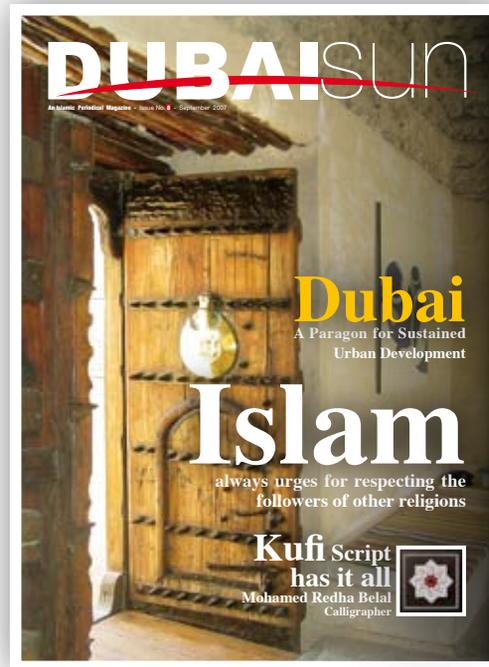




دائرة الشؤون الإسلامية  
والعمل الخيري  
ISLAMIC AFFAIRS & CHARITABLE  
ACTIVITIES DEPARTMENT  
حكومة دبي  
GOVERNMENT OF DUBAI

# DUBAISUN

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EDITORIAL

# The Philosophy of Fasting in Islam

**A**ll Muslims' adorations are closely associated with the ordainments of other heavenly religions. Islam completes and rather crowns the worships performed by the followers of other religions, including their good behaviors and moral deeds.

All revealed religions are premised on one essential principle, notably the build-up of virtuous, conscientious human beings capable of contributing to the construction of a moral world that meets the needs of all its inhabitants. All religions leave no stone unturned to guide man to the virtuous path of God. The odd and extremist behaviors wrongly associated with some religions can never be taken as a criterion to contest the integrity and righteousness of this or that religion. It is by no means fair to label a revealed religion as "extremist" only because of some whimsical, weird conducts done by some fanatics donning the cloak of this or that religion; things should simply not be taken at face value.

Fasting is a worship prescribed by all religions with the ultimate objective of getting man to follow the virtuous path of his Creator and learning self-restraint. It is a unique, moral characteristic of all revealed religions that cultivates in man a vigilant and sound conscience; because the fasting person keeps his fast in secret as well as in public. Only in this particular adoration, there is no mundane authority to check man's behavior or compel him to observe fasting. He keeps it to please God and satisfy his own conscience by being faithful in secret and in public. There is no better way to cultivate a sound conscience in man.

The sincere and honest implementation of



this worship ultimately results in the creation of a totally different person by the end of the Holy Month of Ramadan from that who was there before performing this religious duty. This face-lift becomes crystal clear from the very onset of the sacred month when a Muslim feels the huge religious responsibility he/she is shouldering; fasting indoctrinates man in patience and selflessness, as through fasting, he feels the pains of deprivation but he endures them patiently. He feels a responsibility toward himself, his family and the society at large. He feels the deprivation suffered by other Muslims who suffer hunger pains all the year round. Fasting teaches man how to be generous, open-minded, as he feels he is dealing with Allah the Almighty, and thus loves to spend all that he has in order to win the Paradise in the hereafter as an ultimate reward for his fasting to which he has remained committed only to secure his Creator's satisfaction.

When this holy months draws towards its end, a Muslim usually feels woebegone, primarily because he gets the feeling that he has lost a golden chance that God grants him to get all his sins atoned and avoid the fire of Hell in the Hereafter: "People, any body who in this month (Ramadan) cultivates good manners, will walk over the 'Sirat (Paradise's bridge) on the Day when feet will tend to slip...." ('Uyun al-Akhbar, al-Rida - Prophet's sermon).

The practices of Islamic fasting are designed to divert human mind towards righteousness through a process of self-denials. Fasting constitutes a process of self-purification, self-righteousness, and spiritual development of one self. It's likewise, as attested by all specialists, a surest prescription for securing good health and a positive tool for best constructing the universe from around us.

Let us pray that we receive the real spirit of Ramadan in our lives, in our homes and in our communities.

Oh Lord, don't deprive us of your mercy and atonement in Ramdan.

Amen

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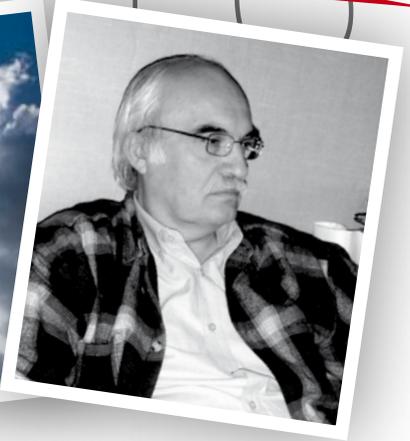
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**a Paragon for Sustained Urban Development**

The 20th Century witnessed radical social, economic and urban developments. The world population jumped from 1.6 b to 6.1b. During the period from 1987 through 2000, the world population increased by one billion, an unprecedented rise in such a short period, according to demographers.

# Dubai

a Paragon for Sustained  
Urban Development



by: Omar El Salk

**T**

he 20th Century witnessed radical social, economic and urban developments. The world population jumped from 1.6 b to 6.1b. During the

period from 1987 through 2000, the world population increased

by one billion, an unprecedented rise in such a short period, according to demographers.

With the world population having jumped four times in number in one single century, urban areas the world over have had to be doubled likewise, specially after a large number of rural



areas' inhabitants , particularly in poor developing nations, have immigrated from the country to capitals and modern cities, seeking high life styles. Such neck-breaking urban growths have taken on different forms all over the world that. They are not confined to immigrations from the





now called sustained urban development, according to urban planning experts.

The interest in sustained urban development has increasingly grown over the past years, although it stretches back to 1972 when the UN Human Development Conference was held in Stockholm as the first such intergovernmental

country to modern cities, but rather include immigrations from poor towns and cities to more promising areas where chances of success can be found more easily. World states' reactions to this urban growth have differed in form and content, but collectively led to depleting natural resources in a way that necessitated well-knit strategic plans,

gathering on environment protection. That was followed by a series of seminars and conferences, including the UN Population Conference in Bucharest, 1974, and a strategy designed by the World Conservation Union for preserving world environment. Then the World Commission on Environment and Development was formed and chaired by the then Norwegian premier





to discuss environment and urban issues the world over. Then followed similar conferences in Mexico City in the US and Rio De Janeiro in Brazil, besides the Johannesburg Summit in 2002.

The "sustained environment" concept, as known among academics and experts nowadays, is not confined to the relation linking natural environment to development, but rather extends to cover the relation linking the concept of development to different social, economic and urban dimensions, i.e. a sustained development is a

comprehensive concept aimed to strike a balance between the three dimensions of a development: the urban, the economic and social.

Sustained development is a modern term whose definition has been capsulised by the UN in the following words: it is that kind of development that meets the needs of a current generation without negatively impinging on the chances of coming generations to get their needs."

A large number of studies have been conducted and many conferences have



been held in order to strike a balance between a population growth and natural resources available. All these studies and seminars share one reference point, which is that man is the prime target of development, because he is the one who provides the catalyst for progress on all levels.

The overall development undertaken by several cities all over the world has prompted their governments to study the issues closely related to urban development. Thus, they have designed social and urban rehabilitation programmes for old cities and districts in their countries to turn them to what urban planning experts call "Central Business Districts".

Urban planning experts in Dubai have viewed that the Emirate badly needs an overhauling project to turn part of it into a CBD owing to the drastic urban developments it has witnessed over the past years that have caused high-income segments of the society to desert the



downtown districts for the city suburbs and have then been replaced by lower-income people. With the passage of time, the change in the economic, social and demographic fabric of the city has become crystal clear.

Accordingly, the city government has decided to deal with the rehabilitation of Dubai as one of the key issues inseparably related to sustained urban development efforts, aimed to enhance Dubai position as a prime business, tourist and shopping hub.

This comes within the context of a wider strategy evolved by the Emirate



to achieve its goals. A number of strategic plans have been charted on urban development and heritage, including the Overall Development Planning (1985-2000) and the Urban & Strategic Growth Planning for Dubai (2000-2050) and the First Five-Year Plan for Urban Dubai (2000-2005), plus a number of legislations and laws on the use of the Emirate's lands.

All these plans have come up with a number of policies aimed to preserve resources in a way that ensures the constant development of urban areas, including striking a balance between the population growth and the use of lands and enhancing environmental services.

Towards this end, the government of Dubai in 2006 held the Dubai Forum on Sustained Urban Development which was organized by the Dubai Municipality in cooperation with the American University in Dubai under the sponsorship of HH Sheikh Hemedan bin Rashid Al Maktoum,

Dubai Vice Ruler, Minister of Finance and Industry, Dubai Municipality Chief.

The three-day gathering, which was held on March 18-20, 2006, occasioned an exchange of views among a galaxy of experts in areas of planning and urban development from Egypt, Australia, Canada, France, Malaysia and Scotland, plus academic teams from leading universities from different parts of the world who all came to vie for presenting the best project for establishing a Central Business District in Dubai. Before the conference, the Dubai Municipality opted for the area of the Old Souq which runs in parallel with the Dubai Creek from the direction of Deira and Bur Dubai to be this Central Business District, and decided to overhaul it in different respects. This intention opened the door of competition among different leading international universities whose scientists presented thorough and in-depth architectural studies





to overhaul this area in a way relevant to a CBD model.

The work presented by these universities, which include South Australia University, Shanghai University, Aleppo University and Georgia Institute of Technology, was evaluated by an international jury committee that eventually named the Georgia Institute of Technology team the winner of the competition.

Dubai urban planning officials have pledged to draw the maximum possible benefit from the studies and research presented during the forum in order to upgrade the level of urban development in the Emirate so that Dubai can be a trend-setter in this field in the whole Arab region.

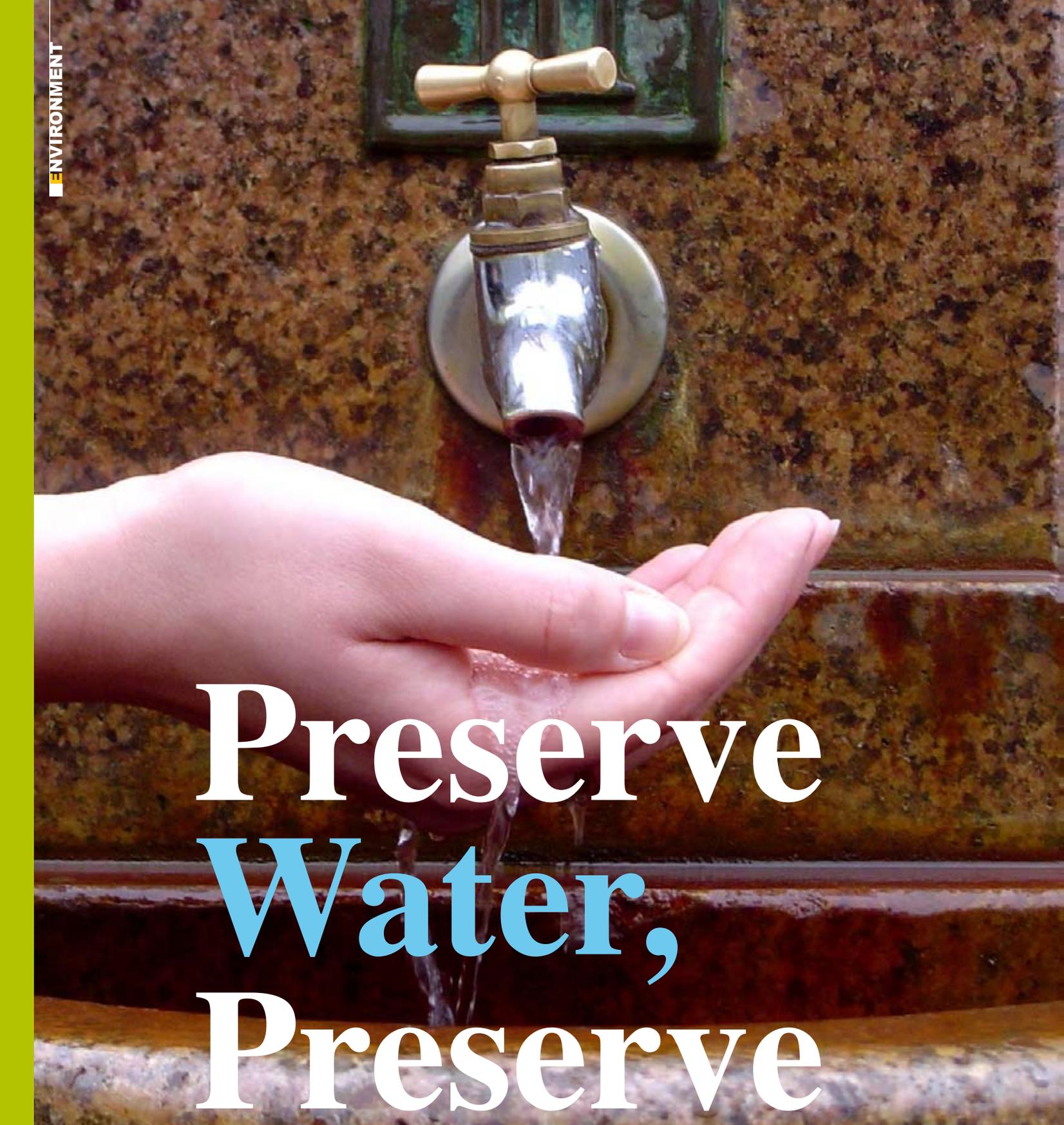
Urban development experts in Dubai have stated that the district meant for rehabilitation in Dubai includes mosques with courts that must be taken into

consideration while overhauling the entire district.

It's noteworthy that the number of mosques in Dubai has increased to more than 470- 278 of which are spacious enough to host worshippers during the Friday prayer.

Most of these mosques have been built in keeping with the latest architectural techniques while evoking, at the same time, the unique nature of Islamic architecture.



A close-up photograph of a hand cupping water from a faucet. The faucet is a classic brass design with a cross-handle, set against a dark, speckled granite countertop. The water is clear and flows into the palm of a hand. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the water and the hand.

# Preserve Water, Preserve Life

By Shehnaz Toorawa

**"Get out of the shower!" your little brother shouts as he bangs on the washroom door. "You've been in there for twenty minutes!"**

— that's just 2.03 liters.

Abu Ja`far narrated: While I and my father were with Jabir bin `Abdullah, some people asked him about taking a bath. He replied, "A saa` of water is sufficient for you." A man said, "A saa` is not sufficient for me." Jabir said, "A saa` was sufficient for one who had more hair than you and was better than you [meaning the Prophet]." (Al-Bukhari)

**D**uring the 20 minutes you spend in the shower, you use up approximately 400 liters of water (Environment Canada, Quick Facts). The Prophet (peace be upon him) performed the ghusl, a complete bath, with one saa` of water

#### **The Current Picture**

You may ask, "How is that possible? Taking a shower in six cups of water? The times sure have changed." You're right. Times have changed. The problem of water scarcity is worse today than during the time of the Prophet. We have come to passively accept the luxurious North American lifestyle. While the average Canadian uses 335 liters of water per day, the average sub-Saharan



African uses 10-20 liters per day (Environment Canada, "How Do We Use It?"). It may seem impossible for us in North America to conceive, but in today's world, the level of conservation practiced by the Prophet has become a necessity.

**These statistics may explain why:**

- Less than one half of one percent of all water on Earth is freshwater suitable for human use. The rest is seawater or frozen in the polar ice caps (Barlow).
- 1.4 billion people, that is 20 percent of the world's population, lack access to an adequate supply of clean drinking water (Ward).
- Global water consumption is doubling every 20 years, at more than twice the rate of human population growth (Barlow).
- 31 countries currently face water scarcity (Barlow).
- More than half the world's major

**“Water is increasingly being privatized by large transnational corporations who own it and sell it like a commodity”**

rivers are either polluted or drying (Ward).

- In developing countries, water causes 80 percent of illnesses. Each year three to four million people die of waterborne diseases (Environment Canada, Quickfacts).
- By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will live in conditions of water shortage and one-third will



live in absolute water scarcity (Barlow).

### **Water Politics**

"What we call man's power over nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with nature as its instrument." (C.S. Lewis)

The problem is not the amount of water. The amount of water on Earth remains constant — it doesn't increase or decrease — and there is enough to meet everyone's needs. The problem is unequal access and use.

Different regions of the world naturally hold different amounts of freshwater. India, for example, holds 20 percent of the world's population but



only 4 percent of its water (Ward). This natural division of water is easy for governments to overcome with the right technology. The problem of water scarcity arises when limited water



**Jabir bin 'Abdullah narrated: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) forbade the sale of excess water.**  
(Muslim)

is coupled with social inequalities and political agendas. Who gets access to a region's water and how they use it is usually determined by who has power and money.

Water is increasingly being privatized by large transnational corporations who own it and sell it like a commodity. Hungry for profit, these corporations drive the price of water out of reach of poor people and deliver it to those wealthy individuals and industries that can pay for it. Only the wealthy who can install plumbing systems receive subsidized municipal water, leaving the poorest in developing countries to pay the highest price for water. In Lima, Peru, for example, poor people pay private vendors up to US\$3 per cubic meter for water that is supplied in buckets and is not even potable. At the same time, the affluent pay US\$0.30 per cubic meter for treated water that pours out of taps in their homes (Barlow). In India, some households spend 25 percent of their income on water (Barlow). During droughts, governments often reserve water for the elite who can pay for it.

Is there anything you can do to save the Earth's water supply? Have Your Say Industries, also hungry for profit, require vast amounts of water. It takes

215,000 liters of water to produce one metric ton of steel (Environment Canada, Quickfacts). Industries purchase access to a region's water at subsidized rates from the government. Most of the world's freshwater is naturally stored under the ground. Industries pump this groundwater faster than it can replenish itself, causing the land to collapse and thus permanently destroying its ability to store water. In the Arabian Peninsula, groundwater use is three times as great as recharge. At current rates of extraction, Saudi Arabia will reach total depletion in 50 years (Barlow). In developing countries, industries dump 75 percent of their untreated wastes into local water bodies (Barlow). When the environment is sufficiently damaged and water disappears, industries move elsewhere, leaving a region's residents in scarcity.

The politics of power and money also determine which countries can secure water. Since most rivers and groundwater aquifers cross national boundaries, many experts believe that future conflicts in the world will likely involve water. In the early 1970s, Syria and Iraq almost went to war over the waters of the Euphrates when Syria built a dam at Tabaq, blocking a quarter of the river's flow to Iraq (Ward). Ten African countries share the waters of the Nile and each wants a share of the river. To protect its Nile water supply, Egypt in the past has threatened to use its size, wealth, and power go to war against Ethiopia, a country where water flows abundantly but millions starve to death each year (Ward). In 1978, for example, Egypt's then president Anwar Sadat stated, "any action that would endanger the water of the Blue Nile will be faced with a firm reaction on the part of Egypt, even if that action should lead to war" (Kendie).

### Where Do We Fit In?

The problem of water scarcity is not confined to the developing world. Its roots are connected to us and the way we live in North America. North Americans are the worst hoarders of water. While millions go without water, North Americans use 1,280 cubic meters of water per person every year; Europeans use 694; Asians use 535; South Americans use 311; and Africans use 186 (Barlow).

While North Americans can boast large water supplies — Canada contains one quarter of the world's freshwater — our extravagant habits won't save us from danger for long. Water levels in the Great Lakes reached record lows in recent years (Barlow). The Ogallala groundwater aquifer in the US High Plains is depleted eight times as fast as nature can replenish it, causing the land to drop at least a meter each year (Barlow). Americans have dammed, diverted, and polluted the Colorado River until little or no water reaches its destination at sea (Barlow).

The extravagances of our North American lifestyle — lawn sprinklers, frequent car washes, sprawling golf courses, abundant swimming pools, dripping taps, and toilets that consume 18 liters of water per flush — fool us

into believing we are safe (Barlow). They help us ignore the world's water crisis or accept it with a shrug. The principle of "We have so let's use it now and think about the future later" prevails in most North American minds.

Consider Las Vegas, a city that receives 3.8 inches of rainfall in an average year — comparable to dry areas of Saudi Arabia and the Western Sahara. This desert city sparkles and splashes with the idea that water is limitless. The Hotel Luxor in Las Vegas boasts five-story waterfalls, shark tanks, a 1.3-million gallon dolphin pool, and a miniature Nile River with a boat ride. A full-sized pirate ship sinks again and again into a man-made river that circles the Treasure Island Hotel. The Hotel Bellagio stands beside an 8-acre artificial lake with hundreds of fountains spitting 200 feet into the air. The city flaunts colossal fountains, golf courses, man-made lakes, swimming pools, and even





a sailing club. According to Las Vegas Water Commissioner, Patricia Mulroy, each acre-foot of "decorative water" in the city generates US\$30 million. Hence the saying, "Water flows uphill to money" (Ward).

#### **How Do We Respond?**

"We live in the world's most technically sophisticated society, yet we are now right back where we were three thousand years ago, praying for rain." (Garrett Ward)

Every person on the planet has a right to adequate water.

The Prophet said, "Muslims have a common share in three (things): grass, water, and fire." (Abu Dawud)

Jabir bin 'Abdullah narrated: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) forbade the sale of excess water. (Muslim)

Ideally, basic water needed for survival should be free, equally available to everyone, and legally protected from

waste and contamination. Current global practices and policies are obviously unjust.

We are also responsible for such injustices we see around us, as the Qur'an outlines:

[Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity.] (Aal `Imran 3:104)

Yet, as individuals we have little control over international water politics and policies. How then should we respond to the global water crisis? Here are ways to begin:

- Don't lose hope. Although the situation looks bleak, don't let it depress you. The Qur'an tells us that [Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is Guardian over all things.] (Az-Zumar 39:62)
- You and I are only responsible for making an effort. Allah takes care of

the results. He knows what's best for us and He is the Most Just, whether that justice comes in this life or in the next.

- Be grateful. Allah granted North Americans an abundant supply of fresh, clean water without any effort from us. Allah asks us in the Qur'an, [Have you considered the water which you drink? Is it you that send it down from the clouds, or are We the senders? If We pleased, We would have made it salty; why do you not then give thanks?] (Al-Waqi`ah 56:68-70)
- [Say: Have ye thought: If (all) your water were to disappear into the earth, who then could bring you gushing water?] (Al-Mulk 67:30)
- Water is not simply "there" and it doesn't "fall by itself." As we read in numerous verses of the Qur'an, Allah "sends down water from the sky." Allah is the only one who can continue our supply of water and if He wishes, He can remove it any time.
- Get involved. Raise awareness among your friends and family. Participate in efforts, such as letter-writing campaigns to lobby the government over its international water-related decisions. Join conservation groups in your area that protect local water resources. Many organizations look for volunteers to clean up river banks, monitor water quality, or educate school groups.
- Change your habits. Although we can't always control the actions of governments, we can control our own use of water. Allah rewards us for every step we take towards change. Resist the North American habit to overuse and waste water. The Qur'an tells us:

[And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and





to the wayfarer: But squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones; and the Evil One is to his Lord (himself) ungrateful.] (Al-Israa' 17:26-27)

[Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters.] (Al-A`raf 7:31)

Just because we have abundant water, that doesn't mean we should use it. Begin to fulfill your trust and responsibility towards Allah by conserving the water you use at home.

#### Ten Easy Ways You Can Conserve Water

1. Don't use your toilet as a wastebasket or flush it unnecessarily. Toilets consume a quarter of our municipal water supply and use 40 percent more water than needed (Environment Canada, Quickfacts).
2. Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth or soap dishes.
3. Keep a bottle of drinking water in the fridge. Don't run your tap for cold water.
4. Run your dishwasher and washing machine only when they are full.
5. Check pipes and faucets for leaks and

get them fixed. Many homes lose more water from leaking taps than they need for cooking and drinking (Environment Canada, Quickfacts).

6. Install low-flow shower heads and flow-restrictors on faucets. A 5-minute shower with a standard shower head uses 100 liters of water while a low-flow shower head uses 35 liters of water (Environment Canada, Quickfacts).
7. Water your lawn every third day and water during the cool times of the day.
8. Sweep patios and sidewalks, don't hose them.
9. Limit pesticides on your lawn to prevent them from reaching our water supply.
10. Drive less! It takes approximately 10 liters of water to produce a liter of gasoline (Environment Canada, Quickfacts).

[He it is Who hath placed you as viceroys of the earth and hath exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by (the test of) that which He hath given you. Lo! Thy Lord is swift in prosecution, and Lo! He verily is Forgiving, Merciful.] (Al-An`am 6:165).





The temperate message of Islam is for the  
**whole of**  
**the human**  
**race**

Dr Hamad Al Shaibani

Interviewed by Muhamed Tawfeeq



# D

**Dr. Hamad Al Shaibani, the Director General of the Department of Islamic Affairs & Charity Works of Dubai, underscored**

**the exigency of Muslims working for effecting a renaissance based on a purely Islamic vision. "Building up a truly Muslim person is the cornerstone of a robust, well-integrated society at all levels," he said in an interview with "Dubai Sun". Dr. Shaibani accentuated the necessity of diffusing the temperate message of Islam to all corners of the world.**

- **Would you shed some light on the conciliatory and moderate approach adopted by the Department of Islamic Affairs & Charity Works of Dubai?**

In dealing other peoples and civilizations, Islam champions one message that outlines the universality of its teachings, civilization and approach: it is the message of mercy, moderation and temperance. God says: "Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the

better way. Lo! thy Lord is Best Aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright."

Muslims are ordained not only to be merciful towards each other, but also to be merciful and moderate with all other peoples, and rather all the creatures living in this universe. This mercy is premised on the methodology of moderation and conciliation and the dissemination of the true image and noble teachings of Islam by setting a good example for others to follow and showing how Islam is so open and receptive vis-à-vis other civilizations and cultures.

- **The Islamic civilization, your Excellency, is a deeply-rooted, time-honoured one that has effectively contributed to other civilizations, and rather helped create many of the world leading civilizations; how on earth then can Islam be labeled as an "extremist" religion?**

I'd like first to thank you for this question. For starters, I'd like to say that Islam is a religion based on tolerance and peaceful coexistence. These are among the basic tenets of our religion as revealed by God in the following verses: "Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and





that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him)."

Islam always urges for respecting the followers of other religions and calls upon Muslims to co-exist with them in a peaceful way. God says: " O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)."

It is incumbent upon us as Muslims to drive home the facts of our religion and teach others on the true essence of Islam and how we are ordained to be merciful towards all God's creatures, including our servants, workers, women, children and

even animals and plants.

Our Apostle (PBUH) calls upon us to be merciful toward our servants and urges us not to be aggressive towards them or overburden them. This is clear in the following Hadith:

**Narrated Amr bin Horaith (RA):**

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, in effect, that the more you make it easier for your servant, the more you get rewarded by God.

- **How do you view the attempts aimed to find common grounds between different Islamic schools of jurisprudence?**

Variation is one keynote of our moderate, temperate Shari'a. Since the first day Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received the Divine revelation, this diversity has been featuring high in our Islamic thought, and its contribution to our way of life is highly noticed. It is a bless that we, as Muslims, enjoy, exactly as was the case for other previous nations. The diversity and variation between our schools reveal the flexible nature of Islam and is meant to make it easier for Muslims in their life and worldly dealings. There is one famous saying purporting that the frictions between the Islamic jurisprudence schools smack of the merciful nature of our religion. The attempts to find common grounds between these schools should not be aimed to make all Muslims scholars have one single opinion on all matters and problems. This is on one hand impossible to achieve and rather puts an end to the freedom of thinking in Islam on the other. The multiplicity of jurisprudence schools in Islam is a natural reflection of the merciful and temperate nature of our religion, and a logical consequence to the positive and fruitful attempts of our scholars to reach personal judgements based on Qura'n and Sunna,

which is called in Islam "Ijtihad". Islam is a heavenly religion, one of the basic characteristics of which is tolerance, a fact which is vindicated by the Holy Book and Prophet Muhammad's traditions as well as by common sense and logic; how come can we call for being tolerant with the followers of other religions and at the same time forget to do so with ourselves?! Islam acknowledges differences in opinion and views, and rather views them as a positive trend likely to enrich our human life both at the spiritual and material levels.

- **What can we as ordinary Muslims and scholars do to remold our Islamic nation in a way premised on peace and justice?**

In reality, the Islamic nation should be remolded in a way whereby we can rid ourselves of all the foibles and shortcomings that have led us to deviate from the virtuous path made clear by God in his book and in the Muhammadan Traditions as well as through the personal opinions of our revered ancestors whose

views are based on Qura'n and Sunnah. We are a nation that is inspired by the Noble Qura'an; a nation selected by God to witness over other nations, as stated in the following Divine verses: " Thus, have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves; and We appointed the Qibla to which thou wast used, only to test those who followed the Messenger from those who would turn on their heels (From the Faith). Indeed it was (A change) momentous, except to those guided by Allah. And never would Allah Make your faith of no effect. For Allah is to all people Most surely full of kindness, Most Merciful."

So long as this is our mission, we then have to explore and fathom our identity, and find out how we are rated among other nations. During the current stage we are going through, we have to display a clear-cut image of Islam to the outer world; we have to rectify and purify ourselves of our sins and get back to our mainspring, which is the Noble Qura'an and the traditions of our Apostle (PBUH).



# Activate Your God Spot

**Allah** gave us..  
the **human brain..**  
to make us **the best** of  
all **His creations**

have the power to move believers and non-believers alike.

### **Tune Into the Divine**

Whenever any man sets foot in a holy place such as a mosque or a church, a feeling of reverence generates within him. Some scientists say there is a “God-spot” or a centre for spirituality in the temporal lobe of the human brain (dysfunction of which may also cause seizures). This lobe has connections to the frontal cortex which also houses the attention centre as well as the cognition centre responsible for logical thinking. Al Ḥamdu Lillāh, some of us who do not believe in God at least possess a brain with the capacity to believe in God. The brain circuitry may amount to an antenna to make us tune in to the divine.

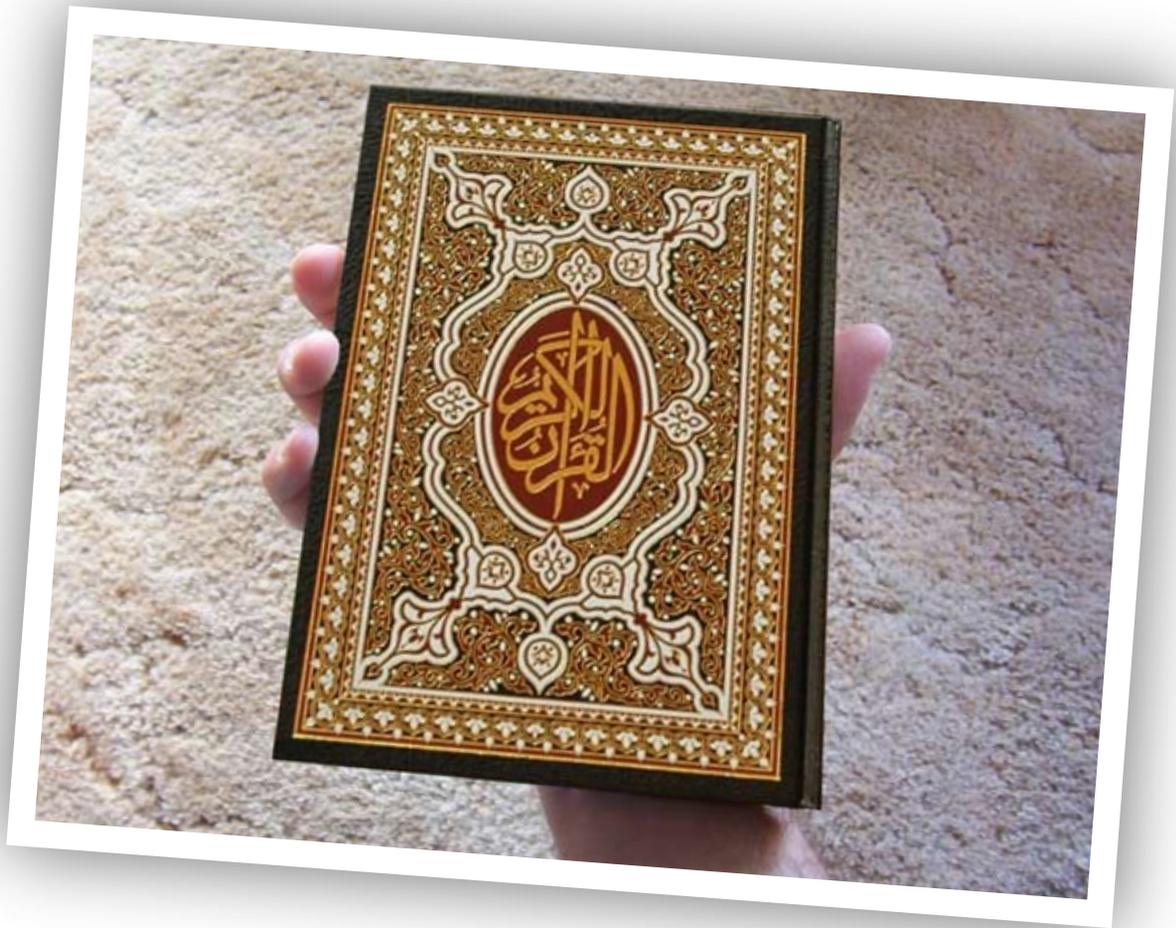
Many people have a profound acceptance that religion has changed their lives, perhaps because spiritual practices activate the temporal lobe. That is why "God won't go away" from us.

Muslims are offended by the notion that God is a creation of the human brain, rather than the other way around.

**T**he human brain is the most complex organ man has been endowed with. Allah gave us the human brain to make us the best of all His creations, in order to differentiate us from animals and other creatures. It contains 100 billion neurons (nerve cells) and trillions of connecting fibers called synapses. It can store a hundred thousand facts at a time and a million billion facts in a lifetime.

Recently, a new science is being developed called neuro-theology to study the neurobiology of religion, to identify the brain's spirituality circuit, and to explain how it is that religious rituals





Allah might have put a God-spot in the brain because it is His sovereign choice to be in relationship to humankind in order that we could develop it further if we want to understand more about Him. This higher center may have evolved to have control over the present day neo-cortex (our 'new' brain or 'thinking' brain which distinguishes us from animals), and thereby our mind, leading to deeper thinking and a prolonged state of Taqwa (God-consciousness).

This God-spot should be well developed in those of us who are religious as well as pious in our actions, but underdeveloped in those who do not respond to the Great Caller and who should be labeled as deaf, dumb and blind "Summun Bukmunn 'Ummyunn" (Qur'an 2:18). If the temporal lobe is surgically resected, then this lobectomy would amount to a "Godectomy" and the person would become an agnostic and

would not know about God.

The Difference Between Brain, Body and Soul.

When we feel carried away by intense prayer and have an uplifting ritual, it is reflected in activity in the temporal lobe

Although it is said that the temporal lobe houses the God-spot and is the seat of a God-given human faculty for experiencing the divine, it is only acting as an antenna. It is not the locus of a person's soul (Rūḥ), although Allah breathed His Rūḥ into the first man - Adam. The Rūḥ has an existence independent from the brain and the rest of the body.

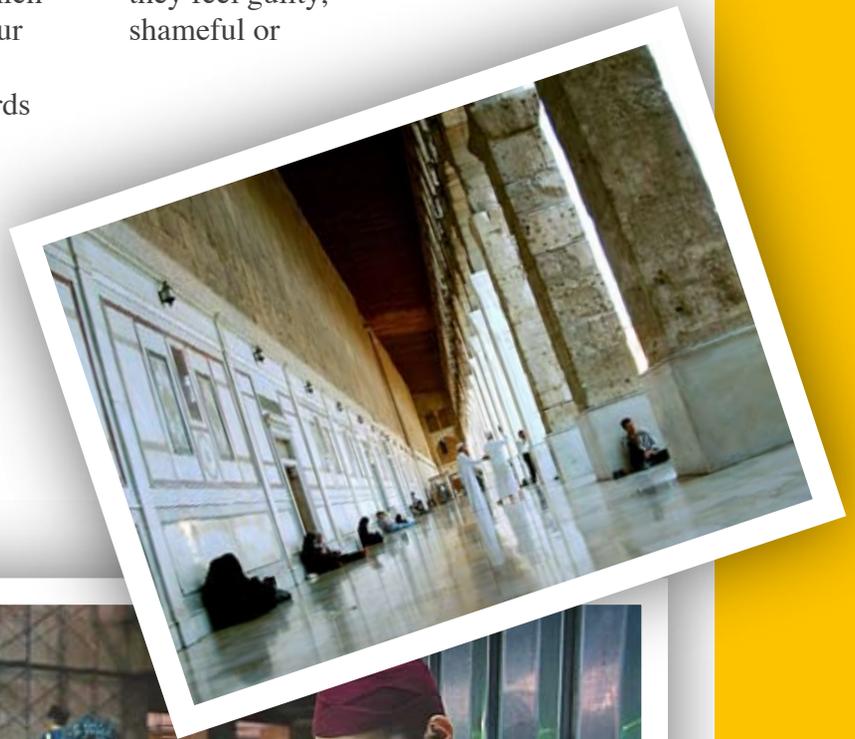
There are very real differences between brain, body and soul. Whenever we feel carried away and transported to another scenario by intense prayer and an uplifting ritual, it is reflected in activity in the temporal lobe with changing of the frequency and amplitude of the brain waves as seen in the

electro-encephalogram. Moreover, brain imaging techniques such as fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and PET (Positive Emission Tomography) which are presently being used to locate and map out the different areas of the brain during prayers and meditation show activity in some areas while other areas in the brain are blanked off. The prefrontal cortex of the brain, which is the seat of attention, lights up, and the superior parietal lobe, (acting as the "orientation association area," which processes information about where our 3-dimensional body stands in space and time, and which is situated towards the top and back of the brain) is switched-off, and so is the amygdale, which registers fear and anger by monitoring the environment for threats and dangers.

Experimentally, bursts of electrical activity could be triggered in the temporal lobes through mini-electrodes, which produce sensations described by

the patient as supernatural or a sense of the divine. Such brain storms can also appear in times of personal crisis and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) suggesting a reason that some people "find God" in such moments.

However, losing one's self in prayer and feeling good or uplifted have nothing to do with how well we communicate with God. In fact, many people pray best when harm afflicts them (Qur'an 41:51) and they feel guilty, shameful or



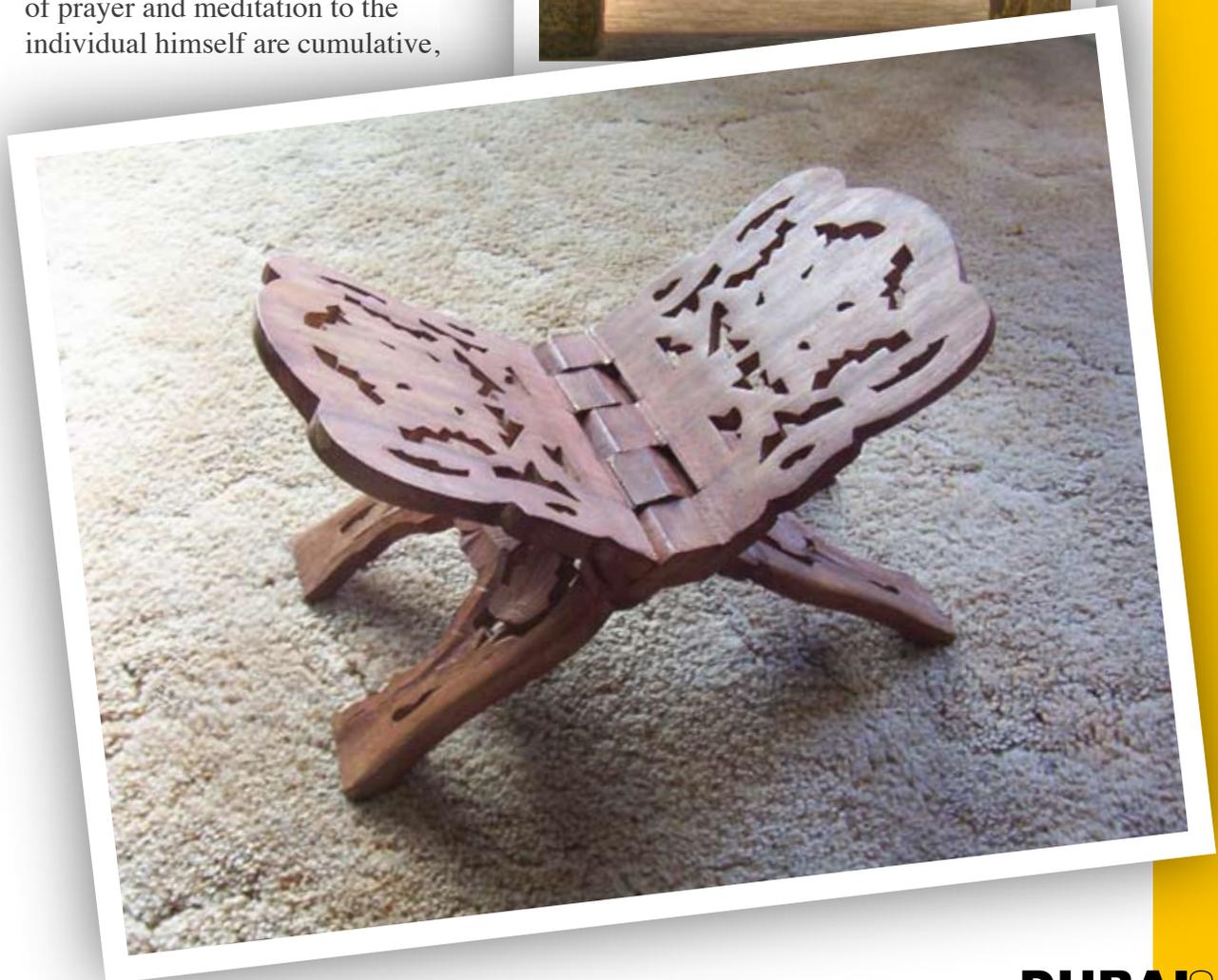
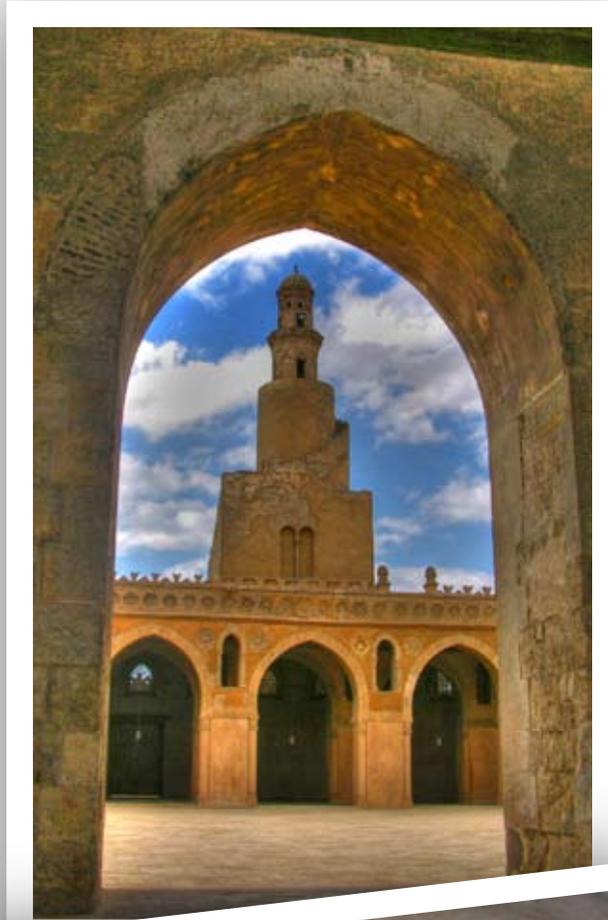


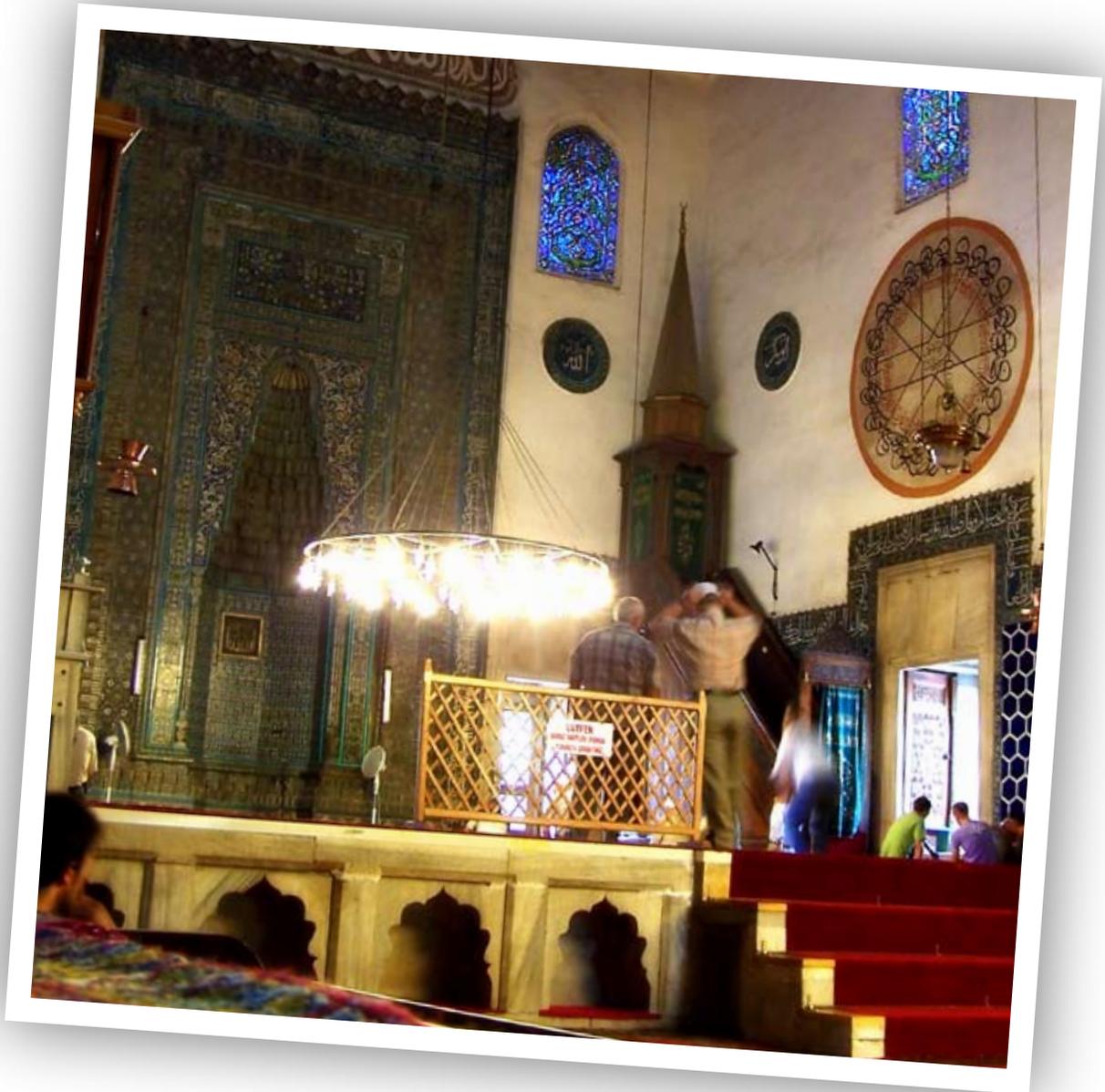
sad. The sheer habit to pray may also be more affirmative than the occasional feeling that God is close by and listening to us.

Some scientists are not sure whether the brainwaves create God or God creates the brainwaves, though they admit that both prayers and meditation give rise to a relaxed dualistic mind with intense feelings of love and joy when both excitatory and inhibitory neurotransmitters in the brain come into play to exert their biological and emotional effects. To the average man, it is a matter of faith. To a Muslim, everything is from Allah.

#### **Thank Allah**

Some studies have found no benefit at all from third-party prayer because, they say, it puts God to the test instead. However, the benefits of prayer and meditation to the individual himself are cumulative,





leaving their footprints in the neural pathways. Hence, the importance of introducing children to prayers at an early age (Hadith). To a Muslim, everything is from Allah.

No matter how we take it, we must thank G.O.D. (the Great Organising Designer) Who gifted us with a brain equipped with different centers and neurotransmitters so that we could think of the divine and be confident, calm and comfortable. The first to mature is that part of the brain controlling movement and senses followed by language, while the center for attention, reasoning and problem-solving is the last to mature, which leads to wisdom. Executive

activities which are prioritized in the prefrontal cortex don't fully develop until young adulthood.

The hyper-religiosity of some individuals has been attributed by some researchers to various grades of temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE). Approximately a quarter of TLE patients have intense religious experiences during seizures, saying that they had an aura preceding the attacks that relate to God, such as hearing a divine voice or seeing a divine vision. Although some non-Muslim scientists have labeled some prophets and some mystics as suffering from temporal-lobe epilepsy, recent studies have cast doubt on the connection

between religiosity and temporal-lobe epilepsy (the latter disease presenting itself in a fascinating array of symptoms sometimes referred to as supernatural).

Laws of the land make human beings behave differently than they would have otherwise. Faith in God results in different behavior. There is no harm in such knowledge of neuroscience co-existing with a person's faith. Muslims accept that even scientific inspiration comes to us from higher sources; Allah.

When prayers and meditation are repetitive, the various neuro-transmitters may stimulate growth of some dormant neurons in the brain to develop a higher centre on the evolutionary ladder of the present day cerebral cortex with a capacity to think and to rationalize much better. Religion Linked to Better Mental Health

It is to be noted that, until 1994, the American Psychiatric Association officially classified strong religious belief as a mental disorder, but now they believe that religion is linked to far better mental health.

Mystics describe their experiences as ecstatic and serene, and they show utmost humility, while psychotics, schizophrenics and epileptics experience hearing the same voice with the same message during their bouts of illness. Although such persons are confused and frightened by these hallucinations, they see themselves as prophets or even God with special divine powers. However, mystical experiences can also come to anyone spontaneously without desiring them. The reader may refer to the Qur'anic verses 40:15 and 16:2.

Having religious faith can speed recovery from depression in older patients. Religiously active older people tend to have lower blood pressure than those who are less active, and live longer. Religion is not only meditation and prayers. It is much more than that such as fasting, charity, visiting widows and orphans, and looking after their welfare.

Disclaimer: The ideas expressed in this article represent solely the opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of IslamOnline.net.



# Kufi Script has it all

Calligrapher  
Mohamed Redha Belal

Interviewed by Bahaa Sanhoury

**W**hile many religions have made use of figural images to convey their core convictions, Islam has instead used the shapes and sizes of words or letters. Because Islamic leaders saw in figural arts a possible implication of idolatry, Islam's early theocracy looked to the artistry of calligraphy for religious expression. In Islamic and Arabic cultures, calligraphy became highly respected as an art -- the art of writing. In a nutshell, Arabic calligraphy is not merely an art form but involves divine and moral representations -- from which calligraphy acquires its sublime reputation.

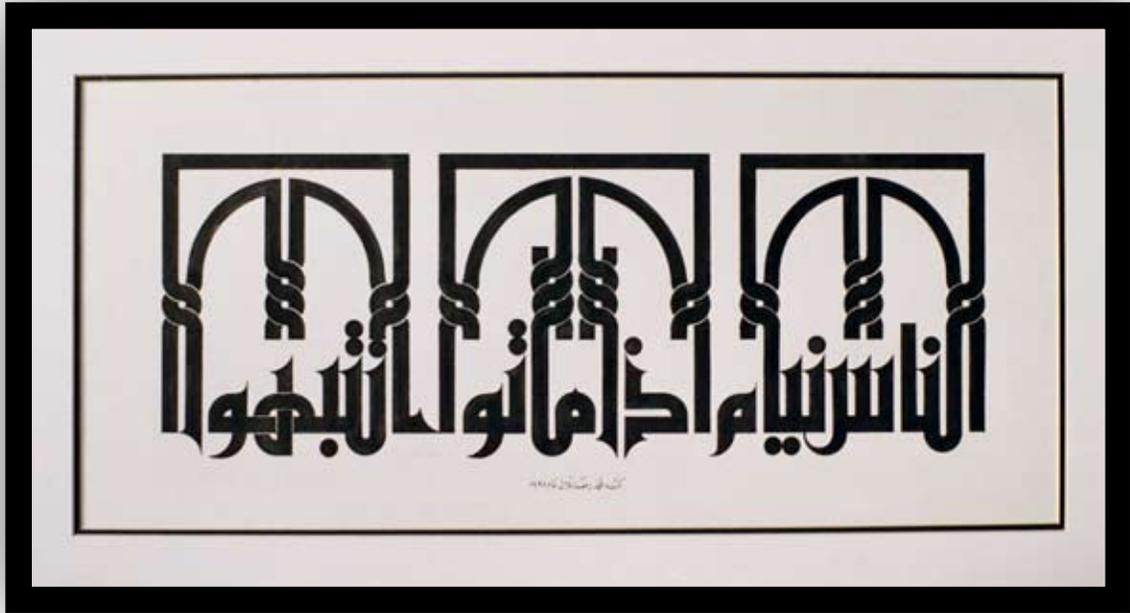


"Dubai Sun" caught up with calligrapher Mohamed Redha Helal, a creative artist with a sui generis touch that has enabled his works to feature high at all the global and regional exhibitions he participated in. He has a special penchant for Kufi script, preferring it to all other calligraphic styles.

**Describe your first experience with Arabic Calligraphy.**

I have been familiar with Arabic calligraphy since my early school years, namely starting from Grade One and more accurately during my first mathematics lessons. I used to virtually draw the Arabic letters rather than just writing them down like my classmates used to do. And





nevertheless I started out my career as a painter not as a calligrapher. When I started learning the rudiments of calligraphy, I was doing like outlining the letters, and hence I have been preferring the Kufi style more than any other calligraphic styles till now. Needless to say that Kufi script is that kind of calligraphic styles that is rather drawn than written, and thus most of those calligraphers who master this kind of scripts were painters before turning to be calligraphers.



### How do you use the Kufi script?

Kufi was the dominant priestly script in early times. It was created after the establishment of the two Muslim cities of Basrah and Kufah in the second decade of the Islamic era (8th century A.D.). The script has specific proportional measurements, along with pronounced angularity and squareness. It became known as al-Khat al-Kufi (Kufi script).

Kufi script had a profound effect on all Islamic calligraphy. In contrast to its low verticals, Kufi has horizontal lines that are

script is considerably wider than it is high. This gives it a certain dynamic momentum. The script often is chosen for use on oblong surfaces. With its glorious Handasi (geometrical) construction, Kufi could be adapted to any space and material from silk squares to the architectural monuments left by Timur at Samarqand.

Because Kufi script was not subjected to strict rules, calligraphers employing it had virtually a free hand in the conception and execution of its ornamental forms.

As for me, I deal with this script style as much accurately as I do any thing else in life. My paintings usually start with scrambled lines on a white paper at my desk, at home or any place else. Usually while moving aimlessly with my brush pen (qalam), I get the idea. I then set out to draw so patiently and repeat my drawing for second, third and even tenth times until I get a satisfactory outcome. I then move the final form onto a transparent paper, using accurate geometrical tools before hanging the painting onto a prominent place at home for some days during which I try to spot the weakness points therein. Having located the foibles, if any, I try to modify them until I verify

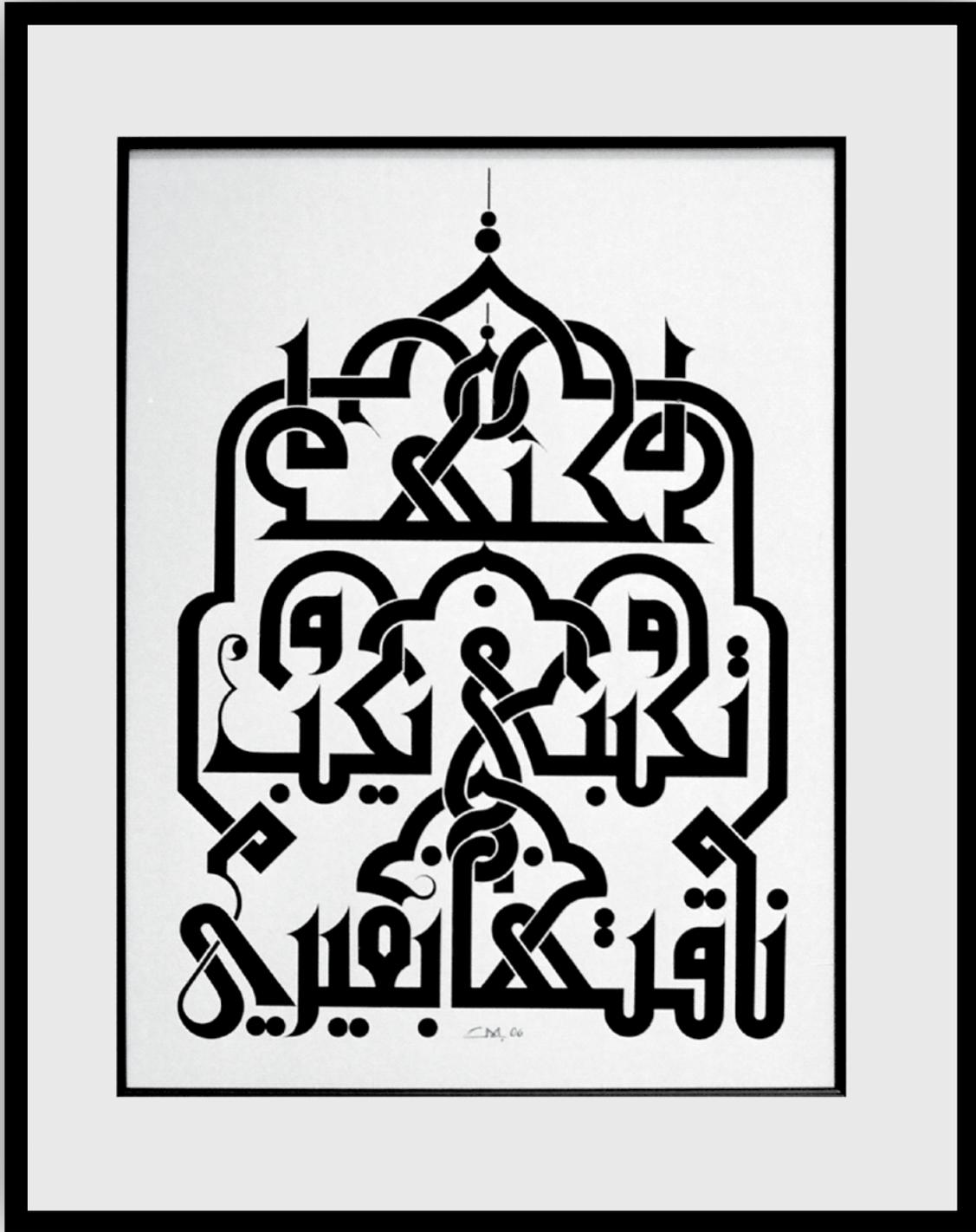
it's in the best possible form. Then comes the final stage which is inking and colouring. It happens many a time that after being over with a painting, I tear it apart if I felt the final output is not satisfactory at least for me or if it carries no significance in people's eyes. Producing a beautiful painting is not enough, as what most matters is making up

a painting that evokes contemplation on the part of the viewers.

**Would you shed some light on the stages you have been through until you have mastered this type of art?**

Like any other calligraphers, the first stage was the love of this art and getting acquainted with its schools and





leading figures and their masterpieces. Having assimilated this, I get into the stage of tasting the good works and sorting them out, i.e. a stage of critical analysis on the personal level. Then comes a stage where I try to copy and emulate famous calligraphers. When I was just a painter, I was preferring the

Kufi style, neglecting all other scripts. I was totally focusing on Al Khat Al Kufi, perhaps because there were no prominent figures specializing on this kind of art on the local and international arenas. In addition, Kufi script has limitless potential and it's closely linked to Islamic Ornament, and both

of them are closely connected to the art of drawing. Then comes the phase of producing a simple classic Kufi painting. Finally, and more precisely during the past 10 years, came the stage where I've found myself completely aligned toward Kufi geometrical compositions that depend on the concept of circular geometrical calligraphic integration which was initiated last century by Turkish artist Amin Pareen. To tell the truth, I've adopted this concept without knowing that it had already been adopted by another artist. But during my readings, I discovered that the technique, although was not completely the same, was adopted by another calligrapher before me.

**How can you rate yourself among other calligraphers?**

I am a calligrapher dealing with only one style of calligraphy which is the Kufi script. I have managed to go long way in this kind of art and I know very well my target. I don't care about people's positive or negative remarks about me. I am also not interested in getting famous; I have been in this domain for 30 years now and but for being here in this generous country, UAE, and but for the great support I am receiving Mr. Mohamed Al Murr, I would have been relegated into oblivion long ago. This is despite the fact that I participated in most of the calligraphy activities and exhibitions held regionally and internationally and got many awards and certificates of merit, the most important of which was the Award of the Calligraphy International Competition organized by the Research Centre for Islamic History and Art in Istanbul on Kufi script.



# Parents..

Are **the Heaven**  
**and Hell** of Children



By Wael Mohammed



**S**howing gratitude, goodness and kindness to one's parents is one of the prime means whereby man can attain Paradise in the hereafter, be well-off on Life Earth and have his prayers fulfilled.

Obedience of parents is one of the noblest deeds man can ever do to secure Allah Almighty's satisfaction and love. Being dutiful to one's parents has been enjoined along with the Oneness and Worship of Allah, in the Holy Koraan, in such a manner that it appears that, among human deeds, to obey parents and treat them with respect and kindness, is next only to Divine Worship as evident in the following sacred verses: "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final)

Goal" ( Luqman-14); "Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour." ( AL Israa-23);" Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious" -(Al Nisaa-36)

The sublime worthiness of being obedient to one's parents is reflected in its being closely interconnected with God's love of those who respect and show tolerance towards their parents. This is reflected in the following Hadith, narrated by Ibn Mas'oud (R.A.): "I asked Prophet Muhamed, Peace Be upon Him,

about which deed Allah Almighty does love most? He (PBUH) said: timely performance of daily prayers.” Then I said: which is next? He replied: showing goodness to parents” Then I said: which is next” He replied: Jihad (strife) for Allah’s sake.”

How can one be obedient and show goodness to parents

As long as they are still alive, there are many ways, by which one can show respect, goodness and tolerance towards parents, some of which can be summarized as follows:

- Obeying them in all matters that don't fly in the face of God's orders.
- Spending on them
- Treating them with reverence and tolerance.
- Totally refraining from insulting them.
- Never eyeing them in derogatory or spiteful manners.
- Never walking before one's father unless being in a state of darkness.
- Never sitting before one's father does.
- Never calling them by their names.
- Talking to them in polite, respected manners.
- Never raising your voice above theirs.
- Acts of obedience and reverence after their deaths:\*
- Supplicating and praying for God to expiate their sins.
- Paying off their debts, performing the religious obligations they had failed to fulfill, including Pilgrimage, and paying their due Alms, if any.
- Implementing their wills.
- Giving post-death hand-outs for the sake of their souls.





### **The Reward**

God promises those who are obedient of their parents of plenty of goodness in life and a great reward in the hereafter.

In life, those who show goodness toward their parents enjoy the following merits:

- Getting their lifetimes longer and Divinely blessed.
- Getting their sustenance increased and blessed.
- Getting their prayers fulfilled
- Their offspring would reward them and show goodness towards them
- Getting loved by their relatives and neighbours.
- Blessed death.
- Love of people.
- God gets content with them just as their parents had been content with them during their lives.

In the hereafter, those who show goodness toward their parents get rewarded in the following ways:

- Attainment of Paradise.
  - To be among the first who enter Paradise.
  - Expiation of sins
- Such a Heavenly reward is verified by the following Prophet's traditions:

## **“Treat parents with honour & speak to them graciously & with humility”**

- Narrated Abu Al Dardaa (R.A):  
“I heard Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) saying (what means): “Obeying your father gets you into Paradise from its middle door, so you are free either to enter or to miss it.”
- Narrated Abu Bakr bin Hafs (R.A):  
“One man said: Oh Allah’s Apostle: I have committed a great sin, can I get expiated? The Prophet asked: is your mother still alive? The man said: no. The prophet asked: is your aunt still alive? The man said: yes. The prophet replied: show goodness to her.”  
In Sahih Al Bukhari and Sahih



Muslim- the most authentic work in Hadith literature ever compiled, Abu Huraira (R.A.) said: “One man came to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and said: Oh Allah’s Apostle! Who is the person that most deserves my companionship in life? The Prophet said: your mother. The man asked: and then? The Prophet said: your mother. The man asked: and then? The prophet replied: your mother. The man said: and then? The Prophet said: your mother. The man asked: and then? The prophet said: your father.

This Hadith means that a mother deserves three times as much tolerance, love, goodness as a father, for mothers suffer a lot in pregnancy, delivery and then suckling. During these stages, it is the mother who only suffers and then comes the father’s role in bringing up the kids. Towards this effect God says: “And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), “Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal.” (Luqman-14)

The Prophet (PBUH) has been proven to have said: “Three persons don’t get Allah’s mercy in the Day of Judgement: a person disobedient of his parents; a

woman behaving and dressing like men, and a pimp. And three persons will never attain Paradise: a disobedient of his parents; a drunkard and a philanthropist who maliciously brags about his good deeds.” (Narrated by Al Nisai, Ahmed and Al Hakim.)

God expresses His thankfulness to Apostle Yehia bin Zakeria, peace be upon him, saying: “And kind to his parents, and he was not overbearing or rebellious.” (Mariam, 14)

Islam has preceded the West in underlying the importance of caring about parents and treating them in the most respectful manner and providing them with a decent life. In the West we find houses and institutions for the elderly, but in Islam, God ordains that we all show the utmost goodness toward our parents and obey and dignify them. God says: “We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth. The carrying of the (child) to his weaning is (a period of) thirty months.”

So man in Islam is exhorted to show goodness toward his parents, rather getting them into houses for the elderly. But in Islam, we are ordained by God to live with them and provide them with

decent life, serve them and pray and supplicate for them.

We supplicate God to atone our sins and failure to give our parents their due respect. We pray to God Almighty to help us avoid the great sin of disparaging our parents and showing any improper attitude towards them.

Disobeying one's parents has many forms and manifestations, some of which are invisible to many of us, including treating them arrogantly for one reason or another when we become rich or well-educated, etc. Another form is to fail to sustain them and provide them with a decent life, letting them depend on other people for sustenance. Another ingratitude form is to prefer some people at their own expense, including your wife or sons.

Some people ignore and relegate to oblivion how much they are indebted to their parents, preferring other people around them to their own flesh and blood. Don't such persons realize they owe great deal to their parents, but for whom they would never have attained any success in life?

We all supplicate God to enable us to recognize the great status Islam has lavished on parents and give them their due respect and attention.

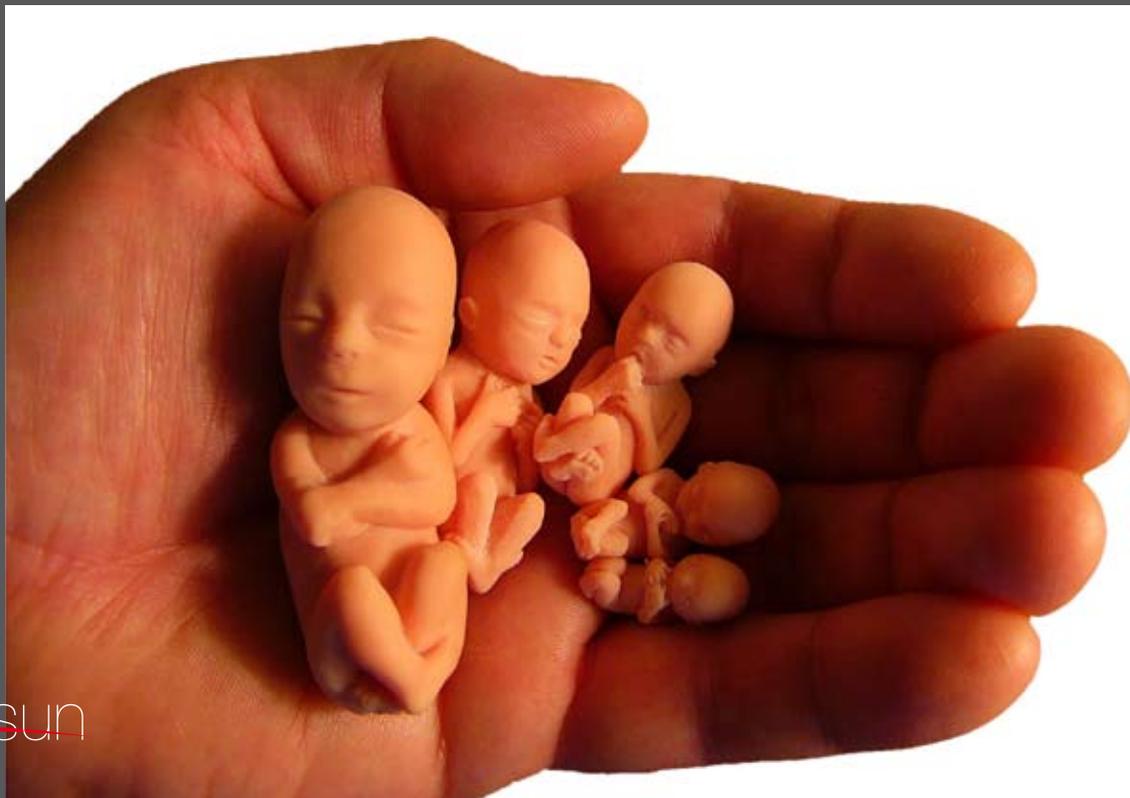
**“Being dutiful to parents is one of the keys to enter Paradise”**

**“One of the dearest deeds to God is being good & dutiful to parents”**





# The **Miracle** Of Human Creation



by Hatim Hassain

"If you have doubts about what We have sent down to Our servant, produce another sura equal to it, and call your witnesses, besides Allah, if you are telling the truth."

**I**t is He Who has created hearing, sight and minds for you. What little thanks you show! (Qur'an, 23:78)  
Allah brought you out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing at all, and gave you hearing, sight and minds so that perhaps you would show thanks. (Qur'an, 16:78)

Say: "What do you think? If Allah took away your hearing and your sight and sealed up your hearts, what god is there, other than Allah, who could give them back to you?" ... (Qur'an, 6:46)

We created man from a mingled drop to test him, and We made him hearing and seeing. (Qur'an, 76:2)

The above verses refer to a number of senses given to human beings by Allah. These are always referred in a specific order in the Qur'an: hearing, sight, feeling and understanding.

In a paper published in the Journal of the Islamic Medical Association, Dr. Keith Moore states that during the development of the fetus, the eye begins to form after the inner ear has assumed its first form. He says the brain, the centre of feeling and understanding, begins its development after the ear and the eye.<sup>94</sup>

The foetus' ears begin to develop as early as the twenty-second day of pregnancy and become fully functional in the fourth month. After that, the fetus can hear sounds in its mother's womb. For that reason, the sense of hearing forms before the other vital functions for



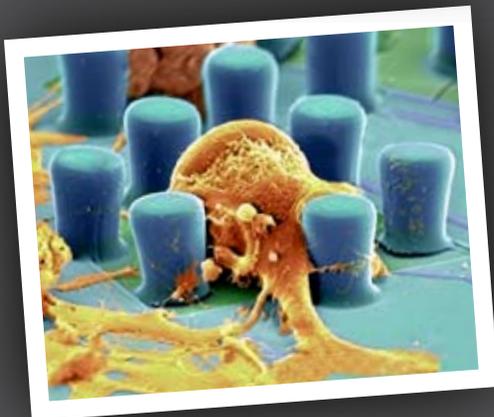
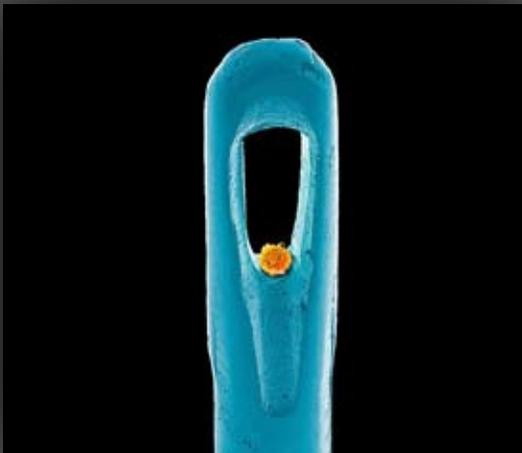


a new-born baby. The order set out in the Qur'an is striking from that point of view.

Curse man for his ingratitude! From what thing did He create him? From a drop of sperm He created him and proportioned him. Then He eases the way for him. (Qur'an, 80:17-20)

The fetus is fully formed at the end of the sixth month. The womb then enters the incubation period. All the baby's bodily organs and systems develop fully during that time, and the womb accelerates this growth by providing nourishment for the fetus. This period continues until the baby emerges from the mother's womb.

The birth canal is normally very narrow and it is difficult for the fetus to pass through it. During birth, however, a number of physiological changes take place in the mother's body. These changes allow the fetus to move easily through the birth canal. Some of these changes include: the expansion of the joints in the pelvic bones in order to widen the birth canal, the relaxation of the muscles to further widen the canal and the lubrication of the canal with amniotic fluid.<sup>92</sup> These pre-birth changes are described in one scientific



source in these terms:

As birth approaches, the amniotic fluid embarks on those activities that will be necessary to facilitate that birth. This fluid comprises sacs, which will enlarge the mouth of the womb, thus allowing the womb to assume the dimensions to allow the baby to pass. These sacs also prevent the foetus from being crushed in the womb during birth. Furthermore, when the sacs burst and release their fluid at the commencement of birth, the path to be taken by the foetus is both lubricated and sterilised. In this way, birth takes place easier and in a manner naturally free of germs.<sup>93</sup>

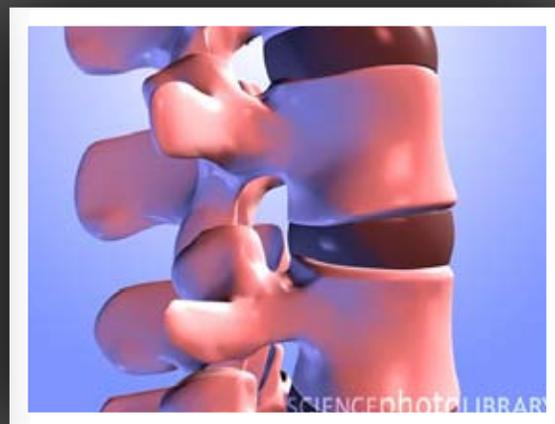
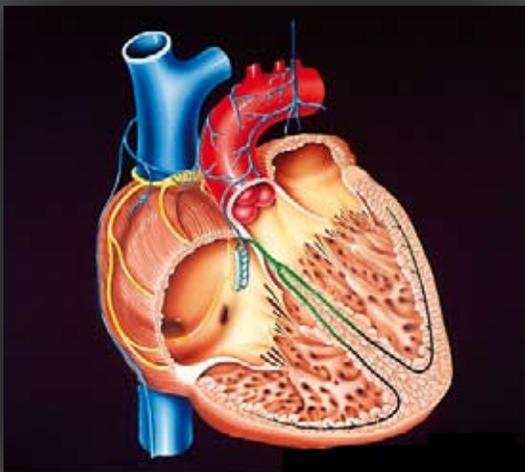
This series of occurrences is openly indicated in the verse of the Qur'an, "Then He eases the way for him." (Qur'an, 80:20) However, it has been possible today to determine these physiological changes-which Allah informed us of 1,400 years ago-only with the use of a number of technological devices.

In order for the miracle of human creation to happen, the necessary preparations actually begin many years earlier. First, male and female reproductive cells must become functional. This comes about in every human being through the process called puberty. The most important element in this process is certainly the hormonal system, which establishes communication among the cells under



the direction of the brain.

God created a system in which all the needs of the human body and its development would be under the control of the brain. He caused messages coming to the brain from the organs to be evaluated by the brain, which then gives the appropriate response; this is then delivered to the required area in the shortest possible time. In this process the hormonal system is used to deliver the information. God has created in the human body a perfect postal route for communication. On this postal route, message-carrying molecules are called "hormones" each one of which really performs the function of a postman. Just as a postman follows his route throughout the city, delivering letters to the right addresses, so do hormones carry commands from the brain to the





relevant cells. In this way, the functions required for human life are activated within the body.

But here we must be reminded that hormones are not human beings who possess the consciousness to know what messages to carry or to what place to carry them, or to determine the direction of their route. They have not received training, nor have they gained experience after years of studies. The hormones we have called the postmen, are composed of molecules that may be expressed in the most complex formulas. It is certainly a great wonder that a molecule knows where it is going and what it is delivering; that it determines what message it will take to which cell; that it finds its way without ever getting lost in the total darkness of a human body millions of times larger than itself and that it carries out this duty flawlessly, without damage to itself or to its message. This example alone is proof of the extraordinary systems that God has put in place within the human body.

The functioning of a person's hormonal system generally begins when he is still in his mother's womb

and continues right up until his death. Reproductive glands start to function as a result of the effect of hormones too. But unlike other parts of the body, the secretion of hormones relevant to the reproductive glands begins in puberty. The hypothalamus, a small area at the base of the brain, is regarded as the controller of the hormonal system; in puberty, it begins to send messages to the pituitary gland to cause the reproductive organs to begin functioning.

Here too it is useful to point out another wonder. The hypothalamus is aware of the developments in the human body; for example, it knows how old a person is and whether or not the person is physically developed enough for his reproductive system to begin functioning. And the hypothalamus performs its work consciously. In other words, the hypothalamus, taking time into account and determining that a person's adulthood has come, gives the appropriate commands to the various endocrine glands in the body. It sends the messages (hormones) at exactly the right moment to the destined reproductive organs and assures the beginning of

the development required to allow the human race to continue. And this does not apply to the hypothalamus of just one individual; at this moment the hypothalamuses of millions of people living in the world are performing this function in the same way and at almost the same period.

The fact that this piece of flesh, occupying in our bodies a place no larger than that of a few sugar cubes, is aware of time and can make adjustments for the passage of time is certainly something that demands our thought and attention. How does the hypothalamus make such calculations? Has someone told the hypothalamus what it must do, or has it found out for itself? How does the hypothalamus calculate that the reproductive glands must develop in order for a human being to come into being? How does it know that this particular hormone must be secreted at this particular time? And how does it determine, among all the hormones that it produces, which one will set the reproductive system in operation at exactly the right time? Does it have the foresight to decide on some plan for the future, and make the requisite provisions and preparations to carry out this plan? Why does it wait until the exact time, neither sooner nor later, when the human body is physiologically ready for reproduction?

The intelligence that can make a mass of flesh without eyes, ears or even a brain, direct cells as if it were itself an intelligent being, is incomparable and too much for us to imagine.

It is neither chance nor any other force that makes the hypothalamus aware of time; the high intelligence that gives it its particular function belongs to God. It is the All-knowing God Who inspires this small piece of flesh to know what it has to do. That everything is in God's control is revealed in the verse:

... God is watchful over all things. (Qur'an, 33: 52)

This supreme intelligence belongs to God, Who has created the whole universe down to its smallest detail. In the Qur'an, God says that there are no other gods besides Him:

God, there is no god but Him, the Living, the Self-Sustaining. He is not subject to drowsiness or sleep. Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them but they cannot grasp any of His knowledge save what He wills. His throne encompasses the heavens and the earth and their preservation does not tire Him. He is the Most High, the Magnificent. (Qur'an, 2: 255)





*Marriage*  
has pains,

but..

*Celibacy*  
has no pleasures!

by Sayed Zahran

# “Successful wedlock combines physical pleasure with spiritual countenance”

**G**od has created humanity as His vicegerent on Earth in order that human beings might populate and rule it. Obviously this purpose cannot be realized unless humanity perpetuates itself, living, thriving, cultivating, manufacturing, building, and worshipping its Creator. Accordingly, the Creator has placed certain appetites and impulses in humanity so that its members are impelled toward activities that guarantee humanity's survival. The Qur'an declares:

Men innately feel a passionate attraction toward women, children, treasures of gold and silver (money hoarded), branded horses, cattle, and plantations. Such are the enjoyments of the life of this world; yet with God is the best of the goals to pursue. (3:14)

God has inculcated such impulses in human nature so that humanity could survive on Earth and evolve spiritually and mentally by disciplining them to transform each one into a virtue in order to develop into being a

true, perfect human from being only potentially human. Humanity is not like other species, for it has been created with a different disposition, multiple potentialities, and various mental and spiritual faculties. So, there must be a significant purpose behind its creation. To realize this purpose and being perfected require selfdiscipline. Islam is the name of the set of principles for that selfdiscipline.

According to Imam al-Ghazzali, Islam's legal principles seek to protect and secure five basic values in human life, namely, religion, life, intellect, personal property, and reproduction, and





forbid acts that will nullify them. When we consider the Divinely established prohibitions (e.g., unbelief, hypocrisy, associating partners with God, apostasy, killing a person, taking intoxicants and drugs, usurpation, theft, adultery, fornication, and homosexuality), we can deduce that they have been given to protect and secure those values. In order to secure these values for a virtuous life based upon justice, the observation of mutual rights, mutual helping, and righteousness is a must.

"Dubai Sun" explores the opinions of several married persons of how to start a successful wedlock, also shedding lights on scholars' views on this score.

Mohamed AL Khateeb, a married computer technician, says a successful wedlock is conditioned on the man's ability to make his wife happy by "cooperating with her and exchanging kindness and love with each other."

" Successful couples don't only respect each other, but every one of them must try to help the other, meet his/her needs, explore his/her ambitions and ultimately work for the common good of the whole family."

Marital differences are nature manifestations of any wedlock but the important thing is that each party must try to evade insulting the other party in a way that maintains mutual respect.

"Such differences should rather bolster successful marriages, with each party having to be frank before the other. Frankness is the keyword that melts down any conflicting, helping the couples ride out their disputes," noted Al Khateeb.

Um Khalid, a female civil servant, says: "mature marriages should be based on four tenets:

- Religiousness and morality
- Mutual love.

-Full awareness of each other's merits and demerits. They should forgive each other's foibles and mistakes. In case any of them would focus on every trivial mistake, life would be unbearable, and this was exactly the case with me at the beginning of my marriage. My husband was leaving no chance without reproaching me for any mistake I did. But with the passage of time I have managed to wither all these difficulties because I have realized what makes him

happy and what makes him angry and fuming. And thank God things now are going very well.

-Mutual respect, which is most important for any relation to succeed."

Ali Al Salim, an employee, says that happy married people are those who are very fast in their attempts to bridge the gaps between each other and to solve their disputes the fastest possible before they reach a point of no return.

"There should be a realistic approach to any problem they face in life. It is human to err and therefore we should get adapted to each other's mistakes and weaknesses."

Commenting on how he manages his own personal life with his wife, AL Salem says: "I follow a certain approach which I view as the secret behind my successful marriage; which is applauding any positive behaviour from my wife and paying attention to any point that is likely to strengthen our relation. Constant complaints lead to nothing and rather contribute to ultimately ruining marriage.

Abdul Halim Mahmoud, an Imam and Orator, said the sound basis for any successful marriage is the selection of a virtuous woman as stated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the widely famous Hadith: " A woman may be married for four reasons: for her property, her status, her beauty and her religion, so try to get one who is religious, may your hand be besmeared

with dust."

Mahmoud highlights the importance of the married couples being equal in social, educational and cultural status, stressing that successful marriages are based on mutual sacrifice and altruism.

"Married couples should deal with each other on a benevolent basis, i.e. he or she should not expect the other to give him/ her something in return for his/her good treatment, but rather should expect from God the ultimate reward in the hereafter. They should deal with any problems prudently, never imagining that their life should be ideal devoid of obstacles and mishaps."

He cites the following Divine verses as guidelines for a marital happiness:

" And of His signs is that He has created for you, from your selves, mates, that you might repose in them, and He has engendered love and mercy between you (30:21); God has given you, from your selves, mates, and He has given you, from your mates, children and grandchildren (16:72); The Originator of the heavens and Earth; He has given you, from your selves, mates, and from the cattle mates (42:11). What these refer to by your selves is the human kind, self, or nature. In addition, they indicate that everything in the universe was created in pairs: And everything We have created in pairs (51:49)





# How has Islam got a FOOTHOLD in the US?

Sheikh Hamza Yousef

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he way Muslims try to spread and inculcate their Islamic beliefs and teachings differ from one society to another. The mechanisms employed to call for Islam depends largely on the nature of the targeted region or society. In a country like USA, people are more interested in arts, museums and culture in general, and those calling for Islam in such a society must therefore be well-versed with the ins and outs of such sophisticated environments. "Dubai Sun" caught up with Sheikh Hamza Yousof, a renowned American Muslim scholar to touch on the way Islam should be promoted in the West.

- **A great deal of controversy is going on about the historical roots of Islam in North America. From your own perspective, how has Islam got a foothold in the US?**

Books calling for Islam have been available in the US for 400 years now. The US Museum has several documents that drive home the fact that slaves who immigrated to America from Africa were Muslims and were communicating in Arabic. Therefore, Islam is not a newly established religion in the US. Such documents have ever since been turned into books talking about Islam's history in the US. The Boston Library has rare manuscripts worth millions of dollars that talk about every kind of science humanity has ever known. Many of these manuscripts mention that Arabs are one of the smartest peoples on earth and by virtue of whom the West has got access to many sciences, including astronomy.

- **Could Arabs make up for the lack of knowledge from which the Arab world is now suffering?**

Despite the great interest displayed by Americans in science at large and in astronomy in particular, we don't find the same or even half of this interest in the Arab world. I once visited the largest library in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, and I was shocked to find a maximum of 3 or 4 books on astronomy, while you can't find at any ordinary American library less than 200 books on astronomy alone. Such libraries are open for the average citizen not only for specialists.

In every American village you can find an astronomy-related club for amateurs

who go on their weekends to remote places to watch and follow the movement of stars and contemplate such fabulous miracles and sceneries.





**whom you can never forget. Can you give us some examples?**

There is one person called Mohamed Alexander Web, who was once the US ambassador to the Philippines. He had been fond of reading books on heavenly religions before converting to Islam in South Philippines. He declared his Islam there before returning back to US where he wrote many books on Islam, a religion which he view as a panacea for all the problems faced by the American people.

He is now a prominent Islamic lecturer and founded a mosque in New York. He also published a weekly Islamic magazine where he explains how Islam can solve all American society's problems.

- How can you evaluate the present relation between American Muslims and the US media?

For two years now I have been noticing a growing interest displayed by the US media in Islam. A CUS T.V director called me

once for having an interview on Islam and my institute where I teach Islamic jurisprudence. This American interest in Islam is a chance that should not be missed by us and rather be best utilized otherwise we would be the losers. No sooner had Islam dawned on humanity, than it started to try to change the beliefs of Persians, Turks, and Moghuls. It has transpired that the US media serves as the optimal platform for us to take off and spread our Islamic call everywhere in the West. But the question is: are we really ready and capable of converting Americans into Islam?

- **This is my next questions: what is the best way in your view to spread Islam in North America?**

There are two ways through which we can penetrate the minds of the



The first is the fact that the American people is extremely fond of museums. In every American city you can easily find a museums for different kinds of arts. The American citizen is quite bent of sending his children to museums in order for them to acquire knowledge and experience. And therefore I wish Muslims can adopt this idea and establish a museum that illustrates their civilization in the US. At such a museums we can tell Americans how widely famous geometrical theories like those of Newton are based on the choice of Qibla and the direction of Kaaba in Mecca. If we consider the stars' names we can easily find that they are originally Arabic names. For instance, we find that Betelgeuse, the second brightest star in the constellation Orion, is derived from An Arabic name.

Americans don't know the fact that the numbers they are now using are originally Arabic, and the same applies to the names of the star. It is our role to let them know all these facts. I wish I could one day build a museum where a group of people can sit and recite the following verses from the Holy Koraan: " Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day,- there are indeed Signs for men of understanding. Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and

contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (With the thought): "Our Lord! not for naught Hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire. (Aal Emran-190)



And thanks to these films, Jews have managed to entirely turn the Americans' view of them. They are doing all this while we are standing by idle. We should not blame but ourselves. The drastic transformations the world has gone through since the fall of communism, and end of the cold war have revealed to different world peoples and societies the reality of the conditions at the present historical stage which can safely be labeled as a stage of "global compulsion". And in light of the crises the Islamic-Arab nation is going through, it's crystal clear that the Arab people are the worst hit, comparatively with all other world peoples, by the

confusing changes now taking place around the world. I therefore believe that it has become exigent to open up channels of effective cultural dialogue among Muslims and Arabs on one part and between them and the outer world on the other.

This dialogue is not only necessary for us to wither the current crises, but also because it has become a global necessity that has its own respective moral dimensions. The noble scientific renaissance created by our ancestors has basically called for relinquishing violence and adopting peaceful dialogues as being a basis for any urban activity on earth. And thus I believe that the Islamic nation should exert more efforts than other nations

in order to sow the seeds of dialogue in the world at a time when we can't help hearing many voices gainsaying the values of such cultural communication and refusing to believe in its cultural importance and dividends.

Arabs are now knuckling under innumerable cultural and behavioural attacks that are incited by envious cultural dogmas propagated by those donning the cloak of human rights, social equality, and democracy. Such attacks undoubtedly reflect negatively on all our attempts to actuate channels of effective dialogue between us and the outer world. Hence, our scholars are requested to develop a programme of action that makes prominent our



civilisational achievements and refute anti-Muslims stereotyping attempts.

The outrageous anti-Muslim media war is another provocation that must be effectively handled. Such nauseating media campaigns rely on modern technology that now enables every person on earth to have smooth access to all kinds of publications, satellite channels, movies, DVDs and Internet. It is poised to confuse our intellectual thinking by spreading erroneous information meant to weaken our will to react positively and convince the others of the righteous message of Islam and our positive contribution to all world civilizations. The human society at large intrinsically rejects extremism and over-reactions, and thus terrorist attacks launched the world over as well as the hectic arms races rampant among many world countries are not but sheer deviations from the basic nature of humanity. These deviations entail a strong reaction on the part

of the international society now in order to rein in those rogue states and individuals who are behind these attempts. The only way to abort such terrorist endeavours is to get back to the basic, lofty teachings of Islam, being the most effective means to face up to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Political aspirations and conflicting interests are the main obstacles that impede inter-faith dialogues. The surest means to restore the will for launching

such dialogues is the inculcation of tolerance, justice, mutual understanding, and mercy besides relinquishing violence in our societies and calling upon others to follow suite by setting a good example for others to follow. In order for peace and co-existence to prevail in our world, we

should adhere to the moral principles championed by heavenly religions that urge man to abide by God's ordinances that are all meant for the common good of humanity.

Peaceful co-existence among Muslims is one cherished tenant of the Islamic civilization. Calling for peaceful coexistence features quite higher in Islam than in any other religion. Islamic societies in Far East, Middle East and Europe, were examples to be copied for national unity and peaceful co-existence between different ethnic groups.

Information technology should not be utilized for solely augmenting materialistic gains in a way that inculcates the control of super powers over humanity at the expense of other nations. In this sense, technology can never play a positive role in achieving the desired dialogue between world peoples, neither can it help effect the desirable human, economic and cultural development.

Prioritising moral dimensions in any development process is a prerequisite for technological advancements to achieve their supposed outcome. And on this score we should be heedful of two important points:

- **We should avoid the useless accumulation of knowledge and technologies that only waste money and energy without achieving the desirable human benefits.**

We should evade over-consumption and materialism that undermines our basic moral and spiritual values. Technology becomes meaningless once it burdens us with social pressures that impede our social development drives and when it fails to prioritize the humane aspects of our life.

# Islamic Etiquette

**Is Decorum a West-inspired Concept, or rather a deeply-rooted Islamic tradition?**

**M**any misconceptions have long been prevalent in our Islamic societies, including that erroneous idea purporting that etiquette and the sense of decorum are West-inspired principles we have to emulate foreigners

if we want to apply them in our daily life. The irony here is that Islam is the religion that has come up with these principles 1400 years ago. The code of ethics preached by Islam is meant to inculcate such principles of finesse, etiquette, decency, polite conduct, etc, in our minds. Following are examples of how Islam has been calling for maintaining etiquette and a sense of decorum in a Muslim's daily life.

## **Etiquette with Parents**

Suppose that you have come home, carrying some of your most favourite foods. The greedy, vicious and malicious nature of your soul may insinuate you, saying: don't ever show this food to your parents lest they should devour it, leaving nothing for you. Such a situation deplorably happens with some of us.

The question now is: may such a conduct be considered impiety towards one's parents? No. It is not impiety, but it's rather lack of etiquette and



by Ashraf Elsad

impoliteness, isn't it?

Look at what Islam has preached on this score through the following example. We all are familiar with the story of one of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) companions who was on the death bed and unable to utter the two Testifications of Faith: "I testify that there is no god worth of worshipping except Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah". He failed to utter these words although he was one of the Apostle's companions. His friends went to Prophet Muhammad and told him of the man's bad condition. Prophet Muhammad summoned the man's mother who told him that his son used to deny her the fruits he used to buy for his wife and kids. Look: she didn't say that he was impious towards her. She rather was not pleased from his behaviour which is considered misconduct towards one's parents. Having heard that, the Prophet (PBUH) ordered to set fire and throw the man onto it. Our smart Apostle was doing this to evoke the mother's kindness toward her son. Having learned about the Prophet's order to set her son on fire, the woman assured the Prophet that she forgave her son. No sooner had she said so, than the man uttered the two Testifications of Faith and then died.

\* If it happened that your mother called you while you're praying, what should you do? Most of us would say that we complete our prayers first, given that prayers are much more important! But Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that completing the prayers in such a case means you are indifferent to your parents, something which should never be committed by a Muslim. There is one full chapter in Sahih Al Bukhari (Al Bukhari Authentic Version of Hadith) titled: "When a Mother Calls her Son while Praying:

**Reporting Abu Huraira (R.A.):**

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "A mother called her son while he



was in his tent praying: O Gareeg! He replied: O Mom, I am praying. The mother repeated: O Gareeg. He replied again: O Mom I am praying. The woman said: O Allah, may he never die before looking into prostitute's faces. It happened that a shepheress was calling on his tent every now and then. This woman later gave birth to a kid. She was asked by people around her: who is the father of this kid? She replied: Gareeg. Having learned about what she had said, Gareeg came out from his tent, asking: where is the hell that woman who claimed I am the father of her son. She then came and asked the kid, called Yaboos: who is your father? Yaboos replied: the shepherd."

Thus, any of us should rather end his prayers and answer his mother's request if she called on him for help during prayers.

Islam even preaches us to take the permission of our parents before entering their bedrooms. This is clear from the following Divine verses:

"Ye who believe! Let your slaves, and those of you who have not come to



puberty, ask leave of you at three times (before they come into your presence): Before the prayer of dawn, and when ye lay aside your raiment for the heat of noon, and after the prayer of night. Three times of privacy for you. It is no sin for them or for you at other times, when some of you go round attendant upon others (if they come into your presence without leave). Thus Allah maketh clear the revelations for you. Allah is Knower, Wise." (AL Nour-58)

#### Etiquette with Wives.

We sometimes see a man picking up a morsel of food by a fork, putting it in his wife's mouth. Seeing this we say: Wow, how decent and gentle this man is!

But we never think that it is Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who taught us to do so 1400 years ago as is clear from the following Hadith:

Speaking to his companions, the Apostle said:

"For all handouts you spend for the sake of God, you would be rewarded for it by Allah, including a morsel of food you put in your wife's mouth." (Reported by Muslim)

It is also among the decent and appropriate acts recommended by Islam that a husband takes care of his outward appearance before his wife. He should be presentable, neat and nice-looking before he asks her to look tidy and beautiful. He can't be unclean, bad-looking, and then asks his wife to appear sexy. Abudllah bin

Abbas, ( R.A.), a revered companion of Apostle Muhammad (PBUH) for whom the Apostle supplicated Allah to make him master Islamic Fiqh ( Jurisprudence), said: "I'd like to spruce up for my wife just as I'd like her to neaten herself for me."

It's religiously exhorted that you, when coming home, knock on the door and then wait for a while before entering. Such an act is justified by the two following reasons: the first is to give your wife a chance to tidy herself up a little bit; and the second is to make her believe that you trust her, because if you suddenly enter without seeking a permission, this might make her feel that you suspect her. The two reasons prove the high sense of decorum Islam preaches.

In a nutshell, the Islamic Law has introduced and propagated a cluster of public ethics. At the same time, it warned of failure to strictly abide by it, as this will entail punishment in the Hereafter. Imam Muslim narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do you know who is the bankrupt?" They answered: A bankrupt among us is the person who has neither money nor property. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "The bankrupt in my nation is the one who comes on the Day of Resurrection with prayer, zakat and fasting, yet he used to insult, slander, slay and beat others. Thus claimants are rewarded according to their good deeds. If one's good deeds are gone, he is punished for his ill deeds until he is thrown into Hell."

