

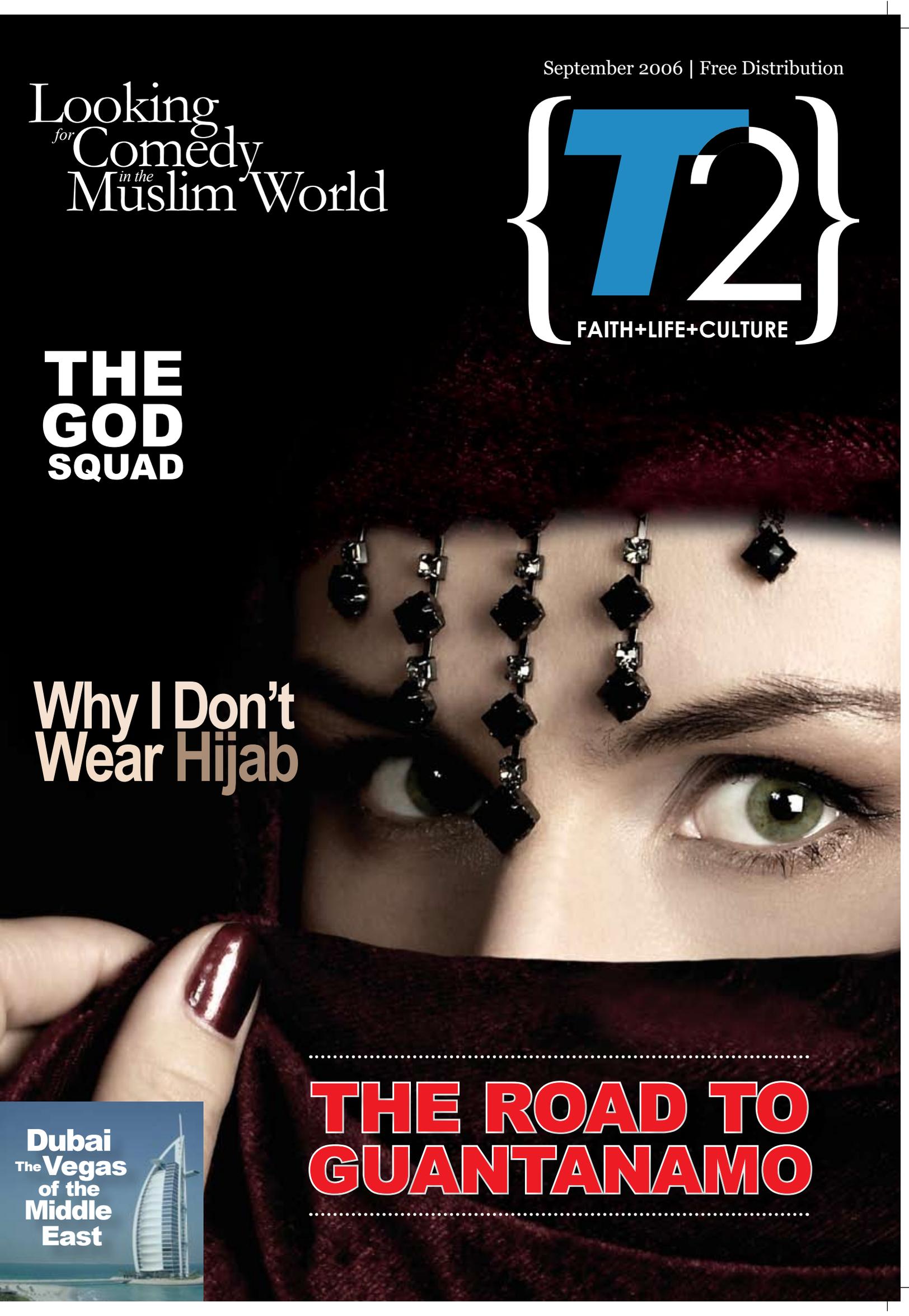
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Looking  
*for* Comedy  
*in the* Muslim World



**THE  
GOD  
SQUAD**

**Why I Don't  
Wear Hijab**



**THE ROAD TO  
GUANTANAMO**

**Dubai**  
The Vegas  
of the  
Middle  
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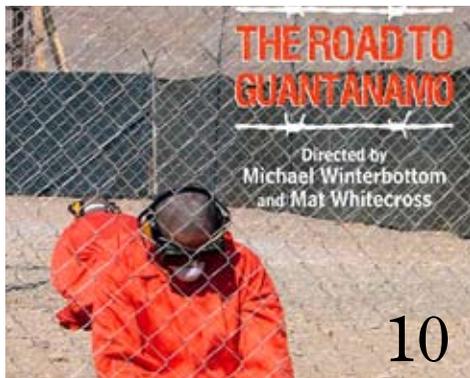


"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their ornaments except what (ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments." (S.24 A.31)



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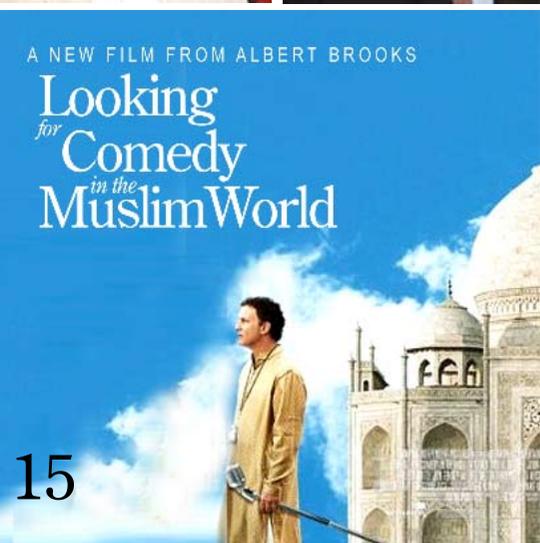
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# Letter **FROM THE** EDITOR

## *American by Birth, Muslim by the Grace of God*

Many times I have crossed that path that bridges the gap between the 'Old World' cultures and 'The American Way' culture that we are brought up on. It is tough being an American Muslim. At home we are taught about religion and sacrifice, outside of the home we are taught about sex and science. At home it's all about respecting your elders, while outside, it is part of the American culture to rebel against your parents at a certain age. At home we had *daal and subzi* when what we wanted was a Big Mac.

Our parents did not understand the horrors of peer pressure. They had never been to Hell, we had – it is called high school. We were told talking with girls is bad, pork is evil, the Internet is the Antichrist, dress modestly, don't listen to *the* American music, good girls from nice families don't hang out after 7:00PM (yes, that's 7PM) and don't eat outside meat. At home we had God, outside – Snoop Dogg.

All those things they said were right but when you are growing up in a culture where sex, drugs and rock n' roll are considered cool, you don't want to listen. You want to rebel. You want to go out and buy a cell phone, a nice car, go to your senior prom and not worry about a 7:00PM curfew. You end up doing all these things in secret anyway. When you went on your first date you told your parents you were going to a friend's house. You deceive your parents and it makes you feel bad but in your young and confused mind they are not 'bad' lies. Some

of you have two-stepped twice in towns your parents have never even heard of.

Some call us ABCD's – American Born Confused Desi and I accept it. What can be more confusing than growing up this way? When you are younger it is hard to cope with but when you get older it all starts making sense. There is a middle ground, my friend, and we are standing on it as I write this and as you read it. There is a way to live in both worlds but it is not until you get older that you realize it.

The way it is now, many of our elders believe that we have no real sense of culture and that ours is a generation lost somewhere in between. The truth is – we are American and proud to be it but we also know about our culture and our religion. We know all about the sacrifices our parents made to get us here. We know not to take it for granted and we know that there are other Muslims around the world suffering. We know that there is more to life than just reading Bollywood news. Yes, we are young, but we know that in Pakistan, women's rights should definitely be rethought. We know that there are films being made that reflect the plight of Muslims in the third world. We know about the prisoner abuse at Guantanamo Bay, that hijab is not for everyone, and that no matter how hard anyone tries, there will never be another voice like Rafi's. We know that we know and this, my friend, is what Tradition Today is all about.

I promise to show that young people can put out meaningful publications, write original articles and produce genuine thought provoking material that proves that our generation is not lost. It will be a challenge but we are up for it. See you next month.

**Omer Afaq Siddiqui**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
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*In Pakistan, if  
 a woman can  
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# MUSHARRAF

## AMENDS WOMEN'S ADULTERY LAWS

Pakistan's president amended a controversial Islamic law recently so that women facing charges for adultery and other minor crimes can be released on bail.

The much awaited amendment by President Gen. Pervez Musharraf to the Hadood Ordinance will initially affect 1,300 female prisoners awaiting trial. This decision, to protect the rights of women and save them from the mistreatment of Islamic laws, is a bold one.

Under the Hadood Ordinance – passed under the military dictatorship of late Gen. Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq in 1979 – women can be sentenced to death if found guilty of having sex outside of marriage. The laws, which were criticized

internationally, include a clause stating that to prove rape a woman must have at least four male witnesses. If the woman fails to provide proof, she herself faces the charge of adultery. The ordinance did not allow for women to be released on bail.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, currently more than 6,000 women are in jails awaiting trial of which 4,621 are being held on Hadood violations.

President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, a moderate, has sought to reform Islamic laws on women's rights in the past but has done so with strong opposition from the deeply conservative majority of Pakistan. ■

# The God Squad

Saudi Arabia Religious Police

Saudi  
Arabia's  
boys in  
blue take  
heat

By SALIM PIRZADA

Saudi Arabia's feared religious police has long enjoyed wide and unchallenged powers. Its members roam public places, such as malls, markets and universities, looking for such infractions as unrelated men and women mingling in public, men skipping their five daily prayers and women with strands of hair showing from under the veil.

The Interior Ministry has said it is taking measures to restrict the powers of the agency that runs the religious police, a force resented by many Saudis for interfering in their personal lives. Interior Minister Prince Nayef has said members of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice can still make arrests in cases like the harassment of women, but probes now

have to be conducted by public prosecutors.

They scold salesmen for dressing elegantly, waiters for serving food with a smile and young women for carrying pictures of celebrities. After the arrests, the Commission, known as *muttawa* in Arabic, sometimes hold people and insist on taking part in ensuing probes.

While some Saudis have been speaking out against these intrusions, others believe the commission plays a vital role in ensuring full compliance with the orthodox school of Wahabbi Islam followed by most Saudis.

The Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has said it is training its "agents" to be more civil. ■

SALIM PIRZADA  
is a young writer currently based  
in Alexandria, Virginia

# They Ignored the Warnings

I live a fairly quiet and peaceful life in a nation that is waging a war in Iraq to seemingly no avail, with almost everything backfiring to the detriment of our own mostly young National Guard units and the nationals of Iraq itself, plus billions of dollars every day going down the black hole of a fractured Capitalist colonialist project in the now threadbare name of democracy.

I live in a nation that because of the military drain on its resources and a stubborn reluctance to face bare facts, natural disasters of “Biblical (and Qur’anic) proportions” have overwhelmed our people to the point that the “richest” and most “powerful” nation on earth has had to accept aid from foreign governments! This may all be so, but I am fairly safe still, haven’t been “profiled,” sit at my computer editing my poetry, sending and receiving e-mails from colleagues, friends, relatives ... I might feel a bit like Sayyidina Nuh (Noah), but I’m not yet in my backyard building a boat.

Am I ignoring the signs? God in the Qur’an—which the Prophet Muhammad said, peace of God be upon him, was sent as a “good news and a warning”—says: “There are signs in the self and on the horizon for those with discernment.” I was reading an essay concerning the difficulties of passing an Iraqi constitution against all odds, when the words, referring to the Americans, “they ignored the warnings,” popped out at me like a gunshot in an empty room. The words rang down through recent history, when my wife and I marched against the Iraq war

among multitudes, both in our 60s, not thinking we might have to march again since the 60s! Everyone was then predicting almost everything that has come true about Iraq, in minute and devastating detail. But the President of the United States said quite candidly that he doesn’t listen to what he called “focus groups” to make his decisions. He willfully and knowingly ignored the warnings. As the 46th verse in Sura Ya Sin puts it: “Not one of your Lord’s signs comes to them without their turning away from it.”

But the reverberation went further back than that ...after all, that’s only a few years ago now. An historian could easily tally instances in detail of leaders and entire countries “ignoring the warnings,” including the smoke billowing out the cone of Mount Vesuvius, whose now rigid dogs and the few people cast in solid lava scratching at the ground clearly signify “warning signs” ignored. Pliny the Elder landed on the shores of Pompeii to get a closer look, and perished in the gases. He definitely “ignored the warnings.”

Of course, it is quite easy to ignore them, not to see them, or to interpret them as of much less import than they really are. The people in New Orleans who might have had a choice to leave before drowning or being flooded, but who chose to stay (as distinguished from the ones who had no choice) might, as we all might, have decided to stick to their normal routine, inside a comfortable house, however shabby, food in the fridge, the dog or cat at our feet, a radio to play as

Turning a blind eye to reality



we do every day... And all of these things could easily come between them and the clear signs on the horizon (to say nothing of intimations in the self) that would convince them that nothing apocalyptic was going to happen.

It brings up another notion I've been meditating on recently, which is the blind power of ideas to trump the facts. It's been said that Christopher Columbus, filled with Biblical visions and speculations on the New World, couldn't see what was in front of his eyes—the land masses and geographical details—because of what was in his mind that he wanted so desperately to see, and was holding onto regardless of what his poor eyes actually saw. For this reason, among others, he failed to “discover” America, but made do with some Caribbean islands, the great India of his inner vision! Our governments in America, England and elsewhere are suffering from this blindness to an inordinate degree. Lives are lost because root causes are not being addressed but exacerbated by a willful blindness.

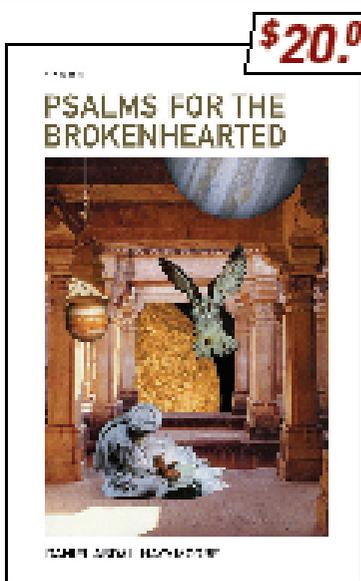
We see a “war on terror” but don't see “symptoms of real grievances” that might be dealt with in

another way than through fearful reactions, paranoid half-preparedness and blunderbuss violent reprisals. In Iraq we are the aggressors now, determined to establish our hold on oil fields and influence. The removal of Saddam may be a prize for Little Jack Horner in the corner, but now the whole thumb that was put in the pie is running with blood down to the elbow and is flowing more plentifully. The now Right-Wing radical sounding words, “What a good boy am I,” ring tragically hollow.

Our “elected” leaders and our electorate have consistently and willfully “ignored the warnings.” It was more convenient to their “ideas” of what they would see than what might be seen with clarity on a day of stern realism. But even our beloved Prophet, peace and blessings of God be upon him, said: “Show me things as they are.” Is it ingrained in our human nature, then, if it was our beloved's conundrum, to see the world in a distorted mirror? And is a cleansing of that mirror and a turning to God in all His perfect single imagelessness, then to His multiple manifestations in the world of forms, the only solution to blood upon blood? ■

**DANIEL ABDAL - HAYY MOORE**  
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By FARUQ PATEL



# The Road **to** Guantanamo

Cowering under an assault of strobe lights and screeching music, a prisoner squats in the darkness of his cell. An interrogator tosses out misleading information and rattles his suspect with evidentiary photos that may not prove anything. As you watch *The Road to Guantanamo*, sitting in the darkness of the theater, your imagination is ripped open by the flickering lights and a frightening soundtrack mix.

In September 2001, Iqbal's mother returns to Tipton, England. She has found a bride for her 19-year-old son in a village not far from Faisalabad, Pakistan. Days later, Iqbal leaves Britain for Pakistan to meet his betrothed. His friends Ahmed, Rasul and Munir Ali soon join him on vacation. The four young men meet in a masjid in Karachi, where the Imam asks for volunteers to provide humanitarian aid in Afghanistan. The bus fare is cheap and Afghanistan sounds like an adventure to the four friends.

After an exhausting journey, the young men arrive in Kandahar. It is the night of the first U.S. bombing raid on Afghanistan. The U.S. troops have initiated the offensive against the Taliban regime in retaliation to the attacks of September 11th. The four move on to Kabul hoping to get back to Pakistan. Separated



from the others, Ali vanishes and is never heard from again. Iqbal, Ahmed and Rasul are then arrested by the Northern Alliance troops and sent to Sheberghan Prison. In late December 2001, U.S. forces take them under possession and by mid-February of 2002 they are forced to live in chain link cages in Guantanamo, imprisoned as potential terrorists without any legal process. For more than two years, the men endure endless interrogation and torture – first on the possibility that they might know something about al-Qaeda, then on the assumption that they may themselves be al-Qaeda members. They are then released into British custody in March 2004 and held for just one day of questioning in London after which they are released without charges.

This 2006 docu-drama was directed by noted filmmaker Michael Winterbottom (Welcome to Sarajevo) about the incarceration of three British detainees at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. The film premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival earlier this year, where it won the Silver Bear for Best Director and had its North American premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival. On March 10th, 2006, it was the first film to be released simultaneously in cinemas, on DVD and on the Internet.

Sharp and poignant, *The Road to Guantanamo* is a film that will shame Americans, or at least enlighten them to the sufferings young men for the sake of America. Yet it is a film that Americans should view; a story that shows sympathy for the innocents caught in the unyielding war on terror.

It is a challenge to watch, not only for its harsh subject matter, but for its abruptness of style.

Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross, the film's co-director, went to extraordinary lengths to tell the story of the Tipton Three, hauling their crew on a long, risky and dusty journey.

There is a sense of quiet outrage that runs through the picture. Some of this tone is conveyed by the characters of Asif Iqbal, Ruhel Ahmed and Shafiq Rasul themselves, but the tension also comes from the filmmakers' clear determination to do justice to their story.

In the film, prisoners are held in small wire-mesh cages, subjected to humiliating abuse and chained in painful positions to hooks in the floor. In an impressive scene, Winterbottom's eye for terrifying reality is well-suited to the story as he depicts American inquisitors screening a video tape of an Osama bin Laden rally and insisting the prisoners were present. The film makes use of archive footage, interviews and dramatized scenes to recreate the authentic story of the real life journey of these young men. Their interviews are skillfully inter cut with the vivid drama of scenes featuring simple and sincere performances from three talented actors: Arfan Usman, Farhad Harun and Rizwan Ahmed. Filming took place in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, which doubled as Cuba.

The 'Road' for this remarkable film has been bumpy. The original poster made to advertise the film in the United States was refused by the Motion Picture Association of America as it showed a detainee with a burlap sack over his head. It was considered inappropriate for its depiction of torture.

Predictably, four of the actors in the film were detained by police at Luton Airport after

returning from the film's premiere in Berlin. Ahmed alleged that during questioning, police asked if he had become an actor to further the Islamic cause. They questioned his views on the Iraq war, verbally abused him and denied him access to a telephone. In a bizarre turnaround, he was then asked to become an informant for the police.

Yet, things are looking up for the Tipton Three as this little film has in big ways helped them find repayment for their sufferings at Guantanamo Bay. In May this past year, a United States District Court judge ruled in favor of the Tipton Three, giving them the right to file a lawsuit against their United States captors in Cuba. The \$10 million lawsuit claims their treatment at the prison was in direct violation of their right under the U.S. law to practice their religious faith. American lawyers plan to file a lawsuit against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and 10 U.S. military commanders on behalf of their three British clients. U.S. District Court Judge Ricardo Urbina ruled that the Tipton Three's case falls within the jurisdiction granted by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993.

*The Road to Guantanamo* is a story that goes far beyond the story of Iqbal, Ahmed and Rasul. The men were kept at the prison long after it had become obvious they had no connection to terrorists. And yet, how many more remain caged or shut in solitary confinement cells. Even after this film has garnered the attention of not only the world, but the American government as well, how many innocents are still locked away? ■

**F A R U Q P A T E L**  
studies and lives in New Delhi.

IN THE WORLD

# Why I Don't Wear Hijab?

by Sarah Burhan

**A**s a Muslim woman, I refuse to wear a veil or anything that covers my hair, my face or my body. Although I do not flaunt my body around, I dress appropriately enough to allow myself some decency and respect. I think wearing hijab goes against almost everything I believe. It calls into question the very One I worship.

To me, hijab is something that has come out of the Islamic culture, confused by the ignorant masses as something religious, like the phenomenon of arranged marriages or bizarrely, even henna. Fine, there are some who say that hijab is supported by the Holy Qur'an. However, here is only one passage that supports this, intermingled with passages about what-not-to-eat.

---

*"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their ornaments except what (ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments."*  
S.24 A.31

---

As one would delicately handle anything written more than millennia ago, this passage could be taken literally or figuratively. The literal meaning: women need to draw a veil over the bosom and face, because that is where all the beauty (and possible seduction) lies. I approach this passage differently. Why would Allah be so superficial as to think that beauty only comes from the outside appearance? Whatever happened to inner beauty?

I do not see how any self-respecting Muslim would want to worship Him if He in His infinite shallowness decreed that women have nothing going for them, unless they are pretty, but that prettiness needs to get covered up. That is why I think the selection from The Holy Qur'an refers to the inner self. The term "veil"

is a figure of speech, used, in this case, to conceal what is normally identified as the "personality." If a woman can mask it, she becomes meek and modest, not wild and raucous. Many find this attractive in a woman, especially in the time the Holy Qur'an was written.

If one looks at the word "ornaments" in the above passage, it can mean anything that normally resides under the clothing, so do not run around in the nude or you will be displaying things that are not supposed to appear otherwise. No one really wears anklets these days to seduce people, so that is not a big problem today.

At the end of the day, when I interpret these few lines and cause such uproar among my hijab-wearing friends (though, admittedly, numbering few) I think it means this: cover your chest or definitely wear clothes on your chest, be modest, do not be naked in public, and do not be suggestive.

I am amazed at the turbulence caused by such a small passage. The same veiled women who chide me and call me indecent, are the same ones I see munching wings when I walk into a Spicy Chicken Wing Hut (as a vegetarian, I opt for the salad). There are many incidents in the Holy Book where it says often to eat only the meat designated for Muslims. Spicy Chicken Wing Hut obviously does not provide that, it does not matter how much one might try to justify it. That meat was not cut humanely offering the animal being slaughtered the least pain possible, and praying over it before consumption does not mean it negates the way it was cut, sans the required lines. I would like to see an editorial from a confident veiled one, stating the reason it is fine to eat "outside meat," even if in the afterlife she is promised a belly full of fire for the act. My belly is hopefully safe, since I avoid any animal meat. Eventually I am sure I will have to answer for that, unless I find a good reason eating meat is against my religion. ■

SARAH BURHAN lives and writes out of New York City. If you have any comments, ideas or recipes, email Sarah at [la.divin@yahoo.com](mailto:la.divin@yahoo.com).

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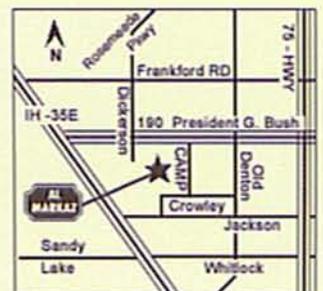
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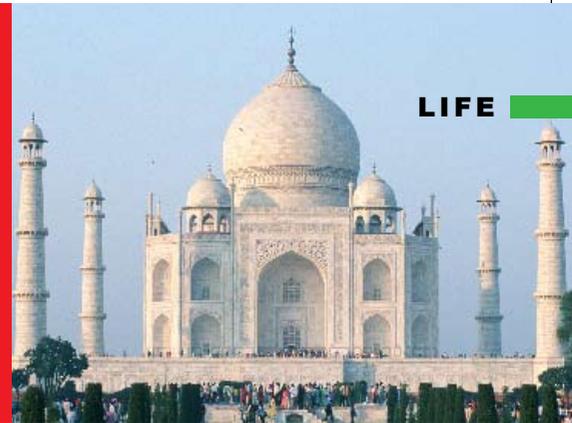
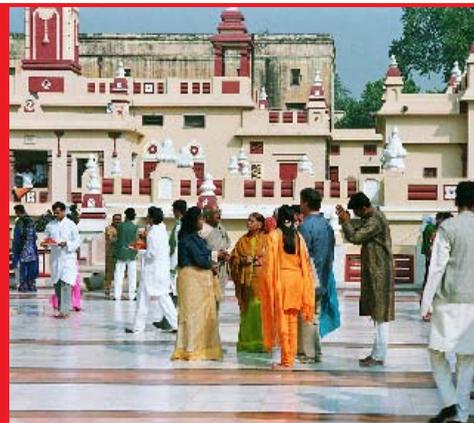
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LIFE

A NEW FILM FROM ALBERT BROOKS

FILMS/DOCS

# Looking *for* Comedy *in the* Muslim World

As a film, writer/director Albert Brooks' response to the world, post-Sept. 11, is in the form of a funny and appropriately skewed comedy. "Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World" is full of sharp culture-clashes and gloriously absurd stand-up. At best, the film serves as an excellent social commentary.

Despite occasionally falling into the predictable trap of stereotypes, the film is a humorous tale of Brooks' journey to India and Pakistan, commissioned by the United States government, in an attempt to discover what makes over 300 million Muslims laugh.

Brooks plays himself as a worried, vain and down-on-his-luck actor/comedian whose career is flat lining. The State Department rushes him to India faster than he can say "chicken curry." He is joined by a staff of two American functionaries and an impossibly sweet-natured Indian secretary (Sheetal Sheth).

Obligated to produce a 500-page report about what makes Muslims chuckle, Brooks begins by approaching people on the streets. When that plan proves unsuccessful, he rents a hall and performs a memorable stand-up act in front of a packed house. Ineffective at connecting with the audience, Brooks, with his deadpan humor and satirical quips, finds it difficult to complete the task he has been assigned. This provides a challenge for the comedian throughout the film and his main struggle is to make this seemingly difficult group laugh.

The stand-up scene in India stands out the most in the film, skillfully paralleled by a scene where Brooks

performs in a remote location across the border in Pakistan, meeting the same response from both sides. Brooks is clearly unable to reach his audience.

The actors in this film perform as expected although Brooks' direction is nothing spectacular, save for the occasional use of the documentary approach.

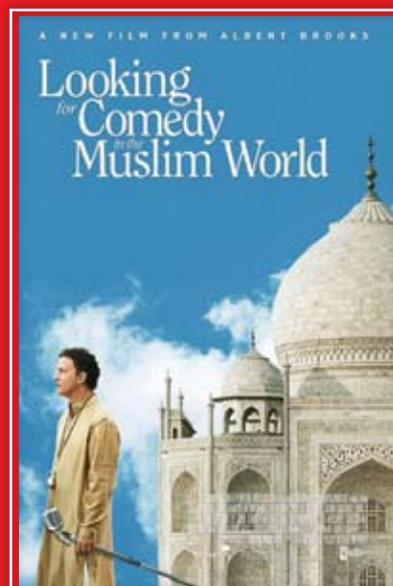
His writing is most notable in supporting the central theme of this film. The laughs in "Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World" come as a real response to the fears and concerns present in the world today. Brooks never finds it necessary to distort reality in the pursuit of comedy. Not only is there some subtle romantic tension, there is a slight forlorn undertone throughout as Brooks finds it hard to fit in as a stranger. The film is given an extra dimension as you see Brooks' anxious character become affected by his difficult assignment. The film stays light and funny, never turns serious and

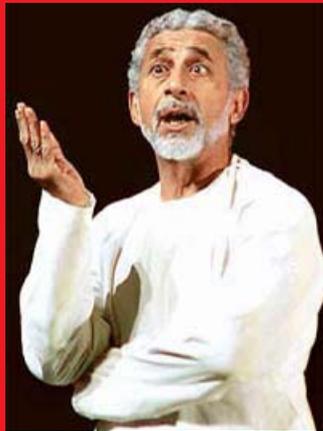
never strays from earnest reflection, which is the trademark of good humor.

Starring : Albert Brooks and Sheetal Sheth.

Directed by : Albert Brooks.

PG-13. 98 mins.





THE ICON

# Naseeruddin Shah

**N**aseeruddin Shah is arguably one of the finest actors in the world today. Think discerning Indian actor, and his is almost always the first face that comes to mind. He has done everything from what was once called “new wave cinema” to run-of-the-mill Bollywood potboilers to more recent attempts to crossover films. Though his use of hesitant speech and casual gesture to signify psychological complexity sets him apart from mainstream actors, he has gained a fair amount of success in commercial films which makes him an undeniable Icon of Indian Cinema.

What is surely most arresting about him is the sheer versatility of his talent. On stage, he is lauded as one of the great directors of contemporary Indian theatre, particularly with his adaptations of short stories by Ismat Chughtai and Saadat Hasan Manto. He also acts and directs English and Urdu plays for his theatre troupe Motley along with his wife Ratna Pathak. Some of the productions have toured throughout the United States. In 2001, he appeared in the Brooklyn Music Academy in Peter Brook’s Hamlet. He played the title role of Cyrano at the National Theatre in England in 1985.

And as if over 100 films, dozens of theater projects and more than a handful of accolades are not enough, Naseerudin Shah is now taking over the director’s chair with Yun Hota to Kya Hota.

Born on July 20, 1950, Shah showed an early interest in acting as a child. He graduated from the National School of Drama in 1973 and enrolled in the Film and Television Institute of India the same year. His first film appearance was in Shyam Benegal’s 1975 masterpiece Nishant. In 1979, at the age of 29, Shah won the Indian government’s National Award for Best Actor for his effective portrayal of a blind man in the film Sparsh (Touch). One of his most intense performances was given in Saeed Mirza’s Albert Pinto Ko Gussa

Kyon Ata Hain? In the movie, he plays a garage mechanic from Goa who dreams of the expensive cars he repairs but that are far beyond his reach. The film has a Catholic setting, primarily because Mirza did not have the courage to tackle Muslim issues.

This was the time when several young directors were making movies that producers and established mainstream “Bollywood” actors were shying away from. This movement was termed the New Wave which often included the same group of willing and fearless actors such as Shah, Shabana Azmi, Smita Patil and Om Puri.

Shah’s numerous awards include Best Actor at the Venice Film Festival (1984 for Paar), the Padma Bhushan by the Indian Government

(2003), the Sangeet Natak Akademi Purusker awarded by the National Academy for Music and Drama, two National awards and three Filmfare awards (India’s Oscar) for Best Actor, one for Chakra (The Vicious Cycle) which was filmed in actual slums of the inner city.

Indeed, Shah has found pleasure in so many other areas of art he sees more of a future for himself as a teacher, and has taken over as the head of the acting department of Subhash Ghai’s filmmaking institute, Whistling Woods. Much of the fatigue Shah has been experiencing with acting in films has been evident in the many recent interviews he has given. Over time, he has grown very cynical of the Hindi film industry, and has lashed out time and again at formulaic movie making. In the last few years, he has also tried to keep

away from the typical masala film, devoting more of his time and energy to more critically acclaimed films such as Monsoon Wedding, Maqbool, Iqbal and Being Cyrus.

With Yun Hota... done with, the future looks more relaxed for Shah. Adapted from a story written by Uttam Gada, a Gujarati playwright, the film follows the lives of four random people bound together by a strong desire to go to the U.S.A., and the unlikely fate that results from their life-altering dream.

There’s nothing much coming up soon other than a few releases including Parzania by Rahul Dholakhia and Valley of Flowers by Pan Nalin. His enthusiasm is boundless after being a theatre, film and television actor and teacher. ■

## Awards

2004: 7th International Film Festival of Mumbai – Award for contribution to Indian cinema  
 2003: Padma Bhushan, India’s third highest civilian award  
 2000: IIFA (International Indian Film Academy) Award - Artistic Excellence for Performance in a Negative Role for Sarfarosh  
 1987: Padma Shri, India’s fourth highest civilian award  
 1984: The Volpi Cup (Award for Best Actor) at Venice Film Festival for Paar

1984: National Award for Best Actor – awarded by Government of India for Paar  
 1983: Filmfare Best Actor Award for Masoom  
 1981: Filmfare Best Actor Award for Chakra  
 1980: Filmfare Best Actor Award for Aakrosh  
 1979: National Award for Best Actor – awarded by Government of India for Sparsh.

## Selected Filmography

1975 Nishant (Night’s End)  
 1976 Manthan (The Churning)  
 1977 Bhumika  
 1978 Junoon  
 1980 Bhavni Bhavai  
 1980 Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Ata Hai?  
 1980 Aakrosh  
 1980 Sparsh (Touch)  
 1981 Umrao Jaan  
 1981 Chakra (The Vicious Cycle)  
 1982 Sitam  
 1982 Bazaar  
 1983 Masoom  
 1983 Mandi  
 1983 Ardh Satya (Half Truth)  
 1983 Who 7 Din  
 1983 Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro

1984 Holi  
 1985 Trikal  
 1986 Karma  
 1987 Ijaazat  
 1988 Pestonjee  
 1988 Mirza Ghalib  
 1988 The Perfect Murder  
 1989 Tridev  
 1992 Electric Moon  
 1993 Game  
 1993 Sir  
 1994 Mohra  
 1998 Bombay Boys  
 1999 Sarfarosh  
 1999 Bhopal Express  
 2000 Hey Ram  
 2001 Gaja Gamini  
 2001 Monsoon Wedding

2003 The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen  
 2003 Maqbool  
 2004 Main Hoon Na  
 2005 The Great New Wonderful  
 2005 Paheli  
 2005 The Rising: The Ballad of Mangalk Pandey  
 2005 Iqbal  
 2005 Being Cyrus  
 2006 Mixed Doubles  
 2006 Banaras: A Mystic Love Story  
 2006 Krrish  
 2006 Valley of Flowers  
 2006 Omkara



## TRAVEL

*It has been called the new Mecca, but by 2010, if all goes according to plan, it might become the greatest city on earth. Hell, it may already be. A guided tour through world revolution, huge capitalism, and the finest hotel rooms money can buy.*

# Dubai

## The Vegas of the Middle East



In the middle of a harsh, repressive, religiously excessive, and physically horrifying region, sits Dubai. Among its Gulf neighbors: Iraq and Iran, war torn and militantly ruled, respectively. Surrounding it, Saudi Arabia, where stealing results in getting your hand cut off and women's faces cannot be seen in public, is a country on the brink of serious trouble.

Dubai is located in the United Arab Emirates on the Arabian Peninsula, one hundred miles across the Gulf from Iran, about 600 miles from Basra, 1,100 from Kabul. As it turns out, Dubai is quite possibly the safest great city in the world. It is also the newest. Before oil was discovered in the region in the 1950s, Dubai was just a cluster of mud huts and Bedouin tents. The entire city has essentially been created in the last fifty years.

By 2010, if current plans flow smoothly, Dubai will boast some of the most extravagant and grandiose features any city on Earth could possibly possess: the world's tallest skyscraper (2,300 feet), largest mall, biggest theme park, longest indoor ski run, most luxurious underwater hotel (accessible by submarine train); a huge (2,000-acre, 60,000-resident) development called International City, divided into nation-neighborhoods (England, China, France, Greece, etc.) within which all homes will be required to reflect the national architectural style;

not to mention four artificially constructed island mega-archipelagoes (one of them shaped like a map of the world) built using a specially designed boat that dredges up tons of ocean-bottom sand each day and sprays it into place.

The Madinat Jumeirah is a super resort consisting of at least six luxury sub-hotels and three clusters of luxury villas spread out over about forty acres. The Madinat is themed to resemble an ancient Arabian village. The site is crisscrossed by 2.3 miles of artificial creeks and the largest outdoor pool in the Middle East.

A small distance from the Madinat is Wild Wadi, a sprawling water park. Once an hour, a waterfall begins dropping a thousand gallons of water a minute into an empty pond. This is the biggest water park on that side of the world equipped with fake thunder, lightning and rain.

The Burj Al Arab, sail-shaped and iconic, is the only seven-star hotel in the world, even though the rating system usually goes up only to five. The most expensive Burj suite goes for \$12,000 a night. The atrium is 590 feet from floor to ceiling, the largest in the world. The lobby of the Burj is neither inside nor out. The roof is so high it is enough to seem like the sky. Every gold-colored surface you see is made from twenty-four karat gold and every Burj room is a two-story suite.

During this time of the year, you can visit Arabian Ice City which is part of a festival that takes place over a couple of months called "Dubai Summer Surprises."

Dubai is literally a cultural melting pot. There is a Pashtun dominated section, a hidden Hindu temple, a section that suddenly goes Chinese, and entire streets where nothing is sold but cloth. There is an appropriately named "gold section" where you can find two or three hundred gold shops on one street.

Although Dubai easily defines capitalism to the extreme-it is beautiful. The air is perfumed, you hear fountains everywhere coupled with distant chanted prayers, and when the (real) Arabian moon comes up behind a (fake) Arabian wind tower you feel you are a resident of some ancient city where once you have arrived, it is almost impossible to leave. ■

## And That's Not All...

*In Dubai, construction crews work seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. And the things they're building are only getting more and more expensive and fantastic. Here are three of the most insane projects currently in the works.*

### THE WORLD

#### WHAT IT IS

300 man-made private islands 2.5 miles of the Dubai coast that, when looked at from on high, form a map of the world. All the islands, ranging from 150,000 to 450,000 square feet, are available for private ownership.

**OPENS** - 2008

**COSTS** - \$2 billion to \$3 billion

**CRAZIEST DETAIL** - 11.5 billion cubic feet of sand and 32 million tons of rock will have been reclaimed from the ocean floor by the time the project is done.

### HYDROPOLIS

#### WHAT IT IS

A super-luxe underwater hotel. Every one of the planned 200 suites will have a clear, domed ceiling so you can watch the fish swim by. There are even fog machines that pump out sun-blocking underwater "clouds."

**OPENS** - If all goes according to plan, late 2007

**COSTS** - The King suites will be around \$4,250 a night.

**CRAZIEST DETAIL** - The project's chairman, Mansoor Ijaz, says that the Hydropolis's security measures will be so sophisticated that they'll rival those "reserved for heads of state."

### DUBAILAND

#### WHAT IT IS

A 3-billion-square-foot project that will include the biggest mall in the world, the largest indoor ski resort in the world, a "rotating city" with villas that "fly", and the world's largest cruise ship, in the middle of the Middle East's largest amusement park.

**OPENS** - The first phase of development is slated to open in mid-2008.

**COSTS** - To be determined. Investments so far total \$10 billion.

**CRAZIEST DETAIL** - The Eiffel Tower and Taj Mahal replicas in Dubailand's Falcon City of Wonders will be seventy feet taller and 150 percent larger, respectively, than the originals.



THE ARTIST

# Mohammad Rafi

MOHAMMAD RAFI

**M**ohammed Rafi was inarguably the greatest Hindi/Urdu playback singer in Bollywood - along with Kishore Kumar and Mukesh. Rafi still remains popular in the Indian Subcontinent and in many other parts of the world such as the UK, Kenya and West Indies, where people of Indian origin are settled. He continues to inspire new Bollywood playback singers like Sonu Nigam, Mohammed Aziz, Shabbir Kumar and Anwar.

Rafi sang many duets with Lata Mangeshkar, but he has also sung a large number of songs with Geeta Dutt and Lata's sister Asha Bhosle as well.

His work ranged from classical numbers to patriotic songs, sad lamentations to highly romantic numbers, qawaalis to ghazals and bhajans, and from slow melancholic tunes to fast, fun-filled songs.



He sang for Rajendra Kumar and Jeetendra, the tragedy heroes Dilip Kumar and Bharat Bhushan, comedian Johnny Walker, and many more. His voice personified the rebellious image of the star Shammi Kapoor and also gave expression to smaller and younger heroes like Biswajit and Joy Mukherjee. Rafi sang for singer-actor Kishore Kumar in a few movies like Raagini, Baaghi Shehzaada, and Shararat. Mohd. Rafi had also sung for Talat Mahmood in the film 'Lalarukh' for the song Hai kali kali ke lab par.

## Early Years

Rafi was born at Kotla Sultan Singh Village near Amritsar in Punjab, on December 24, 1924, to a middle class Muslim family. His family shifted to Lahore when he was still an infant. Each day, a "fakir" would come to their locality in Lahore and sing. The young Rafi was so fascinated, he would follow him around. His elder brother Hameed was aware of Rafi's love for music and encouraged it. In Lahore, Rafi began taking music lessons from Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan and he also learned Indian classical music from Ghulam Ali Khan. One day Rafi and Hameed attended a performance by K. L. Saigal. However, the legendary singer refused to sing because there was a power failure at the venue. Hameed went up to the organiser to ask whether his brother could sing to keep the audience quiet, marking Rafi's first public performance at the age of 13. Among the audience sat noted composer Shyam Sunder, who invited Rafi to Bombay.

Rafi's first song was in Punjabi for the film Gul Baloch - it was a duet with the singer Zeenat Begum. The song was Soniye nee, Heeriye nee, composed by Shyam Sunder. Shyam Sunder was impressed with his voice and gave Rafi seven songs in another film, Bazaar. 1944, Rafi decided to move to Bombay, where Naushad gave him a break in Pehle Aap (1944). Rafi made his mark with "Tera Khilona Toota Balak" in Anmol Ghadi (1946). Rafi's first hit song was Yahan Badla Wafa Ka with legendary songstress Noor Jehan, composed by Feroz Nizami and it earned him fame. J B Wadia, producer of the film Amar Raj, sought only him for his films.

Rafi also had brief roles in movies like Laila-Majnu (1945) and Jugnu (1947). In Laila-Majnu, he was seen singing Tera Jalwa as a part of the chorus. Rafi's most famous film was Neel Kamal in 1968. He sang over 26,000 songs in Hindi, English, bhangra, and bhajan among other styles.

## Rise to Fame

Rafi hit the big time came when he met the composer Naushad in Bombay. Rafi's first song for Naushad was Hindustan ke hum hain for the film Pehle Aap in 1944. Rafi and Naushad struck a chord. The first hit for the duo was the soundtrack of the highly successful movie Anmol Ghadi (1946). Before Rafi, Naushad's favorite singer was Talat Mahmood, but once, when Naushad found Talat smoking during a recording, he hired Rafi to sing all the songs of the movie Baiju Bawra. After the Partition of India, Rafi and Naushad decided to remain in India. Whenever Naushad required a male voice in the songs he composed, he would approach Rafi and nobody else. Naushad's attitude was criticized by many people, but he continued his patronage of Rafi. Naushad used Rafi's voice for almost all actors of that time including Bharat Bhushan and Dilip Kumar.

Soon, Rafi became the favorite singer of other composers too, notably O. P. Nayyar, Shankar Jaikishan and Sachin Dev Burman. Rafi became the voice of Dev Anand with soul-stirring songs composed by S. D. Burman. He sang songs of all moods for S. D. Burman, picturized on Dev Anand - the romantic dil ka bhanwar, the drunk hum bekhudi mein, the free-spirited khoya khoya chaand. Rafi and S. D. Burman teamed up with Dev Anand's Navketan production house to produce hit tracks in many movies - Kala Bazar, Tere Ghar Ke Saamne, Guide among others. S. D. Burman also had Rafi sing for Rajesh Khanna in Aradhana and Amitabh Bachchan in Abhimaan. Rafi and S. D. Burman also produced soulful songs for Guru Dutt's Pyaasa, C.I.D. and Kaagaz ke Phool.

O. P. Nayyar used Rafi and Asha Bhosle for most of his songs. Together they created music in the 1950s and 1960s. O. P. Nayyar was once quoted as saying "If there

had been no Mohd. Rafi, there would have been no O P Nayyar". He and Rafi created many songs together including the famous Yeh hai Bombay meri jaan. O P Nayyar was so impressed with Rafi that he also had Rafi sing for singer-actor Kishore Kumar - Man mora baawara for the movie Raagini. The team is particularly remembered for the songs picturized on Shammi Kapoor. The song Jawaaniyan yeh mast mast and the title song Yun to humne lakh hansee dekhe hain, tumsa nahin dekha of the film Tumsa Nahin Dekha became instant hits. They were followed by hits like Taareef karoon kya uski jisne tumhe banaya from Kashmir ki Kali.

Shammi Kapoor himself gives a large credit for his success to Rafi. Shammi's image of the young, rebellious, carefree man can be attributed to the famous song Yahoo! Chahe koi mujhe jungle kahe, kehne do ji sung by Rafi and composed by Shankar Jaikishan. Shanker-Jaikishan also created beautiful songs with Rafi. Their pairing is remembered for the songs picturized on Rajendra Kumar - Baharon phool barsaao and others.

Rafi was also composer Ravi's first choice for playback singing. Rafi to sang the famous Rock-n-Roll number from the movie China Town - Baar Baar Dekho, picturized on Shammi Kapoor for Ravi.

Madan Mohan was another composer whose favorite singer was Rafi. They teamed up to produce many ghazals including teri aankhon ke siva duniya mein rakha kya hai, the sad Yeh duniya yeh mehfil mere kaam ki nahin and the romantic tum jo mil gaye ho. Madan Mohan used Rafi's voice in many films like Chirag and Laila Majnu.

The famous composer duo Laxmikant Pyarelal ("L-P") also used Rafi as their male voice in 1960s and 70s. When L-P were new in the industry, Rafi sang for them, although he was the top singer for Bollywood at that time. Rafi sang for their first hit film Paarasmani. Both Rafi and L-P won Filmfare Awards for the song Chahoonga main tujhe shaam saavere from the superhit film Dosti. The tune was originally meant to be sung by a female singer, but the lyricist suggested that it would sound better in a male voice. L-P agreed and had the song sung by Rafi.

In 1965, Rafi was honoured by the Government of India with the Padma Sri award.

In the year 1969, Bollywood witnessed the rise of a new superstar, Rajesh Khanna in the movie Aradhana. Aradhana was the beginning of the era of another great singer Kishore Kumar.

Many stories afloat that Rafi was overshadowed by Kishore. But Rafi delivered many hit songs during that time like "Aaj Mausam bada Beimaan he" (Loafer 1973) and many more. He came back with a bang with memorable songs from Sargam, Hum Kisise Kam Nahin and Amar, Akbar, Anthony which put Rafi right back on the top.

## Personal Life

Rafi married Bilquis and had four sons and three daughters. He was a teetotaler, a religious and extremely humble person. He was a devout Muslim. Once, when a lesser-known composer, Nisar Bazmi (who migrated to Pakistan in early 1960s), didn't have enough money to pay him, Rafi charged a fee of one rupee and sang for him. He even helped producers financially. As Laxmikant (of the Laxmikant-Pyarelal duo) once observed, "He always gave without thinking of the returns". Rafi was also famous for his various humanitarian efforts. Rafi and Lata Mangeshkar had a major debate over the issue of royalties in 1960s. Rafi believed that once a recording was over and a singer has been paid, he or she should not ask for more. Lata, on the other hand said that singers should be paid royalties for their works, over and above the amount given for the singing. This led to a fall out between them. They refused to sing songs together. At the insistence of Nargis they finally made up at a stage concert and sang Dil Pukare from the film Jewel Thief, composed by S D Burman.

## Last Years

His song Kya hua tera waada from the movie Hum Kisise Kum Nahin fetched him the national award and Filmfare Award for the year 1977. His songs from the films sung towards the late 1970's Laila Majnu, Amar Akbar Anthony and Sargam, became hits. Laxmikant-Pyarelal the famous music director began to churn out hit after hit from Rafi during the late 1970s. His dard-e-dil, dard-e-jigar, composed by Laxmikant-Pyarelal and filmed on Rishi Kapoor, in the movie Karz, became a rage amongst the youngsters.

On July 31, 1980 after composing a song for the movie Aas Paas, Shaam phir kyun udaas hai dost with L-P, Rafi asked "Should I leave?". LP were surprised because Rafi had never said anything like this before. While leaving, Rafi said once again "OK. I will leave." Rafi died at 7.30 p.m. on the same day due to a massive heart attack. He was 55 years old. ■

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*"The focus on perfection"*

By ALEENA KHAN



Offering eclectic and impeccably consummated lifestyle buried in the belief of virtuous eminence for money, Maria B's designs are wearable and somehow affordable. Thanks to print media for their constant spotlight on Maria B, it has now infatuated a colossal aggregate of fans from Pakistan and abroad. Though immensely sought after, they are now available in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. From the past decade, fashion has led resolutely from the idea of workingwomen to everyday wear. Maria B's designs are yuppie, aesthetic, modern and culturally palpable. Mari B has modernized our traditional shalwar kameez by boiling down lines and cuts, and making embroideries minimal. Maria B wants to see no difference between casual and formal garments, with inclusion of cotton, linen, hand woven khaddar and organdy garments. Her range is from modern party wear to bridals. Checking garments, one pays attention to all cuts, stitches and patterns, while observing them I was surprised to see, they were stitched to perfection. Well garment can be shaped on orders also. Fulfilling your modern dreams and fantasies, is the bull's eye at Maria B. All garments are fashioned keeping the dreams of clientele in mind and pouring one's dream into reality.

*Designer Profile*

# Maria - B



Some 27 years ago Mari Butt was born with the eager nature of fashion. One could have easily depicted her desire and fashion nature. Wrecking her mom's makeup and wardrobe, singing and striking poses in front of mirror for hours, showed the world of fashion embedded in this beautiful girl. She describes fashion as diverse, technical and volatile, as she got a chance to discharge her dreams by gearing up her career from Pakistan school of fashion designs. She topped all four years in (PSFD) but the biggest culmination came when she topped Les Etoiles de la mode, an international fashion competition in Belgium with contestants from 22 countries. Well-done Maria. Currently she is operating outlets in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. Maria B has also opened the first professional fashion house in Pakistan, with bridals, party wears, casuals, and many more, all under one roof, She assuredly is in competition with Armani, Gucci and Channel.

In defiance of all this she believes that she has a long way to go and has to bread and butter learning all her life. She believes that cuts, patterns, and stitching are the bases without which you would be erecting castles in air.



Confidence and creativity are the essence of excellence in today's world. Maria B seems to be following above adage; she is now working on day-to-day transformations in fashion with making her clientele comfortable and trendy. She loves working on party wears, which she finds hip, trendy and challenging. Actually you have to use some good fabrics, add shine and bead work and be a little crazy with cuts. Still you are not supposed to forget your customer and her requisites. Working on linen, georgette and sheer fabrics makes her fall in love with her work, as she also loves to work on khaddar because of its versatility. She has a strong hate for bland and classics one.

Maria says that aunty tradition is soon vanishing away from Pakistan and women are waking to the new trends of fashion, which is fast inundating the entire globe. She believes that trendy and wearable clothes are the one's required by woman of today, which should be conditional of being affordable.

Though Maria is facing tough competition when it comes to mention Rizwan Beyg, Neelofer Shahid and Deepak Perwani, but still she got a caliber of culminating in very few years time.

Unlike others Maria sees no restrictions in living and working in Islamic country as she has an excellence of making her garments, remaining in the ocean of being Muslim. She does it by a limit and a touch of modesty. She enlightens the great taste of Pakistani fashion designers but do become sad on the lack of professionalism in this saga. She wants to wave the name of country in fashion field and then let her individual identity to be recognized.

Giving her exhortations to future fashion designers, she wants them to be passionate and challenging couples with full devotion of themselves in fashion and to forget everything about their every day life. She wants the new generation to be filled with perseverance, enthusiasm and good intentions that would lead them to success.

Names of her designs and style diva range from Jackie Paul Gaultier, Stella Giorgio Armani and none other than Madonna. She loves the day to day change in Madonna and wants to be one like her. Personally, she adores black color, black bootleg pants with short shirt; actually she has a dilemma of being short. To cut it she wears high heels and short shirts. Well! She looks gorgeous in them. She loves pouring money whenever she is shopping for shoes and handbags, saves a lot while spending on clothes (not to mention that she shops at Maria B for her clothes).

Seriously I believe that before Maria B, the response of fashion industry was lukewarm but her entry has suddenly metamorphosed the industry. By winning international contests, introducing new concepts in designs, she certainly is proving the additional professionalism in fashion designing. Being a Muslim and Pakistani, she takes it as a challenge and wants to culminate country's name in this Hercules competition world. Way to go Maria! ■

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**ALEENA KHAN**

can be reached at  
972-242-3737 or come visit her  
at PASSIONZ 1205 W. Trinity Mills  
Suite 208 in Carrollton, TX 75006

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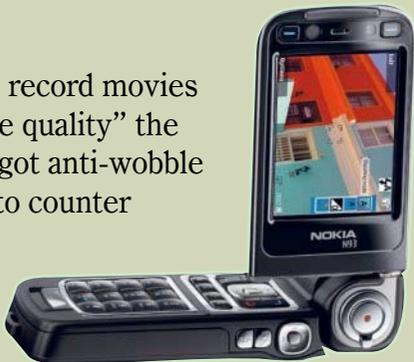
## The Digital Qur'an NS Model

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## Nokia's N93 – the Super phone

Nokia's ultimate camcorder phone is finally on its way. Part of the Finnish phone giant's high-end "Multimedia Computer" range; it packs a 3.2 mega pixel camera, and 3x optical zoom – a first for a camera phone outside the Far East.

Designed to record movies in "DVD-like quality" the N93's even got anti-wobble technology to counter the effects of shaky hands.



## New(er) Xbox 360 incoming?

Microsoft is giving you more for your money rather than dropping the price. Online rumors suggest that the US Xbox 360 Premium Pack will soon be replaced by a new bundle offering more – but at the same



\$399 price. This package will feature a 360 console, 20GB hard drive, wireless controller,



headset and Hi-Def component video cable, plus a copy of Project Gotham Racing, a three month Gold subscription to Xbox Live and 1,250 XBL Marketplace points to spend on extra content. According to reports, the package will launch in the US very soon.

## G A D G E T S

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## iWatch puts an iPod on your wrist!

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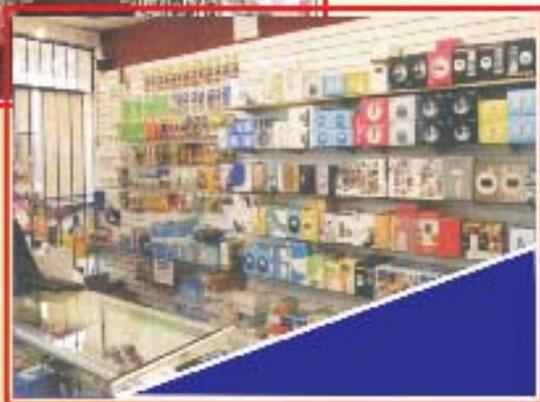
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# The Current Status of Muslims

Surely you will prevail if you are indeed believers. (Al-Qur'an 3:139)

## 1.3 Billion People

Islam is a Universal Way of Life (DEEN). Besides Asia and Africa, Europe and North America have substantial populations of Muslims. It is proudly claimed that there are more than one billion Muslims in the world.

However, these more than one billion people are facing a global crisis. The crisis consists of political, economic, social, military, and scientific setbacks. The great Allama Inayatullah Khan Al-Mashriqi in the 1940's depicted the state of the East in general, and that of Muslims in particular, in this way:

*"People ask me that having widely traveled the East for years, what have I seen. How shall I tell what I have seen! From this end to that end I saw towns in ruins, broken and shaken bridges, dirt clogged canals, dusty streets, abandoned highways. I saw wrinkled faces, undernourished bodies, stooping backs, empty brains, insensitive hearts, inverted logic, aberrant reason. I saw oppression, slavery, poverty, pomp and vanity, detestable vices, clusters of disease, burnt forests, cold ovens, barren fields, dirty attire and useless hands and feet. I saw imams (religious leaders) without followings. I saw brothers who were foes unto one another. I saw days without purpose and I saw nights which led to no dawns."*

Let's assess the situation from one more viewpoint. The noted Egyptian scholar Mufti Muhammad Abde Rabbuhu (d.1906) visited Paris a hundred years ago. Upon his return to Egypt he startled the world by declaring, "In Europe I saw no Muslims, I saw Islam. In Egypt I see Muslims, I see no Islam!" (By the way, he termed the rampant, counterfeit, manmade Islam as THE ESTRANGED RELIGION.)

Dear Reader, although there are non-Islamic practices in the West, I can hear the echo of that declaration today. The so-called billion plus Muslims are Muslims without Islam! Their political, economic and social conditions paint a complete picture of misery and chaos wherever they live. Apparently the tree bearing such bad fruit should be blameworthy. Isn't a tree known by the fruit it bears? Let me say at the outset: The tree bearing this bad fruit is what I call THE NUMBER TWO ISLAM. Allama Mashriqi (d.1964) had termed it THE MAULVI'S WRONG RELIGION. Allama Iqbal (d.1938) called it AJAMI ISLAM. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (d.1897) had named it the MANMADE RELIGION.

## By DR. SHABBIR AHMED

Subjugation to kings, despots and tyrants, slavery to the Sufi and the Mullah, submission to blind following of weird dogmas, fear, illiteracy, insecurity, lootings and killings, ethnic and sectarian hatred, webs of superstition – what is all this?

Let's view the situation from another angle. The tree of sectarianism among Muslims has grown to such heights, and fatwas (religious edicts) of infidelity have become so popular that there exists not a single Muslim in the world today who would be unanimously accepted as a Muslim by the Ulema of any two sects! (According to a Turkish scholar now these sects number 190!) The followers of Islam, which introduced the concept of international brotherhood, are hopelessly divided among themselves.

Many find consolation in, "We are born Muslims", or "Thank God! He created us among Muslims." But

the Qur'an confers no value to Islam by inheritance. It reads:

*4:136 O You who have chosen to be graced with belief! (And call yourselves Muslim)! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the Book he has revealed to His Messenger, and (the fact that He revealed) the Scripture before.*

*[Belief to the point of Conviction can only be attained through reason and not as a birth right 12:108]*

*12:108 Say (O Prophet), "This is my way. Resting my call upon reason, I am calling you all to Allah – I and they who follow me." (We do not invite through blind faith, vague dogmas or by stunning your intellect with miracles). Glory to Allah! And I am not one of those who ascribe divinity in any form besides Him.*

The Qur'an is very particular on using our intellect and reason. It emphasizes on people not to expect even its own verses deaf and blind. (25:73)

Muslims should stop here and think for a moment. Have I ever tried to search for reality? Did I really find the Truth? Or, am I simply imitating the ways of my forefathers? It is only after due contemplation that Islam can be adopted. Unfortunately, today almost all the one billion plus Muslims are Muslims by birth and by blind following, the kind of Islam that the Qur'an considers of no merit. It has to be a matter of choice based upon reason and understanding. Only then can a Muslim be an effective, enlightened member of the Ummah.

For more information about Dr. Shabbir Ahmed and his books please visit [www.ourbeacon.com](http://www.ourbeacon.com) or simply email him at [drshabbir@bellsouth.net](mailto:drshabbir@bellsouth.net). ■

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# MY Approach to ISLAM

Allah . . . Most Gracious Most Merciful

**M**y personal goal is to become a Muslim, or one who surrenders, not just by name, but as one who surrenders to God, and is at peace with her/himself, the world around her/him, and therefore with God. The purpose of the Qur'an, and the other books that contain revelations of God, is apparent in its own contents. Read for yourself.<sup>1</sup>

“And this is a blessed Reminder which We have revealed; will you then deny it?”<sup>2</sup>

“Thus do We relate to you (some) of the news of what has gone before; and indeed We have given to you a Reminder from Ourselves.”<sup>3</sup>

Also see: 7:2, 11:114, 11:120, 12:104, 15:9, 21:7, 21:10, 21:24, 29:51, 32:22, 36:69-70, 38:49, 38:87, 43:44, 50:37, 68:52, 81:27, 73:19, 74:31, and the list goes on.

As you can see, the Qur'an as a reminder of God, the True Reality, and doing good is a theme found throughout the Qur'an.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) like all other Prophets of God (peace be upon them all) was “only a reminder,”<sup>4</sup> and a “plain warner.”<sup>5</sup> We are told in the Qur'an that believers should not make any distinction between the Prophets of God.

“And those who believe in God and His messengers and do not make a distinction between any of them—God will grant them their rewards; and God is Forgiving, Merciful.”<sup>6</sup>

That is, no one Prophet is better

than the other Prophets. They all called people to believe in God and do good.

It is misleading to speak of Islam as something completely foreign from Christianity, Judaism, and other “religions” calling people to the belief in God. To discuss Islam without speaking of previous communications from God hampers a true understanding of the message. Pluralism is intrinsic to believing in God. We are told several times that what matters is not where one faces,<sup>7</sup> or what one calls themselves, but what one does and believes.

**By HIJABMAN**

“Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in God and the Last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.”<sup>8</sup>

So one doesn't really need the Qur'an to surrender to God, nor does one need the Qur'an to do good. But if there is a revelation of God available, and it has not been changed by the hands of people, why deny it?

The Qur'an confirms the scriptures before it (including the Torah and Bible), and describes how those texts were changed by people who concealed the truth.<sup>9</sup> The Qur'an even uses Jews and Christians as examples. I'll continue on the theme of pluralism.

“And they say: None shall enter the garden (or paradise) except he who is a Jew or a Christian. These are

their vain desires. Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful. Nay! whoever submits himself entirely to God and he is the doer of good (to others) he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for him nor shall he grieve.<sup>10</sup>

Whereas some Christians and Jews will say they are the only ones who will enter paradise, God tells us in the Qur'an that whoever believes and does good shall have nothing to fear on Judgement Day. Some Muslims seem to have fallen into the same trap.

The Qur'an enjoins such virtues as seeking knowledge, helping those in need, being just, and striving for a better world. Doing the opposite, God tells us, we only hurt ourselves.<sup>11</sup> It is in our own interest to do good.

For those of you who are not Muslim but are reading these pages, like I said, Islam is beautiful, but unfortunately, in some cases, Islam and Muslim have become disconnected from their Arabic meanings, and now act as brand names like Nike, taking on entirely new meanings. ■

For more information about Hijabman, please visit his website at [www.hijabman.com](http://www.hijabman.com)

<sup>1</sup>Arabic is coming soon, and will be placed next to the English translations  
<sup>2</sup>Qur'an 21:50. The Shakir translation has been used, for the most part  
<sup>3</sup>Qur'an 20:99  
<sup>4</sup>Qur'an 88:21  
<sup>5</sup>Qur'an 46:9  
<sup>6</sup>Qur'an 4:152. Also see 2:285, and 3:84.  
<sup>7</sup>Qur'an 2:177  
<sup>8</sup>Qur'an 2:62. Also see 5:69  
<sup>9</sup>Qur'an 6:91  
<sup>10</sup>Qur'an 2:111-112  
<sup>11</sup>See 10:44, 16:33, 29:40, 30:9  
<sup>12</sup>More on this will be available shortly

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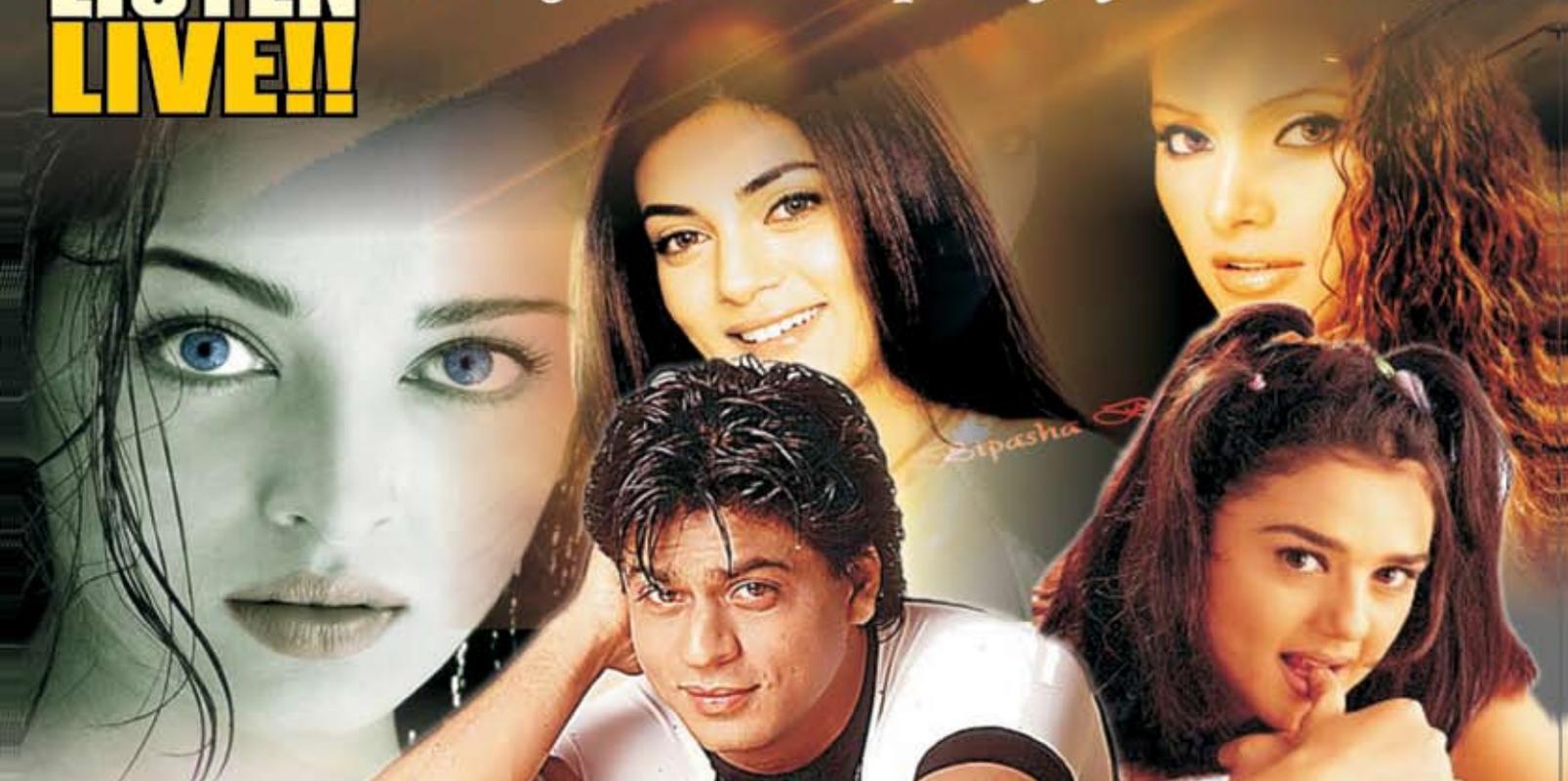
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# Poetry

By DANIEL ABDAL-HAYY MOORE

## The Saint Sat At The Window

*The saint sat at the window and  
became the window  
that's what saints do*

*And the saint went out the window  
and became the air  
that's how they are*

*Animals feeding on the mountainside  
saw the saint pass  
they've got the eyes for it*

*The mountainside felt the saint pass  
and her grasses bent aside  
that's how saints go*

*On a saint's errand all things in place  
for the remedy to arrive  
on time as always*

*The twelve ducklings and the Chinese child  
felt instantly renewed  
though the saint barely touched them*

*Back before supper the saint wasn't missed  
the place settings glimmered  
as usual*

*Our earth is in need of them  
our hearts are in need of them  
God keep them at our side*

*(from Coattails of the Saint)*

## Among The Giants

for Habib Ali and Habib Umar

*The lakes are quiet and the clouds are low  
at the departure of all the giants from the world*

*Grasses bend in sadness and stones lament  
in their lugubrious way because the*

*great ones have left us and now a silver night descends  
and the seas are turbid and cold*

*Their broad smiles lit places where  
even sunlight with all its atomic subtlety struggled to  
enter*

*Their buoyant hearts in every weather*

*reminded us of such a simple thing as our  
pure humanity aloft in this earthly littleness and  
savagery*

*They walked among redwoods followed by equally giant  
sheep they whistled melodious songs and birds fell from  
the branches in a swoon*

*They brandished torches that lit up our frail battlements  
and sad battlefields with a ruddy glow if ready for an  
early burning*

*Who remembers them except mountains in their  
inaccessible crags and depthless gorges?  
The clang of stones dislodged and hurtling into pits of  
darkness?*

*Time itself measures their passing and space itself  
feels the ache of such sudden shrinkage*

*Nights are longer than usual and  
the small fires at the heart of them nearly  
microscopic*

*Then one or two of God's saints appears and the  
ancient brotherhood and sisterhood of the giants is  
revived*

*Highest mountain peaks capped in their otherworldly  
ice recognize them as one of their own*

*Oceans sing from their netherworldly crevasses at  
their arrival*

*Small of stature but filled with Muhammadan Light  
their giant eyes and lengthy strides span*

*continents in one glance and oceans in one step  
forward*

*illuminating the arctic and undersides of the Northern  
Lights as they shimmer their neon fuchsia curtains*

*with enough radiance for even the blind to  
see by and get safely through to the end of night*

*(from Coattails of the Saint)*

## The Saint and The Leopard

*A Lark stopped in mid-flight to notice what  
arc it was in*

*A ship at sea suspended its motors to  
contemplate its shadow*

*Buried deep underground a corpse saw its  
skeleton and moaned*

*Removed from seeing on his own  
the saint looked and saw only Allah  
no second face!*

*And everywhere his eyes landed  
he saw only Allah*

*And the leopard at the zoo  
in looking at him through the bars  
saw only Allah too*

*And for both the bars disappeared  
without endangering the little boy in  
green shorts with pink cotton candy standing  
too close*

*For the bars between us exist only in  
phenomena*

*Whereas this seeing is both before and  
after phenomena and somehow even  
deep within it*

*The leopard gets out and stretches for the  
first time in ten years*

*The saint cups his hand over his neck to  
make him docile*

*They travel side by side through the stars  
visiting each planetary population*

*Though not a lick of cotton candy  
has been lost*

*It should make you happy*

*No animals were harmed in the  
making of this poem*

*And when the saint turned to go  
the leopard gnashed his teeth  
and lunged at the bars*

*"I'll come back tomorrow" the saint said  
and the entire zoo dissolved*

*as well as all who beheld it*

*The lark in its arc as well as the  
ship its shadow  
and the skeleton underground*

*"I'll see you tomorrow" said the saint  
and the zoo reappeared again*

*Only the Face forever aware  
of its awareness*

*Allah's eyes see only Allah*

*(from Coattails of the Saint)*



# Credit Scoring Myths

By **Joseph D. Hansen, MBA.**  
President and CEO, **One World Bank**

Looking for a loan? Make sure you know what will truly hurt and help your case with lenders -- and don't fall for the misinformation bankers can spread.

There's a lot of misinformation being propagated about what does and doesn't hurt your credit score, and much of it is coming from sources who should know better: Bankers. Now, let me say first that I've worked with for excellent banks who really knew their stuff and kept up to date, not only on loan trends but on the information that's available about credit scoring. That's important, because the FICO credit score, in its various permutations, is used in three-quarters of all commercial and mortgage lending. But what I hear from several bankers was the kind of bad advice that can cost you money and keep you from getting the best loans. So if your banker gives you any of the following advice, take a tip from me: Find a new banker.

### **MYTH: Closing accounts can help your credit score**

No, no, no. For the umpteenth time: Closing accounts can never help your credit score, and may hurt it.

Every time I write this, I get more e-mail from people who say their lenders told them exactly the opposite. It's true that having too many open accounts can hurt your score. But once you've opened the accounts, you've done the damage. You can't repair it by shutting the account, and you may actually make things worse.

The credit score looks at the difference be-

tween your available credit and what you're using. Shut down accounts, and your total available credit shrinks, making your balances loom larger, which typically hurts your score. The score also tracks the length of your credit history. Shutting older accounts can also make your credit history look younger than it actually is, which can hurt your score. Rather than closing accounts, pay down your credit card debt. That's something that actually can and usually will improve your score.

### **MYTH: Checking your FICO score can hurt your credit.**

Unfortunately, I heard this one from a mortgage broker who is otherwise pretty smart. He was confused about which type of inquiries hurt your score and which don't. Applying for new credit is generally what hurts your score. Ordering a copy of your own credit report or credit score doesn't count. Those mass inquiries made by credit card lenders, who are trying to decide whether to send you an offer for a pre-approved card, also aren't going to hurt you, either -- unless you actually take them up on their offers. If you want to minimize the damage from credit inquiries, make sure that when you shop for a loan you do so in a fairly short period of time. The FICO score treats multiple inquiries in a 14-day period as just one inquiry and ignores all inquiries made within 30 days prior to the day the score is computed. For most people, one inquiry will generally knock no more than 5 points off a score (and scores typically run from 300 to 850, so that's not a big percentage).

Most scores represent the following:

## FICO\* Credit Score and Credit Rating

Credit Grade.	High Score	Low Score
A+ (Best Rates)	800	740
A	739	620
A-	619	600
B	599	580
C	579	550
D (Worst Rates)	549	500

*\* FICO represents Fair Isaac Company. Other Risk Agencies provide similar scores. Most Lenders use the middle of three reported scores.*

### MYTH: Credit counseling will hurt your score as much as a bankruptcy.

The current FICO formula ignores any reference to credit counseling that may be in your file. That's been true for the last three years, after researchers at Fair, Isaac, the company that created the FICO scoring system, noticed that people getting credit counseling didn't default on their debts any more often than anyone else.

Your ability to get a loan could still be hurt by credit counseling, however. Your current lenders may report you as late, because you're not paying what you originally owed or because your credit counselor isn't sending your payments in on time. Late payments do hurt your credit score.

Lenders consider other factors besides credit scores in making their decisions, as well. The factors they look at can vary widely. Most want to know your income, for example. Some want to know how much savings you have or whether you're a homeowner. Some will find credit counseling disturbing, while others see it as a good sign. Such things as loan structuring and credit enhancements can make a tremendous difference in loan approvals.

The Banks who don't like credit counseling generally treat its enrollees the same as if they had filed for Chapter 13 bankruptcy. Chapter 13 is the kind of bankruptcy that requires a repayment plan and is looked at somewhat more favorably than Chapter 7, which allows you to erase many of your debts. You might still be able to qualify for a loan from one of these lenders, although your interest rates will almost certainly be higher than if you had perfect credit.

If you plan to get a loan and especially a mortgage soon, and you're not already behind on your debts, it's probably smart to steer clear of credit counseling. If you're already in trouble, however, a good credit counseling agency might be able to help you get back on track.

### MYTH: Your FICO isn't the only score you need to check.

This came from lenders who thought the FICO score is offered by only one of the three credit bureaus: Equifax.

In reality, all three of the bureaus offer FICO credit scores using the formula developed by Fair, Isaac, but they each give the scores a different name. At Equifax, the FICO is known as the Beacon credit score. At TransUnion, it's called Empirica. At Experian, it goes by the unwieldy title of "Experian/Fair, Isaac Risk Model." Complicating matters further is that you'll probably have three different scores from the three different bureaus, largely because the bureaus don't all share the same data. One bureau may list more accounts for you than another, for example, and the differences (in types of accounts, payment histories, credit limits and balances) will be reflected in the score that bureau computes for you.

Because of those differences, it does make sense to pull and examine your credit reports from all three bureaus before you apply for big loans. Many banks take the middle score from the three bureaus when making their decisions, so fixing errors in all three reports before you shop for a loan is smart.

When it comes to comparing your scores, however, you may be stuck. Equifax is so far the only bureau that makes it easy for consumers to get the same FICO score that lenders see. The scores typically provided to consumers by Experian and TransUnion aren't FICO scores, and they're different from the scores these bureaus provide to lenders.

But the ways you improve your credit score are the same in any case: Correct errors. Pay your bills on time. Pay down your debt. And apply for credit sparingly. ■

# Got Allergy?

By DR. HUSNA RAOOF



The reason is dust mites - those tiny bugs that live in linen and pillowcases and feed on your dead skin and cause problems when you press your face into them. Rather than being an insect, dust mite are actually spiders and an average bed will contain about 100,000 to 10 million of them.

Your bed is especially inviting to them. Dust mites love warm, humid places and not only that your bed is also an all-you-can-eat buffet. Sadly for us allergy to dust mite can make life miserable. Studies have linked dust mite allergy with seasonal allergy (hayfever). The constant exposure to dust mite might cause chronic inflammation, making sufferers more susceptible when pollen season comes around.

## What is Allergy?

The term allergy is used to describe a response within the body to a substance that is not necessarily harmful. This can lead to a reaction that causes symptoms (itching, wheezing, runny nose and headaches). Allergy is very common and affects one in four of the population at some time in their lives. Half of those that are affected are children.

Common allergen include; pollen from plants, house dust mites, moulds, pets, insects like bees and wasps, industrial and household chemicals, latex, medicines, and foods such as milk, eggs, nuts, and fruits.

An allergic person's immune sees allergens as a damaging substance and releases an antibody (IgE) to attack the substance. This in turn causes blood cells to release more chemicals (one of which is Histamine), leading to a full-blown allergy.

## What can be done about it?

A new mattress or pillow isn't the answer, since they already come with dust mites living in them. The solution is allergen proof encasement (zippered) made of vinyl or tightly woven fabric that won't allow dust mite or their faeces through. Once the encasement is on there is no need to replace or wash it on a regular basis. Make sure that pillows, mattresses and the box spring are all covered. Washing bed sheet once a week in hot water (more than 55 degree C) is also important.

Vacuum the entire house once a week to get rid mites that might be in your carpet. Reducing the amount of carpeting might also be an option. Allow plenty of ventilation, so open your windows; oxygen is good for you anyway. Remember dust mites prefer humid environments, there for use air conditioners or dehumidifiers. When it's too dry the mites shrivel and die.

If you have pets keep their sleeping place far from your room and let them out of the house as much as possible. Mites can easily hitch rides in your pet's fur and feed on your pets' dead skin too.

## How do I treat my allergy?

The best way to handle an allergy is to avoid what is causing it. If hayfever is the problem avoid going out when the pollen count is high. With dust mites just follow the out lines mentioned earlier. Yet often allergens can not be avoided or what is causing the allergy can not be determined. For that medication might need to be taken. Anti-histamines and steroids are usually given, but for those who are concerned about the long-term affects of these medicines, there are other ways that might alleviate allergies.

Vitamin C is natural anti-histamine, so eat citrus fruits, strawberries, peppers, kiwi fruits and cherries. Magnesium can help eliviate constricted airways. Foods that have Magnesium are spinach, avocados, almonds, barley, buckwheat, sunflower seeds, pumpkinseeds, chocolate, oysters and Brazil nuts. Quercetin reduces inflammation and also prevents release of histamine. Eating cabbage, garlic, apples, grapes, cranberries, pears, onions, spinach and grapefruit can boost your Quercetin levels.

## Allergy busting foods.

**GINGER** – A natural antihistamine and decongestant. It may also provide a measure of relief from allergy symptoms by dilating constricted bronchial tubes.

**EYEBRIGHT** – Helpful for conditions involving mucous membranes. Used for congestion, coughs and hayfever. Works well when combined with Stinging Nettle.

**HONEY** – Has long been used to prevent hayfever. The small amounts of pollen found in the honey will often desensitise the eater to the allergic effect of local pollen. For this reason, its best to eat honey produced locally.

**FENUGREEK** - Has a soothing effect on the respiratory system. Drinking one cup of fenugreek seed tea a day may help hayfever sufferers.

**WASABI** – It has been used traditionally by Japanese to treat hayfever. They recommend one teaspoon full of wasabi everyday until symptoms disappear. Then after that few teaspoons a month to keep the hayfever from coming back.

**GINKGO** – Chinese have been using ginkgo to treat allergies for centuries. Both the back and the leaves can be used.

## What to do if you just can't sleep

By DR. MAZHAR IQBAL

An astonishing one in three people suffer from frequent or chronic insomnia, and most of us have occasional problems in nodding off. It can have devastating effects on the careers and personal lives of sufferers. Research has shown that insomniacs effectively work only half the hours of their better sleeping colleagues. They are also the cause of twice as many car accidents as healthy sleepers.

The main cause of insomnia, and the root of the solution, is lifestyle. According to "The Healing Power of Sleep (Gaia Books)" "Insomnia is not an illness, it is a symptom of bad lifestyle". Stress, anxiety, money worries, anger: there are all sorts of problems that keep people awake. And then there is eating badly and working too late. Some people will work until 10pm, go to bed an hour later and expect to sleep. Too much caffeine, nicotine and not enough exercise will not aid sleep either. We all tend to have the most appalling lifestyles.

Sleeping pills can be effective at a time of crisis, but side and withdrawal effects mean that should not be seen as a long-term sleep aid. Aromatherapy, homeopathy and herbal remedies will all provide an effective natural cure for insomnia in some cases. The herbs commonly associated with sleep are camomile, passiflora, valerian and skullcap. Melatonin – a synthetic version of the hormone naturally produced by the pineal gland inside the brain – is a wonder drug that is becoming increasingly popular in treating sleep disorders (among many other complaints). It is currently available in the United States, but not all over Europe, which explains the increasing number of grumpy Englishmen.

If you want a natural solution, you will need to make some lifestyle changes. Try to reduce the stress in your life and cut down your stimulant intake. Establish a regular, night-time routine: have a warm bath and hot milk (the heating of milk releases natural, opiate – like substances) before settling down. Go to bed at the same time every night and get out the same time every morning. Avoid cat-napping during the day, which can interrupt regular sleeping patterns. It can take up to a month, but the important thing is to programme your body clock for deep regular sleep.

If that fails then here are some more general "Tips for Kips".

- **Invest in Rest:** A bad bed can lead to sleep loss, fatigue and back pain. A study by Dr. Chris Idaikowski, author of *Learn to sleep well* found on average people got 42 minutes, more sleep per night when they replaced their old bed.
- **Schedule Sleep:** Establish a routine. Erratic sleeping times won't enable you to get the most from your slumber. If you can't get to sleep till the early hours, then don't try until the following night. Six hours sleep is ample for many people.
- **A Time and a place:** You might think, "warm and cuddly", but when it comes to sleep, cooler is better. A room temperature of around 16°C (65°F) is ideal. Sleeping next to a hot partner is supposedly the equivalent of sleeping next to a 100 watt electric fire. Open the window.
- **Watch what you drink:** Caffeine provides your body with too much stimulation stopping you drifting into the most restful sleep.
- **Gym and Tonic:** If you're fatigued during the afternoon, don't reach for those "energy foods" at the cafeteria. Cut out the high-carb lunches and go to the gym instead. Daily exercise in the middle of the day can boost energy in the afternoons.
- **If all else fails:** If you're having real trouble sleeping you may be suffering from a condition such as nocturnal myoclonus (restless leg syndrome). There are websites available where you can fill in a quick questionnaire such as: [www.londonsleep-centre.com](http://www.londonsleep-centre.com). Score highly and it may be time to visit your physician.



# No god BUT god

B O O K R E V I E W

BY REZA ASLAN

**R**eza Aslan, lucidly charts the growth of Islam from Muhammad's model community in Medina, when it was a center of egalitarian social reform, through the chaotic contest to define the faith after the Prophet's death within his novel *No God but God*. Within generations, seven hundred thousand hadith, accounts of Muhammad's words and deeds, were in circulation, but many fabricated by individuals who sought to legitimize their own particular beliefs. Out of this muddle was born the primacy of the ulema, Islam's clerical establishment. The ulema, in Aslan's view, foreclosed Qur'anic interpretation, detoured from the Medinan ideas and obscured Islam under a thicket of legalistic decrees. Fifteen centuries after Muhammad, Islam has reached the age at which Christianity underwent its reformation; Islam's renewal, Aslan attests, "is already here." However, both modernizers and their "fundamentalist" opposites call themselves reformers and the victory of the former is not assured.

Aslan has studied religions at Santa Clara University, Harvard University and the University of California, Santa Barbara. He holds

an MFA in fiction from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, where he also visited assistant professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. His work has appeared in *USA Today*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as well as a number of academic journals.

Aslan's introduction to the history of Islam, which also devotes several chapters to Islam's place in the contemporary world, tackles its subject with serious and well-informed scholarship. But, miracle of miracles, it's actually quite fun to read. Beginning with an exploration of the religious climate in the years before the Prophet's Revelation, Aslan traces the story of Islam from the Prophet's life and the so-called golden age of the first four caliphs all the way through European colonization and subsequent independence. Aslan sees religion as a story, and he tells it that way, bringing each successive century to life with the kind of vivid details and like-you-were-there, present-tense narration that makes popular history popular. Even so, the depth and breadth may make a heavy read for some who might better enjoy Karen Armstrong's shorter, if less authoritative, *Islam* (2000). ■



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