it more compelling—for one person it may have been a new insight about a verse, for the other it may have been a practical story about helping others. Such differences are captured in the conceptualization of spirituality types, traits, or tendencies that coalesce to form one's unique spiritual personality. For this reason, it is important for Islamic speakers and educators to diversify their messages to cater to different members of their audience.

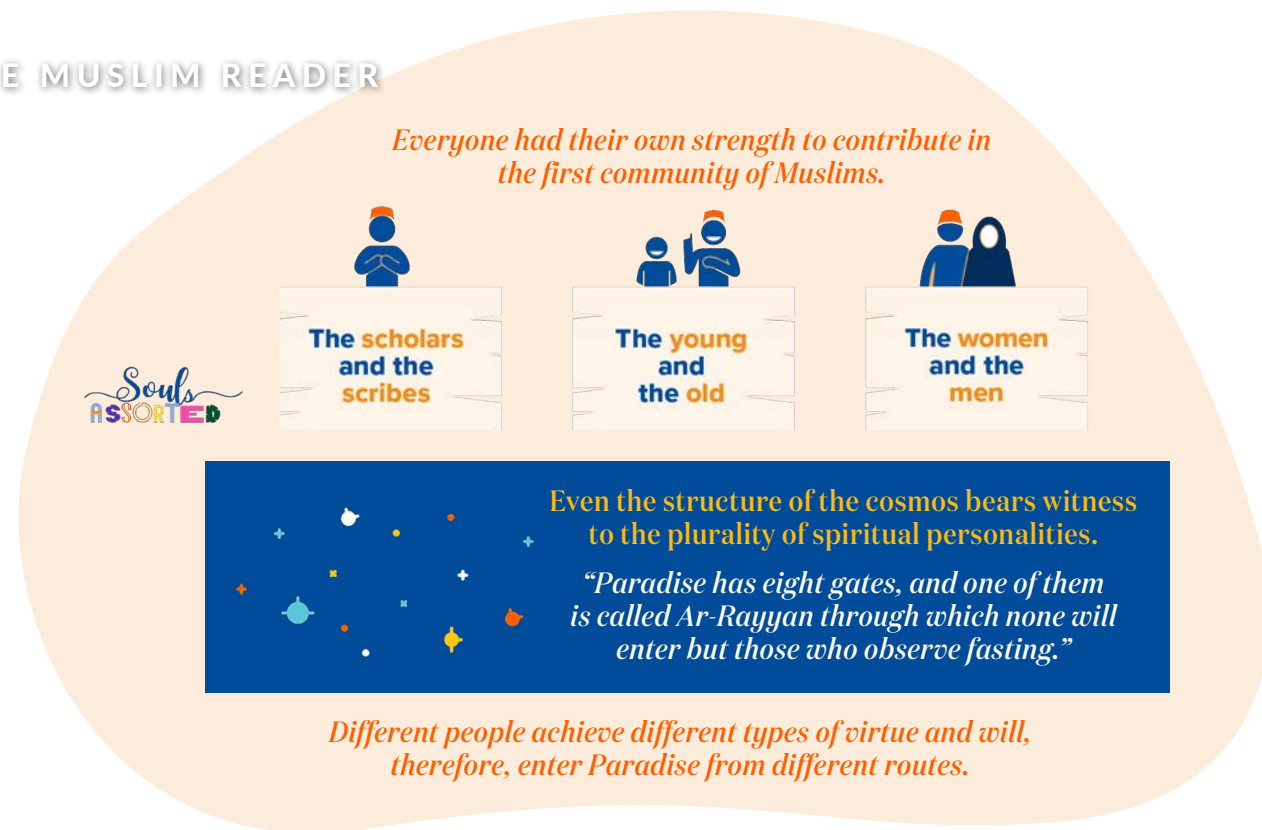
This is in line with the style of the Qur'an, *And We have certainly diversified in this Qur'an for mankind from every kind of example. But, mankind has above all else always been argumentative.* (Qur'an, 18:54)

And thus we have sent an Arabic Qur'an down and diversified the warnings in it so that they may become conscious (of God) or it would inspire remembrance. (Qur'an, 20:113)

Spiritual personality refers to how an individual manifests their spirituality. Just as our personalities result in different approaches to relationships and work, our spiritual personalities result in a variety of approaches to spiritual practices, religious beliefs, and identity. There may be some that find the sense of belongingness and community (ummah) cultivated through

[36] Forty Hadith of Imam Nawawi, Accessed Online. The Prophet ﷺ gave this advice to Wabisah ibn Ma'bad and very similar advice to Nawwas ibn Sam'an. Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (d. 974 AH) makes the interesting observation that this advice applies to those persons similar to Wabisah who possess that faculty of inner perception (idrak), while others may need more explicit religious rulings of commands and prohibitions, and thus the Prophet addressed everyone with the advice most suited to them; see al-Haytami, Fath al-Mubin, (Dar al-Minhaj 2008), p. 465. For judgment-oriented people, they may need objective definitive rules to avoid succumbing to personal bias (hawa') and desires (shahawat).

[37] Sahih Muslim, Accessed online. Ibn al-Qayyim cites this hadith as proof in Madarij al-Salikin, and also explains that a certain measure of dhawq is necessary for



communal prayers (salah) and Islamic conferences especially invigorating.

The greatest example of the concept of spiritual personality is seen through the generation of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The companions were not homogenous in the way they served Islam. There were those who were focused on knowledge, such as Abu Hurairah, Mu’adh bin Jabal, Abdullah ibn Mas’ood, and Abdullah ibn Abbas. Then there were

And We have certainly diversified in this Qur’an for mankind from every kind of example. But, mankind has above all else always been argumentative. (18:54)

those who were known for their bravery and courage, such as Khalid ibn al-Walid, Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah, and Zubayr ibn al-Awwam. There were those known for their intense devotion in praying and fasting, such as Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas, who also combined the virtue of narrating hadith. Hassan ibn Thaabit, on the other hand, was artistic and used his poetry to defend the honor of Islam. Uthman ibn Affan was particularly known for his modesty and shyness and Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq was known for his loyalty to, and companionship (suhba) with, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. All of these companions and many more served Islam based on what was facilitated for them from their spiritual personality.

Categorizing spiritual tendencies

At this stage, the most pressing questions that present themselves relate to what types of personalities are associated with the different aspects of Islam. What makes a person focus more on knowledge over prayer or charity and activism over knowledge? If we know our personality type, will we be able to enhance our understanding of ourselves, our spiritual strengths, and our spiritual weaknesses?

To answer these questions, let us first examine the psycho-spiritual foundations of the human being. Ibn al-Qayyim explains that all human activity goes back to two fundamental processes:

The capacity to know and the capacity to act.³² The results of these processes are ‘ilm (knowledge) and ‘amal (behavior) respectively, two terms that are at the epicenter of the entire Qur’anic and Prophetic discourse on virtue. At any moment in time, we are either acquiring knowledge to build and enhance our understanding of the world or we are interacting with the world to change or maintain the order of things. This is what makes us human. Therefore, any variation in spiritual personality should ultimately be a consequence of variation in approaches to knowledge and action.

Indeed, Ibn al-Qayyim describes a categorization of thinking based on these very attributes:

*Thinking (fikir) is of two types: a type of thinking that pertains to knowledge (‘ilm) and recognition (ma’rifah), and a type of thinking that pertains to pursuit (talab) and will (iradah). So that which relates to knowledge and recognition is thinking which discerns truth and falsehood and matters affirmed and negated, while the latter relates to the thinking which distinguishes that which is beneficial and that which is harmful.*³³

How one thinks and approaches knowledge varies between people, and similarly how a person thinks about that which they pursue (goals, motivation, behavior) also varies between people. A close examination of Islamic theology and scripture integrated with psychoanalysis yields two approaches for knowledge and two approaches for behavior, elaborated in the subsequent sections.

Knowledge type: experience vs. judgment

The Islamic tradition heavily emphasizes the value of acquiring knowledge. The Qur’an praises the people of knowledge by bearing witness on their behalf to the Truth and mentioning them alongside the angels (Qur’an 3:18). The Qur’an encourages the use of the mind in over 750 places, demonstrating the importance of knowledge in the life of a Muslim.³⁴ The Qur’an describes the locus of true knowledge as the signs of God (ayāt). It is through discovering and interpreting these signs, that we grow in our knowledge of God, drawing closer to Him.

One’s learning can be inclined more towards experiences (ahwāl) or judgments (ahkām).³⁵ Everyone uses both hands, but some people are right-hand dominant and others are left-handed; there is a natural tendency towards one or the other. The Qur’an and Sunnah contain many evidences that describe the experiential dimension of learning. In several passages, the Qur’an describes the importance of journeying through the earth, whether to witness the outcome of perished nations or to witness how creation begins (29:20), or journeying in order to obtain beneficial knowledge using one’s heart and hearing (22:46). The Prophet ﷺ also referenced the experiential form of knowledge when he said, “Consult your heart; righteousness is that which grants ease to the soul and

makes the heart tranquil. Wrongdoing is that which troubles the soul and causes uneasiness in the chest, even if people have repeatedly given their legal opinion [in its favor].”³⁶ Another term used to describe this form of experiential learning is dhawq (lit. tasting), which the Prophet ﷺ also used with reference to faith.³⁷ Through developing one’s spiritual insight (baseerah) into experiences, one may attain realizations “that cannot be acquired or studied.”³⁸

On the other hand, there is the judgment-oriented approach towards knowledge, focused on acquiring knowledge of rulings, of drawing value-laden judgments about matters that will guide practical decision-making in the performance of good deeds.

The Qur’an contains many passages that emphasize reliance on authority, obedience, and objectivity (eg. 4:59); there is an emphasis on enjoining the good and forbidding the evil (3:104), racing to do more good deeds (3:133).

Equipped with a very clear structural view of right and wrong, people with the judgment orientation are well-suited to make major changes in society.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized the numerical magnitude of reward associated with different deeds.³⁹ Judgment-oriented people are also heavily motivated by a sense of duty and justice, perceiving the complex interweb of roles, rights, and responsibilities that govern human relationships. The distinction

all people, without which they may succumb to doubts in their faith (vol. 3, p. 92, online).

[38] Ibn al-Qayyim, Madarij al-Salikin, online. (Arabic: “Alati laa tanalu bi-kasb wa la dirasah”).

[39] 40 Hadith Nawawi, no. 37, accessed online, which describes the multiplication of rewards in general.

[40] 40 Hadith Nawawi, no. 19, accessed online.

[41] Al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami al-Saghir 2328.

[42] Ibn al-Qayyim, Madarij al-Salikin, vol. 1, p. 147. Online.

[43] There are also specialties that focus on the genetic and biological basis for personality, but this is largely

separate from the type vs. trait discussion, which is mainly a statistical issue.

[44] Bess, T. L., & Harvey, R. J. (2002). Bimodal score distributions and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator: Fact or artifact? Journal of Personality Assessment,

[45](1), 176-186.

[46] Pittenger, D. J. (2004). The limitations of extracting typologies from trait measures of personality. Personality and Individual Differences, 37(4), 779-787.

[47] <https://www.16personalities.com/articles/our-theory>

[48] The names of these categories have been formulated by the authors to capture the central motif

embodied in each spiritual personality.

[49] Ibn Muflih, Adab al-Shar’iyyah. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risalah 1999), vol. 1, p. 378. Arabic: al-furus tamur mithl al-sahab.

[50] Sunan Abi Dawud, Accessed online.

[51] Ibn Abdal-Hakam, Futuh Misr, vol. 1, p. 195.

[52] Such as Umar’s asking Hudhayfah whether he was mentioned amongst the Munafiqin due to his great fear of being insincere in his faith (Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, Matalib al-Aliyah, vol. 14, p. 702, online).


[53] See, for instance, Umar pardoning a man who was drinking (Mustadrak al-Hakim 8198, available online).





There are two types of *knowledge*:

Experience



This knowledge type wants to learn through exploration and experience. They search for what can heighten their understanding of God and the afterlife.

Judgement



This knowledge type is focused on acquiring knowledge and making judgements that guide decision making in practical ways.



People who have this preference tend to be creative, insightful and visionary. They want to have spiritual experiences.



People who have this preference tend to be industrious, responsible traditional and orderly. They focus on knowing how to act correctly in big and small matters.



Experiential types are interested in learning about spiritual concepts, philosophy, and theology, and less interested in learning about the technical details of Islamic rulings.



Judgement types are interested in tangible subjects. They are keen to learn about the practical aspects of Islam, such as the laws and regarding worship, social dealings, or business transactions.

between experience- and judgment-based learning is also manifested in the juxtaposition by many scholars of the terms ma'rifah (recognition) and 'ilm (knowledge). The Prophet ﷺ described experiential learning with the verbal form of ma'rifah when he said, "Recognize Allah in times of prosperity and He will recognize you in times of adversity."⁴⁰ On the other hand, he also described the knowledge attained through study and analysis: "Verily, knowledge ('ilm) is only through study."⁴¹ For greater clarity, if we combine these terms with the aforementioned terms, we can designate the first spiritual tendency as ma'rifah al-ahwal (recognition of experiences) and the second tendency as 'ilm al-ahkam (knowledge of judgments). Interestingly, these two tendencies have also been described in other spiritual traditions, including Christianity.

Ibn al-Qayyim explains that ma'rifah is to 'ilm as the soul is to the body.⁴² Islam is characterized by both substance and spirit. The substance represents the guidelines, boundaries, rules, and doctrines, while the spirit represents the internal connection to Allah and spiritual states that are felt deep within one's being. Both are necessary and vital, and the religion cannot exist without either element. One's natural tendency toward one side can be cultivated to attain great spiritual gifts, but if the other aspect is neglected it can result in fatal weakness and spiritual failure.

A typology of spiritual personality

Hitherto, we have described two spiritual personality dimensions that capture variation in approach to knowledge (experience vs. judgment) and behavior (action vs. restraint). A human being goes forth into the world acquiring knowledge through experience and through rational judgments. This knowledge forms a representation of the world that provides the individual with an

understanding of how to behave. The individual constantly makes decisions on whether they should initiate an action or exercise restraint when encountering daily situations

In constructing a complete typology of spiritual personality, we should first note the relative merits of the two main contemporary approaches to personality, namely the trait approach and the type approach.⁴³ Personality traits refer to a spectrum with a normal distribution.⁴⁴ This means that for any given trait, the majority of people are in the middle of the spectrum, with a minority being at the extremes. On the other hand, the type model assumes that there is a bimodal distribution. This means that the majority of people congregate to the extremes with a minority in the middle. Thus, the type model is only concerned with direction on the spectrum rather than with placement.

The trait model provides useful statistical models,⁴⁵ but the type model provides a

better conceptual model to understand people. The type model allows the formation of distinct personality types that incorporate an archetypal pattern of thought, emotion, and behavior. People are categorized into distinct types and learn about the archetypal form of their personality traits. The trait model cannot be organized into distinct types but provides an exact placement on the spectrum. Therefore, the trait model provides a higher resolution representation of an individual's personality, containing more information.⁴⁶

The 16-personality website⁴⁷ incorporates both the trait and type model into their theory. This allows people to see their personality traits on each spectrum and to learn about the archetypal pattern of personality most closely associated with their results. No model can capture the full complexity of each individual person. Personality types are like maps. Although

they do not capture the full reality of the actual landscape, they provide a useful representation that can provide guidance for a person.

With this in mind, we propose an initial spiritual personality typology of 4 archetypal patterns. Within each spiritual personality dimension, a person may preferentially utilize one over the other. For instance, regarding acquiring knowledge they may utilize their experience more than relying on judgment. Regarding behavior, some may prefer to exercise caution rather than initiate an action. The more a person uses one over the other, the more developed that function becomes in fortifying the individual's faith. Everyone has a choice on how to process the world (Knowledge Type) and how to act on it (Behavior Type). The combination of their preferences in each domain yields the following four spiritual personality types.⁴⁸ The names have been constructed according to what best captures the essential theme of the spiritual personality type being described.

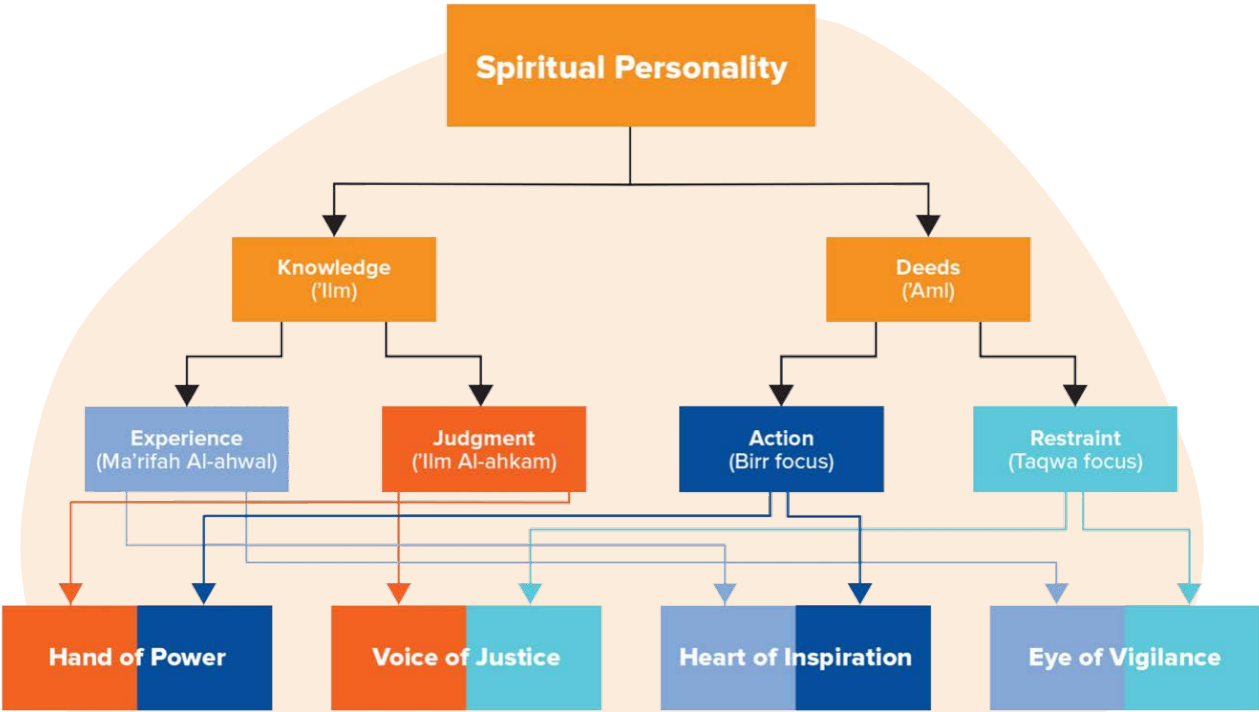


Figure 1. Spiritual personality typology.



There are **four possible combinations** of these traits, and thus **four personality types** that describe how we operate spiritually:



Hand of Power

When a person combines Judgment with Action, their spiritual passion for positive action merges with judgment to produce a practical solution-focused approach to doing good in the world, attempting to maximize benefit for those around them.

Example. Ali Ibn Abi Talib is a clear example of this category, known for his incredible passion in serving the truth and performing unmatched feats of virtue (risking his life during an assassination attempt on the Prophet, performing the hijrah on foot, his bravery during the Battle of al-Khandaq and his heroism during Khaybar, etc). When the fitnah (tribulation) occurred after the death of `Uthman, the approach of Ali was to act pragmatically to take the reins of leadership to bring stability and unity to the ummah. According to Ali, "Opportunity passes as quickly as clouds, so make use of opportunities for good."⁴⁹ described.

Voice of Justice

When Judgment merges with Restraint, this results in judgment concerning evils. This personality type is powerfully motivated to eradicate injustice, immorality, and falsehood. This is the personality that best typifies the Prophetic saying, "The most virtuous struggle is a true word spoken in the face of a tyrant."⁵⁰

Example. Umar ibn al-Khattab is the obvious example of this category. His relentless commitment to eradicating evil and opposing injustice has been noted by all who have studied his life. He announced his Islam openly in front of the Quraysh chieftains, condemned transgressions, and denounced those who perpetrated them in the strongest of terms. His justice was manifest in his swift retribution punishing the son of a governor who abused a Christian peasant in Egypt, and asking his father, "When did you enslave people when their mothers bore them free?"⁵¹ As harsh as he was on those who did wrong, he was always harsher on himself,⁵² and this in turn led him to soften on others.⁵³

Heart of Inspiration

A person who approaches knowledge with Experience combined with the behavior of Action possesses incredible vision, seeing the path that humanity must collectively tread in the pursuit of virtue and a better future. These are the visionaries the ummah needs as its guides and source of continued wisdom, compassion, and support.⁵⁴

Example. The prime example of this category is Abu Bakr al-Siddeeq. Without hesitation he was the first man to accept Islam, immediately seeing it for the truth that it was. One of the most remarkable aspects of who he was is the role he played in bringing so many of the other leading companions to embrace the faith and the intense amount of striving for good he exemplified.⁵⁵ His experiential insight revealed to him meanings that were not readily apparent to others; when the Prophet announced that a slave was given a choice between this world and that which is with Allah and had chosen the latter, only Abu Bakr understood that the Prophet was announcing that he would soon pass away. Abu Bakr was a pillar of support for Muslims in the most calamitous moment the ummah experienced, namely the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, offering the powerful words that showed his insight: "Whoever worshipped Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad has died. And whoever worshipped Allah, then verily Allah is Ever Living, and shall never die."⁵⁶

[56] The Qur'an actually mentions this combination in 38:45 and mentions Prophet Ibrahim as an example. His strong vision (baseera) and powerful pursuit of good (ayd) play out multiple times in his life. It is what gave him the resolve to withstand the persecution of his people, and trust that his family would grow and prosper in the barren valley of Makkah. We also find a strong drive for action as he built the Ka'ba with his hands, and he physically broke the idols as part of his preaching. The Prophet Muhammad likened Abu Bakr to Ibrahim and Eesa, while he likened Umar to Nuh and Musa (Musnad Ahmad).

[57] The Messenger ﷺ asked, "Who is fasting today?" Abu Bakr (radi Allahu anhu) replied, "Me." The Messenger ﷺ asked, "Who has followed a funeral procession today?" Abu Bakr (radi Allahu anhu) replied, "Me." The Messenger ﷺ asked, "Who has fed a poor person today?" Abu Bakr (radi Allahu anhu) replied, "Me." The Messenger ﷺ asked, "Who has visited a sick person today?" Abu Bakr (radi Allahu anhu) replied, "Me." The Messenger ﷺ then said, "Any person that has done these four things in one day will enter Paradise." (Sahih Muslim, online).

[58] Al-Baghawi, Sharh al-Sunnah, vol. 5, p. 323.

Eye of Vigilance

This spirituality type unites the caution of Restraint with the vision and foresight of Experiential knowledge, resulting in unparalleled awareness of the dangers and threats to true faith and worrisome trends in society. There is a focus on heeding warnings, escaping evil, and reflecting on the end-times and the afterlife.⁵⁷

Example. The example of Uthman ibn Affan shines clearly in this category. He was not the most outspoken companion but rather was a tremendously reflective soul, contemplating the afterlife and punishment in the grave. It is narrated that when he stood over a grave, he would weep until his beard became wet.⁵⁸ He worried about the negative consequences of seemingly mundane actions.⁵⁹ His concern for preventing Muslims from differing about the Qur'anic text led to his commissioning of Zaid ibn Thabit to compile the mushaf.⁶⁰ He paid tremendous attention to the prophecies of the end-times and, when the rebels surrounded his home, he warned them of the internecine violence it would lead to, and he forbade anyone to shed blood in his defense. In one of his famous sermons, Uthman said, "O people fear Allah, for fear of Allah is a great treasure. The smartest of people is the one who checks himself and strives for that which comes after death, and gains from the light of Allah light to illuminate his grave."⁶¹

[59] A famous example of the contrast between the Hand of Power and the Eye of Vigilance is that of Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak (d. 181 AH), the warrior-scholar defending the frontiers of Muslim lands against the Romans, versus Fudayl ibn Iyad (d. 187 AH) the pious ascetic and bandit-turned-worshipper who was constantly worshipping in the Holy sanctuary of Makkah; the former wrote a well-known poem in this regard.

[60] Sunan Ibn Majah (Online).

[61] It was narrated from Humayd ibn Nu'aym that 'Umar and 'Uthman were invited to a meal, and when they set out, 'Uthman said: We have come to a meal where I wish we did not come. He said: Why? He said: I am afraid it was prepared in order to show off. (Al-Zuhd by Imam Ahmad, p. 126).

[62] For a detailed discussion see al-Azami, M. M. The History of the Qur'anic Text: From Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments. (UK Islamic Academy 2003), p. 88.

[63] Saheeh al-Tawtheeq fi Seerah wa Hayat Dhi'n-Noorayn, p. 107 as cited in as-Sallabi, The Biography of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. Darussalam 2007, p. 132.

Every person's spirituality is comprised of knowledge ('ilm) and deeds ('aml). Their primary approach to knowledge may either be through experience of states or practical knowledge of rulings that aid in judging right from wrong. Their primary approach to deeds may either be focused on performing acts of virtue (birr) or restraining from evil (taqwa). Depending on which approach to knowledge is combined with which approach to deeds, a person acquires one of four possible combinations, each representing a distinct spiritual personality type— Hand of power, Voice of justice, Heart of inspiration, and Eye of vigilance.

Four fundamental spiritual personality types are conceptualized here by juxtaposing their approach to knowledge (experience versus judgment) and approach to action (action versus restraint).

There are some important potential sources of misunderstanding that it is necessary to clarify with respect to spiritual personality. First, there is a difference between religiosity and spiritual personality. Just as different colors may be indistinguishable in the dark, one's spiritual personality type may remain latent in the absence of strong religious practice. The more one increases in religiosity, the more they may discover elements of their spiritual personality of which they were previously unaware.

Secondly, as mentioned previously, these different categories of spiritual personality describe dominant tendencies; they do not confine a person's spiritual expression. Thus, it would be wrong to presume that someone who exhibits the Hand of Power orientation is unconcerned with justice, or that the Heart of Inspiration does not see negative consequences. These spiritual personalities only describe what is the foremost tendency or greatest focus of one's passions. They may translate into a proclivity for different concrete actions, but righteousness includes all these actions

and there is no reason why a person of one category can't excel in virtues typically dominant in other categories

Thirdly, one may ask whether it is not possible for there to be more spiritual personality types; why limit it to four? Of course, each of these four could have many subcategories and further differentiation and variation, however given that it is constructed upon two psychologically evident and Islamically manifest conceptual spectrums (experience vs. judgment and action vs. restraint), which are both subsumed within the basic spiritual instincts in Islamic thought (knowledge and deeds), this categorization is conceptually fundamental. Moreover, its conceptual correlation with the psychological traits of the Big Five lends this classification an empirical basis for being considered fundamental as well.

*Say:
Everyone will
act according to
their nature, and your
Lord knows best who
is rightly guide.
(17:84)*

Fourthly, one may ask whether one can change their spiritual personality. The answer is that one may acquire virtues of other categories but it requires expending somewhat greater effort or having unique life experiences since those virtues would otherwise not come as easily. One would surmise however that the only human being who maximized and perfected the virtue of every single category, mastering them all with equal brilliance, was the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who thus transcends any categorization.

Conclusion

It is especially important in our times to recognize the diversity that Allah has created in our spiritual personalities that manifest in our different approaches to the practice of Islam. We live in a world where many young Muslims are unable to experience a strong sense of belonging with the Muslim community because they find it so foreign to their natural orientation. When a person enters the community they may find themselves shamed for not being involved enough in a political movement or not learning enough about abstract theological issues. They may be shown a picture of a practicing Muslim that is focused on cultural dress codes and accessories. This can alienate our youth who find it impossible to express themselves and their own passions without fear of being judged negatively. Instead, we should recognize that practicing Islam beyond the obligations can be as diverse as life itself. These personalities should be utilized where they are best suited, allowing individual talents to flourish as they channel their passions for the sake of the Muslim community.

Reflecting on the tendencies of each spiritual personality type proposed can provide a Muslim with greater self-knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses. It can also build tolerance and acceptance of different approaches to Islamic practice. Everyone has a role to play based on their spiritual personality ■



MCAS E-ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



MCAS 41st Annual General Meeting was held online via Zoom on 4 April 2021. Members attended the EAGM by submitting their proxy to the Association as Covid-19 Safe Management Measures are in place.

5 people from Afghanistan who shaped Middle Eastern History

by Nadda Osman
Middle East Eye

From Rumi to the Safavid Shah Abbas, the country has brought forth warriors, poets and ascetics who went on to define the history of the wider region

The region that now makes up modern-day Afghanistan has long been a crossroads of civilisation, connecting cultures in Central Asia, East Asia, the Middle East and South Asia.

After the arrival of Islam in the region, various Arab, Persian, Turkic and Mongol rulers valued the mountainous territory for its proximity to trade routes, fertile valleys, and strategic position for raids further to the south over the Hindu Kush mountains.

The Mughal Emperor Babur had his capital in Kabul before launching his invasion of India; his Timurid ancestors kept their capital in the western city of Herat, from where they controlled an empire that spanned much of Central Asia, Iran, Iraq and Anatolia.

The term "Afghan" traditionally referred to ethnic Pashtuns, but the modern state of Afghanistan includes regions that have traditionally spoken Persian dialects, known as Tajik, and Turkic languages, such as Uzbek.

Historically, the region was also home to small Arab communities, who arrived as soldiers, administrators, merchants and missionaries in the centuries following the birth of Islam, but these populations have since been assimilated into neighbouring ethnic groups.

Their existence nevertheless underscores Afghanistan's integral position in the medieval Islamic world.

Here Middle East Eye looks at some of the most influential people with strong ties to Afghanistan and specifically their impact on the Middle East.



An illustration shows Rumi's meeting with Shams in Konya (Wikimedia Commons)

As well as devotions to God, the fraternity of all humans and renunciation of temporal existence. There are also verses dedicated to his friend Shams Tabrizi, a fellow mystic.

His works have had a significant impact on the development of Turkish, Persian and South Asian literature, and his original verses continue to be read both in their original Persian, Turkish and Arabic, as well as in translation.

Today Rumi's work has reached the mainstream with translations widely available in bookshops across the West, having his work being read out by Madonna, helping Coldplay's Chris Martin get through his divorce with actress Gwyneth Paltrow, and appearing as inspirational quotes on social media.

The trend is not without its critics, with Muslims and scholars of Persian literature accusing western artists and translators of removing Islamic references in Rumi's works and turning devotions to God into romantic poetry.

Rumi died in Konya in December 1273, aged 66, and his funeral drew thousands including believers of other faiths. A shrine over his grave remains a popular attraction for devotees and tourists alike.

Rumi

Widely regarded as one of the greatest Persian language poets, Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi, later known as Rumi, was born in September 1207, in the Balkh province of Afghanistan.

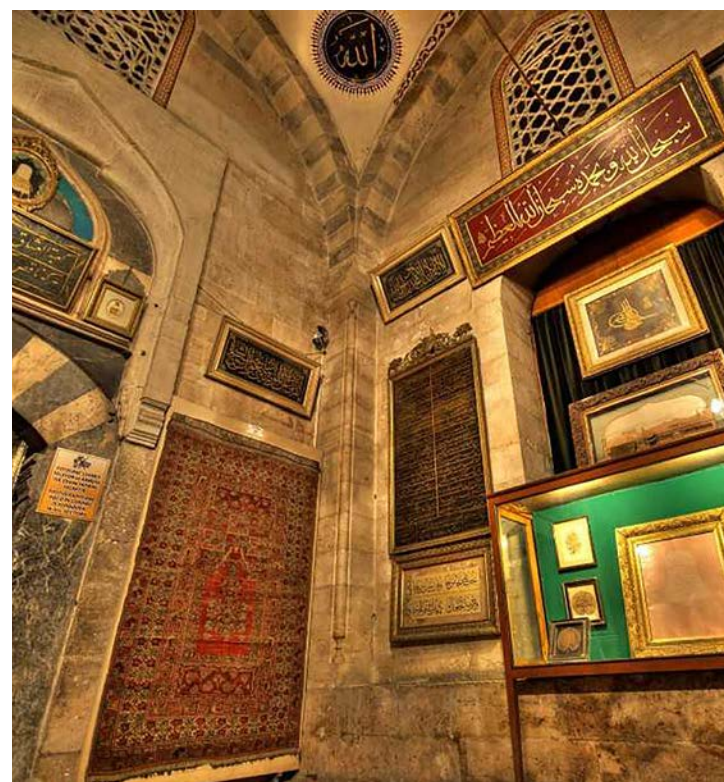
The son of a religious scholar, Rumi was himself an Islamic jurist and devoted Sufi, with much of his poetic verses devoted to understanding the nature of God.

Rumi left Balkh with his family at a young age to escape the Mongol hordes invading Central Asia, eventually living in Iraq, Syria and modern-day Turkey at different points.

As he got older, Rumi studied within the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence and later moved to Konya in Turkey, in a region then known as Rum, where he worked as a teacher.

The poet was widely read in Arabic grammar and narrations attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, as well as secular subjects such as history, philosophy and astronomy. His studies earned him the epithet mawlana, meaning "our master", variants of which are still used to refer to him today.

Rumi's poetry explored diverse themes and were sometimes intended as spiritual instruction and at other times as entertainment.



Mevlana Museum, the mausoleum of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, in Konya, central Turkey (Tour Maker Turkey)



Abu Hanifa al-Numan mosque (iStock)

2 Imam Abu Hanifa

Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man bin Thabit bin Zuta was born in Iraq in the year 689CE to a Persian father from Kabul. He would later go on to become one of the most influential Muslim jurists and theologians in history, best known for inspiring the Hanafi school of Sunni jurisprudence, the most widely followed of the four main Sunni traditions.

As a youth, he seemed destined to follow in his father's footsteps by becoming a merchant, but a fondness for theological debates developed into full-time study of the Islamic faith.

His legal method was defined by prioritising direct reading of the Quran, followed by traditions attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, then the conduct of the Prophet's companions, followed by the use of analogy, consensus of the learned, custom, as well as practicality.

Abu Hanifa lived during a time when the people who knew the Prophet Muhammad had died or were born too young to have any recollection of him.

This combined with the nascent Islamic Empire's need for a coherent and firm legal structure created the conditions for

the codification of Islamic tradition into law proper.

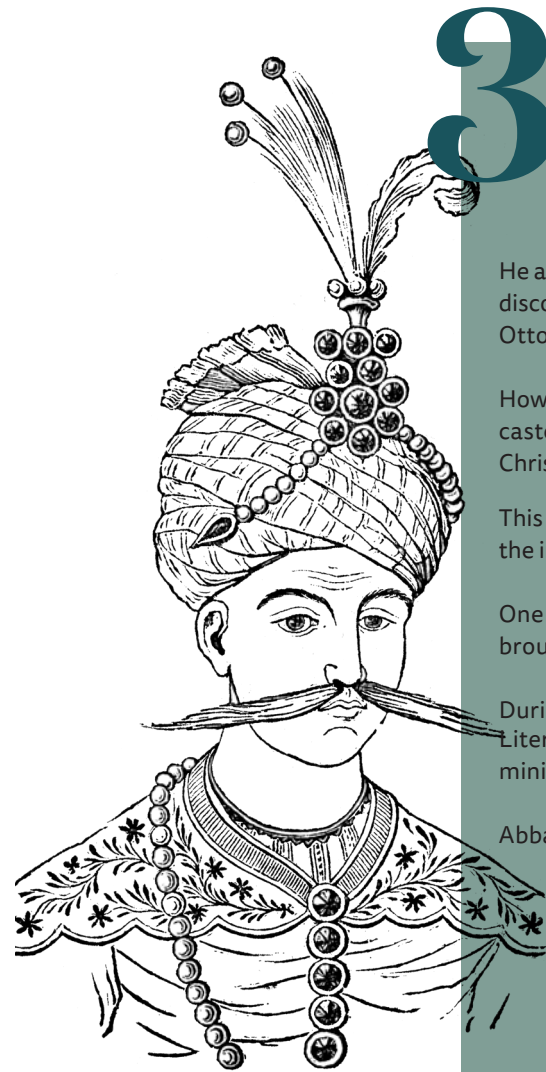
The theologian and his students therefore worked to apply Islamic principles to the legal problems that were coming up in their societies.

His legacy lies not just in the specific rulings he and his students issued but also in establishing the methodology needed to come up with them.

The scholar died at the age of 70 while under pressure from the Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur, to accept the position of chief judge. Abu Hanifa had refused the position, to the ire of the caliph, for fear that taking up an official role would compromise his independence.

Al-Mansur, incensed by the challenge to his authority, had Abu Hanifa imprisoned and the scholar later died in jail.

The episode did little to negate his legacy, however, with his Hanafi school firmly established and so many turning up to his funeral that the prayer had to be repeated five times in order to accommodate all those who had come to pay their respects. A shrine and mosque stand over his grave in Baghdad to this day.



3 Shah Abbas I

Shah Abbas I was born in January 1571, in Herat, in what is now modern-day Afghanistan. He was the fifth king of Safavid Iran, and considered to be one of the dynasty's greatest rulers, earning the epithet "Abbas the Great".

He assumed his position during troubled times for the Safavid Empire, with discontent within the army, economic uncertainty, and rival empires, such as the Ottomans looking to capitalise on the unrest.

However, Abbas, a master strategist, was able to centralise power by creating a caste of loyal soldiers similar to the Ottoman Janissaries, made up of conquered Christian peoples, such as the Circassians, Georgians and Armenians.

This elite group of soldiers took over civil and military administration, mitigating the influence of old warrior classes, such as the Qizilbash.

One of Abbas's biggest accomplishments was the economic rejuvenation of Iran brought on by moving his capital to Isfahan in 1597-98.

During his reign, there was a heavy focus on architecture, trade and the arts. Literature and artists flourished under his rule, paving the way for acclaimed miniaturists including Aqa Riza and Mir 'Imad.

Abbas was also noted for his relative tolerance of other faiths, allowing churches to be built for minority Christian communities and allowing missionaries to build bases to propagate their faith.

The Shah died in 1629, leaving a legacy that was difficult for his heirs to live up to. In 1722, Isfahan was besieged by a Pashtun tribe led by the Hotaki dynasty, which had rebelled against the Safavids. In the ensuing defeat, the Safavid dynasty collapsed.

4 Jamal al-Din Afghani

Sayed Jamal ad-Din Asadabadi, most often referred to as al-Afghani, was a 19th-century political activist, politician and journalist born in 1838 who travelled across the Muslim world advocating for pan-Islamic unity.

His exact place of birth is disputed, with some claiming that he was born in Afghanistan and others claiming that he was actually an Iranian who posed as an Afghan to avoid the accusation of being a Shia amongst his largely Sunni circles.

In any case, these sectarian differences mattered little to the activist, with much of his career spent on political agitation against western imperialists.

He began his career in British India, establishing a pattern of travel across the Muslim world, where he would work with

local activists in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt to organise activism against foreigners.

The Indian experience, which coincided with the Indian Mutiny against British rule, is widely seen as a turning point in his political development and the formation of his anti-western outlook

In 1866, al-Afghani took up a post in the government of Afghanistan, travelling extensively, including to Egypt, France, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Russia. The crux of his ideology was pan-Muslim unity and that the only way to overcome western interference in the Islamic world was on the basis of common struggle.

Though opposed to western interference and colonialism, al-Afghani was an advocate of modern approaches to science and technology and believed that Muslims could

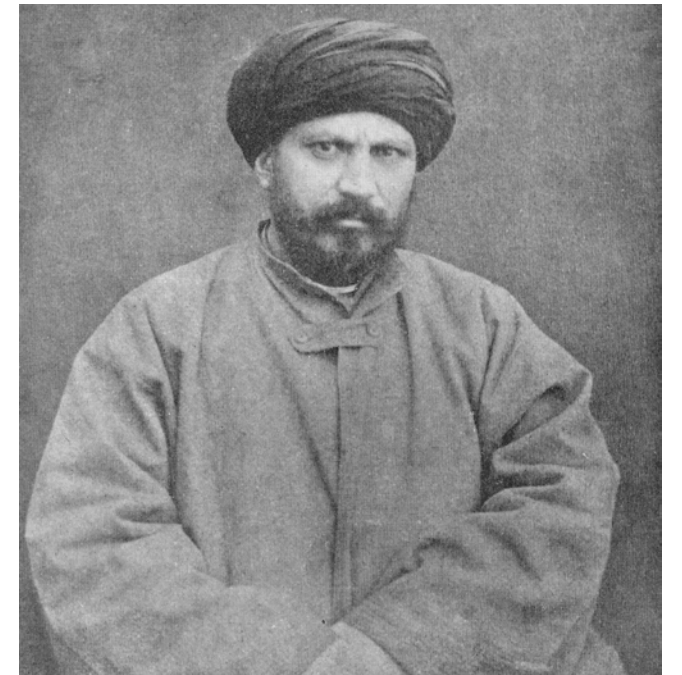
only develop in terms of civilisation without the exploitative foreign presence in their lands.

Some of al-Afghani's most notable work took place in Cairo, where he stayed from 1870-1879. In Cairo he taught Islamic philosophy and exposed students to his ideas on political reform.

There he got involved in Egyptian nationalist and anti-British politics, encouraging his followers to form political newspapers. One of his followers, Mohammed 'Abdu later became the leader of the modernist Islamic movement; another, Saad Pasha Zaghlul, founded the Egyptian nationalist Wafd party.

Al-Afghani died of cancer in Turkey in March 1897, where he was buried. The Afghan government asked for his remains to be returned to Afghanistan in 1944, where a mausoleum was built in his memory.

The activist and scholar is widely considered to be one of the founders of the pan-Islamic movement.



Al-Afghani is credited with helping to develop pan-Islamic ideas (Creative Commons)

5 Ibrahim ibn Adham

Ibrahim ibn Adham, sometimes referred to as Ibrahim Balkhi, was born in Balkh, Afghanistan, in

718CE to an aristocratic Arab family, but would go on to be known for his renunciation of material comfort and life as an ascetic.

The mystic helped influence the development of Sufism and was praised by Rumi, who recounted his legend in his work, the Masnawi.

In a story that echoes that of Gautama, the Buddha, Ibn Adham chose the ascetic life after giving up his throne, believing it was impossible to find God while distracted by luxury.

In one account, he comes across a camel herder looking for his animal on the roof of his palace. When Adham expresses his incredulity that a camel could ever make it to the roof, the man retorts that it was equally incredulous to look for God amidst material wealth.

The experience is said to have led to an epiphany, after which ibn Adham took on the life of a wise sage, traveling across the



A watercolour painting depicts Ibrahim ibn Adham being visited by angels dated between 1760-1770 (WikiMedia)

region and eventually passing away in Syria in 776CE, where his tomb is now located and has since been turned into a shrine.

Ibn Adham features frequently in Sufi legends, where miracles and encounters with divine beings, such as angels, are attributed to him ■

Journey to Recovery



Although Covid-19 and the new normal has set in, the past year still saw many changes and trials. Restrictions were enforced, lifted, enforced again, new variants broke out, and everytime we thought we have adjusted, more changes require us to recalibrate once more. The Muslim Reader asks Mr Imran Kuna about his thoughts of the past year and its challenges for MCAS.

1. How has Darul Arqam been coping in 2021 in this journey in recovering from Covid?

Imran: 2020 has been a very challenging year. We were caught by surprise at how quickly Covid-19 turned into a massive and worldwide pandemic. We fought our way through by utilizing all the resources we have at hand and managed to turn around and come back stronger. We've moved our entire operation online - meetings, religious classes, counselling sessions, even Conversions that was traditionally done in person. In 2021, there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Covid-19 vaccines were showing its effectiveness, but the world was still in a pandemic. Having almost a year of experience, we got bolder as we have successfully integrated all our services online. We explored new ways to serve the community while ensuring our members' welfare are being taken care of.

2. How has the general public reacted to the current operations of Darul Arqam?

Imran: We received support from the community as they too embraced online as the way moving forward. Our conversion was back to the pre-pandemic level. We've launched #giveMCAS campaign to garner the much-needed support. Through the Association's GIVE-MCAS initiative, MCAS has channelled its contributions to various organizations such as Mercy Relief Limited, Rahmatan Lil Alamin Foundation (RLAF) and The Singapore Red Cross, as part of the Association's humanitarian and relief efforts. In the recent months, arising from the Covid-19 pandemic situation, MCAS has pledged \$30,000 to Ain Society's efforts to help their beneficiaries, especially to the families who are affected by the pandemic.

3. Despite the tough restrictions in 2021, what are the milestones Darul Arqam is proud of?

Imran: Darul Arqam has always been known for the mass iftar, congregational Tarawih and Eid prayer, and Qurban Drive. We always strive to maintain the same level of services to our community despite challenges and restriction in organizing such a big event. With the support of all staff, volunteers, and members, we have organized these events successfully this year. Our Tarawih and Eid was done in a very controlled manner following the Safe Management Measures set by the government to ensure we can provide religious programme in safe environment.

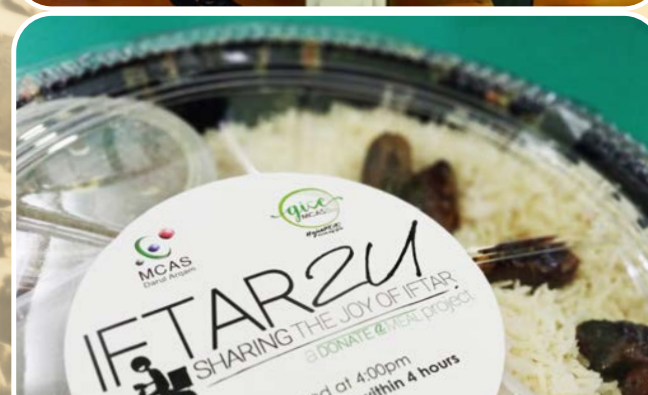
To substitute our flagship mass iftar, we launched a new initiative that allowed the community to contribute in #DonateAMeal to deliver warm meals to 1000 beneficiaries across Singapore for their iftar during Ramadan in the #iftar2u programme. Partnering with several other organizations, we were able to deliver simultaneously to 1000 homes every Saturday in Ramadan.

4. As we are recovering from the restrictions, are there any milestones Darul Arqam is looking at in the upcoming year?

Imran: The Journey to Recovery is never a straight path, but we are positive that it is coming. Inshallah, Allah will guide us through. At Darul Arqam, we planned for programmes that specifically targets rebuilding the community post-pandemic. Our courses are currently being looked into so it stays relevant in this ever-changing world. Delivery methods are being analyzed and we noted that people are now more used to attending online lessons and they too find it more effective to learn from the comfort of their homes.

Welfare of the converts remains our core priority at Darul Arqam. We ensure that the converts are well equipped and supported by our services from the moment they first learn about Islam until the point where they embraced Islam. We do not stop there; we continue to guide them and support their every need to their graves. New welfare programmes are currently in the planning stages and will be made available in 2022.

We hope in the coming years we will be able to seamlessly integrate online and physical classes and lectures to cater to growing demands for religious classes both locally and internationally. At the same time, we aim to train more converts to be able to support each other as there's no better mentor than the ones that have walked in the same shoes as converts themselves ■



ZAKAT DISBURSEMENT



Zakat Disbursement 2021

This annual ceremony is part of MCAS Fakir Miskin Asnaf (Poor & Needy) programme. Every year in the month of Ramadan, MCAS disburses its Zakat and Fidyah to help the poor and needy during the fasting month and for their preparation of the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr celebration. MCAS Fakir Miskin programme extends to other months of the year and includes providing short-term monthly assistance to selected families with financial difficulties, as well as organising motivational talks and budgeting workshops for them.

To ensure the recipients receive their money on time for their Eid Fitr preparation, MCAS credited this year's disbursement directly into the beneficiary's bank account totalling to \$200 on 24 April 2021. This brings to a total of \$120,000 in zakat being disbursed to beneficiaries.

Launch of #GIVEMCAS Campaign

#GIVEMCAS was launched as a brand-new web portal as one stop centre for all kind of payment. The campaign is also aimed to raise awareness of MCAS' programmes and welfare activities and to let donors know that there are many ways of contributing online.

This is also to inform the public that contributions goes to various activities and programmes such as;

- Da'wah Outreach
- Financial Aid/Assistance Scheme Client
- Convert's Welfare
- Child & Youth Program
- Religious Education Class for everyone
- Education Bursary for tertiary students

MCAS is committed to support the community with compassion and kindness, by providing essential services and assistance to those who need, motivating them towards betterment and strengthening the fabric of the community.

in conjunction with IFTAR2U



Iftar2U

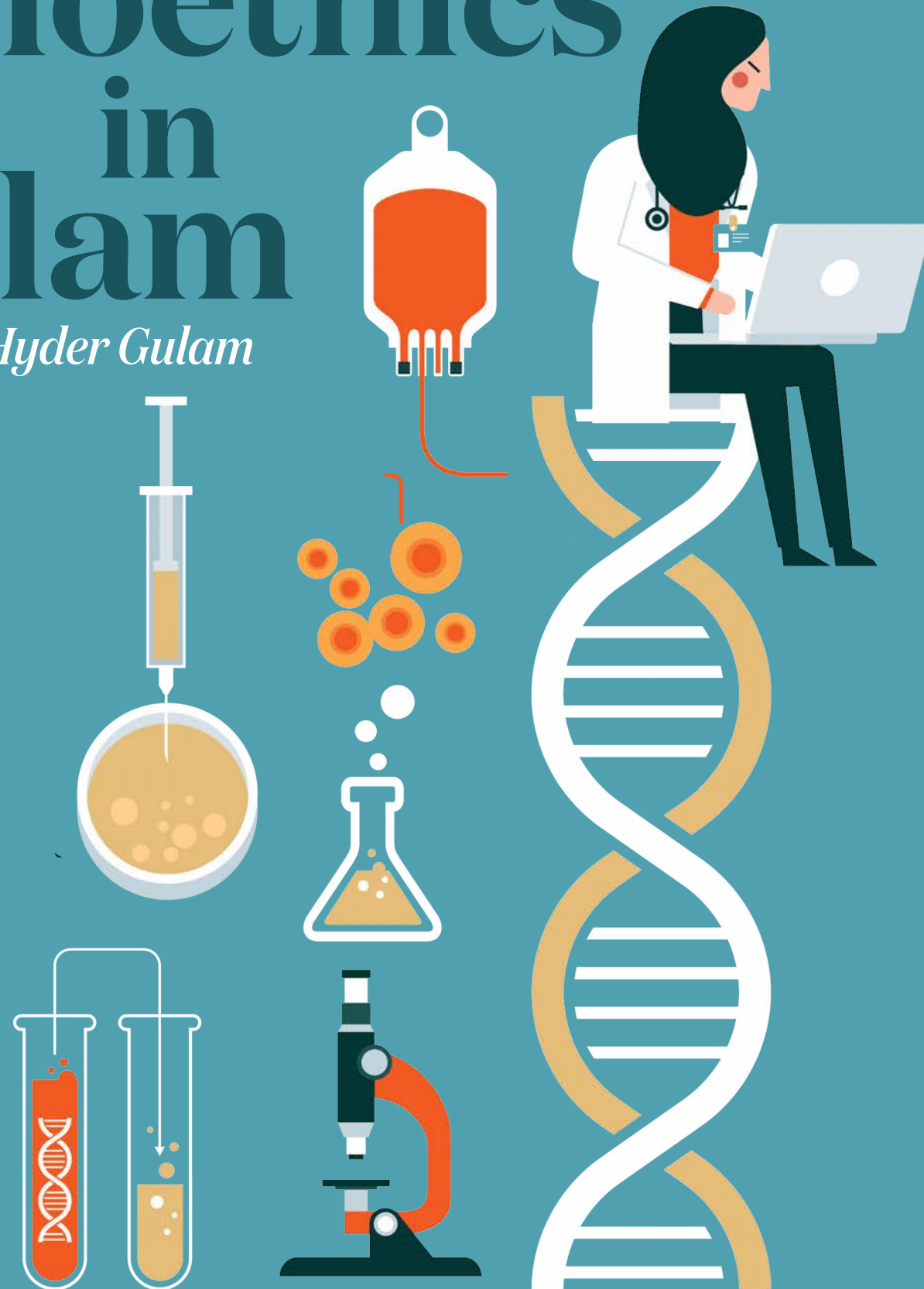
The Association has been organizing weekly mass iftar for our members, volunteers, converts, born Muslims, and public every Saturdays in the month of Ramadan, prior to Covid-19 pandemic.

4000 packed food was delivered to MCAS beneficiaries and their family members through contactless food delivery sent by 200 dedicated volunteer riders. Each packed food can serve up to 4 person in a household.



Bioethics in Islam

by Hyder Gulam



وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ

*"That humankind can have nothing, except that (good)
which they strive for"*

(Surah An-Najm, 53:39)

This article will focus on the preservation of life as a principle of Islam. It is a continuation of the bioethical theme from last year's Vaccination article in The Muslim Reader. Islamic bioethics as a topic of study has seen immense growth in the medical and secular bioethical literature over the past decade. Bioethics essentially combines biological knowledge (bio) with the knowledge of human value systems and philosophy (ethics). In the Islamic context it is shaped by the Divine revelations and human intellect. Islamic discourse on bioethical issues has focused on the so-called "detailed rulings in order to see if a specific medical practice (e.g., abortion, cloning, stem-cell research, use of porcine and other "haram" elements) is permissible (halal) or prohibited (haram)". This article will explain bioethics in Islam, the main derived rulings, the main issues in Islamic bioethics and provide some examples from a Singaporean Muslim context.

What is Bioethics?

Ethics is concerned with determining the rightness and wrongness of actions, decisions or goals². There has been growing interest in ethics in professional spheres, such as medicine, as a result of historical atrocities, such

as the Nazi experiments on humans during WW2. Pertaining to ethics, Islam places a great emphasis on moral virtues. The comparable word for ethics in Islam is a combination of two words, Aqhlāq, meaning proper conduct, and Adab, meaning virtue³. Since Islam's inception, Muslim health care professionals have paid special attention to ethics in their personal and professional practice⁴. Scholars within the Islamic tradition have always been aware of the moral underpinnings of the religious duties that all Muslims are required to fulfil. They validate their research upon the Islamic sources, when faced with practical questions, by ensuring they consider the many moral facets of each case⁵. Legal decisions within Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) are made after ensuring that due attention is paid to the various factors that determine the rightness and wrongness of the matter under consideration. So, Islamic bioethics can be considered a combination of virtue ethics, which focuses on the conduct of the practitioner and based on their religious matrix⁶.

What is Shariah?

Shariah is based on the unqualified submission to the will of God (Allah)⁷. The will of Allah embraces all aspects of life and the law hence covers all of them⁸.

Shariah is an Arabic word meaning the path to be followed⁹. Literally, it means 'the way to a watering place'. It is the path not only leading to Allah, but the straight path believed by all Muslims to be the righteous path shown by Allah, through His Last Messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ¹¹. For adherents of Islam, Shariah governs every aspect of one's daily life, and provides a moral and legal framework for Muslims and does not separate religion from daily life, nor religion from politics, nor politics from morals, nor morals from the state¹².

Unlike the European civil law or English common law, Shariah is considered to be divine in origin, and technically refers to a body of explicit revealed laws¹³. Shariah is not strictly speaking a legal system, as the force and intent of its words and rules reach much deeper into thought, life and the conduct than a purely legal system and the rewards and sanctions are both in this world and the hereafter¹⁴. The first and primary source of Shariah is the Qur'an the (religious text of Islam, as the word of God)¹⁵. The second source is the Sunna, the words, acts, and practice of the Prophet Muhammad, as collected in the hadiths¹⁶. The third source is both ijma (consensus of opinion of ulama (or scholars) and qiyas (analogical deduction)¹⁷. Also available as a reasoning process is ijtihad or literally "striving, or self-exertion in

[1] M. Ghaly (September 2013). "Islamic Bioethics in the 21st Century", Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science, Vol.48, No.3.

[2] P. Singer (1994). Ethics. Oxford University Press: Oxford, pp. 3-10.

[3] A. Siddiqui (1997). "Ethics in Islam: Key Concepts and Contemporary Challenges", Journal of Moral Education,

26: 4 pp.423-31 (Dec 1997).

[4] F. Zahedi F, S.H. EmamiRazavi, B. Larijani (2009). "A two-decade Review of Medical Ethics in Iran". Iranian Journal of Public Health, 38(Suppl. 1): 40- 46.

[5] S. Abdulaziz. 2009. Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Principles and Application. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.7.

[6] S. Mehrunisha (2021). Islam and Biomedical Research Ethics, Routledge: New York, p.16

[7] M.H. Kamali, (2008). Shar'iah law: An introduction. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

[8] C.G. Weeramantry (2001). Islamic Jurisprudence: An International Perspective. Kuala Lumpur: The Other

any activity which entails a measure of hardship¹⁸. Ijtihad is the process of making a legal decision by independent interpretation of the legal sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah¹⁹.

What is Fiqh?

Fiqh is a robust juridical system rooted in the primary sources, analysed and applied by scholars to arrive at solutions to practical problems faced by Muslims²⁰. Fiqh refers to 'knowledge of practical legal rulings derived from their specific evidence, as deduced from the Qur'an and Sunnah to cover specific situations not directly treated in the revealed sources²¹. According to Professor Abdalla, unlike Shariah, fiqh is flexible and changes according to the circumstances under which it is applied²². Muslims have agreed on the Shariah but not on the rulings of fiqh²³.

Maqasid Al Shariah – the Higher Objectives of the Law

Muslims are familiar with life being sacred and the notion that the entire universe results in and supports human life, as a tenet of faith. Life is nothing short of a miracle, from the galactic stars to the smallest of living organisms, ordained by Allah (swt). Although Islam treats the life of all creatures as valuable, it gives greater honour to human life. Knowledge of these Maqasid of Shariah, that is the higher objectives, can certainly go a long way to relieving some of the doubts and confusion when reconciling living life and faith, and the Divine gifts and benefits of these Islamic principles. Scholars generally divide Maqasid into two general categories: (1) higher objectives of the lawgiver; and (2) objectives of those accountable before the law. Like Imam al-Ghazali

(d. 1111), Imam al-Shatibi (d. 1388) amongst others, concluded that the major objectives of Shariah are the preservation of religion/faith, human life, progeny, material wealth/property and intellect/human reason. Islamic law aims to preserve essential and other interests by preserving their existence and also protecting them from annihilation²⁴.

However, it is crucial how the Maqasid are to be identified and defined for bioethical purposes, to delineate how the Maqasid are to be balanced between each other and when they conflict in a given case, to determine how they should be applied to such cases, and also to describe how they should be adapted for use in different societies, such as the Muslim minority setting²⁵.

The Maqasid of Bioethics

So what are these higher objectives in relation to bioethics? Here are a few uncontroversial key maxims.

- For every sickness and disease (except aging) God has already created a cure. This means that scientific investigations and looking for treatment is encouraged.
- Islam has made it an onus upon the sick to seek treatment. This means that searching for a cure is a responsibility for the individual and the community.

- Human life is sacred. The saving of one life is considered to be the same as saving the life of all of humanity. This means that effort ought to be made to save life, however this must not endanger others or be reckless.

- God does not burden a soul greater than what it can bear.

The plain understanding behind this is that we should not be overwhelmed by our illnesses, instead use the experience to strive towards piety and be grateful (shukr) for all the gifts from our Lord.

- Necessity can remove a prohibition temporarily for as long as necessity is removed. This means that those things which are clearly prohibited, can be made permissible, such as their use in a medicine (i.e. alcohol) if there is no alternative, and for the period of the necessity.

- When confronted with two evils, the lesser evil is preferred. This is not better explained in the utility of organ transplant, especially as a superior religious alternative than choosing to die. This also means that when a Muslim is confronted with two different lawful choices, the easier option should be chosen, ie one that causes less hardship.

- Everything in Islam is permissible unless otherwise proved otherwise by clear evidence. This means that Islam approves of most of the biological

researches, which aims to benefit human life.

- The family and lineage should be protected. This is manifested by the permissibility of IVF within wedlock.

- Actions will be judged according to intentions. Intention plays a critical role with all bioethical matters. In fact, this maxim is the cornerstone for judging actions generally.

Issues in Bioethics from an Islamic perspective

Many religious perspectives on bioethical issues often begin with an appeal to primary sources (e.g., scriptural texts, important figures, etc). In the case of Islamic bioethics, for example, the sparsity of methodological frameworks is secondary to an appeal to the Qur'an or the Prophetic tradition as self-evident evidence²⁶. Many starting premises begin by positing one of these primary sources in the form of an ayat(s) (verse), parable, or Prophetic saying(s) to which the scholar will ascribe an interpretation. This interpretation must be able to withstand scrutiny from an Arabic grammar, internal consistency, pure logical, historical cross reference and circumstantial perspective.

However, when the normative texts are silent, Muslim jurists have successfully derived legal and moral principles

from subsidiary sources. Professor Sachedina²⁷ refers to a few of these principles within his seminal work, such as Maslaha (public good), Dharurah (necessity) and Urf (custom)²⁸. These can be used to inform the law and is considered a secondary source within the Islamic ethico-legal framework Further, the derived sciences: the aforementioned fiqh, tasawwuf (Sufism), Adab and Aqhlaq are a third level of the practice of Muslims as an embodiment of the textual sources and derived sciences²⁹.

A salient criticism of the Islamic bioethics is that a scholar's derivation of ethical concepts are from isolated verses and the corollary supposition that these ethical concepts are 'Islamic' solely because they can be traced either to a prima facie reading of the scripture or because it was espoused by a notable Muslim thinker with whom the scholar aligns (with no explanation of how that scholar derived their conclusions). The audience often has limited means of testing the epistemology, reasoning or logic by which these bioethical statements are derived. It is not enough to extract a verse from the Qur'an or hadith and use it as standalone evidence for a bioethical/moral claim. All interpretations from religious primary source materials require some traceable or interrogatable methodology from which an interpretation is derived to facilitate dialogue and critique³⁰.

Press.
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[10] A. Rahman I. Doi, (1984). Shariah: The Islamic Law. Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, p. 2.
[11] ibid
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[19] M.H. Kamali, (2003). Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence. Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society.
[20] ibid
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[24] T. Ramadan (2009). What I Believe. New York:

Oxford University Press. pp. 59-76
[25]A. I. Padela, (2019). "Using the Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah to Furnish an Islamic Bioethics: Conceptual and Practical Issues", Bioethical Inquiry 16:347-352
[26] A. H. Ibrahim, N.N.A. Rahman, S.M. Saifuddeen, and M. Baharuddin. 2019. Maqasid al-shariah based Islamic bioethics: A comprehensive approach. Journal of Bioethical Inquiry, 16:333-345.
[27] Op cit. Abdalaziz. 2009
[28] Op cit. Mehrunisha p.17
[29] ibid, p.18
[30] Rattani, A. (2021). "A Critique of Contemporary Islamic Bioethics", Bioethical Inquiry 18:357-361.
[31] ibid
[32] ibid
[33] Op cit. Mehrunisha, p.8

[34] D. Atigghetchi (2007). Islamic Bioethics: Problems and Perspectives. Springer: The Netherlands, see ch.2
[35]Op cit. Mehrunisha, p.12
[36] ibid, p.7
[37] CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) (n.d.). "World Factbook". Government of the United States of America. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook.html> accessed 29 March 2016.
[38] CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) (n.d.). "World Factbook". Government of the United States of America. Retrieved from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook.html> and Wikipedia (n.d.), "Islam in Singapore". Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Singapore accessed 29 March 2016.
[39] Wikipedia (n.d.), "Islam in Singapore". Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Singapore accessed 29 March 2016.



The appeal to authority is a defeasible argument in where deference is given to an authoritative body whose statements are taken as justification or evidence for an argument—typically as a substitute for validated or sound evidence. The appeal to authority is a common logical fallacy found with great frequency in the majority of Islamic bioethics literature today³¹. The major problem with this form of appeal to authority reasoning is that abstract, diverse, and complex concepts are reduced into monolithic and concrete entities that are not verifiable, relevant, or applicable³². It also provides a one-dimensional impression of Islam or Islamic bioethics relegated to the definitional whims of the particular scholar. Islamic bioethics scholars run a high risk of reducing this vast faith tradition to a set of bullet points, whereas in fact, there is a rich vein of diversity and a myriad of views.

Some final points to notes: It is important to mention briefly that although now presented as secular, 'Western' bioethics itself has its origins within religion and, more specifically, Christianity³³. The sources of such bioethics are the various gospels and commentary by scholars, with influence from Jewish sources and heritage³⁴. Even within the Islamic framework, there is a divergence of

views, depending on how contemporary Sunni and Shi'a scholars apply differing approaches to emerging bioethical questions. Often their conclusions will differ, not just because of theological differences and proofs, but also due to ethico-legal, historic and sociological factors³⁵.

Further, there has been a long-standing debate within bioethics about whether ethical principles are dependent on time and space, and are therefore relative, or whether there are universally acceptable principles for determining ethical rightness and wrongness, even if the interpretation of these is highly dependent upon context³⁶. Therefore, what is permissible at one point may not be so at another point, with the efflux of time, circumstances, personality and space, and vice versa.

Bioethics from an Islamic Framework – the Singapore Example

Singapore has a population of almost 6 million, a majority of whom are Buddhist Chinese³⁷. About 15% of Singapore's population are Muslims, of which a majority are Sunni Muslim Malays, following the Shafi'i school of thought (Mazhab), who are the

traditional inhabitants of the land³⁸. Almost seventeen (17%) of Muslims in Singapore are of South Asian origin, who are mainly Hanafi Mazhab. There are also Muslims in Singapore who are Shi'ite Muslims³⁹. Malays are the native inhabitants of Singapore, as recognized in the Singaporean Constitution, per section 152:

The Government shall exercise its functions in such manner as to recognise the special position of the Malays, who are the indigenous people of Singapore, and accordingly it shall be the responsibility of the Government to protect, safeguard, support, foster and promote their political, educational, religious, economic, social and cultural interests and the Malay language.

Islam has been the dominant religion of the Malays in Singapore since at least the 16th Century. By and large, given most Muslims in Singapore are Malays, Muslims in Singapore are generally homogenous, and not as ethnically and culturally diverse relative to Muslims who form the minorities in other countries, such as Australia, UK, Canada etc., and share a very close bond to Malay Muslims in neighbouring states such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Southern Thailand, and Philippines. This creates a distinct Malay community

of largely shared values and outlook, that is independent from that cultural hegemony of the Middle East and North Africa, irrespective of sharing the same faith: Islam.

In Singapore, MUIS is the peak and only authorized body sanctioned to issue fatwas (legal rulings) for the benefit of Muslims in Singapore⁴⁰. The Administration of Muslim Law Act, 1966 (AMLA)⁴¹ addresses the functions and jurisdiction of a number of key Muslim institutions in Singapore, including MUIS, as:

“...a statutory body to advise the President of Singapore on all matters relating to Islam in Singapore. It also has the role to see that the many and varied interests of Singapore's Muslim community are looked after in accordance with the principles and traditions of Islam as enshrined in the Holy Quran and Sunnah” (AMLA, section 32).

MUIS has a Legal Committee consisting of the Mufti of Singapore, two other members of the Majlis and two non-members; the function of the Legal Committee is to issue fatwa on any point of Muslim law (AMLA, sections 30-33). AMLA sets out that in issuing any ruling, the Legal Committee shall ordinarily follow the tenets of the Shafi'i school of law (AMLA, section 33). The MUIS website contains a number of important fatwas for the Muslim community in Singapore, some of which are unique to the circumstance of residing in the island state, such as CPF (superannuation) nomination, revocable insurance nomination, Zakat on gold and jewellery, matters of aqidah (creed) and faith (deen), permissibility of organ donation etc⁴².

In the context of this paper, MUIS has from time to time issued a number of notable Fatwas on bioethical considerations. Some of these are: Rotavirus Vaccine, Organ Donation, Milk Banks and Stem Cell Research. While the methodology and analysis is a summary form on the MUIS website, MUIS has shown a tendency to be broad minded and flexible when it comes to deriving rulings from even minority sources. Presumably this is not to cause

undue hardship to the community (such as bringing forward the performing of Friday prayers before the appointed time, from a minority Hanbali opinion, which is surprising given that Shafi Mazhab is the dominant school of thought in Singapore, and Hanafi Mazhab is the largest school of thought in the world)⁴³.

Rotavirus Vaccine,⁴⁴

Rotavirus is a virus that can cause vomiting, dehydration, fever, and in certain cases, death. As of now, rotavirus vaccine is the best measure available in managing the virus. The MUIS Fatwa Committee received information that trypsin enzyme from porcine (pig) pancreas is being used in one of the manufacturing stages. The Fatwa Council noted that Islam highly advocates for its followers to seek treatment for all illnesses. This is because the preservation of life is one of the main objectives of Shariah (Maqasid Shariah), and by seeking treatment, one is making the effort to preserve his/her life and body. By relying on Prophetic narrations, the Fatwa Committee said that taking vaccine is a means of preventing oneself from being infected by viruses and diseases. Early preventive measures are also highly encouraged in Islam. In respect to the impure elements (Najis) in the medication, the

Fatwa Committee stated as a guideline, the Shariah has always prohibited one from seeking treatment from najis or haram (unlawful) sources. However, in the instance that there are no other halal (permissible) alternatives, and the patient's life depends on this treatment, then Shariah allows for the patient to proceed with the treatment.

After due inquiry and research, the Fatwa Committee held that the Rotavirus Vaccine was halal and pure. This was because: (i) the trypsin solution is currently the safest option in ensuring the effectiveness of transferring the cells, so as not to cause them to die prematurely. After harvesting enough cells, trypsin will no longer be used in the subsequent steps. The harvest fluid will then undergo several filtration processes and will finally be sterilized to help ensure that the product will be removed of all traces of trypsin; (ii) the impure element in the overall product is very insignificant compared to the overwhelming percentage of pure elements contained in the product. Hence, trypsin solution is considered to be pure as it has undergone the processes of dilution and the addition of other pure elements; (iii) the porcine enzyme found in the trypsin solution is not found in the end product of the rotavirus vaccine.



Organ Transplant/Donation.⁴⁵

One of the driving issues in this bioethical matter was the problems and sufferings of Muslim kidney patients in Singapore. Equally, the outcomes of public awareness campaigns on the importance of rendering help to kidney patients by becoming organ pledgers, coupled with a need to increase the current number of Muslim pledgers, and whether this increase could help alleviate the problems of the kidney patients in the future, were some of the considerations behind this issue. The general consensus of Muslim jurists is that organ transplant and donation by the deceased is permissible in Islam. Among the reasons quoted by the Fatwa Committee are:

Islam calls for the seeking of cure and treatment for illnesses, and the most effective treatment for those who suffer from organ failure, currently, is by receiving a new organ in place of the failed one. The objectives (Maqasid) of the Shariah clearly state the importance of protecting and saving human lives.

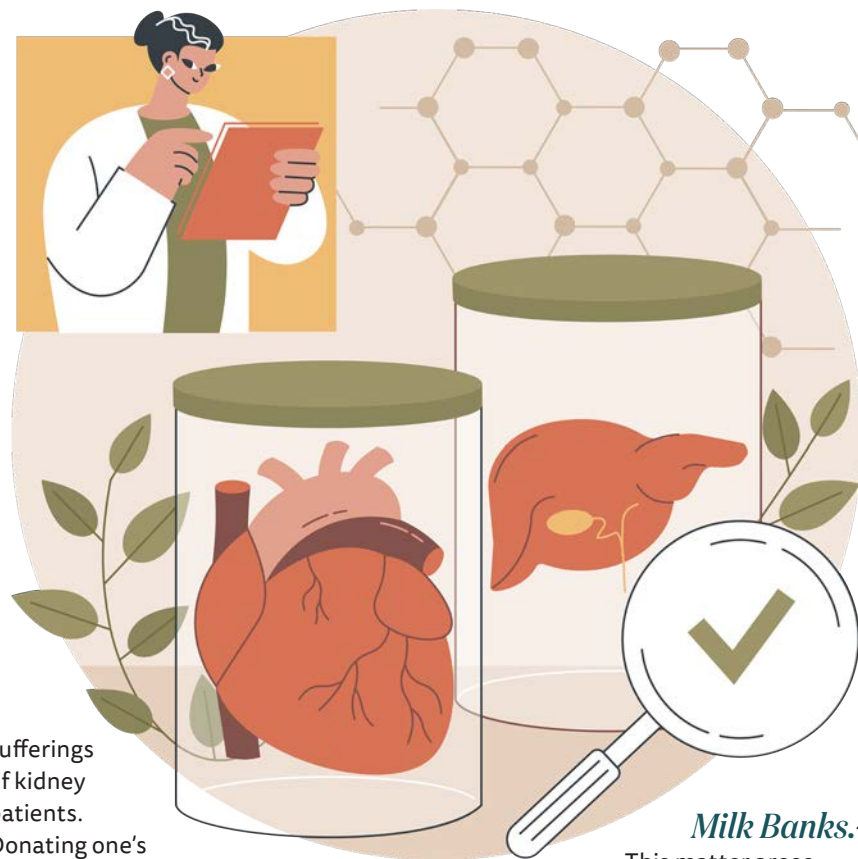
This is mentioned in the Holy Quran:

وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَانَتْ
أُخْيَا النَّاسِ جَمِيعًا

“...and whomever saves one life, then it is as though he has saved the whole of humanity.”

(Surah Al-Maidah 5:32)

The Shariah is built upon values such as care and compassion. The Shariah thus calls for mankind to help one another, and to contribute in alleviating human sufferings and pain, such as the



sufferings of kidney patients.

Donating one's organs is an act of amal jariyah (continuous charitable deed) in which the rewards accrue even after one's death.

The Fatwa Committee also cited a number of legal maxims from Islamic jurisprudence, including:

(i) “If a problem grows acute, then it shall be relieved”;

(ii) “Difficulty calls for facilitation”; and that to safeguard public interest and welfare (maslahah), leaders of the community should decide for the community what is best in their interest. This is in line with the legal maxim: “The actions of an Imam (leader) is driven by the interest of the community.”

Milk Banks.⁴⁶

This matter arose from the plans of a local hospital to set up a Human Milk Bank. The question put forward to the Fatwa Committee was to understand the perspective of Muslim law on this issue, and whether premature Muslim babies can benefit from the milk processed at the above-mentioned Milk Bank. In deliberating the ruling pertaining to the Milk Bank and its implications, the Fatwa Committee acknowledged that this issue is related to the status of mahramiyāh (kinship or relations that bar marriage), that can come about from breastfeeding. The Committee examined the decision of other like-minded bodies, especially from Malaysia, and the spiritual head

of Muslim Brotherhood based in Qatar, Dr Qaradawi, (but curiously no other eminent religious scholars from the Muslim world, such as Sheikh Ali Gomaa, Sheikh Bin Bayyah or Habib Hassan in Singapore).

The Fatwa Committee examined some issues related to the issue of mahramiyāh were also studied by the Fatwa Committee, such as:

- Amount and number of feedings using breast milk.
- Issue of uncertainty (jahā lāh).
- Method of feeding.

The Committee considered that the issue of mahramiyāh would exist only if there is no doubt on the status of the donor and, if the milk was not mixed with other substances or with other donors' milk. Further, only the act of suckling directly from the breast of the woman would cause mahramiyāh to be established, citing Surah An-Nisa:

وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ

“And your mothers are those who have suckled you.”

(Surah An-Nisaa 4:23)

Accordingly, the Fatwa Committee was of the view that the issue of mahramiyāh would not exist in relation to the Milk Bank that was being proposed.

The Fatwa Committee noted that the explanation given by the hospital on the needs of premature babies to be breastfed so that they have a better chance to develop and grow. Accordingly, the Fatwa Committee was of the view that there exists a situation of great difficulty (masyaqqāh) that brings about hājāh or a need for a solution for such babies. Therefore, the Fatwa Committee decided that the plan for the establishment of a milk bank for this purpose was an initiative in line with the objectives of Shariah (Maqasid Shariah) which, among others, emphasize the need for the preservation of human life. The principles in Islam



were embodied in the following legal maxims of fiqh:

- Any harm [must] be eliminated.
- Hardship begets facility.
- When the condition becomes tight, then [the law] is widened.

Stem Cell Research.⁴⁷

The Fatwa Committee was asked its views as to the use of embryos created from in-vitro fertilisation, which are less than 14 days old, for the purpose of serious research involving stem cells for the benefit of humankind. The Committee's preliminary statement was that any research must be utilised for the benefit of humankind in areas like the treatment of illnesses. The research has to be within the boundaries of principles in Islamic Jurisprudence, which include:

- There should not be any harm and nothing should be done to cause harm
- Harm should be avoided.

The Fatwa Committee examined a number of Hadiths and the decision of the Fatwa Institution of Darul Ifta', Saudi Arabia on the same topic. In arriving at its decision, the Committee stated that the majority of Islamic jurists held that Islam does not place any judgement on an embryo, which is not fully formed. An embryo is only considered as a human life after it is 4 months old as in Islam, it is believed that a soul is introduced into the embryo when it is 4 months old.

Accordingly, the Fatwa Committee was of the view that the use of stem cells from embryos below 14 days old for the purpose of research, which will benefit humankind, is allowed in Islam, coupled with the condition that it is not misused for the purpose of human reproductive cloning, which would result in contamination of progeny and the loss of human dignity.

Conclusion

Islamic bioethics as a field and a discipline is still developing. Many different experts are involved in demarcating the “Islamic” content of the field and in establishing the reasoning processes it should employ. It is a vibrant field: the application of Islamic principles and values to a changing technological world. Islamic bioethics is an ethical system oriented towards openness and public interest. Individual interest and personal satisfaction are closely related to and dependent on public interest and welfare. Humankind as a whole is regarded as a unified entity and for this reason, Islamic bioethics is critical of selfish actions which disregard the surrounding environment like leaving a neighbour hungry⁴⁸. This sense of belonging develops the identity of free human beings who have responsibilities and rights in relation to themselves, family, the community, and Allah (swt). Islamic bioethics is another means of serving the Creator ■

[40] A.N. Abbas, (2012). “The Islamic legal system in Singapore”. Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal, Vol. 21, No. 1, 167-187.

[41] AMLA (Administration of Muslim Law Act 1966 Singapore). Retrieved from <http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/view.w3p?id=98a6fd44-2821-4eb8-a691-c9doceaff4f;page=0;query=DocId%3A3e90fc65-b364-434b-b2dc-ced1d9608640%20%20Status%3Ainforce%20Depth%3A0;rec=0#pr8-he-> (or type in AMLA at <http://statutes.agc.gov.sg>) accessed 29 March 2016.

[42] MUIS (n.d.). “Fatwa in Singapore – Office of the Mufti”. Retrieved from <http://www.officeofthemufti.sg/Fatwa/index.html> accessed 29 March 2016.

[43] Office of the Mufti – MUIS (16 June 2020), “Fatwa on Performing Friday Prayers during Covid-19 (English)”, accessed 4th November 2021 from <https://www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/Fatwa/English-Fatwa-on-Friday-Prayers-during-Covid-19>

[44] Office of the Mufti – MUIS (28 Feb 2013)– MUIS, “Rotavirus Vaccine (English)”, accessed 4th November 2021 at <https://www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/>

Fatwa/English-Rotavirus-Vaccine

[45] Office of the Mufti – MUIS (10 January 2017)– MUIS, “Milk Bank (English)”, accessed 4th November 2021 at <https://www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/Fatwa/Milk-Bank---English>

[46] Office of the Mufti – MUIS (N.D.)– MUIS, “Fatwa on Stem Cell Research (English)”, accessed 4th November 2021 at <https://www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/Fatwa/English-Stem-Cell-Research>

[47] Op cit. Ibrahim et al (2019)

ZAKAT

DEFINITION OF

TO GROW
TO PURIFY
TO BLESS

زَكَاةٌ
ZAKAA

الزَّكَاةُ
AZ-ZAKAH

ZAKAT IN ISLAM

THIRD PILLAR
OF ISLAM

OBLIGATORY
UNLIKE
SADAQAH &
CHARITY

GIVEN IN A
CALCULATED
AMOUNT

MENTIONED
30 TIMES
IN THE QURAN

TYPES OF SADAQAH

1 زَكَاةُ الْمَالِ
ZAKAT ON WEALTH
ZAKAT UL-MAL

2 زَكَاةُ الْفِطْرِ
ZAKAT ON INDIVIDUAL
ZAKAT UL-FITR

ITS BENEFITS!

HEALS THE HEART
FROM STINGINESS

REMINDS US THAT WE
ARE MANAGERS OF
WEALTH IN DUNYA,
NOT OWNERS

LESSENS THE
BURDEN OF THE
NEEDY

INSTILL VALUE OF
GRATEFULNESS
AND COMPASSION

4 CONDITIONS FOR OBLIGATORY ZAKAT

MUSLIM BY FAITH

Zakat is only
applicable
to Muslims

1

FULL OWNERSHIP

Implies that the
owner should be fully
capable of disposing
the wealth without
being an object of
contest by others

2

NISAB

The person's wealth
at any point in time
in the Hijrah year must
reach Nisab, which is
equivalent to the market
value of 85g of gold

3

HAUL

The person's wealth
above Nisab must
be with the person for
at least one Hijrah year

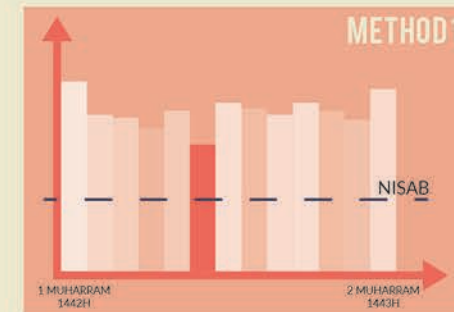
4

HOW?

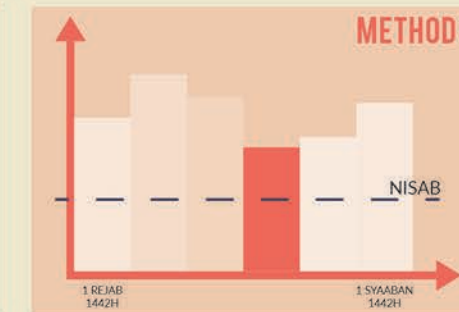
ZAKAT CALCULATOR

LET'S USE AN EXAMPLE FOR ZAKAT ON (ANY TYPE OF) SAVINGS (ACCOUNTS)!

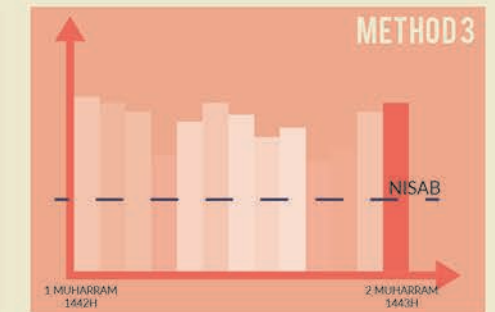
ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MAY BE USED TO CALCULATE THE QUANTUM OF ZAKAT PAYABLE



2.5% X LOWEST
ANNUAL BALANCE



2.5% X LOWEST
MONTHLY BALANCE



2.5% X LAST BALANCE
UPON COMPLETION OF HAUL

ZAKAT DISTRIBUTIONS

MUALLAF

one who convert
to Islam

FAKIR

has insufficient means
of livelihood to meet
his/her daily needs

RIQAB

need assistance to
pursue their
education

IBNUSSABIL

stranded travellers
on a permissible
journey



FISABILILLAH

one who strives
in the cause of Allah
for the betterment
of the community

AMIL

officer appointed to
collect Zakat

MISKIN

has insufficient means
of livelihood to meet
his/her basic needs

GHARIMIN

in debt and needs
assistance to meet
his/her basic needs

Meet the MCAS General Manager

Norsiah Saad

The Muslim Reader interviewed Miss Norsiah Saad in her role as the new General Manager of MCAS.

1. Briefly describe your career growth at MCAS?

Norsiah: It has been an unexpected yet amazing experience since joining MCAS in 2004 as a Senior Executive Officer with Finance Division and subsequently heading the Finance division. A few years later, the role of Head of Corporate Affairs Division was offered when there was a vacancy. This role requires different skillsets and covers much broader responsibilities and from this role, was then eventually promoted to the Deputy General Manager and now General Manager. Could not have done the job without the guidance and co-operation from the management and fellow colleagues. I believe that at whatever positions or responsibilities that have been assigned, I should never lose sight of the objectives of the Association and that I am a part of that Association to fulfil its objectives.

2. How do you see MCAS changing in the next two years, and how do you see yourself creating that change?

Norsiah: It will be dependent on who will be elected to the Council for the term 2022 - 2024 in the coming Annual General Meeting in March 2022. If the team consist mainly of the current Council, the expectation will be a continuation of the current programme. However, should a new team be elected, then the priorities and programmes may change.

For the next two years, I would see myself providing the support to the elected new management, changes in operations as we adapt and cope to the new norm arising from Covid-19 which includes hastening the pace towards digitalisation, implementation and updating the new policies such as PDPA, etc.

3. What do you think are the strengths of MCAS as a Muslim Organisation in Singapore and in the region?

Norsiah: As a Muslim Organisation in Singapore and in the region, MCAS is already known for its structured Islamic education programmes conducted in English which is not only suitable for those who wish to embrace Islam, but also for born Muslims who are starting to be conscious of the religion. MCAS is also known for its healthy financial position which is also an indicator of having a good management team, prudent and sound financial policies and operating efficiency.

4. What is the biggest challenge, including people management, you have faced so far as a General Manager? How did you overcome it and what did you learn from it?

Norsiah: One of the biggest challenges since being appointed as the General Manager on 1 July 2021 would be managing my time between all the five divisions and shifting my focus to the bigger picture thinking though I was the Deputy General Manager and was assuming the responsibilities as acting General Manager when the General Manager left in 2019. However, the Management and fellow Staff have been very supportive in this adjustment process.

5. How would you describe your style of leadership?

Norsiah: Approachable and Hands-On. As much as I like to interact with other people, I also want other people to see me as someone whom they are comfortable to approach regardless of my position. I hope such interactions will result in a candid or reliable feedback and build trust to create better

working relationships. I also like to get my hands 'dirtied' with all aspects of the work including those done even by the junior staff so that I could learn and understand the challenges which the staff may be facing. This understanding will assist in the decisions and directions that I am going to give during planning and execution.

6. Name two strengths and two weaknesses you have and how they can impact your responsibilities as a GM.

Norsiah: I think my past working experience in Auditing, Accounting and Operations from the private sector have contributed greatly, and as I have been with MCAS since 2004, I am thus familiar with MCAS strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

Being hands-on might result in the challenge of managing my time and I need to get used to the increased visibility which requires increased attention to words and actions.

7. What do you hope to accomplish within the next 2 years?

Norsiah: Definitely enhancing the Leadership Team among the Staff and I hope to review the work environment and business strategies and suggest new changes, if need be.

8. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Norsiah: I like to spend time with my family members doing simple things such as spending time by the beach and going out for lunch ■



Islam in Science

by Dr Adam Brown
Rocket Science

For centuries, people have argued about whether religion is compatible with science¹. For instance, ever since the writings of Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882), his Theory of Evolution has been brought forward in evidence against the existence of a God (Allah, swt).

Equally, some scientists have bought forward evidence for the existence of a God (Allah, swt). In Islam, this often involves examining how what was written (Muslims would say “revealed”) in the Quran 14 centuries ago corresponds with scientific discoveries from the last century or two, ie at least a millennium after the revelation of the Quran. There is, they argue, no way in which anyone in the 6th or 7th century could have known these scientific facts. It is, they conclude, perfectly reasonable to suggest a non-human origin for these passages, ie they were not written by Prophet Muhammad (saw), but by a higher power (Allah, swt).

There are many resources on the internet that list Quranic passages and the scientific truths that they convey². It is not the purpose of this article to list them again. Instead, this article describes modern, largely western, scientists who have been surprised by the correspondence between Quranic verses and recently discovered scientific facts. As a result, some of these scientists have converted to Islam.

A word of caution

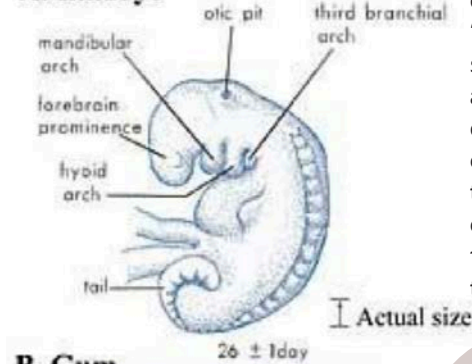
The Commission on Scientific Signs in the Quran and Sunnah³ was established in 1984 by Sheikh Abdul Majeed al-Zindani with the backing of the Muslim World League. The commission, and its conference, has been criticised for its perhaps over-zealous reporting of eminent scientists, giving their statements a slant that could not be called neutral.

“Marine scientist William W. Hay complained of having fallen into a ‘trap’ in interviews, while embryologist Gerald Goeringer claimed ‘mutual manipulation’ between the scientists and conference organizers.”³

Other scientists complained that “they were misrepresented, their video quotes were taken out of context (often after days of preparation to get them to say words that could be used in the video), and were sometimes quoted in written works saying things they had no recollection whatever of saying.”³

In light of this criticism, the following discussion only details scientists who have been accurately reported, often in videos available on YouTube, etc

The branches of science in which these scientists work are primarily embryology, astronomy and geology.

A. Embryo**B. Gum****Embryology**

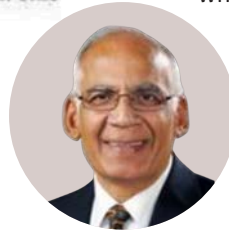
The development of the human embryo in its mother's womb is described in Surah al-Muminun (23:12-14):

"We (Allah) created man from a quintessence of clay. We then placed him as a nutfah (drop) in a place of settlement, firmly fixed, then We made the drop into an alaqah (leech like structure), and then We changed the alaqah into a mudghah (chewed like substance), then We made out of that mudghah, izam (skeleton, bones), then We clothed the bones with lahm (muscles, flesh) then We caused him to grow and come in being and attain the definitive (human) form. So, blessed be God, the best to create."



Keith L. Moore⁴ (1925 – 2019) was Professor Emeritus of the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, University of Toronto, Canada. His Wikipedia page comments, "the Holy book claims that at one

point the embryo looks like a small piece of meat which can be chewed, or mudghah, and Moore consents, "by golly, it does, sorta", agreeing and signaling to the knowledge we have about the structure and appearance of the actual embryo, which actually comes into a stage where it resembles the size of a small thing which can be chewed by teeth ie it is approximately 1.0 cm. Meanwhile in the alaqah stage, the embryo is forming and only 3.5 mm, which can't be chewed."



T. V. N. Persaud (born 1940) was Professor of Anatomy, and Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. He echoed Keith Moore's observations: "It seems to me that Muhammad was a very ordinary man, he couldn't read, didn't know how to write, in fact he was an illiterate. We're talking about 1,400 years ago, you have some illiterate person making profound statements that are amazingly accurate, of a scientific nature. I personally can't see how this could be mere chance, there are too many accuracies and like Dr Moore, I have no difficulty in my mind reconciling that this is a divine inspiration or revelation which led him to these statements."⁵

Similarly, E Marshall Johnson (born 1930) was Professor and Chairman of the Department of Anatomy and Developmental Biology, and Director of the Daniel Baugh Institute, Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Commenting on the same description in the Quran, he states, "As a scientist, I can only deal with things which I can specifically see. I can understand embryology and developmental biology. I can understand the words that are translated to me from



the Quran. ... if I were to transpose myself into that era, knowing what I do today and describing things, I could not describe the things that were described. I see no evidence to refute the concept that this individual Muhammad had to be developing this information from some place ... so I see nothing here in conflict with the concept that divine intervention was involved in what he was able to write."⁶

On another occasion, he stated, "To see any detail in it as is described in the Quran, I need an instrument that wasn't developed until the 1700s."⁷

Tejatat Tejasen was Chairman of the Department of Anatomy and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Chiang Mai, Thailand. He observed, "I became interested in the Quran. ... From my studies and what I have learned throughout this conference, I believe that everything that has been recorded in the Quran fourteen hundred years ago must be the truth, that can be proved by the scientific means. Since the Prophet Muhammad could neither read nor write, Muhammad must be a Messenger who relayed this truth which was revealed to him as an enlightenment by the one who is eligible creator. This creator must be God, or Allah."⁸

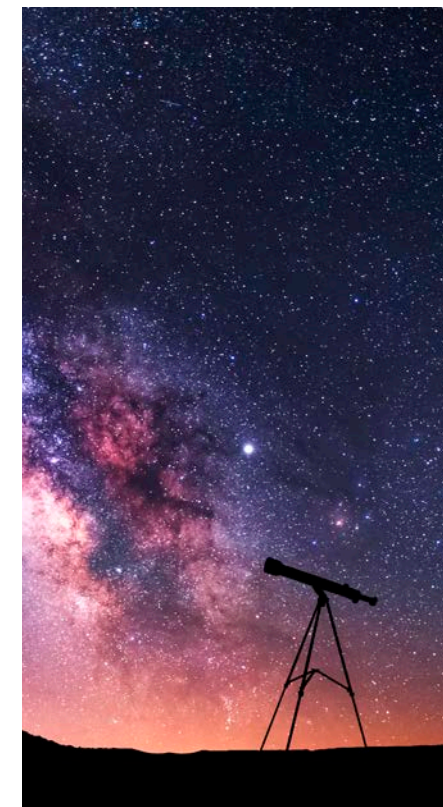
Joe Leigh Simpson (born 1943) was Professor and Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, USA. He echoed the above opinions: "These hadiths (sayings of Muhammad) could not have been obtained on the basis of the scientific knowledge that was available at the time of the 'writer'. It follows that not only is there no conflict between genetics and religion (Islam) but in fact religion (Islam) may guide science by adding revelation to some of the traditional scientific approaches. There exist statements in the Quran shown centuries later to be valid which support knowledge in the Quran having been derived from God."⁹

Astronomy

An often-quoted astronomical passage in the Quran is in Surah al-Anbiya (21:30): "Have not the disbelievers seen that the Heavens and the Earth were one piece and we parted them? And We made every living thing from water. Will they not then believe?"

This is the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe, not proposed by scientists until the 1940s.

Yushidi Kusan (born 1920) was the Director of the Tokyo Observatory, Tokyo, Japan. He remarked, "I say, I am very much impressed by finding true astronomical facts in Quran, and for us modern astronomers have been studying very small piece of the universe. We have concentrated our efforts for understanding of very small part. Because by using telescopes, we can see only very few parts of the sky without thinking about the whole universe. So by reading the Quran and by answering to the questions, I think I can find my future way for investigation of the universe."¹⁰

**Geology**

Discussions about geology in the Quran often mention the following verse from Surah an-Naba: "Have We not smoothed out the earth like a bed, and made the mountains as its pegs?" (78:7). The pegs referred to here are like tent pegs, not pegs for hanging washing.

Professor Siaveda is a Professor of Marine Geology in Japan. He observed that the shape of all mountains, whether they are on land or in the sea, is in the shape of a wedge. "Could anyone during the time of Prophet Muhammad have known of the shape of these mountains? Could anyone imagine that the solid massive mountain that he sees before him actually extends deep into the earth and has a root as scientists assure? A large number of geography books when discussing mountains, only describe that part which is on the surface of the earth. This is because they are not written by specialists in geology, but modern science informs us about it and Allah says in the Quran, 'And the mountains as pegs.'"¹¹

**Conclusion**

Perhaps the most famous such scientist is Dr Maurice Bucaille (1920 – 1998), who was chief of the Surgical Clinic, University of Paris, France. He is famous for the 1976 book The Bible, The Quran and Science¹², originally in his native French, but subsequently translated into many languages. On page 119 of the book, he writes, "These scientific considerations, which are very specific to the Quran, greatly surprised me at first. Up until then, I had not thought it possible for one to find so many statements in a text compiled more than thirteen centuries ago referring to extremely diverse subjects and all of them totally in keeping with modern scientific knowledge."

Does Islam have a problem with science?
No ■

And We made every living thing from water. Will they not then believe? (21:30)

- [1] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relationship_between_religion_and_science
- [2] www.slideshare.net/kingabid/miracles-of-the-quran-new-full-colour-pdf-book
www.ioqas.org.sa/wp-content/uploads/Scientific-Miracles-in-the-Quran-and-Sunnah.pdf
www.ukm.my/kamal3/iae/The%20Basis%20of%20Muslim%20Belief.pdf
- [3] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commission_on_Scientific_Signs_in_the_Quran_and_Sunnah
- [4] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith_L._Moore
- [5] idealmuslimah.com/quraan/scientists-amazed-by-the-quraan/303-prof-tvn-persaud.html
- [6] www.radioislam.org.za/j3/index.php/resources/library/158-the-noble-quran/10604-quran-findings-of-prof-e-marshall-johnson.html
- [7] www.thedenshow.com/amazing-quran-miracle-embryology/
- [8] idealmuslimah.com/the-quraan/scientists-amazed-by-the-quraan/313-tejatat-tejasen.html
- [9] idealmuslimah.com/quraan/scientists-amazed-by-the-quraan/305-prof-joe-leigh-simpson.html
- [10] www.facebook.com/theawakenings/posts/yushidi-kusan-director-of-the-tokyo-observatory-tokyo-japan-i-say-i-am-very-much/957650614264512/
- [11] muslimconverts.com/islam-and-science/OriginOfEarth-Mountains.htm
- [12] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Bucaille
- [13] www.islamicbook.ws/english/english-048.pdf

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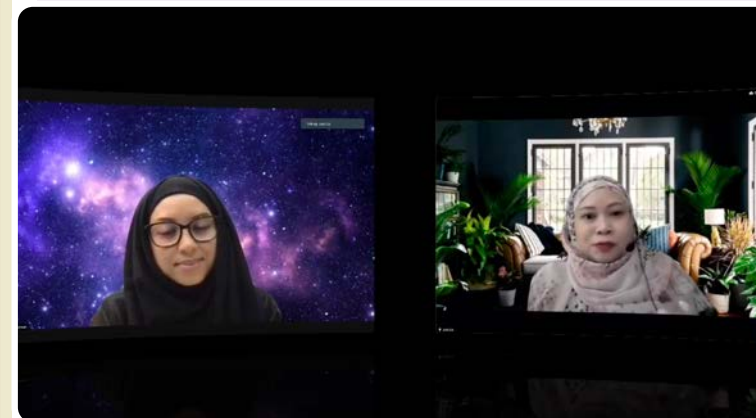
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Humanity of Muhammad - A Christian View by Dr. Craig Considine

Dr. Craig Considine, the author of *The Humanity of Muhammad- A Christian View* discussed what sparked his interest in learning about Islam and Prophet Muhammad PBUH, how he reacts to the misconceptions around Prophet Muhammad PBUH, and his similarities with Jesus (AS). The talk was moderated by Ustaz Khalid Rafi who did an excellent job at giving a balanced perspective on what was shared. The talk was attended by 130 participants from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, the US, and the UK.



Back to Basics: Beings of Light - Angels of Allah by Ustaz Muhammad Faheem

Ustaz Muhammad Faheem explained the wonders of Allah's majestic creation, the Angels, in detail. He described their form, size, abilities, and duties. He also explained the difference between them and us humans and the importance of knowing and believing in them as a part of our article of faith. The talk was attended by 90 participants from Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, it was well-received and interactive.

Holistic Healing

Islam's Legacy of Mental Health

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Institute
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Research*

Abstract

Islamic intellectual heritage has squarely recognized mental health and played an active role in cultivating mental wellbeing—starting from the Prophet ﷺ and his companions (RA) and inspiring Muslim scholars who followed. So where did the concept of shame regarding mental health difficulties come from? Or the belief that a believer is invincible and that faith alone will prevent them from struggling with mental illness? How have these ideas impacted our ummah? What lies ahead? In this paper, we explore each of these questions from a historical and Islamic lens in an attempt to reconcile the rich Islamic intellectual heritage of the past with the mental health challenges of the present and the future.

Suffering and resilience: How Prophet Muhammad ﷺ managed emotional difficulties

It is not uncommon to hear some Muslims say: “A Muslim cannot be afflicted by depression” or “Depression is the result of weak faith; all you need to do is pray more.” To justify this stance, some people use āyāt such as the following:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Indeed, those who believe, do good, establish prayer, and pay alms-tax will receive their reward from their Lord, and there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve.
(Surah Al-Baqarah 2:277)



This āyah, however, was understood by the early Muslims to refer to the state of the believer in the hereafter. For example, Imam al-Ṭabarī mentions that “there is no fear for the believers in the hereafter; God is pleased with them and He grants them salvation and grace, nor will they grieve over what they missed out on in this world.”^[1] Ibn Kathīr agrees with al-Ṭabarī; he says, “The believers are not scared of what is to come on the Day of Resurrection nor do they experience sorrow over what they left behind in the world.”^[2] This world, however, is a place of trials and tests,^[3] and the believers are told in the Qur’an to expect tribulations in their wealth and within themselves (i.e., their health),^[4] with some fear, famine, and loss of property, life, and crops.^[5] We are also told that we will be tested in the pleasures of life and through gains.^[6]

These tests apply to all of humanity, including to the best of us (the prophets). In fact, the Prophet ﷺ taught us that God tests those He loves the most, to strengthen them and to cultivate tenacity, resilience, and gratitude within them.

Sa’d said that when the Prophet ﷺ was asked which people experienced the greatest trials he replied, “The prophets, then those who follow their path, then those who follow them. A human is afflicted in proportion to their faith; if they are firm in their faith, their trial is increased, but if there is weakness in their faith, their trial is made lighter for them, and this continues until they walk on the earth [almost] having no sin.”^[7]

The prophets, whose faith and trust in Allah is unmatched, experienced and acknowledged intense emotional challenges.^[8] Part of the humanity of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is evidenced by the struggles he endured and how he overcame them. In the resilience he exhibited is a series of lessons for us

should we undergo similar challenges. For example, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ experienced sadness so deep during a year-long episode of bereavement that chroniclers coined this period “the year of sadness.” His grief was exacerbated by the immense financial pressure on him and his followers from the Quraysh’s socio-economic boycott. He also felt the pain of the disbelievers’ denial of his message:

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ إِنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا

Perhaps, then, will you [O Prophet] grieve yourself to death over their denial, if they [continue to] disbelieve in this message.
(Surah Al-Kahf 18:6)

Importantly, Allah (SWT) urged him to take steps to manage this grief:

فَلَا تَذْهَبْ نَفْسُكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَاتٍ

So do not grieve yourself to death over them [O Prophet].
(Surah Al-Fatir 35:8)

Part of managing the grief in his life involved embracing and acknowledging his emotions. While watching his son Ibrāhīm take his last breaths, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ demonstrated the importance of being careful with one’s words and focusing on coming to terms

[1] Tafsir al-Ṭabarī, verse 10:62, <http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/tabary/sura10-aya62.html>.

[2] Tafsir Ibn Kathīr, verse 10:62, <http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura10-aya62.html>.

[3] Qur’an 67:2, 11:7, 6:165, 23:30, 21:35, 3:186, and 76:2.

[4] Qur’an 2:186.

[5] Qur’an 21:155.

[6] Qur’an 6:156.



with reality and accepting the will of Allah (SWT) with contentment and healing. With tears flowing down his blessed cheeks, he said:

إِنَّ الْعَيْنَ تَدْمَعُ وَالْقَلْبَ يَحْزَنُ وَلَا نَقُولُ إِلَّا مَا يَرْضَى رَبُّنَا، وَإِنَّا لَفِرَاقُكَ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَمَحْزُونُونَ

Indeed, the eyes shed tears and the heart feels sorrow. Yet, we do not say anything except that which is pleasing to our Lord. Your departure, O Ibrahim, surely leaves us all deeply saddened.
(Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn, no. 927)^[9]

[7] Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābiḥ, no. 1562, <https://sunnah.com/mishkat:1562>.

[8] Qur’an 12:84, 18:6, and 35:8.

[9] Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn, no. 927, <https://sunnah.com/riyadussalihin:927>.

[10] Qur’an 13:28.

[11] Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn, no. 39, <https://sunnah.com/riyadussalihin:39>.

[12] Hiṣn al-Muslim, no. 137, <https://sunnah.com/hisn:137>.

[13] Sunan Abū Dāwūd, no. 4782, <https://sunnah.com/abudawud:4782>; Bulūgh al-Marām, bk. 16, hadith 1524,

He also taught a holistic approach to healing, including accessing spiritual remedies (such as mindful remembrance of Allah,^[10] cognitive reframing in light of Allah’s Divine Will,^[11] and special supplications for anxiety and sadness),^[12] regulating our emotions,^[13] and taking good care of our bodies.^[14] However, he did not stop there.

When one of ‘Ā’ishah’s (RA) family members would pass away, she would gather her close relatives and friends and ask for a pot of talbinah (a soup made by adding milk and honey to dried barley powder) and some tharīd (a dish made from meat and bread) to be cooked. She would then tell them, “Eat of it, for I heard Allah’s Messenger ﷺ saying, ‘Talbinah soothes the heart of the patient and relieves some of his sadness.’”^[15] In these instances, ‘Ā’ishah (RA) recognized that her loved ones were suffering from grief and offered them a physical, medical treatment for emotional distress. She was also known to use talbinah to treat anxiety and grief-induced psychosis. It should be noted here that talbinah was considered by the Prophet’s contemporaries to be a form of healing with some medicinal benefits to be used in conjunction with spiritual remedies—illustrating the holistic nature of Islamic healing. Describing talbinah, the Prophet ﷺ said, “It strengthens the heart of the bereaved person, and removes [some of] the sorrow within the heart of the ill person, similar to how one of you removes dust from their face by washing their face with water.”^[16]

<https://sunnah.com/urn/2117910>; Bulūgh al-Marām, bk. 16, hadith 1535, <https://sunnah.com/urn/2118020>.

[14] Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn, no. 149, <https://sunnah.com/riyadussalihin:149>.

[15] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 5417, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:5417>.

[16] An explanation of Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābiḥ, no. 4162, al-Durar al-Saniyah (website), <https://web.archive.org/web/20210428083335/https://www.dorar.net/hadith/sharh/92522>.

[17] Jāmi’ al-Tirmidhi, vol. 4, bk. 2, hadith 2038, <https://sunnah.com/urn/721670>.

Although talbinah can be categorized as a form of naturopathic medicine, the Prophet ﷺ encouraged the companions to seek all forms of treatments available to them:

تَدَاوُوا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَضَعْ دَاءً إِلَّا وَضَعَ مَعَهُ شِفَاءً إِلَّا الْهَرَمَ

Seek cures, O servants of God, for God has placed a cure for every ailment that He has allowed, except for old-age/death.^[17]

This Prophetic tradition, among others, is said to have encouraged early Muslim researchers to go out and look for medical solutions available to them, catalyzing the formation of Islamic medicine (which also included aspects of Galenic medicine) as well as al-ṭibb al-nabawī (Prophetic medicine, a distinct discipline based on Prophetic sayings and remedies).^[18] In this way, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ laid the groundwork for what would become a rich Islamic tradition of caring for mental health in the generations that came after him.^[19]

It is important to add here that Muslims often delay seeking medical treatments because they attribute mental health problems to different phenomena, including the evil eye (ḥasad or nathlah), possession by supernatural entities such as demons (jinn), and magic (siḥr).^[20] Many Muslim scholars (e.g., Ibn Taymiyyah) assert that these are real phenomena that can impact mental and spiritual health. However,

[18] John K. Borchardt, “Arabic Pharmacy during the Age of the Caliphs,” *Drug News and Perspectives* 15, no. 6 (2002): 383–88, <https://doi.org/10.1358/dnp.2002.15.6.840036>.

[19] Rania Awaad, Danah Elsayed, Sara Ali, and Aneeqa Abid, “Islamic Psychology: A Portrait of Its Historical Origins and Contributions,” in *Applying Islamic Principles to Clinical Mental Health Care*, ed. Hooman Keshavarzi, Fahad Khan, Bilal Ali, and Rania Awaad (New York: Routledge, 2020), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003043331-6/islamic-psychology-rania-awaad-danah-elsayed-sara-ali-aneeqa-abid>.

[20] G. Hussein Rassool, *Islamic Counselling: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2016),

“not all mental health problems are associated with supernatural causes.”²¹ As noted above, the Prophetic framing encourages Muslims to seek spiritual, psychological, and medicinal forms of healing that are available to them.

The legacy of the Prophet continues: Understanding and caring for mental health during the 7th-15th centuries CE

For years after the life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the tradition of recognizing and prioritizing mental wellbeing continued in the works of Muslim scholars who drew from the teachings of the Prophet ﷺ and from the civilizations before him.²² Muslim and non-Muslim scholars alike gathered in the Islamic knowledge capital Baghdad²³ and worked collaboratively to preserve and produce knowledge related to the human psyche.

In their pursuit to understand the self (nafs), soul (rūh), mind ('aql) and the psyche more broadly, the scholars typically took one of two paths. Some would translate the works of the Greek, Persian, and Indian civilizations into Arabic,²⁴ filter out what was not in accordance with Islamic theology, and then add to these translations by trying to consolidate them with Islamic teachings or by using other empirical or philosophical methods to build upon them. For example, Al-Kindī (d. 873 CE;

known as “the philosopher of the Arabs”) was commissioned by the 'Abbāsīd caliphs al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'taṣīm to oversee the translation of Greek works into Arabic in Baghdad's great “House of Wisdom.”²⁵ He tried to reconcile Greek and Islamic thought in his own work and constructed theories on perception, dreams, and repelling sorrows, drawing from both revelatory and Greek philosophical sources. For example, in his book describing cognitive strategies to fight depression (al-Ḥilah li-Da' al-Aḥzān/The Trick to Repelling Sorrows), Al-Kindi borrows the same five-word phrase from the Qur'an (57:23) used to describe grief over missing out on worldly pursuits:

لَكَيْلًا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ
(so that you do not grieve over what you have missed out on).²⁶
(Surah Al-Hadid 57:23)

This is but one small example of how the works of our early predecessors were directly inspired by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The other approach taken by some scholars was to ground themselves first in the study of revelatory sources, searching the Qur'an and Sunnah for inspiration about the inner workings of the psyche. Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350 CE; a great Islamic scholar and a student of ibn

Taymiyyah) was known to draw almost exclusively from revelatory sources, only taking from the sciences and philosophical works what could be backed by revelation.²⁷ For example, he proposed a sequential stage-theory of cognition and behavior based on terms used in the Qur'an to describe thinking in the following stages: involuntary thoughts, emotional motivations to act, firm decisions to act, taking action, and finally, consistent actions forming habits.²⁸ Importantly, he and others like him took mental health seriously.

In his Ighāthat al-Lahfān fī Maṣāyid al-Shayṭān (Rescuing the Fool Caught in the Trap of Satan), he states:

The second category of diseases of the heart are based on emotional states such as anxiety, sadness, depression, and anger. This type of disease can be



54.

[21] G. Hussein Rassool, Evil Eye, Jinn Possession, and Mental Health Issues: An Islamic Perspective (New York: Routledge, 2019), 58.

[22] Rassool, Evil Eye.

[23] Osman Bakar, “Science,” in History of Islamic Philosophy, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (London: Routledge, 2015), 1656-92.

[24] Rania Awaad and Sara Ali, “Obsessional Disorders in al-Balkhi's 9th Century Treatise: Sustenance of the Body and Soul,” Journal of Affective Disorders 180 (July 15, 2015): 185–89, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2015.03.003.

[25] Muḥammad 'Uthmān Najātī, al-Dīrāsāt al-nafsāniyah 'inda al-'ulamā' al-Muslimīn (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993).

[26] Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī, Rasā'il al-Kindī al-falsafiyah (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1950).

[27] Najātī, al-Dīrāsāt al-nafsāniyah.

[28] Zohair Abdul-Rahman, “The Lost Art of Contemplation,” Yaqeen, September 20, 2017, https://yaqeeninstitute.org/zohair/the-lost-art-of-contemplation-spiritual-psychology-series/.

[29] Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim, Ighāthat al-lahfān fī maṣāyid al-shayṭān, ed. Muṣṭafā ibn Sa'īd Itīm, Muḥammad 'Aziz Shams, and Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh Bū Zayd, vol. 1 (Mecca: Dār 'Ālim al-Fawā'id, 2011), 26.

[30] Abū Zayd al-Balkhī and Malik Badri, Abu Zayd al-Balkhi's Sustenance of the Soul: The Cognitive Behavior Therapy of a Ninth Century Physician (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2013), 28–29.

[31] Rania Awaad and Sara Ali, “A Modern Conceptualization of Phobia in al-Balkhi's 9th Century Treatise: Sustenance of the Body and Soul,” Journal of Anxiety Disorders 37 (2016): 89–93, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2015.11.003.

[32] Abū Zayd al-Balkhī, Maṣāliḥ al-abdān wa-al-anfus, ed.

Maḥmūd al-Miṣrī and Muḥammad Haytham al-Khayyāt (Cairo: Ma'had al-Makhtūṭāt al-'Arabiyah, 2005).

[33] Awaad and Ali, “Obsessional Disorders,” 180, 185–89.

[34] Michael W. Dols, Majnūn: The Madman in the Medieval Islamic World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[35] Dols.

[36] Gülşen Erdal and İlknur Erbaş, “Darüşşifas Where Music Therapy Was Practiced during Anatolian Seljuks and Ottomans/Selçuklu ve Osmanlı Darüşşifalarında müzikle tedavi,” Journal of History Culture and Art Research 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–19; Nina Ergin, “Healing by Design? An Experiential Approach to Early Modern Ottoman Hospital Architecture,” Turkish Historical Review 6, no. 1 (2015): 1–37; Enver Şengül, “Edirne Sultan Bayezid II Hospital,” Turkish Neurosurgery 25, no. 1 (2015): 1–8; Nurettin Heybeli, “Sultan Bayezid II Külliyesi: One of the Earliest Medical Schools—Founded in 1488,” Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research 467, no. 9

treated naturally by treating its [root] cause or with medicine that goes against the cause... and this is because the heart is harmed by what harms the body and vice versa.”²⁹

Another great scholar from Islamic history, al-Balkhī (d. 934 CE), drew mainly from medicine and revelation in the formulation of his ideas surrounding mental health and in his call to action. What is striking about al-Balkhi's famous book, Maṣāliḥ al-Abdān wa-al-Anfus (Sustenance of the Body and Soul), as a premodern text is the urgency and seriousness with which he implores his readers to understand psychological illnesses, especially depression. He argues that psychological illnesses are just as, if not more, serious than physical illnesses because people are affected by their consequences far more frequently throughout their lives and because virtually everyone will face these symptoms at some point.³⁰ Given this importance, al-Balkhī took great care in refining the definitions and understandings of several psychological illnesses, including depression, anxiety, phobias, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. For example, in his descriptions of the diagnostic criteria for obsessive compulsive disorder—which are a near-perfect match for the DSM-5, the internationally relied upon diagnostic manual for determining psychiatric disorders—he explains its causes as possibly the result of black bile (the dominant medical explanation of the time, likely taken from the Greeks) or as whispers from Shayṭān

or a combination of both.³¹ Al-Balkhī urges his readers to seek treatment regardless of which cause they believe to have led to their symptoms of mental illness³² and asks them to remain optimistic, quoting the hadith, “for every illness God has created a cure.”³³

Beyond the works of individual scholars, the Islamic legacy of prioritizing mental wellbeing can also be seen in the hospital systems built under Muslim governance. One of the unique trademarks of the Islamic hospital was the dedication of a psychiatric ward within the hospital system. It is incredible to note that wards dedicated to mental health conditions emerged in the Muslim world approximately 500 years before they did in Europe.³⁴ The earliest evidence for institutional psychiatric care is a report that documents the care for psychiatric patients in the al-Fustat Hospital founded in Cairo in 872-3 CE.³⁵

From the 10th century onward, healing centers, known as dār al-shifā' or mārīstāns, sprung up all throughout



Qalawun Complex built by Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun in 1284–1285. It includes a hospital (bimaristan), a madrasa and his mausoleum.

the Muslim world from North Africa to Anatolia. Muslim cities such as Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo were all homes to prominent hospitals that had specific treatments for psychiatric illnesses in specialized wings.³⁶ These institutions were located centrally in the heart of the city to remain accessible to those who might need them, but also to encourage Muslims to fulfill the Sunnah's recommendation of visiting the ill.³⁷ Notably, the architects of these holistic healing institutions also took the air quality and proximity to natural

(2009): 2457–63.

[37] Dols, Majnūn.

[38] Dols.

[39] Dols.

[40] Dols.

[41] Dols.

[42] Sara Ali, Danah Elsayed, Saadia Elahi, Belal Zia, and Rania Awaad, “Predicting Rejection Attitudes Towards Utilizing Formal Mental Health Services in Muslim Women in the US,” International Journal of Social Psychiatry, March 14, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1177/00207640211001084; Rania Awaad, Aaron J. Fisher, Sara Ali, and Natalie Rasgon, “Development and Validation of the Muslims' Perceptions and Attitudes to Mental Health (M-PAMH) Scale with a Sample of American Muslim Women,” Journal of Muslim Mental Health 13, no. 2

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water sources into consideration when choosing a location. They designed water drainage systems to maintain cleanliness and monitored the air quality constantly. For example, in the Mansuri Hospital in Cairo, giant fans called pankas were used for air circulation and the floors were covered with branches of henna, pomegranate, and mastic as makeshift Medieval air fresheners.³⁸

In terms of treatment in these Muslim hospitals, or *māristāns*, individuals with mental illnesses were treated with a wide variety of methods, including both simple and compound drugs, such as stimulants, sedatives, and suppressants. For example, early forms of antidepressants were used and referred to as *mufarriḥ al-naḥs*, or a “gladdenor of the spirit.”³⁹ Armed with the worldview of holistic healing and the understanding that humans are complex social and emotional beings, physicians in these *māristāns* employed multi-level approaches to healing. In addition to drugs and surgery, physicians also utilized alternative, holistic treatments that would minimize side effects. These treatments included auditory therapy (by employing Qur’anic recitation, musical tones, and nature sounds like water or birdsong), regular bathing, healthy balanced diets, blood-letting, cupping, massages with oils, immersion in nature (through the use of gardens on-site), and more.⁴⁰ When patients completed their treatment and were discharged from Islamic hospitals, such as Dār al-Māristān in Baghdad for example, they would receive financial support in order to bridge their transition and reintegration into daily life.⁴¹ All of these very careful considerations evidence the

importance that early Muslim scholars placed on integrating mental health treatment into holistic wellbeing. It is also these very well thought out considerations that led Islamic medicine to become known as “humanistic medicine.”

A legacy interrupted: The influence of colonial and secular forces

Today, studies suggest that despite experiencing elevated risk factors, Muslims tend to underutilize mental health services.⁴² In general, Muslim populations appear to distrust modern psychology (both as a discipline and as a clinical service).⁴³ Many avoid using psychotropic medication because they are wary of falling prey to money-making schemes, side effects, or long-term dependence.⁴⁴ Seeking therapy is often dismissed for fear that non-Muslim service providers will indoctrinate them or that Muslim service providers will judge or gossip about them.⁴⁵ This means that countless Muslims suffer in silence, remaining undiagnosed or unwilling to access treatment. How did this happen?

There are a multitude of reasons for this with only a few

mentioned here. At the forefront was a general shift away from religion that had a downstream impact on Muslims losing touch with what was once a very integrated and holistic system of healing that included mental health. It is also important to note that the weakening of religious practice along with waning political power played a significant shift in attitudes towards mental illness witnessed in this era. It is also in this context that the emerging field of modern “Western” psychology of the 19th century was developing in a world that had largely forgotten the intellectual contributions of Islamic civilizations. Colonial and secular forces had not only taken hold of Muslim lands, but also Muslim minds.⁴⁶ Colonialism divided the Muslim world along linguistic and nationalistic lines, which lessened their ability and motivation to collaborate. For example, when Mohamed Ali, the founder of modern Egypt, came into power, he aimed to transform the country so that it would be in line with colonial conceptions of modernity.⁴⁷ To do this, he installed foreign (i.e., French-speaking) high-ranking teachers in the universities that taught modern sciences. In addition to inserting linguistic barriers between Egypt and

the remainder of Arabic-speaking scholarship, this created a lack of confidence in combining rational and revelatory sources because unlike French and other colonial languages, the Arabic terms for scientific and revelatory concepts were enmeshed, instead of at odds with one another.⁴⁸

As new colonial civilizations whose foundations were based on secularism formed, religion was pushed out of the academy. The secular roots of modern psychology, then, opposed the fundamentals of an Islamic worldview and thus, fostered mistrust in many Muslims.⁴⁹ These historical forces excluded Muslims from mainstream psychology and caused them to turn inwards: they rejected non-revelatory sources and relied on cultural and familial networks for the resolution of mental health challenges.⁵⁰ As the causes of mental illnesses came to be seen as inherently spiritual in nature, the stigma against seeking out care rose. What was once a robust, holistic understanding of wellness that firmly incorporated mental health faded. So too, did the formidable Islamic heritage of mental health promotion and care.⁵¹

Reclaiming our Islamic conceptions of mental health: The road ahead

Islamic history has strongly nurtured mental health, from the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ through countless succeeding generations of Muslim scholarship. The holistic outlook on life as a core foundation of the Islamic worldview led Muslim scholars from all disciplines to contribute to the field that became known as *‘ilm al-naḥs* (the study of the self) and that was the precursor to the field of psychology. In an interdisciplinary effort, Muslim philosophers, theologians, and physician-scientists all contributed to this emerging field. For this reason, the study of the human psyche was never limited to focusing on the mind or to the field of science, as is common today. Rather, Islamic Psychology offered a holistic model (most famously described by Imam al-Ghazālī) that put the heart at

the center, and connected to it the mind, body, soul, and emotions.

Similarly, this interdisciplinary approach to understanding mental illnesses helped Muslim scholars conclude that their causes were multifactorial: they postulated that biology, heritable factors (today known as genetics), environment, and spirituality could all be implicated. It was for this reason that Muslim scholars did not attribute mental illness to simply a weakness of faith. As such, their treatment regimens were also varied and they did not prescribe prayer alone to combat mental illnesses. Along with the premodern medications, talk therapies and other forms of wellbeing previously discussed, they also gave spiritual remedies in line with their understanding of holistic wellbeing.

It is clear, then, that our Muslim predecessors were able to carry on the noble tradition of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in balancing the mind, body, and soul in their attempts to treat psychological ailments. They acknowledged and affirmed the impact of spiritual forces on mental health but, at the same time, were open to (and, indeed, actively pursued) other explanations and treatments like medicine, cognitive training, and talking with a trusted, learned person (who today we would call a professional).

In order to look forward, it is important that we learn from our past. In order to provide healing to our modern Muslim communities, we must understand our history. And in order to revive our great Islamic intellectual heritage, we must recognize it as one that was deeply committed to mental wellness via its holistic healing framework. We must also critically assess the mental health stigma that currently exists in our communities, including our reservations about receiving diagnoses and seeking treatment for psychological ailments. It is time that we not only acknowledge the scholarly giants that came before us, but that we actively stand on their shoulders to move this legacy forward ■



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TERAWIH & EID FITR



Terawih & Eid Fitr

With safe management measures in place in MCAS, and smooth conduct of the last Terawih and Eid Fitr prayers, MCAS had offered converts, members and active volunteers spaces for congregational Eid prayers.

MCAS had offered 3 sessions of Eid prayers. The booking of the limited prayer spaces for 50 congregants (35 males and 15 females) was offered to our converts, members and active volunteers' weeks in advance.

All congregants adhered to the safe management measures in place, to keep our Association safe and play a part to combat the spread of Covid-19.

ONE-MINUTE DAWAH



It is not just about smiling and being nice. When they are in need of help or calamity has befallen them, it is the duty of a Muslim to reach out and offer help the best that he can (regardless of the neighbour's faith).
If they are met with a good fortune, congratulate them.

Love your Neighbour

"And (show) fairest (companionship) to parents, and to the near kinsman, and the orphans and the indigent, and the neighbor who is near kinsman, and the neighbor who is a stranger, (i.e. not of the family or creed or "nationality") and the companion at your side, and the wayfarer, and what your right hands possess. Surely Allah does not love whoever has been conceited (and) constantly boastful,"

(Surah An-Nisaa: 36)

The Influence of Muslims & Islam on Non-Muslim popular culture and civilization

by Hyder Gulam

In non-Muslim popular culture and civilization, sometimes the influence of Muslim and Islamic roots and themes is not readily discernible. It takes a careful forensic approach to tease back the layers, to expose the brilliance of Islam as well as Muslim contribution and its origin. This article will focus on the Muslim motifs and themes in some non-Muslim popular culture phenomena. It will do so by highlighting the Muslim influence in two major Hollywood productions, as well as the Common Law, pasta, tulips and coffee.

The Sufis of Star Wars and Dune: *the Desert planet*

Islamic and Arabic themes were a key influence on the seminal sci-fi novel "Dune," which went on to influence many works in this genre, including Star Wars. In 1965, American author, Frank Herbert began the Dune universe, borrowing heavily from the Islamic world and the Middle East. Herbert also used Middle Eastern languages, in particular, Arabic, throughout his novels.

The central figure is Paul Atreides, the son of the murdered ruler of planet Arrakis, otherwise known as Dune. Atreides is adopted by the Fremen, a fierce desert Bedouin tribe that lives in the planet's deserts. He is soon leading a rebellion against a decadent Galactic Empire, which controls the planet. The Fremen refer to Atreides as the "Mahdi" or expected one, which in Islamic tradition is an eschatological figure and spiritual redeemer who many Muslims believe will unite the world before the return of Jesus ibn Maryam (peace be upon them) at the end of times. Atreides also takes the name "Muad'Dib" in the novel, nearly identical to an Arabic word for 'teacher'. This again hints at the Sufi influence on the views of religion held by the Fremen in the book.

The plot itself recalls the ideas of Islamic philosopher Ibn Khaldun, whose work 'The Maqadimmah' stressed the cyclical nature of government in North Africa, where decadent ruling regimes were overthrown at regular intervals by tribal groups. Over time these new tribal

groups-turned-ruling regimes would in turn reflect the depravity of the regime they had deposed — sowing once more the seeds of future rebellions. In the novels, a similar cycle plays out — even the 'good guys' and their successor regimes do not live up to their ideals. Herbert gives a direct nod to Ibn Khaldun in the books when he names the Fremen's religious text after one of Khaldun's works: Kitāb al-'ibār: "The Book of Lessons."

Herbert's books were also influenced by the 1962 historical film "Lawrence of Arabia" and by the novel about Imam Shaml, a 19th-century Sufi sheikh in Caucasus who led a rebellion against Imperial Russia. Dune is thoroughly Muslim: its Muslimness is not only a function of its Arabic words; its quotations and paraphrases from the Qur'an, prophetic teachings, or Muslim authors; and its references to Muslim histories.

Before the 1984 and 2021 movies, Dune's real influence also came through with the impact it had on the 'Star Wars' series. The religious ideas of the Jedi order draw on the universalistic ideas of Sufi Islam found in "Dune." The original 1977 'Star Wars' film was partially shot in Tunisia, the birthplace of Ibn Khaldun, not far from the town of Tatooine, the namesake for the desert planet where the narrative begins. There are common themes in both works — the out-worldly saviour, the noble indigenous peoples, the desert environment, the use of

Bedouin motifs and dress, prophecy and of course similar views on religion and spirituality. In one Star Wars film, Rogue One, one of the protagonists (Chirrut Imwe) is a Sufi-like blind monk who utters the following mantra (or dhikr) in times of tribulation: "I am one with the Force and the Force is with me". This is an echo of the enigmatic figure al-Hallaj (a Persian mystic, poet and Sufi teacher, 858- 922 CE), who proclaimed "I am [one with] God!", which has been interpreted to mean he had reached such a state of spiritual awakening - that he had achieved a particularly powerful divine connection, an alignment with God's will only by the permission of Allah.

The Star Wars series revolves around the Jedi who learn The Force from their teachers, the Jedi Knights who in turn have mastered the ways of The Force, and resemble a Sufi order with a mystical understanding, meditation, appearance and simple, cloak-like attire. They learn to detach themselves from worldly desires and discipline themselves to master self-control, and their egos. Islam also teaches the same principles and contains similar concepts: to perfect and strengthen your morality, character and relationship with God, to utilize your attributes and gifts to defend the weak, destitute and disadvantaged, while being a seeker of inner peace and tranquillity.

While the whole Star Wars franchise is replete with Sufi motifs and teachings,

the one that resonates is from 'Episode VI: Return of the Jedi', where the Emperor tries to seduce Luke Skywalker to give into his emotional feelings of anger and hatred. Luke is a Jedi, and the Jedi order are taught that one's intentions in battle must be pure and that it's wrong to kill out of anger, even when it is outwardly justified.

Imam Ali (kw), the cousin of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), faced a similar situation at the Battle of the Ditch. Imam Ali (kw) had knocked an enemy soldier to the ground and was raising his sword to



kill him when the soldier spat in his face. Imam Ali (kw) at once stood still and refrained from killing his enemy. Hardly able to believe his own eyes, the enemy combatant asked: "Why have you spared me, O gracious one?" To this, the Imam Ali (kw) replied: "Your property and your life have become sacrosanct to me. I am not authorized to slay you. I can receive permission to kill only in holy combat, in fighting commanded by Allah. Just a few moments ago, I had overcome you in battle, knocked you to the ground and was on the point of slaying you. But when you spat in my face, my selfish

anger was aroused against you. If I had killed you, I would have slain you not for Allah's sake but for my own selfish reason; they would then have called me not a champion warrior, but a murderer. When you spat in my face, my selfish passion threatened to overwhelm me, so instead of striking you with the sword for my own sake I struck my passion for the sake of Allah, Exalted is He. There you have the reason for your escape." The unbeliever was of course in awe by Imam Ali's noble character, and immediately accepted Islam.

Tulips

While most people look to the Netherlands for its famous tulip fields, few would know that this evocative plant originated in Central Asia. Tulips first appeared about 10 million years ago at the foothills of the Tien Shan mountains in modern Kazakhstan. Cultivation of the tulip began in Iran probably in the 10th century, but it was the interaction between Europe and the Ottoman Empire which brought tulip to the attention of the non-Muslim world. Every year, when the tulips were in bloom, a big party was held by Ottoman Sultan Suleyman I. Tulips became a symbol of power and wealth, and the Ottoman sultans wore a tulip on their turban. As the shape of tulips resembled the turban, the flower was named "tulipan", or turban in Persian.

Sultan Suleyman gave tulips to important guests, including the man who managed the gardens of the emperor of Austria and later became head of the oldest botanical garden in the Netherlands. The country's first tulips were planted there and the Dutch popularised the cultivation of tulips in the 17th century, which became part of Tulip mania, where one tulip was valued at 10 months' salary! Long before Rembrandt painted the tulip, this beautiful flower was mentioned by Omar Khayyam and Rumi in their majestic works.



Pasta

Like the pillars of the Common Law (discussed below), pasta entered European cuisine not through the lazy myth that Marco Polo (1254-1324) brought pasta back to Italy from his travels in China. In fact, these sheets or ribbons of noodles or wheat pasta was similar to that already existing in Italy. Pasta is mainly non-raising or unleavened bread that is made without yeast or baking powder.

Pasta, as we know it today, was being produced in Sicily long before the 12th century and was undoubtedly introduced by the Arabs when they ruled much of southern Italy. North Africa's variation on pasta is, of course, couscous. It's thought the Arabs used dried noodles on journeys and military campaigns as it kept well for long periods, which would later be used by European seafarers as they sailed across the Atlantic and to Asia.

Coffee

Coffee is a beverage that the modern world could simply not do without. Now a global product, its heritage can be traced back to the ancient coffee forests on the Ethiopian plateau. Given the close proximity between Ethiopia and Yemen, this product moved east readily and reached the Arabian peninsula. By the 15th century, coffee was being grown in the Yemeni areas of Arabia and by the 16th century it was known in Persia, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey. Coffee enjoyed in the many public coffee houses — called qahveh khaneh — which began to appear in cities across Turkey, the Magrebi and the Levant. The popularity of the Ottoman coffee houses was unequalled and people frequented them for all kinds of social activity.

Not only did the patrons drink coffee and engage in conversation, but they also listened to music, watched performers, played chess and kept current on the news. With thousands of pilgrims visiting the holy city of Mecca each year from all over the world, knowledge of this unique elixir began to spread. By the 17th century, coffee had made its way to Europe and was becoming popular across the continent.

Some people reacted to this new beverage with suspicion or fear, calling

it the "bitter invention of Satan." Both the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV in the 15th century and Middle Ages Christian clergy condemned coffee when it came to Venice in 1615. The controversy was resolved readily by Pope Clement VIII when he tasted the beverage for himself before making a decision, and found the drink so satisfying that he gave it papal approval.

Much earlier, Sultan Murad IV deemed coffee drinking as an immoral activity. He believed that coffee was promoting social decay and, ultimately, discord in Istanbul. Due to the seriousness of the matter, this Ottoman Sultan declared coffee drinkers punishable by death. The scholars of the time believed that the caffeine in drinks like coffee and tea had mind-altering effects comparable to alcohol or narcotic substances. Additionally, the effects of caffeine could be considered addictive. However, after further discussion among Islamic scholars, there was no conclusive evidence to prove that coffee or caffeine was in fact an intoxicating substance. Unlike drugs and alcohol, caffeine is considered a mild stimulant, and its intoxicating effects (if any) really depended on the person. In 1542, Ottoman Sultan Selim I allowed coffee to be classified as Halal.



Common Law

One important question that has been raised recently is the relationship between English law, specifically common law, and Islamic law. For many scholars, the historical connection to Islam is the key to explaining why English common law (and hence the law in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA and Singapore etc) differs from the classical Roman legal system, otherwise known as the civil law system, predominant in the rest of Europe.

From the 9th to the 11th century, Sicily was ruled by Muslims who followed the Maliki school of legal thought. Sicily represented a gateway into western Europe for Islamic ideas, coupled with the close affinity and relationship between the Norman rulers of both Sicily (Roger I and Roger II) with the Henry II, who was the English monarch credited with founding the common law. England and Sicily were the only two European states that had Norman rulers. Roger II grew up imbued with Muslim culture, and his armies and bureaucracy incorporated

many Muslims, and had the Arabic title al-Mu'tazz bi-llah. In fact, many commentators have stated that Roger II maintained many Islamic elements into the government of Sicily, including bureaucracy, fiscal and judicial, which were transplanted with the continuous interchange of administrative personnel between England and Sicily.

The above pollination of ideas from the Muslim world to Europe generally is not surprising given the influence of Muslim Spain (Andalusia) and the trigger for enlightenment in the dark Middle Ages Europe. There is no doubt on the huge influence of non-Muslim philosophers like Ibn Rusd, Al Farabi, Ibn Sina, as well as scientists like al Kindi etc, on the dominant medieval thinkers in the western tradition, such as Aquinas. In fact, at the Harvard University School of Law, the following verse from the Qur'an is posted at the entrance of its library, describing the verse as one of the greatest expressions of justice in history:

"O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses

To Allah, even as against Yourself, or your parents, Or your kin, and whether

It be (against) rich or poor: For Allah can best protect both."
(Surah An-Nisa 3:135)

Some of the specific arrangements in the common law that have their roots in Islamic law are as follows:

(i) Waqf or perpetual endowment, where trustees kept an institution running through the ages, for the benefit of the community. The Muslim centres of learning were generally administered under a special legal device called the "waqf" under which trustees guaranteed their

independence and continuity. This was striking similar to the 1264 statute that Walter De Merton used to establish Merton College at Oxford (which was hitherto unknown in medieval England): De Merton was businessman with connections to the Knights Templar, who were long involved in Muslim Sicily and the Middle East. The original 1264 document that established Merton College has parallels with the waqf because it is a "perpetual endowment" - a system where trustees keep the college running through the ages. It's been used as a template across the Western world ever since.

(ii) Jury trial: this was used to prevent oppression by the Government to both the applicant and the judiciary. Prior to this, the methods of proof used in England were the fire and water ordeal, which involved torturous methods. Professor Makdisi has described a remarkable similarity between the English jury trial and the Islamic laif, where witnesses swore to the tell the truth in matters they had seen or heard. In fact, one such administrative officer who worked between Norman England and Sicily, Thomas Brown (Kaid Brun). He is said to have been a key person in the transmission of ideas between Sicily and England.

(iii) Contract law permitted the transfer of property ownership on the sole basis of offer and acceptance through the action of debt.

Summary

The influence of the Muslim world on modern popular culture and diet is sometimes not apparent at first, shrouded in veils. Yet, if we delve deep enough, we can discern the Islamic motifs which continue to resonate in Western popular culture. This paper is only the beginning ■

يَا أَيُّهَا
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ
بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ
أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ
إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ
أُولَىٰ بِهَمَّا



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Humanity

of

ﷺ

a Christian View

by Dr Craig Considine

It is not easy to summarize the life and legacy of Prophet Muhammad into six sociological categories, but that was my task in writing *The Humanity of Muhammad – A Christian View*. In addition to the challenge of capturing Muhammad's sociological impact and relevance, I – a Catholic American of European descent – had the opportunity to reflect on the relevance of his teachings to human beings of the 21st century.

My book dives into the encounters that Muhammad had with the Christians of Najran. The Prophet did not merely tolerate their presence and religion in his mosque in Medina, but he engaged in what I refer to as pluralism, or the “energetic engagement with religious diversity,” as defined by Diana Eck of the Pluralism Project of Harvard University. Muhammad actively engaged with the Christians of Najran by embarking upon a cordial dialogue on Christology. He also supported their human right to freedom of religion. Not only did he welcome them into his mosque, but he showed them hospitality by providing a clean and safe space for the Christians to engage in their Christian prayers.

I appreciate that Muhammad made space in a sacred building for his fellow monotheists. As a descendant of Irish and Italian Catholic ancestors, I am familiar with both the power of hospitality (the Irish and Italian are known for being hospitable), but also (unfortunately) the scourge of religion-based discrimination and religious fundamentalism.

Prophet Muhammad was much more than a pluralist. He was a diplomat and statesmen. In 622 he initiated a nation building project that made equal rights a reality for all residents of Yathrib, which he later named Medina. Jews and pagans were granted freedom of expression, freed of religion, and freedom of speech. Muhammad connected the diverse Medinese tribes not through ethnic, racial, or religious identities, but by constitutional principles rooted in democratic values. *The Humanity of Muhammad* actually compares the values outlined in the Constitution of Medina to the vision of U.S. Founding Fathers, laid out by the likes of Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson.

Civic nation building is inherently connected to the promotion of racial equality. My book provides detailed evidence that Muhammad was not merely a “non-racist,” but that he was more specifically an “anti-racist.” There is a difference between these two terms. A non-racist is someone who does not believe in the superiority of any particular “race,” but non-racists do not always actively work to undue the racism ingrained in societies. An anti-racist, on the other hand, energetically participates in the liberation of people across the racial spectrum.

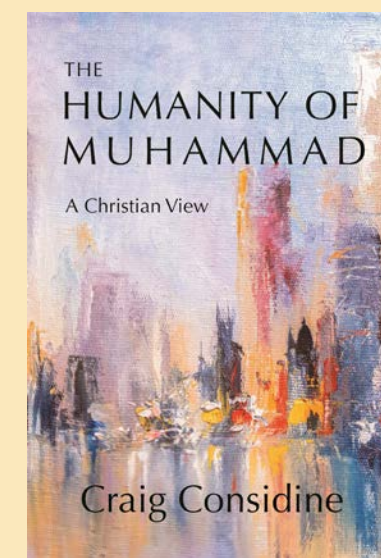
The Humanity of Muhammad offers specific stories that reveal Muhammad's position on anti-racism. Bilal, the mixed-race Abyssinian/Meccan man and close companion of the Prophet, is a case in point; he was liberated by Muhammad and his companions. Even more than that Prophet Muhammad established a cultural and social environment that enabled Bilal to maximize his potential and God given talents. Bilal rose to the position of muezzin, in addition to the other critical roles that he played in the success of the early Ummah.

Muhammad's “Farewell Sermon” is another case in point. In perhaps the most important speech of his life Muhammad outlined his vision of the Ummah. His vision focused on racial equality among Arabs, Blacks, and Whites. He added that no racial group is superior to the other except in piety and good action.

These powerful words are inspiring and symbolic to me, a Christian America. Muhammad's words remind me of another Christian American – Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. – who was a boyhood role model of mine. In his famous “I Have a Dream Speech” at the Abraham Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC in 1963, MLK said that he looks forward to the day when his children would not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

The beauty of Prophet Muhammad is that his example and teachings are more relevant than ever. Our challenge as human beings in the 21st century is to ensure that his example and teachings are alive in our world today. His life and legacy transcends border, cultures, ethnicities, nations, races, or religions.

One does not need to be a Muslim to have love for the great Muhammad ■



This book is sold at *The English Islamic bookshop* for \$28 (32 Onan Road) or Online: <https://www.mcas.sg/product/the-humanity-of-muhammad-a-christian-view>

ONE-MINUTE DAWAH



Do Charity by Helping Others

The Prophet (SAW) said, "Greeting your brother with a smiling face is charity. Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong is charity... Removing boulders and thorns from the road is charity. Pouring water from your vessel into your brother's is charity"

(Sunan At-Tirmidhi)

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Converts' Arena & Launch of MCAS New Publication

Why Islam? Inspirations from 40 Muslim Converts

The Converts' Arena was introduced with the aim for participants to interact with Muslim Converts on their journeys to Islam. It is a platform for the speaker to share their unique experiences with the participants on how Islam has played a pivotal role in their lives. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss and relate their own experiences with fellow converts and seekers. This was with the hope to achieve fresh spiritual insights and foster new companions in the path towards God. These sessions were highly recommended for students who are exploring Islam, Converts and their partners. This episode of Converts' Arena was done in conjunction with MCAS Latest Publication Launch, 'Why Islam?'.

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End the Cycle of Abuse

by Nur Shabana Abdullah
& Sugyanto Suryono
Casa Raudha Symposium

Introduction

The symposium held on Thursday, 11 November 2021 was Casa Raudha's second symposium in their effort to provide information and resources on the community-based system to keep children safe and put an end to the intergenerational cycle of abuse. Guest-of-Honour Associate Professor Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State for Ministry of Home Affairs for Singapore, graced the event that afternoon.

The objectives of the symposium were:

1. To raise awareness in the community to put an end to the intergenerational cycle of abuse.
2. To implement effective intervention plans by the community to create a safe environment for the children.
3. To highlight the resources available to support both survivors and perpetrators of child abuse.

Sharing By Keynote Speakers

The symposium showcased various esteemed speakers who are leaders in their respective fields, all of whom gave insightful sharing on the issue.

Singapore recorded the highest number of child abuse cases in a decade thus far which led to an urgent need to address and raise awareness in the community space. The data gathered from the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) included 1,313 cases, the highest number of cases recorded in the year 2020, investigated by the Child Protective Service (CPS), highlighting a 20.7% increase in numbers from 2019. More than half of Casa Raudha's admissions into the crisis shelter were children, even including infants who were exposed to physical, mental and emotional abuse that may have adverse impacts on their cognitive and social functioning, shared by Mr Abdul Hamid Abdullah, Deputy Chairperson of Casa Raudha. These children were

observed to have mirrored the behaviour of the perpetrators at home towards other children.

He further highlighted a disturbing statistic in relation to domestic violence, especially among the Malay-Muslim families, many of which were made up of divorce cases which saw an increase of 597 cases among the Malay-Muslim families between the years 2017-2020, as reported by the Singapore Department of Statistics. He urged the community partners, namely the mosques and religious teachers (Asatizahs), to create a safe space for the children by being the first touchpoints for individuals to approach for assistance. He named Assyakirin Mosque as one of the mosques that is in active collaboration with Casa Raudha on community outreach efforts to curb this cancerous act and strongly urged other mosques to follow suit.

In 2019, Casa Raudha has expanded their service to do community outreach, partnering with MSF. Mdm Zaharah Ariff, Executive Director of Casa Raudha shared their efforts

in collaborating with various community partners to put an end to family violence, actively involving both men and women as she pointed out that both are part of the solution. She highlighted the various aims in this initiative which includes strengthening existing community support networks to look out for families/couples at-risk and to create more community touchpoints and public education about violence. This includes making mandatory the Marriage Preparation course for couples who are getting married to dispel certain misconceptions on the Islamic perspective on domestic violence.

Another aim is to enable touchpoints to provide help as first responders by sending the Asatizahs to domestic violence awareness workshops and including domestic violence as a topic in one of the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) modules to equip them with the necessary skills.

Mdm Zaharah also shared some tips on helping children deal with violence on the home front such as creating a helpline

and care pack for children who may not be comfortable verbalizing the abuse in person and teaching them the hand signal to seek help if they are a victim of abuse (refer to images below). She also encouraged parents to educate and empower children to highlight their friends' worries to a trusted adult.

In the community, public education on child abuse includes educating doctors, pre-school teachers and natural touchpoints such as hawker centres and convenience stores on child abuse concerns and the reporting process

Sharing By Community Partners

The Deputy Mufti of Singapore, Dr Mohammad Hannan Hassan stressed on the importance of coming together as one community, fostering the spirit of a village, to face this challenge. The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) has sent 420 Asatizahs to undergo training as a first responder in dealing with the issue of family violence and many other courses related to family violence. MUIS has also been very supportive of Casa Raudha's initiative in dealing with the issue thus far. The Deputy Mufti of Singapore encouraged more Asatizahs to undergo training as first responders, to be a resource for both victims and perpetrators.

Ustaz Muhd Syahid Abdul Latif, Manager of the Department of Religious and Social Services at Assyakirin Mosque came forward to share on the efforts made by Assyakirin Mosque to address the issue of family violence that were guided by the framework developed by Casa Raudha due to the increasing number of family violence cases reported by the Singapore Police Force during the Circuit Breaker period and seen among the 200 Zakat-assisted families served by Assyakirin



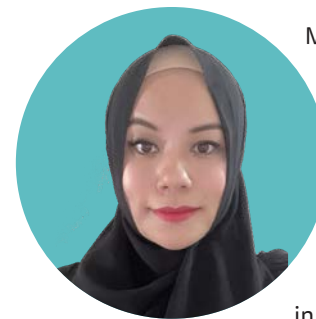
Mosque. In November 2019, Assyakirin Mosque collaborated with Casa Raudha in their focus group discussion involving 50 professional Muslim women comprising of social workers, teachers, and survivors of domestic violence which aimed to dispel the misconceptions on the Islamic stance on domestic violence between perpetrator and victim. On 12 September 2020, Assyakirin Mosque once again partnered with Casa Raudha to initiate an online focus group with 50 Muslim men, including Minister of State, Associate Professor Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim and the Mufti of Singapore, Dr Nazirudin Mohd Nasir, to share their perspectives on domestic violence. An online forum was initiated by one of the members of the Religious Ministers of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore (MABIMS) to share their approaches and best practices during the pandemic in relation to the rising statistics on domestic violence, empowering those who are witnesses to domestic violence to speak out and report the matter. In April and May 2021, Assyakirin Mosque partnered with Maarof Mosque in designing 8 posters to raise awareness about domestic violence. Assyakirin Mosque was the first religious organization to be appointed by MSF to be a member of the Family Violence Working Group (FVWG) with the objective of raising awareness on family violence and enhancing service through community-driven activities.

Ustaz Tarmizi Wahid, Founder & CEO of Safinah Holdings Pte Ltd gave an insightful presentation on practical tips about raising children in a Muslim home. He emphasized on cultivating a culture of respect at home that begins with the husband and the wife which will influence the behaviour and mindset of the children as they learn from what they observe at home, the importance of maintaining civility when in the presence of children to educate them that issues can be settled diplomatically through the display of compassion, forgiveness, and patience without the need to resort to violence.



Ms Nuraishah Senin, Assistant Senior Social Worker at PPIS discussed on the cycle of violence and its impact on children who are trapped in the cycle. She highlighted the importance of giving appropriate responses to the victims of violence and how this can empower them to be agents of change in their own situation.

Ms Rachel Yang, an art therapist and co-founder of Daylight Creative Therapies, Developmental Play Practitioner and President of Art Therapists' Association Singapore shared about her work with children who have experienced trauma, its impact on mind-body connections and how they can be supported through a trauma-informed approach using play and art.



Ms Nur Shabana Abdullah, Counsellor at Darul Arqam attended the Symposium and shared her thoughts on the issue of abuse of children in Muslim homes and domestic violence.

The prevalence of domestic violence and child abuse cases in Singapore, especially among the Malay-Muslim families, is disheartening and disturbing. The increase in the statistics of such cases is a cry for help to mobilise all members of the community to play a part in ending this vicious intergenerational cycle of abuse. Understanding the perpetrator's root cause to harm others and having the dosage of intervention may be a solution to this hence, having ex-abusers come forward to share their journey may very well be one of the eye-opening methods of intervention as it may be a simple yet honest sharing from the heart which should never be underestimated for it may be a beacon of light for individuals who wish to reform but may not know where to start or who to look up to. A courageous effort to be applauded was portrayed by Mr Mohd Firdaus Bin Zhairudin, a Malay-Muslim reformed person who caused hurt



(PCH) whose sharing was extremely touching and beneficial during the symposium. He cited certain organisations that played a part in his reformation, including a programme titled 'Brotherhood' organised by Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society where males who display aggression towards their loved ones can get professional help. These reformed individuals act as a role model and a source of inspiration to many in ending the intergenerational cycle of abuse as change begins with ME.

Mr Sugyanto Suryono, Head of Da'wah Division at Darul Arqam attended the Symposium and raised the plausible correlation between the rise of domestic violence and mental health issues since 2020. The advent of Covid-19 which supervened the Circuit Breaker and work from home routine, has magnified additional pressures on families. One of the realisable factors contributing to the pressures leading to domestic violence is the increased consumption and exposure to contentious entertainment content from various media channels. Television programmes and movie series shape our community's beliefs and opinions, stereotypes, and attitudes. It has a significant impact on understanding gender roles and behaviour stereotypes, which often are used as an excuse by the perpetrator to justify expressing anger and frustrations through violence. Often solutions and norms acted out is not necessarily appropriate to address domestic violence and its causes. We find many scripts that reinforce or promote peculiar and violent behaviours from both men and women on how they treat their spouses and children, to make them react abusively to resolve issues often with no remorse.



"There needs to be active participation from self-help groups, asatizah and teachers in schools to advocate positive counter narratives to what the community consumes as a form of entertainment. This is with the objective to create more awareness of what domestic violence means and to galvanise action by providing positive reinforcement to stop domestic violence in the community."

Conclusion

With the increasing number of child abuse and family violence cases in Singapore, it is crucial for the nation to work together as one community to put an end to the intergenerational cycle of abuse. In his closing remarks during the online focus group for Muslim men initiated by Casa Raudha and Assyakirin Mosque, Mufti of Singapore Dr Nazirudin Mohd Nasir concluded that everyone should play a part to ensure that no one should be subjected to any form of violence, especially domestically and urged all to report it to the authorities if they come to know of such cases ■



QURBAN DRIVE

MCAS Qurban Drive is an annual programme, established in 2017, to promote the act of giving in celebration of Eid Adha. In 2018, 450 families has benefited from it, and 2019 the figure was doubled to 1000 families from our financial assistance scheme and 8 beneficiaries from partners; MCAS even set a new Singapore Record for the Largest Convoy delivery Groceries for Charity and the event was graced by President Halimah Yacob. In 2020, under strict Safe Management Measures, MCAS managed to provide 750 families with fresh Qurban meat.

Just like last year, 2020, a different challenge is posed under the Phase 2 (Heightened Alert) that was put in place to control the Covid-19 pandemic, but MCAS hopes to continue to touch the hearts of the families and uplift their spirits in this testing time, with the intention to strengthen the bond of our Muslim brothers and sisters. The distribution and volunteers were scaled down so that we can comply with strictest safety guidelines to ensure the safety and health of all staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries.

A contactless delivery was implemented where frozen Qurban meat were placed in cooler bags that could hold freshness for up to 6 hours and placed at the doors of beneficiaries who have been informed ahead of time of the scheduled delivery.

DRIVE

Taking it a step further, MCAS ensured that only those who have been vaccinated were allowed to participate in the Qurban Drive this year. A total of 1100 families received 2200 kilograms of Qurban meat and 2400 pack of Briyani distributed by MCAS volunteers and beneficiaries' partners via 9 decentralized locations by adopting contactless delivery island wide.

This year, MCAS partnered with the following organization to extend the Qurban meat to their beneficiaries:

1. PERGAS
Singapore Islamic Scholars & Religious Teachers Association or Persatuan Ulama dan Guru-Guru Agama Islam Singapura
2. PPIS
Persatuan Pemudi Islam Singapura or the Singapore Muslim Women's Association
3. Muslim Counseling Services
4. Casa Raudha
5. Tanjong Pagar MAEC (Spoonier Rental Flats)
6. HatiEmas60 (Needy Families)
7. Hui Hui Cultural Association of Singapore
8. Leng Kee IAEC



The Fruit of *Patience* is always Sweet

by Yasir Qadhi
Muslim Matters



We reproduced this article with the hope that this story of patience, which was narrated by Sheikh Yasir Qadhi during a Ramadan lecture, can be relatable for the readers while dealing with the challenges of the Covid-19.

The verse that mentions the story of Ayyūb is very interesting. Allāh mentions a number of prophets in Sūrah Šād. Of the prophets, Allāh says, “And remember, O Muḥammad...” Allāh tells the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ to think about Ayyūb as a role model. We need to understand that all the prophets are role models for other prophets. They are also role models for us. Every prophet has something the other prophets will benefit from.

Our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is told in the Qur’ān: “Be patient like the strong prophets of old were patient.” Allāh tells our Prophet ﷺ, “Look at the stories of those before you. Through the trials of the previous prophets, your own chest will become affirmed, and you will get hope and optimism.” One of the stories that Allāh reminds our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ about is the story of Ayyūb. Allāh calls him His slave and His servant.

“When he made du’ā’ to his Lord, he said, ‘O my Lord, Shayṭān has afflicted me with a pain and with torture.’ What is the story of Ayyūb ? We don’t have it mentioned in the Qur’ān and Sunnah in detail, but just references are given. We gather from other sources [the Isra’iliyyāt], which we are allowed to narrate. Isra’iliyyāt are the stories that are found in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Our Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ told us about our position towards those stories. He said, “You may narrate them, but don’t believe in them fully and don’t deny them unless you have knowledge from our own book.”

Ayyūb’s Test

From the Old Testament, we learn the story of Ayyūb in much more detail. Ayyūb is called Job in the Old Testament. The story of Ayyūb, as summarized in the Old Testament, is that he was blessed with an immense fortune and an immense wealth. Allāh blessed him with ten sons, which is a huge number. Allāh blessed him with a large house and many agriculture and many plantations. He was a thankful servant of Allāh. Allāh wanted to test and try to see whether he would be thankful if all of this is taken away.

“What would you do, O Ayyūb, if you don’t have your wealth, your plantations?”

Overnight, a storm came and it was one of the thunderstorms that have fire in it as well. They are very rare but happen. This test from Allāh came and took everything that Ayyūb had. He was outside of his house, and the house itself collapsed, and all of his children died.

Only his wife was saved. Everybody else was taken back to Allāh. The entire

property was destroyed. In addition to that, he was then afflicted with a disease. What was this disease? Some books say leprosy and other books say other things. Basically, his skin began to fester and wound. It became so difficult to look at him. Ayyūb had been a handsome man, and he was blessed with beauty and a good body. He was then afflicted with a type of pain and a type of suffering that people couldn’t bear to look at him.

He had to abandon the city and live in a shanty-house and a small structure. Nobody would come close to him except his wife who was very dedicated, and she continued to support her husband and continue to take care of him throughout this time. His worship did not change at all. He continued being just as thankful for what he had, and he continued praying and fasting and doing whatever he could despite the fact he didn’t have anything of what he used to have. His attitude towards his Lord did not change at all. He passed the test.

Allāh says:

“This is our true servant Ayyūb who worships Us regardless of the situation he is in, whether he is rich or poor, whether he is healthy or sick, the Lord will not change. Allāh’s blessings will be given if you put your faith in Him.”

He prayed to Allāh and blamed it all on Shayṭān. “O my Lord, Shayṭān has done all of this,” and this is of the positive attitude of the believer. We said many, many times: the believer never ascribes evil to Allāh even though at the end of the day nothing happens except if Allāh decrees. We don’t ascribe it to Allāh. We ascribe it to ourselves. “It is because of my sins.” Or we ascribe it to the Shayṭān, but we don’t ascribe evil to Allāh. Our Prophet ﷺ said, “All good comes from you, O Allāh. Evil I will not ascribe to You.”

Ibrāhīm made the du’ā’, “When I fall sick, He cures me.” Even though in the grand scale, the sickness is from Allāh and the cure is from Allāh, but how did Ibrāhīm phrase it? “When I fall sick. (It is my fault). He is the One who cures me.” We ascribe good to Allāh. We don’t ascribe evil to Allāh.

Ayyūb says, “Shayṭān caused all of this for me, and he has caused me pain. O my Lord, you know my situation.” Allāh responded and he was tested for a few years (three years, five years). He was tested for a time. But everyone should realize that when you are tested, then that test is a temporary test and there is always a light at the end of the tunnel if you truly believe in Allāh.

After those few years, Allāh told him, “Kick the ground. Where you kick the ground, you will find water coming out from there. Wash yourself with this water. It is cold and pure water.” When he washed himself, he came out as handsome as he ever was, so much so that when his wife came with his daily food, she saw this beautiful stranger and said, “Where is my husband? He used to be around here.” She didn’t even recognize him because he had gone back to even a better state. Allāh says, “We gave him back his whole family, all the wealth that he had, and We doubled it.” Why? To show that this is what happens when you have patience.

What is Patience?

I want to talk about patience. Our Prophet ﷺ said, “The month of Ramadan is the month of patience.”

Our Prophet ﷺ said,

“If you can conquer fasting, fasting is half of all patience.”

If you can perfect your fasting, then you have perfected 50% of patience. The rest of patience will be through other things. Patience (ṣabr) is a part and parcel of our life. Allāh in Sūrat’-Muddaththir, the first surah to come down after iqra’, Allāh tells the Prophet

ﷺ, “Be patient for the sake of your Lord.” Being patient for Allāh is part of imān.

Ṣabara actually means “to restrain, to tie up.” You say that an animal is maṣbūr if the animal is tied up. You say that the prisoner is ṣabra if his hands are tied up. Ṣabara actually means to tie up, to be withheld, to restrain. Of course, you understand the logical connection between the original meaning and patience because what is patience? Patience means you control yourself. You put your hands down and an invisible knot around your hands and an invisible string around your tongue. This is what you are holding and you are restraining.

The real meaning of ṣabr is to withhold. The reason why ṣabr is such a difficult action is because it is an inaction, it is no action. You are not supposed to do something. Your blood is boiling, and ṣabr tells you to trap it, clamp it down, control it. You want to scream, shriek, yell, and hit. Ṣabr means calm down and control it. This is the reality of what ṣabr is.

Allāh praises ṣabr in over 50 verses of the Qur’ān. Allāh says, “Allāh loves those who are patient.” Allāh says, “The believing men and women are those who are patient men and patient women.” Allāh says, “Allāh is with the ṣābirin.”

Allāh says, “Those people will be given the highest apartments in Jannah because they were patient.” Al-ghurfah are the highest levels of Jannah. Allāh says, “The angels will enter in upon you in Jannah and will tell you, ‘Peace is on you today because you were patient. Because you had ṣabr, this is where you are right now.’” Allāh says, “Allāh saved them because of their ṣabr.”

Allāh’s Punishment is lifted because of your patience, and Allāh’s Reward is a sign and the highest levels of Jannah are a sign. In fact, this is one of the best rewards of patience. We said many,

“Be patient for the sake of your Lord.”

many times that every deed is given between 10 to 700 times reward.

There are some exceptions.

Fasting is one of them. There is no limit because fasting is the embodiment of patience, and Allāh says about patience, “Those who are patient will get their reward back without it being counted.”

When Allāh does not count, can you imagine how much you are going to get?

There are so many blessings as well. The ḥadīth qudsi in Tirmidhi: the Prophet ﷺ said Allāh said, “When somebody is tested with his son or daughter dying...” The most painful death is not the death of a parent but the death of a child. You expect the death of a parent, but you don’t expect the death of a child. The death of a child is the greatest calamity that can befall any parent. The ḥadīth qudsi said, “Whichever parent is tested by taking away his child and he remains patient at that, then that child shall intercede for him to go to Jannah.”

Also in the ḥadīth in Tirmidhi, the Prophet ﷺ said that Allāh said, “If I take away the two pearls from the believer (his eyes), and he becomes blind and remains patient at that, then I have no reward lesser for him than Jannah itself.” These are all showing the importance of ṣabr that Allāh is speaking. The rewards here for patience are nothing less than Jannah itself. Allāh tells the believers, “If you only have patience – you are scared about the enemies of Islam and are worried about them – and have taqwa in Allāh, I will send 5,000 angels to take care of them.”

The bottom line: if you have ṣabr, nobody can destroy you. Allāh is going to be on your side. When you have ṣabr, you will get Allāh’s Rewards, Allāh’s Blessings, and Allāh’s Help.

As the saying goes, the fruit of patience is always sweet. If you try to be hasty, you are not going to get the fruit. If you are patient, you will get the fruit.

Three Types of Sabr

Sabr is of three types.

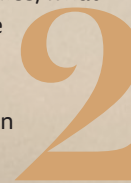
1. Sabr in the face of a calamity.

Death of a loved one, car accident, loss of a job, muṣībah happens. How do we do ṣabr at that point in time? We act Islamically. We don't say what we shouldn't say. We don't move our hands and wail and cry. We act responsibly and sensibly. This is the first category of ṣabr.



2. Restrain ourselves from committing sins.

If we see some alcohol and temptations come to drink it, some of us may have a problem with this, but they have ṣabr and control it. This ṣabr is generally more difficult than the first category because in the first category, you can't help it if you are in an accident and have to be patient. If somebody dies, what are you going to do? You are forced into it. In the second category, you have the will to do a sin, but ṣabr comes in and you restrain yourself.



The highest category of ṣabr is:

3. Restrain yourself from permissible things and put yourself into worship of Allāh constantly.

Allāh says, "Be extra patient as you worship Him." Praying five times a day is a sign of patience. Fasting is a sign of patience. Why? Because you are withholding and restraining yourself in order to do these good deeds.



How to Attain Patience

The final point: How does one attain patience?

Two points:

1. Study the blessings of patience.

Simply reading the Qur'ān and Sunnah and Imam al-Nawawi has a very good chapter in Riyāḍ'l-Ṣāliḥīn on patience. Simply read this and be aware of the blessings of patience. This will bring about an immense ease when a calamity happens how to be patient.

2. Ask Allāh to give you patience.

Our Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever turns to Allāh to get ṣabr, Allāh will give him that ṣabr." Ask Allāh for that patience and ask Allāh to be granted that peacefulness and serenity to be able to conquer your actions.

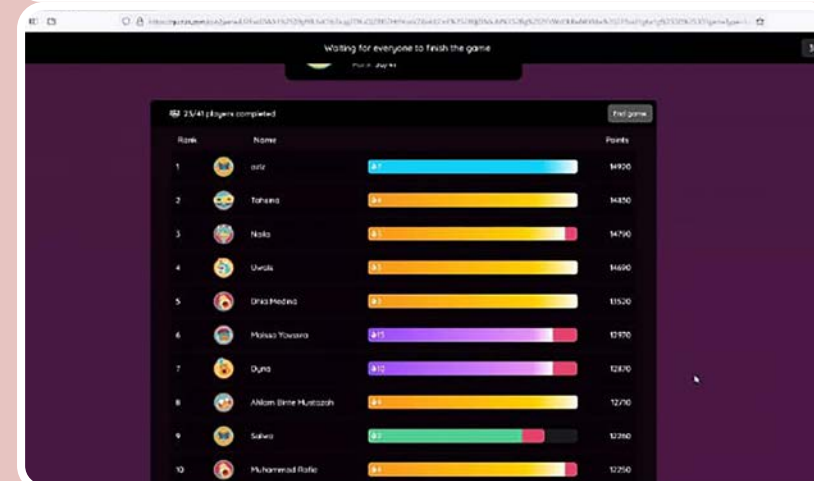
Remember that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The strong person is not the one who can beat somebody else up. The strong person is the one who can control himself when he is angry because that is the ultimate patience."

The ultimate patience is not to control somebody else but to control yourself.

May Allāh grant us the perfection of patience. May Allāh accept our fasting. May Allāh grant us the tawfiq to stand on laylat'l-qadr. May Allāh cause the Qur'ān to be an intercessor for all of us. May Allāh cause us all to be amongst those who are patient. Āmin

"The strong person is the one who can control himself when he is angry because that is the ultimate patience."

STORYTELLING SESSION



Converts' Arena & Launch of MCAS New Publication

Why Islam? Inspirations from 40 Muslim Converts

One of the online events The English Islamic Bookshop has organised was a storytelling session conducted by Ustazah Nusaibah. The children had a great time participating in the activities and quizzes. The key takeaway is education can be instilled in a fun and interactive way.

In a hadith recorded by Bukhari and Muslim, Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, "Every Muslim has five rights over another Muslim: to return the greetings, to visit the sick, to accompany funeral processions, to accept an invitation, to respond to the one who sneezes."

This article deals with the second of these five rights: the right to be visited by your Muslim brothers and sisters if you are sick.

We often hear of people around us – family, friends, work colleagues, etc – who are sick. Visiting them when they are sick not only fulfils the blessed sunnah; it also serves as a reminder for ourselves. Imagine you were the sick person. How would you feel if nobody visited you? This is especially important if the person is really sick, or in hospital.

Rewards for visiting the sick

Many hadiths describe the rewards for visiting a sick person, including the blessings of the angels, and Jannah (Paradise).

"When the Muslim visits his (sick) Muslim brother, he is harvesting the fruits of Paradise until he returns" (Muslim).

"Whoever visits a sick person or visits a brother in Islam, a caller cries out to him, 'May you be happy, may your walking be blessed, and may you occupy a dignified position in Paradise'" (at-Tirmidhi).

"There is no Muslim who visits a (sick) Muslim early in the morning but that seventy-thousand angels send blessings upon him until evening comes, and if he visits him in the evening, seventy thousand angels send blessings upon him until morning comes, and he will have a garden in Paradise" (at-Tirmidhi).

Etiquette of visiting the sick

There are various practices in the Islamic method of visiting the sick.

Intention: Before visiting the sick, you should make the intention of visiting the sick. In a well-known hadith, Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, "Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended." In other words, you will only get rewards for visiting the sick if that is what you intended.



Timing: You should not turn up at a sick person's house or the hospital at any time of the day or night. You should check beforehand that the time you intend to arrive is convenient for the sick person.

Brevity: The person you are visiting is sick. They may be in pain, drowsy from drugs, or sleepy. You should therefore make your visit short, so as to not overburden the sick person. This is unless the sick person asks you to stay longer.



Gift: A thoughtful gift will always be appreciated by a sick person.

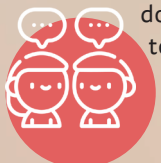
Needs: During the visit, it is good to ask the sick person if they have any particular needs, and then try to fulfil them. A hadith shows that Prophet Muhammad (saw) did this: "The Prophet (saw) visited an ill person and asked, 'Do you long for anything? Do you long for sweet bread (ka'k)?' The man replied, 'Yes.' So they sent someone to bring some ka'k for him" (Ibn Maja).



Duas: The person visiting a sick person should say duas for their full and speedy recovery. Perhaps more surprisingly, there are hadiths that state that the opposite should also occur. "If you enter upon a sick person, then ask him to supplicate for you, for his supplication is like the supplications of the angels" (Ibn Maja).



Conversation: The conversation you use to talk to the sick person should be joyful and positive. The sick person may be in pain and downhearted, so happy topics should be used to cheer them up.



Conclusion

Living at a time when people are becoming more distant and disconnected from one another, it is increasingly important that we revive the sunnah of visiting the sick. Not only will this benefit the sick person and you, but it will also help build relationships and a beautiful community based upon prophetic mercy for one another. Can you imagine the impact on a non-Muslim if we visited them?

This was the way of our beloved Prophet (saw). Despite his many and varied responsibilities in the community and at home, he would always make time to

visit people, keep the ties of kinship and bonds of friendship strong, and this was even more so when people were unwell.

"Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection, 'O son of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit Me.' He will say, 'My Lord, how can I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds?' Allah will say, 'Did you not know that My servant was sick and you did not visit him, and had you visited him you would have found Me with him?'" (Muslim) ■

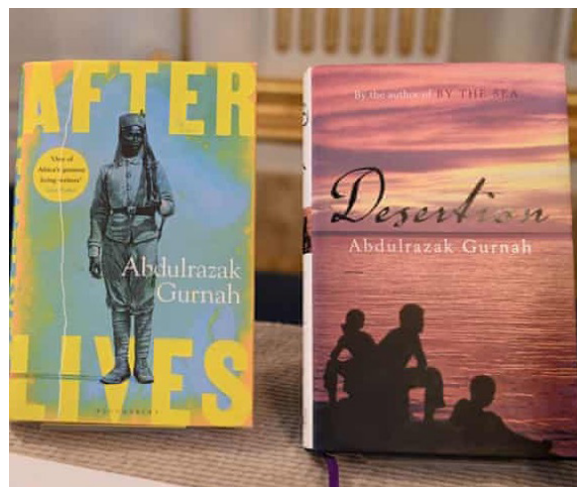
The Sunnah of Visiting the Sick

Rocket Science

Abdulrazak Gurnah wins the 2021 Nobel Prize

Zanzibari novelist becomes first black African writer in 35 years to win

*by Alison Flood
The Guardian*



The Nobel prize in literature has been awarded to the novelist Abdulrazak Gurnah, for his “uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents”.

Gurnah grew up on one of the islands of Zanzibar before fleeing persecution and arriving in England as a student in the 1960s. He has published 10 novels as well as a number of short stories. Anders Olsson, chair of the Nobel committee, said that the Gurnah’s novels – from his debut *Memory of Departure*, about a failed uprising, to his most recent, *Afterlives* – “recoil from stereotypical descriptions and open our gaze to a culturally diversified East Africa unfamiliar to many in other parts of the world”.

No black African writer has won the prize since Wole Soyinka in 1986. Gurnah is the first black writer to win since Toni Morrison in 1993.

Gurnah’s fourth novel, *Paradise*, was shortlisted for the Booker prize in 1994, and his sixth, *By the Sea*, was longlisted in 2001. Olsson said that *Paradise* “has obvious reference to Joseph Conrad in its portrayal of the innocent young hero Yusuf’s journey to the heart of darkness”.

“[Gurnah] has consistently and with great compassion penetrated the effects of colonialism in East Africa, and its effects on the lives of uprooted and migrating individuals,” Olsson told journalists in Stockholm.

Gurnah, who was in the kitchen when he was informed of his win, said that he believed it was a wind-up.

“I thought it was a prank,” he said. “These things are usually floated for weeks beforehand, or sometimes months beforehand, about who are the runners, so it was not something that was in my mind at all. I was just thinking, I wonder who’ll get it?”

“I am honoured to be awarded this prize and to join the writers who have preceded me on this list. It is overwhelming and I am so proud.”

His longtime editor, Alexandra Pringle at Bloomsbury, said Gurnah’s win was “most deserved” for a writer who has not previously received due recognition.

“He is one of the greatest living African writers, and no one has ever taken any notice of him and it’s just killed me. I did a podcast last week and in it I said that he was one of the people that has been just ignored. And now this has happened,” she said.

Pringle said Gurnah had always written about displacement, “but in the most beautiful and haunting ways of what it is that uproots people and blows them across continents”.

“It’s not always asylum seeking, it can be so many reasons, it can be trade, it can be commerce, it can be education, it can be love,” she said. “The first of his novels I took on at Bloomsbury is called *By the Sea*, and there’s this haunting image of a man at Heathrow airport with a carved incense box, and that’s all he has. He arrives, and he says one word, and that’s ‘asylum’.”

Pringle said Gurnah is as important a writer as Chinua Achebe. “His writing is particularly beautiful and grave and also humorous and kind and sensitive. He’s an extraordinary writer writing about really important things.”

Afterlives, published last year, tells the story of Ilyas, who was stolen from his parents by German colonial troops as a boy and returns to his village after years fighting in a war against his own people. It was described in the *Guardian* as “a compelling novel, one that gathers close all those who were meant to be forgotten, and refuses their erasure”.

“In Gurnah’s literary universe, everything is shifting – memories, names, identities. This is probably because his project cannot

reach completion in any definitive sense,” said Olsson. “An unending exploration driven by intellectual passion is present in all his books, and equally prominent now, in *Afterlives*, as when he began writing as a 21-year-old refugee.”

Maya Jaggi, critic and 2021 Costa Prize judge said: “Gurnah, whom I first interviewed for the *Guardian* in 1994, is a powerful and nuanced writer whose elliptical lyricism counters the silences and lies of imperial history imposed when he was a child in east Africa. His subtle oeuvre is as robust about the brutal flaws of the mercantile culture he left as the atrocities of British and German colonialism, not least during the first world war, and the ‘random acts of terror’ he experienced as a black person in Britain – converting them into a comic triumph in his 1988 novel *Pilgrims Way*.”

Gurnah was born in 1948, growing up in Zanzibar. When Zanzibar went through a revolution in 1964, citizens of Arab origin were persecuted, and Gurnah was forced to flee the country when he was 18. He began to write as a 21-year-old refugee in England, choosing to write in English, although Swahili is his first language. His first novel, *Memory of Departure*, was published in 1987. He has until recently been professor of English and postcolonial literatures at the University of Kent, until his retirement.

Worth 10m Swedish krona (£840,000), the Nobel prize for literature goes to the writer deemed to be, in the words of Alfred Nobel’s will, “the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction”. Winners have ranged from Bob Dylan, cited for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition”, to Kazuo Ishiguro “who, in novels of great emotional force, has uncovered the abyss beneath our illusory sense of connection with the world”. According to Ellen Mattson, who sits on the Swedish Academy and the Nobel committee: “Literary merit. That’s the only thing that counts.”

The Nobel winner is chosen by the 18 members of the Swedish Academy – an august and mysterious organisation that has made efforts to become more transparent after it was hit by a sexual abuse and financial misconduct scandal in 2017. Last year’s prize went to the American poet Louise Glück – an uncontroversial choice after the uproar provoked by the Austrian writer Peter Handke’s win in 2019. Handke had denied the Srebrenica genocide and attended the funeral of war criminal Slobodan Milošević.

The Nobel prize for literature has been awarded 118 times. Just 16 of the awards have gone to women, seven of those in the 21st century. In 2019, the Swedish academy promised the award would become less “male-oriented” and “Eurocentric”, but proceeded to give its next two prizes to two Europeans, Handke and Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk ■



Singapore Tourism Board, in collaboration with CrescentRating and HalalTrip, has released "*Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore (Second Edition)*" and the "*Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers*".

Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore covers the various activities, brands, Muslim-friendly amenities and Halal food available in the seven main neighbourhoods around Singapore. The Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers acts as a supplementary guide to the main one, featuring additional fashion and souvenir brands, places to stay as well as Halal food in Singapore. The brands, places and restaurants featured in the guides were thoughtfully chosen to provide a diverse range of uniquely Singaporean experiences that both a Muslim traveller and a Muslim local can enjoy.

As the guides were co-created by the Singapore Tourism Board, CrescentRating and HalalTrip — a Singapore-based online travel website catered to the needs of Muslim travellers — they present an in-touch overview of the cultural scene enjoyed by local Muslims. The guides feature popular establishments old and new that are Halal and fuss-free and allow travellers to get an authentic taste of how Muslims enjoy life in Singapore.



The guides features:

Mosques and prayer facilities in Singapore

One main feature of Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore is that every listed location in the guide features the closest prayer facilities or mosque a Muslim can visit to fulfill their daily obligations. With over 15% of the population in Singapore being Muslims, there is an abundance of prayer facilities island-wide.

When the Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers is used in conjunction with the main guide, prayer facilities can be used interchangeably as the supplementary guide provides location tags for establishments that are within the 7 featured neighbourhoods.

Travellers are also encouraged to visit the HalalTrip website or download the HalalTrip app for greater ease in finding mosques and prayer facilities near them.



Where to find Halal food in Singapore

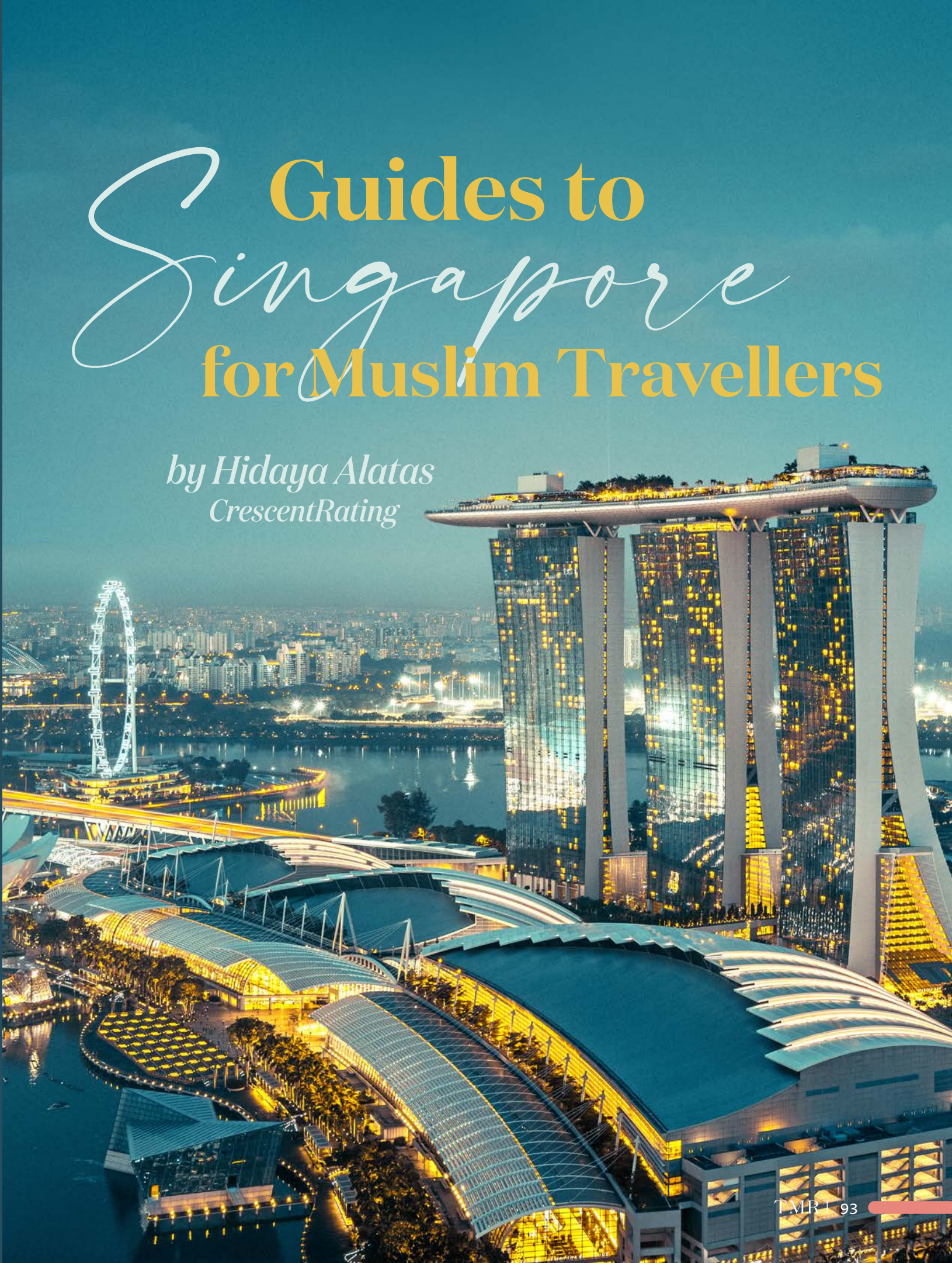
In Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore, Halal restaurants in Singapore are categorised according to precinct. Muslim travellers can easily decide what to eat in and around the seven featured precincts:

- 1. Orchard Road
- 2. Kampong Gelam
- 3. Little India
- 4. Tiong Bahru
- 5. Chinatown
- 6. Sentosa
- 7. Marina Bay

The restaurants featured were selected to give travellers options to a wide variety of cuisines such as Halal Japanese, Korean and Chinese food, as well as

Guides to Singapore for Muslim Travellers

by Hidayat Alatas
CrescentRating





Shopping and souvenirs in Singapore for the Muslim traveller

The guides contain suggestions for places to shop for clothes, accessories, souvenirs and many more in Singapore. Although shopping is largely undeterred by the faith-based needs of Muslim travellers, the guides offer bespoke shopping suggestions such as a trip to Wardah Books or Sifr Aromatics within the Kampong Gelam precinct, presenting an elevated and fulfilling experience for Muslim travellers in Singapore.

In Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore, shopping malls, retail stores and burgeoning local brands are highlighted within the 7 precincts. The featured establishments highlight the specific shopping specialties each precinct offers, such as the jewellery shops in Little India and Design Orchard at Orchard Road.

The Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers features shopping options ranging from unique souvenirs and brands to Muslim-oriented keepsakes and fashion. The guide also features Key Opinion Leader, Fahimah Thalib, and her style picks for the modern stylish Muslim. Fahimah Thalib is a modest wear model famously known for being the first hijabi model of Vogue Singapore.

local staples like Malay and Indian cuisines. The guides are also up-to-date on the latest Halal restaurants and hangouts in Singapore that have quickly garnered interest in the local Halal food scene such as Picanhas' and Fairytail Gastrobar.

Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore also contains a Halal Restaurant Directory that offers restaurant suggestions to travellers based on cuisine type (Healthy, Sweets & Bakes, Korean etc.) to provide more options to travellers.

In the Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers, the Halal Shiok Eats section features food options not covered in the main guide, giving travellers suggestions on popular dishes to try out while in Singapore. The segment contains food recommendations from Key Opinion Leader, Shamsydar Ani (a Masterchef Singapore Season 1 finalist), for the Geylang Serai precinct.



Travel itineraries for Muslim travellers to Singapore

Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore contains 2 4D3N itineraries — the Family Fun travel itinerary and the Modern Millennial Muslim itinerary. The Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers contains 1 itinerary — 24 Hours in Singapore. Aptly named, these itineraries were curated with a variety of travellers in mind, showcasing the best ways for these travellers to enjoy their trip to Singapore.

A comprehensive travel guide to Singapore

Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore and the Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers feature many exciting and meaningful activities for travellers to enjoy, including tours, murals, events and experiences.

Travellers can find many fun and exciting ways to steep themselves in local culture with selected tours such as the Singapore Sidecars Vespa Tour, which explores cultural sites and mosques around the Kampong Gelam precinct, or following the trail of urban art murals within the featured neighbourhoods. The guides also expose travellers to the refreshing ways Singapore locals have fun, such as enjoying an evening of free live performances at the Esplanade.



Learn about Singapore while on the go

Both the guides contain bite-sized information for travellers to learn more about the areas featured while exploring them.

Each neighbourhood in Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore is prefaced with an introduction to the area, a map infographic and culturally notable sites. The guide also contains snippets of Insider's Tips, brief histories of cultural sites and districts, and the Passion Stories of people who founded some of the establishments.

The Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers gives travellers a taste of Singapore's diversity by detailing important cultural festivities in the city as well as the architectural sites that reflect Singapore's values of racial and religious harmony.

The guides also provide useful pointers, tips and contact channels for travellers to fully enjoy their stay in Singapore. An example of some of the tips are; how to look out for halal food and the different government agencies where one can find the latest news and information that are important for travellers in Singapore.



Download Your Muslim Visitor Guide to Singapore and the Lifestyle Guide to Singapore for Muslim Travellers now through the Singapore Tourism Board website or the HalalTrip website.

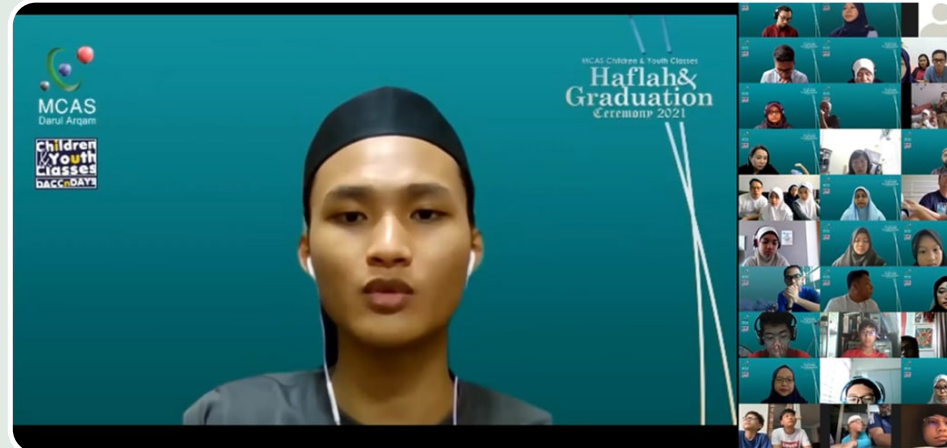
The Singapore Muslim Visitor Guides were created as part of a CrescentRating Destination Marketing project with the Singapore Tourism Board. CrescentRating provides professional support and targeted solutions through customized strategic marketing plans that address the needs of the destination and businesses. Our dedicated team ensures that your destination's attractiveness is communicated to potential Muslim visitors with the intended brand positioning ■



DACCnDAYS

Haflah and Graduation Ceremony

DACCnDAYS Haflah and Graduation Ceremony is an annual celebratory event for students who have shown outstanding performance in their Islamic studies, as well as for the graduating students for completing the DACCnDAYS programme. It is also an event to celebrate the remarkable dedication from students who continue to persevere despite the changing learning landscape. As we are unable to conduct the event physically this year, the event was conducted online with over 60 parents, students, and teachers in attendance. We hoped that the event serves as a motivation for the parents, students, and teachers to continue moving forward and doing their best in their Islamic Learning Journey.



BURSARY

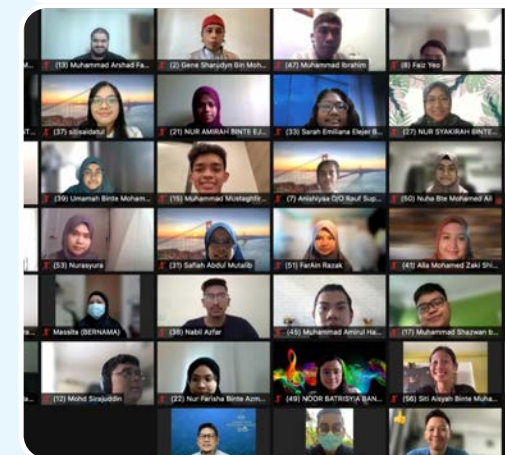
Award Ceremony



RECIPIENTS

HIFZHAN FA'IZ YEO BIN HASSANAL ABDULLAH YEO

DEGREE IN BIO-CONVERGENCE
UNDERWOOD INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE, YONSEI UNIVERSITY



RECIPIENTS

NADIAH GONZAGA BINTE ABDUL AL-JABBAR

BACHELOR OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE



MCAS Bursary 2021 Award Ceremony

This annual event is part of MCAS's academic and welfare project. It aims to lighten the financial burden of the eligible tertiary students through the bursaries that will help reduce the amount needed to complete their studies, such as tuition fees and student loans.

This year, MCAS is awarding a total of \$120,000 in bursary to 58 students. The recipients are made up of tertiary students pursuing diploma or degree both locally (39 students) and overseas (19 students).

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BACHELOR OF ISLAMIC REVEALED KNOWLEDGE AND HERITAGE
WITH HONOURS IN USULUDDIN AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA





Path to Allah

Brother Kaven's Conversion Story

by Kaven Siddique Lim

Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem

My name is Kaven Siddique Lim, I'm 21, a Chinese and a Muslim. Islam has been the greatest thing that has happened to my life, I am proud to be a Muslim and I'm happy to be able to practice this beautiful religion every day. However, this was not always the case. I wasn't always a Muslim and things were vastly different just 2 years ago when I was just Kaven, 19, and a JC student. It wouldn't even have been in my wildest imagination that I will become a Muslim and

begin practising Islam in 2 short years. It has been a miraculous journey filled with numerous highs and lows, and I'm here to share with you some snippets of these moments along my path that brought me to Islam. Through my experiences, I pray that you are able to find your story as well and walk towards the beautiful religion of God.

When I was in Junior College, before I knew anything substantial about Islam, I was a typical boy exploring the liberties of adulthood. Life was almost all about enjoyment. I was someone who would spend some Friday nights at the club with my friends, date around and indulged myself in activities like gossip and talking about the opposite gender. I was not on good terms with my mother after a few years of constant arguments and fights throughout the process of puberty and my life was purposeless

other than having a pursuit for enjoyment. At that point in time, I didn't feel a need for anything more in my life as I was always busy with commitments in sports and in studies. Looking back, I realised that it was a part of my life that was not purposeful but it was covered up by how hectic my life was.

Islam came to me in the form of a romantic interest. I knew that if I wanted to spend a long time with this romantic interest, I had to learn about Islam and I had to evaluate if this faith was something that I really wanted in my life. Hence, my journey into Islam started.

There are three very memorable moments that encapsulated the process of me discovering and learning about Islam. Each represents the different stage that I went through before affirming my faith and submitting to the fitrah (the state of purity and innocence Muslims believe all humans to be born with) within me.



First time at the mosque (Masjid Ba-alwie)

I first stepped into a mosque in December 2016. It was Masjid Ba-alwie on a Thursday night. Typically, the mosque has certain recitations that it performs every Thursday after the evening prayers so I was invited to join and experience this in the mosque.

Back then, I had little to no Islamic knowledge. The only two things I knew about Islam were Friday Prayers and Fasting Month, courtesy of my secondary school friends. Friday school days will always end earlier for my Muslim friends for their prayers and the canteen stalls will have considerably smaller queues during the Fasting Month. I didn't know what to expect because I had never been invited to a mosque, much less join a group of Muslims for their prayers and recitations. Thankfully, I was strongly reassured by my friend and I accepted the invitation that afternoon.

Over the course of my life, it seemed as if I was always playing a game of catch with the concept of religion. It would always approach me in different forms and shapes and catch me at different phases of my life but eventually, I'd always wind up running away from it. My family is predominantly Buddhist. Since my childhood days, we'd have religious events such as paying respects to my late great-grandparents at home, at the temple and at the columbarium. We burnt incense and paper money to honour them and also worshipped and prayed to them for health, prosperity and success. However, my family never imposed their idea of Buddhism on me nor my siblings, so the religious celebrations or practices morphed into a family tradition as I grew up. Slowly, due to the lack of knowledge and the lack of interest to seek it, I started to disassociate myself as a born-Buddhist to somewhat a free-thinker.

I've also been invited to the church a few times with family and with friends.



Growing up around mainly Christian friends, being a Christian was viewed as something that was mainstream and cool so when I was invited to events like Easter or Christmas celebrations, I'd readily accept the invitation and show up hoping to have fun with my friends at church. Subsequently, I identified myself as an unofficial Christian for a few years and would tell other people that I was a Christian even though I knew next to nothing about Christianity. All I knew at that point was that it was a popular choice to be a Christian then, and if you were a Christian then you were with the mainstream crowd with the newest songs and the new-age manner of worship.

As I grew up further, into my Junior College days, the heavy study into physics, chemistry and biology changed my mindset greatly. My heart knew that there was something out there - A God. However, my mind said otherwise. I started viewing religion as a silly concept because I was convinced that there were no proofs of these "miracles". Instead, science has a reason for everything. Humans know why the Earth revolves around the Sun, humans know how the universe began and humans can explain everything under the sun with the means of a hypothesis and a controlled experiment. In science, for any hypothesis to be proven right, there must be tangible and credible data, and in religion, it seemed as though it was a case that can never be proven by science, and instead, it was debunked by the existence and proliferation of the study of sciences. That was my state of mind throughout my post-teenage years.

So there I was on a fateful night in December 2016, with a tug-of-war between my heart and my mind, with my feet in front of a mosque and not knowing what to expect out of it at all. This became a turning point in my life.

Stepping into the mosque as a Chinese should be a weird experience, instead, it felt as if it was just like another

normal day at the mosque, with everyone focused on their own worship. A sense of relief came over me as I realised that I was not going to be made into the subject of the day and I was linked with a brother who frequents the mosque regularly, to show me around and explain to me about the fundamentals of Islam.

Initially, I intended to learn more about Islam that night. However, Allah, the All-Knowing, had better plans for me. I learnt about Islam not just through the knowledge passed on to me, but I felt the essence of Islam through the mannerism of the brothers whom I had interacted with. The entire night was about making me feel comfortable in the atmosphere of the mosque. They offered me food, drinks and hospitality, never once asking me to come back to the mosque in return. They were focused on answering my queries about Islam, never once brushing the questions off.

It was until a while later on my conversion journey that I had the opportunity to learn about this word "Adab" (Islamic etiquette: refinement, good manners, morals, decorum,

decency, humaneness). The Adab that I was shown in Masjid Ba-alwie that evening spurred me towards understanding the religion in-depth and not just exploring it superficially. Coincidentally, that night, I heard a verse of the Quran coming from another brother and he recited: "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong." (2:256)

Al-Mawrid Library at Darul Arqam

After hearing that verse I realised that this essence of no compulsion was how religion should be, no man should be held accountable for another man's sins, hence one's faith should be of his own accord, never from someone else. I was shocked because religion always seemed like a social thing to me. I thought that the largest part about being in religion was to be in a family and a community, and that it was the greatest benefit of religion as well. I was mistaken, the greatest part of religion is the religion a man builds with God, and the peace, strength and



Brother Kaven after his conversion with some of the members of Darul Arqam

wisdom this covenant provides him. The greatest part of being in religion was to create a bond with God, being accountable to God and living for God, and Islam encapsulated that perfectly.

Before long, a spark inside of me was ignited. I wanted to learn more about Islam but assuming that religion was contradictory to logic, I was averse to abandoning logic in order to embrace religion. However, with the pursuit of knowledge, I came across a verse in the Qur'an saying "And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect." (45: 13).

I was genuinely shocked. Instead of stifling the proliferation of knowledge and pursuit of the fundamental belief of the religion, Islam actually encouraged the seeking of knowledge and called for the believers to ponder upon the signs of God in this materialistic world. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) was also reported to have said in an authentic hadith (Al-Albani) "Seeking Knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim male and female." I started to spend some time off my weekends at the Islamic library of Darul Arqam, Al-Mawrid, reading about books on the sciences of the Qur'an.

Conversion button

Before long, I was convinced by the truth in Islam and I started to believe in Allah s.w.t and His Messenger (s.a.w). However, the challenge came when I had to tell my family that I was interested in becoming a Muslim. My family was shocked. Just like how I never expected myself to be interested in embracing Islam, they never expected their nephew/son/brother to become a Muslim. Their first reactions were very negative.

After a lengthy conversation, we decided to wait a few years before coming back to make a decision because it will be more practical then to think of conversion. I was doing my national service and it was said that becoming a Muslim would complicate things. Initially, I agreed with this decision because it was better than a flat-rejection. However, after a while, something inside told me that there was something wrong with what I was planning to do. It was as if there was someone else inside of me telling me that I was doing something wrong.

Upon reflection, I realised that waiting for convenience before becoming a Muslim was not the right choice. One becomes a Muslim out of sincerity, out of faith. If I were to become a Muslim only when it was practical, what if my circumstance changed and became

impractical again, will I then cease to become a Muslim? With this insight, it gave strength to my resolve and I explained once more to my family why I wanted to become a Muslim. Alhamdulillah, they did not oppose my decision and respected it. The biggest change that was going to happen to my life was right ahead of me, and I had no clue how and when it should happen. I kept pondering if I were ready for such a big change to my life and I did not know when was a good date for my conversion. Hence, I was always on the Darul Arqam website, reading their articles and exploring their media, hoping something would give me that leap of faith. One day, while fiddling with the functions of the website, I accidentally booked a conversion appointment for myself when I least expected it. Looking back today, I believe that it was Allah's way of telling me that I was ready and it was time to embrace this beautiful way of life.

On the 7th of January 2018, I took my Shahada, and my life has never been the same since. Islam guides my actions, my values and my purpose. Islam encourages me to seek knowledge to get closer to Allah and motivates me to live my best life in the service of religion. It is the source of my strength, my growth and my happiness.

Alhamdulillah ■



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MAWLID *Rasulullah s.a.w*

Significance of Love for the Prophet s.a.w

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

To know and to love the Prophet pbuh is an important obligation for all Muslims. Love can be expressed in various means. This session introduced the Prophet's beauty through the lenses of Imam Al-Busiri's famous Qasidah Burdah, a beautiful poetic ode of the Prophet pbuh and other enriching sharing.



How Do We Express Our Gratitude To Sayyiduna Muhammad (saw)?

- Uphold what was dear to him and leave what he disliked
 - Recite Al-Quran frequently and regularly
 - Perform the Night Prayers (Qiyamul Layl)
 - Perform acts of remembrance (dzikir) abundantly
 - Be generous and charitable to others, especially those in need
 - Refrain from unnecessary arguments, disproportionate retaliation
 - Refrain from backbiting, sowing discord amongst friends, colleagues, family members



How Do We Express Our Gratitude To Sayyiduna Muhammad (saw)?

1. Obey the commandments of Allah and refrain from His prohibitions – learn Fiqh
2. Have good understanding of the One-ness of Allah – learn Aqidah
3. Know Sayyiduna Muhammad (saw) well – learn Sirah
4. Recite Al-Quran well – learn Tajwid
5. Emulate him in character and in deed – learn Syama'il
6. Cleanse our hearts – learn Tazkiyatun Nafs

Once a *debater*, now a Deputy Public Prosecutor

by Alia Abdullah
MuslimSG



Muid Nur Hidayat Bin Amir, 28, was previously involved in dealing with multi-million dollar lawsuits at one of the Big 4 law firms in Singapore, but soon felt a yearning to do something meaningful and contribute to the community.

He is now a Deputy Public Prosecutor ("DPP") at the Attorney General's Chambers ("AGC"), an institution playing the role of a Government Legal Adviser, Public Prosecutor and Drafter of Laws.

As a Deputy Public Prosecutor, he performs a myriad of roles in relation to the criminal justice system: amongst others, evaluating evidence secured by law enforcement agencies to assess whether an offence is disclosed, conducting trials in the State Courts and representing the State in Magistrate's Appeal in the High Court.

Support from family and community

Hidayat's father is a retired chauffeur while his mother is a housewife. He grew up in a family of 6, living in a four-room HDB flat. Though he came from a humble background, he says that he has never considered himself to be

underprivileged. He explains that he was privileged to have been born into a strong and supportive family. He recalls his parents saying yes without question to every single one of his requests growing up, as long as they are related to his educational needs.

All other priorities were rendered secondary. *"Every day, without fail, my dad would bring home English newspapers from his workplace, apparently left by some anonymous strangers (God bless whoever left them there), and we would read them."*

"I am privileged to have the best support system in my family and in the community and I recognize that there are others out there who might be far more brilliant and talented, but may not come from the best family background."



Hidayat says that a Deputy Public Prosecutor is at the end of the day a mere temporary “title” that he is privileged to assume. He credits, amongst others, his teachers from Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah for guiding him to where he is today.

“The message I got from my experience in madrasah is that no matter where you go and no matter what you decide to do in life, it is on us to do it with excellence.”

“Because that is the amanah expected of you.”

In my court submissions, I bear in mind that no matter how tired you are, no matter how heavy the workload, you always try to execute it as excellent as you can.”

He says that he was, at first, an average student.

“Only towards the end of my secondary school years did I realize that I owe it to my parents and the community to do well. Having received money from Lembaga Basiswa Kenangan Maulud (LBKM), I felt that the donors deserved to have their money well spent and well-invested.”

Furthermore, as private educational institutions, madrasahs are co-funded by the community, their stakeholders and Muis, with money raised from fundraising and donation drives.

Hidayat worked hard to become the top ‘O’ Level Student and valedictorian of Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah. He was awarded the Anugerah MENDAKI, an award given annually to honour Singapore Muslim students who have done exceptionally well in national examinations. He was also the first Madrasah student to have enrolled in National University of Singapore’s Faculty of Law (NUS Law).

Challenges faced

Despite his achievements, Hidayat shared his internal experience of feeling inadequate.



“There is always the feeling like I’ve just been lucky and that my luck will run out.”

When Hidayat was applying for a place at NUS Law, another challenge he faced was not knowing any contacts who could help him prepare for the application process.

“I didn’t know what kind of essays to expect, what kind of interviews that I will be going for. I went to the interview equipped with all the information I got from the NUS website.”

On the other hand, he found out that students from the top JCs had resources and tips to guide them through the process.

The Quranic verse that keeps him going

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

To cope with difficulties, Hidayat reminds himself of Surah Al-Baqarah:

“And when My servants ask you, (O Muhammad), concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me (by obedience) and believe in Me that they may be (rightly) guided.” (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:186)

“I remember thinking about how the verse mentioned the word ‘iza’.”

‘Iza’ means ‘When’ as per the translation of the verse. It reminds him that Allah s.w.t. is in a continual state of being ready to answer when the servants approach Him.

“At His Most High, the servants can reach out to Him, and he would respond. No matter the time, no matter the gap between Allah and His servants, He would respond. You just need to ask for it. I know that even in my difficulties, He’ll bring me through it.”



Hidayat was finally accepted by NUS Law after two years. On top of excelling academically, he was also a quarter-finalist at the International Criminal Moot Court Competition at the Hague. He was the inaugural recipient of the Professor Ahmad Ibrahim Scholarship issued by the Lembaga Basiswa Kenangan Maulud (“LBKM”). Aside from law activities, he also served as President at the National University of Singapore Muslim Society (NUSMS).



Hidayat smiled as he mentioned that it was through NUSMS that he met his wife, Dr Amalina Ridzuan, one of the first two madrasah students to be accepted by NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine in 2015. Dr Amalina Ridzuan was then the Vice-President of NUSMS.

Darul Arqam SMYD 2018 Champion - Individual category

He was also the champion of the Singapore Muslim Youth Debate Competition (Individual All-Stars Category) held by Youth Of Darul Arqam (“YODA”). This annual Singapore Muslim Youth Debate saw Hidayat challenging against Arif Tan in the All Stars Individuals Category for the motion “The Onus is on the Individual to Tackle Fake News in the Post-truth Era.”



Success is not about status

To Hidayat, success is about putting in one’s own version of one’s best effort.

“You can be pursuing careers that society might not, perhaps, have considered as the most elite, such as a grab driver or a chauffeur like my dad was,

but if you put your heart into the jobs that you do, then that is already a success.

My dad is a success in my eyes because no matter how long the working hours, he would do his best to ensure that he does justice to his job.”

He also feels that, while there is a need to re-define the societal definition of what is considered a success, it remains one’s duty to uplift segments of the

community who might have slipped through the cracks of mainstream meritocracy and to pay it forward. To support his juniors, Hidayat volunteered as the head of Maxima, an afterschool mentoring programme for madrasah students who are taking their ‘O’ Level Examinations. He also took part in various programmes organised by Mendaki Club to introduce students to the legal industry, such as the re-work: programme which was just recently held.

“That’s one of the reasons why I did this interview. I would like young students to know that there is a senior they can approach if they need guidance in their journeys.” ■

Original article by Muslim.sg,
by Alia Fatin Binte Abdullah

with additional information
from The Muslim Reader
edited by Nuruljannah Hisham

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- 17 Saudi Arabia cancel social distancing and allow worshippers enter Mecca and Medina mosques
- 19 Danish Muhammad cartoonist Kurt Westergaard dies
- 23 Tokyo Olympics officially begin under spectre of pandemic
- 26 Tunisia's president dismisses prime minister after protests

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Afghanistan government offers Taliban 'share in power'

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US and NATO forces withdrawal of their troops in Afghanistan

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Hundreds of Afghans packed into a US Air Force cargo plane leaving Kabul as the Taliban took control

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Malaysia's Ismail Sabri Yaakob sworn in as new PM

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Dozens of Afghan women took to the streets of Herat demanding the Taliban's commitment on women's empowerment

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Moroccan king appoints Aziz Akhannouch as government head

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The world's biggest Islamic organisation (Nahdlatul Ulama) drives religious reform in Indonesia - and seeks to influence the Muslim world

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Muslims livelihood under attack in India: Experts say rising attacks on Muslim vendors and businesses by Hindu supremacist groups point to a worrying trend

SEP

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Swedish 'Prophet Mohammad' cartoonist Lars Vilks killed in car crash

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The Football Association of Wales (FAW) has become the first footballing body to sign the Muslim Athlete Charter

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First day Singapore Muslim Nurses allowed to wear the Hijab at work

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Shahana Hanif makes history as the first Muslim woman elected to the New York City Council

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Pillars Muslim Artist Database: New Initiative Aims to Change Portrayal of Muslims in Movies

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Cairo Women Seek Diverse Paths to Leadership in Islamic Spaces

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Muis issues new religious ruling on deviant teachings, advises Muslims to be vigilant

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Quebec teacher removed from classroom for wearing hijab

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Heavy rain and massive floods in Malaysia causing several deaths and thousands of affected homes.

DEC

WE ARE CLEAN

CERTIFIED

Alhamdulillah, the President, Exco and Council are pleased to announce that MCAS Singapore, has received the #SGClean certification.

At MCAS Singapore, we are committed to providing a clean and safe environment for all Members, Students, Volunteers, Visitors and Staff. We intend to play our part in keeping Singapore and everyone safe, by enforcing strict Safe Management Measures (SMM).

We also carry out regular cleaning and disinfecting procedures every day, in order to meet the stringent SGClean requirements. The common touchpoints in our Association Building, like the staircase railings, toilets, door knobs are also coated with NanoEL 365 Anti-microbial coating solution that is certified to work against micro-organisms, viruses and fungi.

We will endeavor to maintain a high standard in cleanliness, and we look forward to your co-operation to ensure that we have a clean and safe environment for all.

WORKING HARD TO KEEP YOU SAFE

