

al-badr

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Published on behalf of Hammad Lakhani, President of RUMS

Thought of the day.

In the modern world Islam is seen as many things, but rarely is it viewed as a source of inspiration and enlightenment. Though it is a force of enlightenment and it is not only verses of the Quran that testify to that fact, but also the great body of scholarship produced during the Middle Ages. While Europe was in the midst of darkness, it was the Muslims, spurred on by the light of their new Deen... who picked up the torch of scholarship and science. It was the Muslims who preserved the knowledge of antiquity, elaborated upon it, and finally, passed it on to Europe.

Although every people earn what they do and pass it on, it is important for us to learn about and appreciate the contributions of the Islamic civilization by the early Muslims. Colonialism, the institution of the Western educational model, along with Eurocentrism often portrays Islam as backwards, incompatible with science and technology and anti-educational. Muslim school children never learn of their glorious past and often the only thing passed on to them is the inferiority complex of the generation before them. From the past we can learn from our mistakes and use the analysis of those great examples before us as role models to enrich us in the future.

In the seventh century A.D., the prophet Muhammad (SAW) was sent to the people of Arabia. Within a decade of his death the Muslims had conquered all of the Arabian Peninsula. Within a century, Islam had spread from Al-Andalus in Spain to the borders of China. Islam unified science, theology, and philosophy. Muslims were commanded to study, seek knowledge, and learn and benefit from others' experiences by Allah (SWT) in the holy

Quran and by the prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the Sunnah. It was this that inspired the Muslims to great heights in sciences, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, art and architecture.

Muslim scholars began obtaining Greek treatises and started their study and translation into Arabic a few centuries after the Hijrah (622 A.D.) They critically analysed, collated, corrected and supplemented substantially the Greek science and philosophy. After this period began what is known as the Golden Age of Islam, which lasted for over two centuries. It is here we find many of the great scientists of Islam who literally left behind hundreds and thousands of books on the various branches of science.

Think about it

Look WITHIN

In my 'president's interview' in Al-Badr, I finished with the words "aspire to inspire before you expire". As tempting as it was to talk about how presidency has inspired me to be better, or to mention some of the great Islamic personalities of the past, I want to take this opportunity to talk about someone who really did take the above quote to heart throughout his life. My Grandfather.

My Grandad (May Allah SWT have mercy on him) in the late 1960s took the brave decision to leave the safe, warm and beautiful shores of Mauritius to come to the risky, cold and grey streets of London, for a better and more fulfilled life for his family.

Alongside trying to provide for his family and securing a property, at every given opportunity he'd aim to serve for the sake of Allah (SWT)'s Deen. He was involved in the establishments of Madressahs, seeing the need for tarbiyyah in the community and taking time out of his busy schedule to teach young children. But his striving did not stop there. He continued to help push the others in the North London community for better facilities for Muslims - establishing Muslim community centres and Musallahs - striving to serve in any way that he could be it acting as a caretaker or cleaner to taking the roles of Muezzin and Imam.

The legacy he has left today is that the hundreds of those small children he helped teach are now practicing grown adults, in charge of the very centres and Musallahs he helped to establish. He was involved in this work up until he passed away and he always did it with a smile on his face too.

Sometimes we don't need to look far for inspiration. Sometimes we just need to look within and we'll find light.

Danyaal Sassa

LIFE as a medic fresher

As I walked into the Cruciform for the first time as a medical student, I knew all my hard work had paid off; Alhamdulillah I'd finally made it. It's strange how in the years leading up to university, it always felt as though studying medicine was a very distant affair; although not far off in chronological terms, I was so preoccupied with the seemingly endless entrance exams and interviews I could sometimes forget the end product of it all!

University life has definitely been an enjoyable experience so far, from meeting a huge variety of people from all over the world to joining in with activities and societies you hadn't tried before. At UCL there was no shortage of societies and clubs and I found myself joining a number of groups including cycling and hockey as well as of course the ISOC. From matches and rides every week to ISOC brothers' socials it's been great fun and the club community is a fantastic support network too, particularly the RUMS Islamic Society in my case.

There are such a large number of events going on at any one time you're spoilt for choice, but it's definitely worth getting involved in something if you can; it has to be one of the best ways to get to know new people and make some friends for life! I was lucky enough to take part in fundraising for the ISOC charity week this year, which involved selling doughnuts and bucket collections on campus and in East London- in comic costumes for some of us. If you look at the promotional videos you'll see just how much fun it was whilst raising money for a worthy cause! Now roll on Islamic Awareness Week!

Rateb Katmeh

What Am I doing?

"He who has in his heart, a grain of arrogance will not enter Paradise." (Tabarani)

A wise professor once told me that many many years ago, in a sea of people, one could not point out the religious scholar or the academician or the leader from anybody else. This is due to the fact that their intentions for their pursuit of knowledge were so pure that even a smidgen of knowledge gained from their efforts humbled them ever so powerfully. Thus, they dressed the same as everyone else and acted like everyone else. Everyone knew of them without them having to self-market themselves as having abundant knowledge. It just came naturally - without effort - as they

"...arrogance in your heart will have wasted all your efforts..."

humbled themselves in front of their Lord for the gifts of knowledge that He had bestowed to them.

Unfortunately, time and technology has relinquished the modesty aspect of acquiring knowledge.

re YOU

Students go to university so that they will be able to show off their degrees, professors delve themselves into their research so that they will be able to boast about their findings to their colleagues and more often than not, people volunteer or do good to be recognised and be praised by others around them. How fast we forget that all these experiences and all this knowledge are gifts from Allah (swt). Yet we can stand there with arrogance and say 'Yes, I am proud of my achievement. I worked hard so I do deserve this recognition.' This sentence full of I's could have easily been replaced with 'Alhamdulillah' or 'MashaAllah, I am thankful for this blessing.' And in a heartbeat, we are reminded of where we stand and who we are.

Yes, many spectacular things have happened in past years as man advanced from telephones to mobile phones and from computers to portable laptops. Who knows where we will go next? But with every step forward, we have to look at the carnage that we have left behind - such as our lack of compassion and humility. Acts of kindness have been ransacked and become nothing more than a publicity stunt. Large companies are spending more money on marketing their CSR efforts than actually investing in their own CSR projects and students are volunteering their time to feel superior from their colleagues instead of genuinely wanting to help out.

When I was working in a publication company, one of my fellow writers and my boss was having a disagreement on which act of kindness was superior to the other: Man A - A man who was poor but gave GBP20 to a man in need, or Man B - a millionaire who gave GBP1,000,000 to help the poor. My boss went for the latter and said with a million pounds, more people would benefit thus the impact of the action is greater. But one of my colleagues begged to differ and said that it would be harder for the poor man to give because he had nothing,

while the millionaire had everything. Thus, his act of kindness is greater. Also looking at their intentions, the millionaire would have had selfish reasons to give that much money away. My boss replied, "All actions are underlined with selfish reasons. It is who they impact that matters."

At that point, I was floored with disappointment. If all of humanity thought the same way as my boss, I do not know what the world would come to. We have to get our intentions straight if we want to achieve anything in this life and in the Hereafter. Whether it be a small goal or a big feat, we have to remember who we are doing it for. So focus good efforts solely in pleasing Allah (swt), and inshaAllah He will bring more abundance to us than we can ever imagine. Do good to show off - and unfortunately, nothing will come to you as reward. And contrary to popular belief, no one has the right to have 'bragging rights'. Even if you had saved the whole of Africa from starvation, a little bit of arrogance in your heart will have wasted all your efforts.

In the Quran it states that one characteristic of those who enter Jannah is those who give even if it is hard for them to give. And in the eyes of Allah (swt), no matter how much you give, it is the intention that counts. How good will the world be if everyone just gave for Allah (swt), without any selfish intentions of their own? Talking from personal experience, efforts to please human beings will never fulfill you anyway because no recognition from your peers will ever be big enough to fill that ego. But if it is Allah (swt)'s recognition that you seek, all pain, sweat and time that you invested in doing good will materialise into satisfaction and peace in your heart.

And that is what I call inspired action.

A.F

**“And we have not
sent you except as a
Mercy to mankind...”
(21:7)**

The leaves did wilt,
the ground fell dry,
the buds shrank back,
from the cloudless sky.

The soil darkened;
The mighty seas,
(as the rivers choked)
stood still, at ease.

Petals in buds,
to blossom hurried,
when, strangled by thirst,
in their buds, were buried.

Then came a single blessed day,
after many a lengthy year,
for from the skies were caused to fall,
the long-awaited drops of care.

The earth awakened back to life,
and the admonished sea,
both drank for long in thankfulness,
for their Lord’s infinite Mercy.

And still the rain fell long and hard,
forming a pure spring of mercy,
which would flow through all the earth,
for all of eternity.

Then seeds of paradise’s fruits,
would shine out deep red as ruby,
when watered by that shining spring,
Perfected by Allah’s mercy.

A.Pen

INSPIRING POTENTIAL

When I was first asked to write an article about ‘Inspiration,’ I really didn’t know what I should focus on. There have been some real decision making points along my journey that have been inspired from the experiences in my path to Islam to what I have studied. Rather than focussing on either of these, I have chosen to concentrate on things in the greater context of humanity, its condition and its relevance to inspiration, insha’Allah.

Inspiration can come from many different backgrounds such as a trauma nurse I once read about at the age of 19 years. Claire Bertschinger dedicated much of her life to aid work abroad, despite being dyslexic at a time when little appreciation of the condition existed. She often flew into conflict zones or famine situations, and dealt with some of the most extreme human health conditions imaginable. Her dedication to preserving human life was compelling; whether it was in Afghanistan during the Soviet War or in Ethiopia during the 1984 famine, her commitment to saving life or providing comfort whenever possible before death was very humbling.

It was actually an important step in confirming my decision to study medicine, as I wanted then to experience this type of hands on charitable medicine. Naturally, I would meet many students with similar aspirations once I started, many of who are cherished friends and colleagues to this day.

Closer to home I’ve had the honour of meeting Muslims who are very patient, educated and who exude warmth from their hearts, even before I entered the dean - something which seems to be disappearing as Muslims are now on the defensive much of the time.

Life can throw many challenges and a person's generosity is tested when circumstances are almost unbearable and severe hardship pushes them to the edge of losing hope. When these people still retain their compassion, it is a testament to their nature and character. When such people continue to put others before themselves, I'm always amazed at the generosity in spirit and steadfastness they retain.

I came across this when reading about the developments in east Africa during the recent famine. The Dadaab camp in Kenya had at that point reached 5 times its capacity with multiple families sharing but one shelter. The refugees who had settled in Dadaab years before this recent famine, to escape the conflict in Somalia, were still living in absolute poverty. But now crowds of desperate people are arriving, their gaunt faces telling of severe tribulations, asking only to save their children who have wasted away in their arms.

The refugees who had been living in the camp for years were collecting donations from others who already have next to nothing in order to provide for those newly arriving who literally had nothing. A tingle of shame I felt in my heart at that point. But this is an example of the many struggles we can impact upon should we choose to do so.

Another struggle which is very close to me and the hearts of many Muslims and non Muslims alike is the Palestinian cause. Even in the midst of all their struggles, this community never ends to surprise and move me in their ingenuity, their commitment to their work and each other, their strength in education and their strength in character. For all the years under an oppressive occupying force, the strongest ally in their struggle has been their voices and the pen (or the keypad). The patient debates and protests of many Palestinians, young and old, have paid off massively. Education by far is their greatest tool.

Is it not an example to the whole Ummah about the importance of education? Education which leads to greater understanding and existence in this diverse melting pot we live in.

It is not only the worldly education I emphasize but also Islamic education should lay heavy in our hearts and heavy in our actions so we are looked upon with inspiration. We should be the best and most just in this ever-growing human community. You merely have to scratch the surface to realise education is valued incredibly highly in Islam. One piece being the saying of the Prophet (PBUH):

"The best form of worship is the pursuit of knowledge"

Even though we are implored to seek knowledge, 70- 80% of the Ummah cannot read!

In Nablus, in occupied West Bank, 6/10 families live in poverty but a staggering 90% go onto university from schools of 50 students or more in a single classroom. Something the UK at 40% is slightly lacking on. Their dedication to Education and Justice in a terribly unjust situation is nothing more than inspiring.

But for all our brilliance and resilience, the human condition is one which has the potential to cause great harm, oppression and conflict. Is it not the angels who testify to this?

"Are You going to place therein one who would make mischief in it and shed blood; while we celebrate Your praise, and we glorify Your holiness?"

Yet Allah says "I surely know which you do not know."

Despite our potentially destructive nature, we can triumph in good and struggle through the hardships to a better end. Should we sit back and highlight the downfalls? No. We should be like those Somalis, those Palestinians and those aid workers who struggle every single day for a better future.

I, then ask you to reflect on your own inspiring experiences so you can be a point of inspiration for one another, at the very least.

Keep your hearts open for the wider community so they can see the real beauty of Islam and that they too may take those cautious little steps towards the true inspirer - Allah (swt) the most Gracious, most Merciful.

Ionescu

The Five Top Qualities

By BeeWorker

If I asked you, who and what inspires you in life today I'm sure the average Londoner would name a number of celebrities and well-known figures like Richard Branson or Bill Gates. Perhaps the average Al Badr reader (yes you!) will think of our beloved Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) as well as the numerous scholars of our contemporary era. As Muslims in the West we have to appreciate the outstanding Muslim role models who are striving to be an inspiration for the rest of us to achieve a legacy for our world and our Ummah at large. The past couple of years have taken me on a journey through meeting and learning from inspiring people, and here the word 'inspiring' shouldn't be taken as a vague temporal feeling of Imaan rush which, following that short period of time, leaves you no less better in actions than before (that's just something that came into your ear and out the other side!). There's no doubt the Muslim community is in dire need of leadership and guiding figures to make us reach our full potential, whilst we complain there are few leaders - there's no shortage of amazing people and events which have taken place in the history of Islamic civilisation.

Here I draw on the lessons I've learnt from travelling to global settings, meeting and working with some of these Muslims and even non-Muslims that continue to inspire me in my day to day work whilst not forgetting the best of our examples can come from the Seerah and our pious predecessors. I hope some of this inspiration rubs off on you to do something great for the Ummah too...

1. Have Conviction in Your Cause

One of the first notable traits of inspiring figures I've been surrounded by over the past couple of years is that these people have true conviction in their cause; whether it is in establishing an

organisation, studying to deliver knowledge or alleviating the needs of others - it has required the motto we call at ProductiveMuslim 'sincere intentions and work hard'. These individuals have strived, persisted, driven, challenged and fulfilled this motto in its entirety by their consistent efforts each day to their cause. I could name many figures here that I've been fortunate to meet and work with, including Sr Nai'ma Roberts who is an author and acclaimed editor, or the likes of Sarah Joseph. Others include our profound scholars, many of whom UCL get the blessing of often hosting, such as Sh. Haitham Al Haddad, Sh. Muhammad Al Shareef amongst many others you've probably Youtubed at some point this week! What is clear about these people is their conviction in their cause. Ultimately working for the Sake of Allah (swt) and this Ummah can have no better reward and requires a renewal of our conviction in whatever we do every day of our life.

2. Ready to Embrace New Terrains?

Being ready to embrace new territory is probably one of the most difficult steps to take yet this I've found has developed and made these inspiring figures who they are today. In their willingness to go outside of their comfort zone (and beyond the academic bubble sometimes!) and embrace new learning experiences to help them get better at what they are doing is a lesson for us all. In particular I've watched non-existent organisations flourish into leading providers of services much needed in the Muslim community. But they didn't all do it because they had the skills, knowledge or talent already in place! Rather it was the 'let's dive in and swim as you learn' moments and attitude that has shaped them into people of integrity, experience and expertise in their fields. Here I want to ask you to think about what have you been afraid of accomplishing that you couldn't do without some learning, training and mentoring from others?

"..inspiration about thinking BIG.."

of Inspirational People

3. Be Innovative and Creative

In spring 2011 I met some noble laureates whilst in the 'Education Without Borders' conference in Dubai; the premise of this great global platform bringing together students who want to make a difference through using knowledge of their discipline taught me that sometimes you need to be inspired by your own studies and in order to do that it takes innovation and creativity which are beyond the bounds of academia. I met ordinary students (much like yourselves) with excellent ideas and plans to solve some of the world's most pressing issues which inspired me. One particular person I met whilst there was a man called Alain Roberts (aka Spiderman) - this man had climbed the world's tallest building without any safety harness, and despite being called 'crazy' he still did it! You might wonder: what kind of inspiration did I get from him?! It was the act of him striving to reach the top of that building as we watched which was in itself an act of courage and bravery needed in ordinary folks like us.

4. Have Visionary Leadership

Many of my fellow CW lovers will vouch for the excellent work of Islamic Relief as an international NGO. It was probably back in 2009 when I fell in love with the organisation and found the figures behind this organisation, which continues to inspire me as I walk into the office every morning. Islamic Relief began with one doctor, Dr Hany El-Banna and his vision to serve the world's most needy people. He started with a 20p donation which is now a charity that brings in millions each year. What I really want to focus on is the visionary leadership Dr Hany and his colleagues had in setting up IR at the time, they simply wouldn't settle for second best - they wanted to be a leading organisation and thus we can take lessons of inspiration about Thinking BIG in whatever we want to accomplish. Indeed Allah (swt) is the One Who facilitates all great outcomes.

5. Don't Quit Before You've Started!

Resilience and sheer persistence is the quality

I have come to admire most about those who have inspired me, in particular a young person who against all odds strives to achieve their goals was a source of inspiration for me every day at UCL. I realised through my degree discipline, that resilience and persistence led to the success of not only contemporary figures we know in world politics like Abraham Lincoln or Malcolm X, but rather our very history of Islam growing and spreading around the world required resilience to hostile forces and persistence in sharing the beautiful message of Islam which the Prophets (may peace be upon them all) had embodied. If resilience and never giving up moulded them into successful people, who are we to quit in our mission even before we've started?

In summary, these five qualities and traits of inspiring people I have met on my travels have exposed me to 'wider horizons' some may say, which is why I love to venture upon new surroundings and meet people from all walks of life in this world. Yet it's important for me to note here, we don't really need to go far to find inspiration as often they are on our own doorstep. Making the best of directing that energy, enthusiasm and lessons from those people and events in our life will bih'n'illah make us productive members in this world and bearers of success in the Hereafter.

TO HIJAB OR NOT TO HIJAB...

Let me start by saying, I love my hijab. I love covering my hair. I love the different coloured scarves. I love discovering new halal chic. I love that I am now part of the crew. I love that it protects my hair from wind and cold damage. I love that I don't have to do my hair in the morning. I love that it keeps my ears warm. Most of all, I love that it labels me so bluntly: I am a Muslim woman: strong, independent and liberated.

I have often read about how women come to wearing the hijab and the stories have always touched me. However, I have also realised that sometimes girls and women are perhaps afraid to voice certain issues that arise with hijab and modesty. By writing my story, I hope to reach out to Muslimahs that are having trouble with similar problems, and reassure them, that contrary to the popular saying, help is not on its way. In fact, it is there already waiting for you to take it. My inspiration didn't come to me, it was always there, like a gift waiting for me to unwrap and embrace and use forever.

So, a bit of background: back in year 5, my sister; a year younger than me, was part of an assembly on Islam, and for it, she wore a hijab to enact the practice of Salah. After the assembly, she just never took it off, Alhamdulillah. My father could not hide his pleasure - his young daughter, wearing a hijab without any direct instruction - leading him to nudge me to start to cover. A couple of months later, I began to cover my hair and being so young, this was not a huge transition. At this age, people were considerably less judgemental and I eased into wearing hijab without any difficulty. Forward a year later: high school begins. Bigger buildings, harder classes, more people. Naturally, this is a time of change, both physical and emotional. We're surrounded by people of new backgrounds and religions,

we're trying to deal with the new standards of fashion and appearance and maybe even have mixed feelings about that girl/guy in science class. Even so, my first few years of high school were a breeze; I loved the work (I am a bit of a nerd) and I had a great group of

friends – wearing hijab was not a challenge. In fact, I hardly noticed it.

The problem arose when I hit 15. I felt grown; part of the oldest group of students in the school, mature (or so I thought!), studying for GCSEs and for the first time, thinking about university and careers. At this point, I tended to my appearance more than ever and my social networking profiles were full of pictures of me without hijab, trying to impress others and attract compliments. Although I was keen to learn about Islam, my indifference towards my hijab was incredibly normal to me and I carried on in this way for 2 years, failing to see how callously I was betraying the very essence and principal of hijab, may Allah (swt) forgive me for my wrongdoings!

In my final years of A-Levels I had a slight change of heart. Looking back now, I can see that Allah (swt) had blessed me with good company and I failed to take advantage. I found myself amongst a crowd of beautiful, smart, funny women, most of whom were observing hijab. Subconsciously, I was in awe; this was the first time I had experienced being around practising women who seemed to love wearing the hijab. Their love for wearing it seemed to rub off on me and I began to feel more connected to wearing the hijab, manifesting also in the way I dressed. I was content but perhaps not informed enough, and unfortunately it wasn't to last.

Before starting university, I was at an impasse. Even now, I am not sure why I took steps back. I still had some pictures on Facebook with and without hijab, I still attended weddings with my hair styled immaculately and sometimes the length of my top didn't always match the modesty of hijab. Consequently, for the time first

in 9 years, I stopped wearing my hijab permanently. I started university in this way and did not feel unhappy about my decision. As soon as I removed my hijab, I got a haircut, styled it every morning and revelled in all of the new attention I was getting. My Aunties loved the new look, as they felt the hijab warded off potential marriage proposals; old friends flattered me and new people always noticed and complimented me on voluminous my hair always looked. Just as a hijab should, my hair defined me and ridiculed me with confidence as I exulted in all of the praise.

I will always believe that sixth form was the time irreplaceable friendships were made and university was the time I found my potential partner. Alhamdulillah, my parents agreed for me to marry a man I had chosen and I spent the next two years planning the wedding, honeymoon and the future life that I was going to experience. I just couldn't wait! Everything in my life was running according to my own arrogant plan. I felt like I was in control and almost magically, I was receiving, in abundance, all the things I had dreamed of. Why then, just as I felt that things were going perfectly, was there an irritating, constant, persistent feeling inside of me? Why did it keep repeating that this was not the right way and that I did not deserve the kindness my parents had shown towards me? Months went on, and I began to sense that none of my actions had any barakah, my relationship with my parents was crumbling for no obvious reason and my University work was immensely affected. My Salah rarely had sincerity and I was apathetic towards my Deen. This so-called fault-

less life I had built for myself in the past two years and all the plans that I had made for the future all came down to a deep unhappiness. If everything was going as I had hoped, why did I feel so depressed, hopeless and miserable? I had never experienced the feeling that nothing in my life was blessed.

The helplessness and emptiness I felt was the inspiration I needed to wear hijab. I believed that wearing hijab would protect me, lead me to acquire the knowledge I needed to empower myself and bring barakah and the mercy of Allah 'aza w jal back into my life. Now, every time I went out, I felt something was missing and it was at this time that my discontent was at its peak. Coincidentally, by Allah (swt)'s grace, it was also the same time that I saw a very close friend had rediscovered her religion, learning and reading with a thirst that I had never seen in her before. SubhanAllah how Allah (swt) has truly blessed me with good company Alhamdulillah! She once read me an ayah from Surah Ar Ra'd which says "Truly, God does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Quran 13:11) SubhanAllah my golden ticket! It fit my situation so entirely! - The lack of noor in my life would not change until I changed myself. I could not be successful in all my endeavours if I wasn't successful in my Deen. I would not be truly content if I did not constantly remind myself of the Creator. I realised that my misery and sadness were a result of my own wrongdoings.

The first step in implementing this realisation was wearing the hijab. It meant that I starkly labelled myself again. But this one piece of cloth brought with it countless changes – my Father was so proud (again!) my colleagues were confused and impressed, my Salah had more khushoo', and most importantly, I felt hayaa. The routine of my life now is extremely different to what it was six months ago but Alhamdulillah, my University work is better, my parents are happier with me and we have planned to finally perform my nikah this year inshaAllah, instead of waiting around and procrastinating. Additionally, my amazing bond with my brother and sisters has improved, I am able to control my ill



speech and anger and my taqwa and consciousness of Allah (swt) has increased, protecting me and guarding me from sin InshAllah.

If you are fearful or confused about hijab, just remember, only good can come from it. It is there as a gift to protect you and demand respect. It is part of the road to Jannah. My advice would be to set a date in the very near future and then just do it. Forget about whether you have read enough about the hijab or trying to figure out if you're ready. The truth is, you are ready. Any doubts are just amplified by Shaitaan. Have faith and trust in Allah 'aza w jal and take the plunge. You will see your life transform before your very eyes inshaAllah.

Allah does not burden a soul except what it can bear. For it is what it has earned, and upon it is what it has made due. "Our Lord and Sustainer, do not condemn us if we forget or do wrong. Our Lord and Sustainer, do not put a burden on us like the burden You put on those who were before us. Our Lord and Sustainer, do not put a burden on us that we cannot endure. And blot out (our sins) and forgive us, and be gentle to us. You are our Protector. So help us against the rejectors." (Surah al-Baqarah ayah 286)

A Hijabi.

On Saturday afternoon, at around 2am whilst I was reading Quran, the home phone started to ring. I got up, put the Quran on the table and went to pick up the phone, however before I reached it, my father had woken up and picked up the phone, so I went to my parents room to enquire who it was. As I entered, I heard my Father say Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un. The phone call was from my Uncle and he wanted to inform us that my Grandmother on my Mother's side had passed away just a few minutes ago.

"Surely we belong to Allah and to Him shall we return"

My Mum started to cry and took the phone from my Dad. You see only a few weeks ago my parents had gone abroad to visit my Grandmother for this reason, she was quite old mashallah, approximately 90 and she had unfortunately become quite ill, mainly due to the natural effects of old age. On hearing this, I spent some time comforting my Mother, whilst she then rang my Aunties (her sisters) to inform them. I then kissed her on the forehead and went back to my room, where I made dua for my Grandmother, that Allah (swt) forgive her sins and grant her Paradise. After all she had a tough life, she lost her husband (my Grandfather), when she was only 60, she lost her son 10 years later due to cancer, and then only 2 years ago she lost her second eldest daughter to a sudden heart attack. Each time she had become weaker but never did she ever lose faith in Allah (swt), she never missed a prayer and as long as her mind allowed her there was never a minute where she did not stop making dhikr or reading the Quran.

Become the children of akhira not the children of dunya

Like most people of my generation who live in a different country to their grandparents, initially I didn't know them that well, even though my family and I used to go abroad almost every year to visit them, my relationship was always a somewhat 'typical' Western one, which consisted of a few uneasy hugs, kisses and two-lined

However, when I was about 14 I actually moved abroad, my Father's business required us to move and being a typical teenager with self-esteem 'issues' I was apprehensive about the idea of going to a completely different school especially considering I was not that fluent in the native language.

The first few months were somewhat difficult for me in terms of adjusting. However my Grandmother decided to stay with us for most of the time we lived there. This meant that naturally I started to develop a close relationship with her and every day before I went to school I would go to her room and kiss her on the forehead. In return she never stopped making dua for me and for my success.

The time I spent abroad was a turning point in my life, I started to change from the quite shy boy with low confidence to someone who became much more confident, much more strong, my Iman increased and I started to excel in almost everything I did including my studies. I can't speculate why this change happened, after all it was fate and all success is from Allah (swt), but my parents always told me (and I don't know if it's true) but they said that the sincere Dua of an elder can be very powerful, and I can't help feel that at least a little of my change was due to her Duas to Allah (swt). On a side note its depressing how bad nowadays in the world we treat our elders, nevertheless that's an article for another time.

So where was I? Oh yes, I returned to my room and after making Dua I lifted the Quran I had put down and started to read it. As I read my eyes began to water, but I continued till I finished the page I was on, and by chance I ended on Ayah-35 which translates as the following:

"Everyone is going to taste death, and we shall make a trial of you with evil and with good, and to Us you will be returned." (Surah Al Anbiya, ayah 35)

I started to cry. Not just at the remembrance of my Grandmother but also on the fact of how we forget what our final destination is on this Earth - the grave. Rich or poor, famous or infamous, loved or hated, celebrated or insulted, elevated or degraded, the one thing we cannot escape, the one thing that is certain is that a grave awaits us all.

The question is how often do we have this in our minds and our hearts when we act? Ask yourself honestly, when you perform an action in this Dunya or the hereafter? especially ask yourself that question when you are about to do something good, as we live in a world where 'to show' is what counts; as soon as someone does something seemingly 'good' it's on their Facebook profile in a flash. But putting that aside, how many of us have never missed a prayer; or when was the last time we picked up the Quran and by that I don't mean putting it up on a high shelf; or when was the last time we did not backbite or gossip; or when was the last time we were not rude to our parents; or when was the last time we stopped working for this world and started to sincerely work for the Akhirah?

We spend so much time competing for this Dunya, but everything in it, everything will come to an end but if you look at the Sahaba (RA), read how they competed for Akhirah, look how they never stopped trying to please Allah (swt), look at their faith. You all know the story of how Abu Bakr (RA) donated his entire wealth at the time of Tabouk, yes mashallah it was an act of generosity that can never be matched, but the real beauty of that story was his answer when the Rasool (saw) asked him what he left for his family? And he replied: 'Oh messenger of Allah, I have left Allah (swt) and his Rasool (saw) for them'. It was this level of iman they had, Abu Bakr (RA) realised in his heart that it was never him taking care of his family; it was Allah (swt).

Think carefully with your hearts about how much you do and like me you will cry as you realise, 'very little'. So my dear Brothers and Sisters I will return to my title.

Ali ibn Abi Talib (RA): "Verily, the Dunya is coming to an end and the Akhirah is coming to a beginning and they both have children. So be children of the Akhirah and don't be children of the Dunya."
[Related by Ibn al-Qayyim]

Anonymous

“The best of people

Bismillah.

The Muslim life is by no means difficult.

Many, today, may have a problem with the statement above and refute it with great passion: am I blind? Living as a Muslim now has never been so tough. Do I know Islam? It has too many obligations. Am I even from this Dunya? Temptations are everywhere. Perhaps the greatest evidence for this would be the number of Muslims who have willingly distanced themselves from their Deen.

What we forget, however, is that Islam is not something cheap. It is the result of strong faith, dedication, patience and strength of mind in the most profound sense that the world will never be a witness of again. The hearts and bodies of these people were tested, by Allah (swt) to the very limit and they succeeded in attaining the Pleasure of their Lord. They were none other than the companions of our beloved Prophet (sallallahu alaihi wasallam)- RadiAllahu anhum ajma'in.

“And the foremost to embrace Islam of the Muhajirun (those who migrated from Makkah to Madinah) and the Ansar (the citizens of al-Madinah who helped and gave aid to the muhajirun) and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success” (9:100)

What better examples to follow than those whose fate have already been foretold by Allah (swt)? Pleasure of Allah (swt) and Al-Jannah, two that we are created to aspire towards, the final destination we seek, is what constitutes ultimate success and the Companions (ra) have indeed been successful. Knowledge of how the Sahaba lived, what they accomplished, should be that

spark of fire that inspires us to do at least a tenth of the feats they achieved. The Muslims of today are in a position to look back at their history especially of the first generation, riddled with the best of people with the purest of hearts who endured the greatest of trials. Abu Bakr, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali ibn Abi Talib the 4 rightly guided Caliphs, are names we are familiar with, and are the most mentioned of them and the most honoured of them all because they possessed qualities that surpassed others. Of course they were humans, they weren't infallible, yet at every moment of their life after their declaration of shahadah, was a moment to live by and to take lessons from.

The worship of only One God, the call to social justice and reform, abandonment of shamelessness and indignity was alien to the society of Arab polytheists, whose expertise for many generations had been to cause bloodshed and promote filth. Despite such evil values entrenched in their society, the Companions of the Prophet (swt) were ready to sacrifice their all because their own hearts had been opened up to the real knowledge of who Allah (swt) is and what Allah (swt) expects from His slaves. Their love for Allah (swt) and His messenger is not comparable to our love, primarily because they had the privilege of being present when the revelation was sent down and to describe the kind of effect the revelation had on the hearts and minds of both believers and disbelievers alike at the time would not do it justice. It's hard to appreciate for us at least the extent to which the Qur'an played a role in their lives, for it was the piece by piece revelation that first caused the seed of Iman to be sowed into their hearts and caused its gradual strengthening until they were ready to sacrifice their pleasures and luxuries for a greater pleasure; until they were ready to give every property in their possession as charity; until they were ready to face their enemies in the battlefield and until they loved their final Messenger more than they loved their own selves. Our Iman, in fact, is not complete until the last is so:

are my Companions.”

'Umar to the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alayhi wasallam): "O Allah's Messenger (Sallallahu Alayhi wasallam)! You are dearer to me than everything except my own self." Allah's Messenger (Sallallahu Alayhi wasallam) said: "No, by Him in Whose Hand my soul is, (you will not have complete Faith) until I am dearer to you than your own self." Then 'Umar (ra) said: "However, now, by Allah, you are dearer to me than my own self." He (Sallallahu Alayhi wasallam) then said: "Now, O 'Umar, (now you are a believer)."

After the Word of Allah (swt), the next best inspiration was the beautiful conduct, and excellent character of Rasulallah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). As a husband, a father, a friend, a neighbour, a commander he excelled in every sphere of life; every kind of person, poor or rich, intelligent or not so, fell in love with him.

**"Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example/pattern for him who hopes in Allah and the last day and remembers Allah much"
(33:21)**

In the words of our beloved Mother Aysha (RadiAllahu anha): **"His character was the Qur'an"**

It is ultimately by his example that we understand what it is to be a true believer and what it is to be a slave. The companions were the most eager to follow and imitate his every action. Therefore our love for the final messenger (sallallahu Alayhi wasallam) is a means of being obligated to love his Companions, all of whom he held so dear.

The Prophet (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: **"Don't say harsh things to any of my Companions. If one of you were to spend gold equal to Mount Uhud, he will not achieve in any measure what any one of them achieved - not even half of that."**

What did they sacrifice for the love of Allah, His Messenger (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and Islam, and what are we currently sacrificing? SubhanAllah. Our love for inane celebrities and so-called role models who have not an ounce of Iman in their heart is an indication of the lack of Iman in our own hearts. The people we look up to, to inspire our lives - our Muslims lives - should not just be to attain success in this meagre Dunya, nor be because of the extent to which they entertain us, but for being the cause of strengthening our tie with Allah (swt), knowing the path of guidance that will lead to eternal success.

"Guide us to the Straight Path (siraat)"- we utter so mechanically in our Salah. What path is this, and what does it take to set foot on it? Unlike the path of Shaytaan that are many, here there is only one siraat, the path on which Allah, the Most High is on, and the one that leads us to one destination - directly towards Allah, 'Azzawajal. This is the same path the Sahabah traversed and in learning about such people we come to better understand what that path entails. Just as they were willing to undergo suffering and trial after trial, which aided only to increase their faith, we should also be willing to do so. The very fact that the companions succeeded implies we can also succeed. The next time an idea of how difficult Islam is comes to mind, quickly direct your thoughts to the rough lives of Rasulallah (sallallahu alaihi wasallam) and the companions and those who succeeded them, whose literal sweat and blood paved the way for Islam to reach every corner of the globe - we will then be put in our place.

Too often we misplace our deep admiration and respect to make-believe characters from movies or novels, or actors/actresses, singers, or anyone who qualifies for the role of a celebrity of today. We must think hard whether the reasons for our admiration and the people we are admiring are those whom Allah (swt) is pleased with, who our beloved Rasulallah (Sallallahu Alayhi wasallam) would smile approvingly of, or whether they are beneficial for our Akhirah. Our heads are put down

in shame when we realise how little we know about the best of people selected by Allah (swt). The generosity of Abu Bakr, the justice of Umar, the humility of Uthman and the bravery of Ali (May Allah be pleased with them all) are just a few of the many jewels the amazing generation has to offer our lives. When we exert ourselves to knowing the blessed lives of these people Allah (swt) and His messenger (saw) exalted and obligated us to learn about, it is a way of remaining steadfast upon this Deen at a time when remaining steadfast is proving somewhat of a difficulty. When the family who surround us and the people we befriend do not remind us of Allah (swt) or help us in improving our Islam, motivate us to gain beneficial knowledge, or simply better ourselves as a person, then what other option is there to take as friends than those whose companionship was with our beloved Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi wasallam), the best of creation. We are not honoured like they were because our obedience is not like their obedience- they heard and obeyed. We hear, question, think about and then obey after we've exhausted our thoughts on the logic behind the order. It's no surprise why they were the generation of light, the best of generations. Servitude to the One who created them was a whole different kind of servitude than that seen today.

Allah tells us that this ummah is the best nation to ever be raised for humanity – **“You (true believers in Islamic Monotheism and real followers of Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu Alayhi wasallam, and his sunnah) are the best of people ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin Al-Ma’ruf (Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained) and forbid Al-Munkar (polytheism, disbelief and everything Islam has forbidden), and you believe in Allah” (3:110)**

Are we trying our best to live up to this ayah? The companions were the sternest in enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, this was their life's work, carrying out this essential principal is what made them so great and mighty. When the feeling of embarrassment or awkwardness creeps in when we say anything concerning Islam, or try to (sincerely) correct someone com-

mitting a blatant error in their speech or action, then know that we need to strengthen our foundations, we need to take off the posters of useless boy bands, sports icons, whatever else that acts as an obstacle in our hearts to loving the best of mankind in the way they deserve to be loved, so that we end up, with joy (not dismay), in the after-life with those whom we love.

I end with the words of `Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: **“Allah looked upon the hearts of the people and found the heart of Muhammad as the best among them. So He chose him for Himself, and sent him with His message. Then He looked at the hearts of the people, after the heart of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), and found the hearts of his companions as the best among the people. Therefore He made them helpers to His messenger.”**

U.Y.N.J

Who will SAVE Pakistan?

My country was founded on the general principles of 'Ittehad, Imaan, Tanzeem...' - the message of our Quaid (Muhammad Ali Jinnah). Consciously, we had forgotten it. Politicians come and go – each of them think it is some sort of a good luck charm to hang a picture of themselves on the right hand side of the picture of the Father of our Nation. Do they even know how little they deserve to, as much as they think they are worthy? For far too long after the short thirteen months of our Quaid's rule, so very many of them defected. But one man saw through the corruption and stood against underhanded political proceedings in 1996. They laughed. We laughed. Everyone laughed. Why? He was a child in this power play! How so? He had just retired from a career in cricket!

But how is it that when his picture was printed on billboards all over Karachi, I saw with my own eyes that no other deserved to be side by side with our Quaid in leading our nation to the success it held the potential for at this point? '... Unity, Faith, Discipline.'

On the night of the 24th of December I was stuck in a traffic jam at 11pm.

I woke up around 12pm in the afternoon, give or take a few minutes – don't judge me, I was on vacation. I was quite hyped for the rally and had been announcing for the last week and a half that I would be going with my Mum and brother. They were already watching the gathering crowds who had been there since...12am the night before. Bright red and green bloomed from every corner of the Mazaar-e-Quaid (Jinnah Mausoleum) a joyful flurry of colour. Imran Khan wasn't supposed to arrive until at least 4pm; therefore it seemed reasonable to leave for the Jalsaa (political rally) at 3 given that I lived only twelve minutes' drive from the venue.

The excited crowds were entertained by speeches, enthusiastic media representatives and celebrity artists. The red and green colours of the

PTI ('Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf' *) flag rose high and were never ending in the sea of heads. I stared fixated with joy and an unconsciously placed smile while my family gathered around to watch the event. It was at this point I noticed the greatest Unity the City had shown in a very long time.

Time raced by and so I prepared to leave my house as the clock struck three. Stepping out of my house I noticed an excitement in the air. Of course, it was peaceful around the vicinity of our property but there was just something about the day itself which seemed to invoke a rogue burst of adrenaline...it wasn't very long before I realized that the excitement was actually being caused by a number of fanatics who had unintentionally decided to block the main street on the way to the Jalsaa (political rally) venue.

Thereafter, I returned home wary not to miss Imran Khan's speech since he was shortly due to arrive and managed to compress my disappointment just before my Dad informed me that there was an 8 kilometre line all the way to the Mazaar-e-Quaid (Jinnah Mausoleum). Have you ever experienced that odd feeling when disappointment is mixed with laughter - that which is seeded from an epic sensation of pride? We had Faith in this man - No, not only those who were present at the Jalsaa; everyone. The numbers were estimated to skim around 250,000 at the venue itself. Of course, the critics would now try to argue the figure I have presented but I'll get to that part soon...

He arrived close to 5 pm, which is when he was greeted with roars of excited chants and screams blasting through the air. At this point I was dying to be there myself with the crowds, but see, I've never had too much interest in politics – never until this day – which is why I hadn't realized how insanely difficult it actually was to get to the Jalsaa (political rally). The Sarbaraa (head/leader) of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf* took a seat between his party members and smiled on

as the events continued. So modest, yet his presence on this day was just so profound. A random series of entertainers then began to work the crowds up for the cause and even Javed Hashmi (a prominent figure of the PTI who recently suffered an attack of paralysis) came from his bedridden state to take part in the event.

After long speeches the crowds shifted and demanded the presence of Imran Khan to make his speech, which is when the teasers came to an end and he rose to his feet shortly after being greeted to the stand with songs and cheers, followed by a question which really hit me: 'Kon bachaey ga Pakistan?' (Who will save Pakistan?). Watching his every single footstep with unnecessary intensity and detail, we waited for him to settle the crowds and finally smile as he greeted us and raised his hands up in servitude to Allah (swt). Fascinating. From that moment on I was completely absorbed and fully focused on every word spoken from his lips. Everyone was. It really was inspiring.

My words on this simple article really can't express the emotions stirred by the speech itself but the points he hit directly made an impact on every thought I ever had about the problems in Pakistan. So I know I've clearly crossed the word limit and half of you are well bored by now so let me wrap it up. I stepped outside my house to maybe watch the crowds leaving. There were floods of people everywhere. Mostly on foot. The thing that struck me most was that every time two people locked eyes a smile spread across their faces as we all sucked in the immensity of the atmosphere. That smile spoke more than words. We had Discipline. We were well versed in our cause and purpose and we will finally follow the one ray of light that has come before us after his years of struggle and maybe progress towards the great nation Mohammad Ali Jinnah had planned for us to be.

As for how many people were actually there, I can't say anything. There may only be 250,000 people at the venue but hey, cameras can only see so far can't they? They couldn't really have counted the 8 kilometre long line to the Mizaar-e-quaid (Jinnah Mausoleum) when I tried going could they? Now, in how many directions were those lines spread?

*A Political Part

Bosnia and Herzegovina 20 PART 4

Day 9 – 29.06.2011

Tuzla...

I woke up this morning to the usual scene of a little boy called Ahmed jumping on me and asking me to let him use my laptop for Facebook. Ahmed is another bundle of joy, with a sad story in his past. Of course I could not refuse a request of such an innocent boy and one whom I respected merely for the attitude he had. However today was different, he had a backpack and was showing me some money with a smile on his face. Ahmed was leaving?

I went downstairs with him to ask Muhamed, who confirmed Ahmed was leaving, for an orphanage. Immediately my heart sank. This bundle of joy and attitude, so young and always smiling, was an orphan. I told Dilwar, who expressed a similarly glum sentiment and the morning was sad already. We now knew why we were driving to Tuzla, the closest large city, famous for being the site most Muslims fled to in the war. We also knew why Ahmed was rather small for his age, he was clearly a victim of malnourishment.

We drove to Tuzla in a happy mood, singing various songs, Ahmed giving a memorable rendition of Kesha's Tik Tok in broken English, possibly the last we were to hear of him. We reached the orphanage to see children running to Ahmed greeting him, others sweeping dirt and others sitting perplexed as to who Dilwar and I were. One boy even pointed out that Dilwar looked "cigan" or gypsy!

So we said our goodbyes to Ahmed, someone who had brought so many smiles in our stay so far, and someone we would miss dearly. We left him some money and sweets to give to his friends and told him to be safe. He gave us his usual hugs full of true love and gratitude. He was a tough kid who had the purest heart, may Allah make it easy for him on his journey through life.

11:



A tired Ahmed before he is dropped to the orphanage

Later, we picked up Semir, a 20 year old student, and went to eat pizza at a local fast food place, before walking through the city. After a brief tour of Tuzla we dropped Semir home from university to a village near Zvornik and headed home. Semir gave us an insight into university life in Tuzla and Bosnia in general. He and his flatmates seemed as normal as any other European students, albeit having a poor taste in music I must say!

Day 10 – 30.06.2011

Glumina/Sapna...

Dilwar and I woke up with the intention of testing ourselves physically for the impending Marš Mira walk, which we were probably nowhere near ready for. After another tasty breakfast cooked by resident Masterchef Emina, we shouted for the next door neighbour Mirza, and headed to Snagovo, the home of volunteers Lucy and Lei-

la. Mirza reluctantly accepted to come with us (thunderstorms were rife) and took us on a long route where Dilwar almost gave up. Thankfully we were picked up half way by a friend and driven to Lucy's house, where we stopped for a drink and a well-earned break.

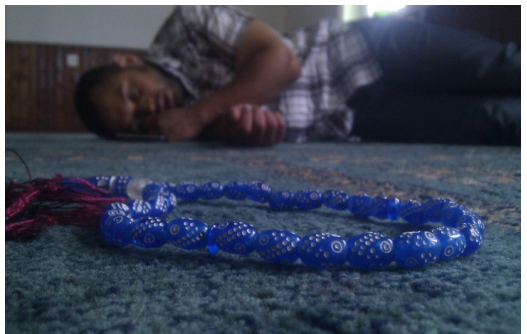
The walk back was much quicker as Mirza now realised his flaw earlier! Even more entertaining were Dilwar's failed attempts to jump over fences. Marš Mira could not come sooner!

The evening was a taste of more Bosnian culture. We were to attend the choir practice of the local community of Sapna and Glumina, led by Islam. We picked up a woman from the Muslim fishing village of Divic, on the shores of the Drina, an amazing singer by the sounds of her practice in the car. We sat in a masjid in Sapna only to be amazed at the talent from a group of young Bosnian men and women. It was a beautiful soundtrack to another serene village. The journey home was also littered with some more solo performances by the lead singer, before we came home to a dinner and another film ...

Day 11 – 01.07.2011

Jošanica

July started as June ended here in Eastern Bosnia, with heavy rain and nasheeds. As Britain was hyping up the Andy Murray v Rafael Nadal semi final at Wimbledon, we too were keen on watching it. First, however was jumma prayer at a mosque in which our host Mohamed was the Imam and delivered a Bosnian khutbah on Surah al-Imran, (which he later translated for us).



After watching Murray lose to Nadal - we were to attend a Mawlid/Mevlud evening ceremony in the village of Jošanica. This was what the choir had been practising for the day before, and Dilwar and I were to be taken aback by what turned out to be an amazingly spiritually fulfilling night. Over 300 Bosnians, men and women, from the surrounding villages packed out the mosque on a beautiful summers evening after Maghrib to listen to some flawless nasheed singing.

The head imam of the local area greeted us and we were treated like very special guests, our names even being mentioned in the main speech! After a lot of handshakes and attention from the locals, the superb hospitality never seemed to end as we were treated to some mut-ton and bread with the other singers and families. This was probably the peak of the journey so far, as fulfilling as the trip to Vitinica.

A late finish to a long day of religious insight, but well worth it, and another experience we would never forget.

Day 12 – 02.07.2011

Jošanica Mosque Opening

Today we had to wake up early as a large event was taking place, an event that would literally shake the hills around villages here. Mohamed, our host, had been advertising for the opening of the stunning new mosque in Jošanica (scene of the Mawlid evening) for over a month and had not stopped talking about it! We had a quick breakfast and headed to Jošanica again with his mother and sister, only this time the atmosphere would be very different.

This was not the peaceful and intimate setting we had experienced the night before. Thousands and thousands of people descended on the hill-top village from all over. Double decker buses parked wherever possible, dropping scores of elderly people off. There were markets, stalls, gypsy beggars littered across the winding road. This seemed a bit like a car boot sale in Birmingham!



Jošanica Mosque opening

A large stage had been set up outside the mosque. Speeches from Imams were interspersed by more choir singing from our new friends. The echo on the hills and the thousands of men and women who sat nearby was an image that would be everlasting. What was even more interesting was the way in which the atmosphere transformed after with much traditional Bosnian dancing and music. A carnival was truly under way!

We were again treated to a massive lunch, something we had to pass up on this occasion (Sheep were being slaughtered and roasted literally down the road on one of the stalls). It was a bizarre experience to say the least. Religion and culture were mixing in a strange way. People were dancing outside a mosque, men and women together, something you would probably not see in East London!

The new mosque of Jošanica deserves a mention itself. Like most other newly built mosques in the area, it is of Ottoman design and beautifully crafted. This one has an added edge however; sitting on a hill - it is a beaming sight for all to see, but more noticeable are the remnants of a destroyed minaret lying in front of it. They had left it there purposely as a reminder of the destruction the Serbs had partaken in not so long ago.

The beautiful new Jošanica mosque

So a long day of experiencing a true Bosnian mosque opening-come-carnival, seeing thousands of Bosnians descend into a tiny village, and meeting more locals, it is safe to say this was another eventful day. As an aside, one image from this day will stick by me – the view of hundreds of old women sitting on a mat on the hill listening to the nasheeds and speeches eerily echoed images seen on footage of the Srebrenica refugee camp. What's more haunting is a lot of these women were probably there or in the vicinity at the time...

“LABAIK ALLAHUMMA LABAIK”

It was not how I imagined it would be; not how I had seen it on the television. It was not glamorous and shiny. It was real and It was overwhelming.

I had been briefed on what to do and what to say and when to say it, but in the awe of the sight I was seeing, everything went straight out the window. In that moment Nothing mattered. Not the people around me, not my family, not my friends, not my life at home, not fortune nor fame, not glitz nor glamour. Nothing.

I was here. Labaik Allahumma Labaik.

And I wanted to be here forever.

Euphoria. Regret. Peace

My search had ended and had just begun. My purpose and My identity were as clear to me as this place in the scorching desert heat. My whole life had now started to make sense.

Who is your Lord: Allah (swt)

What is your religion: Islam

Who is your prophet: Muhammad ibn Abdullah (saw)

I had been brought here to learn of truth, of meaning, of direction - of myself.

I had only heard about what happened here but now I felt it. I had been relayed accounts of the tremendously emotional kind. And now I knew why. It was not a matter of choice - it was innate, it was like coming home, like a reunion – a very special visit to the door of Al-Khaliq.

I was stepping in the footsteps of Ibrahim (as),

Ismail (as) and Muhammad (saw), I was mirroring the journey of Hajar (as); I was in the presence of Angels who would never get the chance to come to this place again. I was in one of the most blessed areas of

land that exist on Earth.

I was among the greatest Nation. Ever.

I was here. Labaik Allahumma Labaik

This was no ordinary thing...oh no. This was my chance to make things better. To change...

Many a Dua were uttered and among them a Dua for guidance, a Dua for Iman, a Dua for Jannah.

So much time had been wasted but no more. No More.

Change had begun. Now I knew.

There was a lot of work to be done. The road ahead would be rocky but I had to try.

This one, simple, not-particularly large brick cubic structure, this ground, these mountains, this land - the sight of oh-so-many world changing events... a witness to nations rising and falling; to the greatest of creation; to the enactment of the will of my Lord. My Lord.

I was here. Labaik Allahumma Labaik.

A new dawn. A brighter day.

I was inspired, Yes. Someone inspired me.

But that someone was no ordinary someone,

That someone was My Lord.

My Lord!

MASJID: Part II



Umayyad Mosque
Damascus, Syria



Al Azhar Mosque
Cairo, Egypt



Grand Mosque
of Kuwait
Kuwait City,

MASJID: Part II



Blue Mosque
Istanbul, Turkey
Kuwait



Hassan II
Mosque
Casablanca,



Sultan Qaboos
Grand Mosque
Muscat, Oman

QCR Campaign

The reward of 2,500 prayers a week

The Problem

The quiet contemplation room, aka 'prayer hut' is probably the most central place for muslims on campus. Just like the mosques in the time of the prophet sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam and his companions, the hut can be considered to be the hub for the muslims at UCL. We meet there to pray, before going to an event or even just to relax. It forms a fundamental component in the life of a muslim on campus and I think we can all agree that we would not really be anywhere near as effective without it.

Pre-2011, there was a room of approximately 25 square metres, enough space for around 20 people to squeeze in there on a good day. After much campaigning and work, the college decided they would refurbish the building as a temporary measure, doubling the amount of space in the room, and would be providing a purpose built room within approximately two years. This of course changed when the master plan was proposed and it is now quite likely that there will be no change until 2017.

According to recent statistics you have probably seen collected inside the room, the facility is already exceeding capacity. On top of this, the number of muslims at UCL is growing every year and with UCL's international aspirations (google 'UCL Qatar'), this is unlikely to change anytime soon. This leads to only one possible conclusion: a bigger room is needed in the meanwhile.

In addition to all of this, many of us have seen the signs put up on several bathrooms close to the contemplation room: "Do not perform ablution here". Not only is this quite offensive, but it also highlights another major problem. There are no suitable ablution facilities close to the room. The bathrooms that are close to the room are all small and do not have a basin in which feet can be washed. Thus, the prayer which should give tranquillity to its performers is instead surrounded by the stresses of finding a place to perform ablution and performing prayer in a room that is overcrowded.

What is being done?

There are many things that are going on as part of the campaign to obtain better facilities. The problem is being advertised to relevant people from the union and college, data is being collected, the campaign is being advertised and a solid, fact-based case for the need for better facilities is being prepared. You will probably see people on campus doing surveys of students and staff in the next few weeks and will probably fill out a survey yourself.

How can you help?

All of this requires the efforts and time of the users of the 'prayer hut' and as the main users, who better to get involved than the muslims! Getting involved is easy and no matter what your ability, there will almost definitely be something you can do. Whether you are on campus or not, there is ample opportunity to help out and you probably won't even have to put in a huge amount of time. If you want to get involved, email contemplationroom@live.co.uk and take it from there. Also, make sure to check out www.uclcontemplationroom.co.uk

Why would you want to help?

Beyond the obvious opportunity to obtain improved facilities for yourself to use, you would also be helping to obtain better facilities for all muslims on campus to use for several years. Think of how central the 'prayer hut' is to you and the muslims on campus and then imagine how it would feel if you had contributed to getting it! On top of that, you will have a share in the reward of all the prayers prayed in the hut because you facilitated it. That's the equivalent of close to 500 prayers a day, 5 days a week for around half the year! Honestly, why are you not already involved?!

Prayer Times

Prayer Schedule January / 2012							
Date	Day	<u>Fajr</u>	<u>Sunrise</u>	<u>Dhuhr</u>	<u>Asr</u>	<u>Maghrib</u>	<u>Isha</u>
16	Mon	5:59	7:59	12:11	2:03	4:22	6:16
17	Tue	5:58	7:58	12:11	2:04	4:24	6:17
18	Wed	5:57	7:57	12:11	2:05	4:25	6:18
19	Thu	5:57	7:56	12:12	2:07	4:27	6:20
20	Fri	5:56	7:55	12:12	2:08	4:28	6:21
21	Sat	5:55	7:54	12:12	2:09	4:30	6:23
22	Sun	5:54	7:53	12:12	2:11	4:32	6:24

If you would like to write an article for publication in Al Badr, please send the article with the subject as 'Al Badr Article' to:

barian_ali@hotmail.com (articles from brothers)

halimah.javaid@gmail.com (articles from sisters)