

# OMG

OMG

RELIGION, FAITH & BELIEF

*this is a free publication, to be circulated in the University of Nottingham, Malaysia*

1

**EDITOR'S NOTE:  
THE SOUND WHEN  
I TURN ON A MAC**

2

**ISLAMIC CULTURE  
OR CULTURAL ISLAM?**

by NAZREEN FAZAL

3

**QUESTIONING RELIGION**

by TS

4

**HELLO UP THERE?**

by CHI LENG

5

**RELIGION & ME:  
MY-STORY**

by XIAO MING WEE

6

**CONVERSATIONS  
BETWEEN  
A FATHER & A SON**

by NUHA HALIM

COVER  
TEXTS

---

EDITOR'S NOTE:

# The Sound When I Turn on a Mac

The start-up sound on a Mac is not just a sound, it is an imagination, a halo, a new *Lumière* and God-like. If one could draw an analogy; the *sounding* of the Mac, like the notion of *calling*, seeks future commitments. The sound of technology captivates one's imagination and propels one's desire, just as the religious vocation that prepares one onto a threshold of hopes.

While technology hasn't come close to becoming God, it is making a consistent progression. But there is always a persistent gap – like Lacan's *che vuoi* where desire is never fulfilled, an unattainable perfection that necessitates advancement. Does the existence of God a reflection of our lack? The God, as Anselm has claimed, "a being than which none greater can be conceived", could be the "che vuoi", and is only comparatively superlative.

The sound of turning on a Mac is an experience of a civilisation, so as the calling. The suspect in many religious controversies today is the overemphasis on the God as a "being" per se. Erykah Badu's tattoo was perceived with abhorrence because of a false association among the "beings": the over-intimate proximity between the sacrosanct being and her unholy Window Seat body. This discourse is politically incomplete and is remiss in portraying the roles of religion in civilisation. More often than not, the fanatics, extremists and religious institutions and police have stipulated certain religious values through stark materialism, thus obscuring religious spirituality.

The following articles seemed to escape this limited discourse that is frequented in the mainstream, to which religious experience is suppressed and at times institutionalised, materialised and generalised as an all-encompassing import. Amidst this mediated meta-sphere, our personal religious experiences, memories and encounters become more important to dismiss the myths perpetuated in the mainstream.

Nazreen Fazal's *Islamic Culture or Cultural Islam?* kicks off this edition by resituating the Muslim's headscarf as a counter-hegemonic symbol. This repudiates the dominant narrative surrounding the headscarf as a symbolic material oppression. Redeeming herself among other voices, her narrative is made possible by returning to the Al-Quran, to a verse oft-neglected in the mainstream discourse.

In *Questioning Religion*, TS's "questioning" is not doubting but a further validation on the relevance of religion amidst inter-religious/inter-cultural conflicts. He seems to embark on the process of re-territorialisa-

tion by reconstituting a universal space for all religions in purposive term. He focuses on a global purpose shared among religions as a conflict resolution strategy.

Similarly, Chi Leng's *Hello Up There?* stood by the margins of a territory. She seeks to read her faith rationally to validate her belief system – the search for logic becomes a search for God, indicative of the "doctrine of proof" in Weber's *Spirit of Capitalism*. She later expressed regret in her fear and reluctance to converse with others on the logic of religions, as she rightly asked: "Is it wrong to search for the truth of the truth?" This demarcation between belief and practice is a symptom of modern secularisation.

*Religion & Me: MY-Story* examines this demarcation. The discomfited Xiao Ming Wee struggles with his inherited religious practice. Not atypical in many communities, religious practice is passed down to generations as *cultural* practice. This encroachment of other identity-space could alienate individuals who are part of the community yet refuse the communal religious system. To appropriate a de Beauvoir: are we born religious or do we become one? Hinting religiosity as performative, here is a substitution of the "being" for the *being-becoming*.

There is no better way to end our concerns other than to contemplate on Nuha Halim's *Conversations between a Father and a Son*. Reading this article is to unfold a journey to innocence, to escape our tainted experiences to reclaim all that is lost in transition. Gentle in tone yet penetrative, it exposes our many fears which are primarily self-imposed and self-fulfilling.

Returning to our Mac analogy, while these writings escape the dominant narrative, are they (again) channels for the unfulfilled, like Mac's hopeful start-up sound that begs for future commitments?

Mazlish's *fourth discontinuity* proclaimed that humans have evolved from "creatures" to "creators" and human beings are beginning to play God. While his discontinuity deals with the links between human and machine, humans are playing God in many other ways: in technological term, there are clones, synthetic biology and designer baby; in legal term, there is death penalty; in social term, there are religious extremism, religious policing and moral absolutism.

God, who are we to commit such ugly things? — TZH



# ISLAMIC CULTURE <sup>02</sup> CULTURAL ISLAM?

\* from the author's personal blog, *Penguin Peeks*:  
<http://penguinpeeks.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/some-things-i-have-been-thinking-about.html>

by NAZREEN FAZAL

The past few weeks in the UK have given me a lot to think about. Living here in a different culture, going to a classroom comprised of mostly westerners — I have been forced to step outside my comfort zone! Another reason I have been thinking so much is that I have A LOT to read these days. I am doing two literature classes and one Cultural Politics module so naturally, there's a ton to read. But for the first time, I don't mind the reading. I LOVE the library here. It's so huge and has so many books! I know, *Duh*. But it is amazing. I love reading about cultural politics as every week we have seminars where we discuss our individual readings. And since I like anything that involves talking, I'm lovin' it! We have interesting discussions on identity, cultures, youth, sexuality... and a good thing about being in an international classroom is that you get to hear multiple perspectives (our class has a smattering of Australians, French, Chinese and British people).

Something I realised over the past few weeks is that keeping an open mind is not just about listening to what other people have to say, it's about think what they have said and comparing them to what you believe in. It's difficult at first to look at what you have grown up believing in and practising with a critical eye. But I think it's something we have to routinely engage in. Re-evaluation is necessary if we want to avoid intellectual stagnation.

Cultural Politics involves looking into a lot of Western critical theories and at first, I must admit, I was a little worried about it clashing with what I believe in (in terms of faith). However, what has happened is that studying a lot of them has only reinforced my faith and even cleared some doubts I had about it! I know you may be

a lil' sceptical about it, but it really did something to the way I think. So many concepts of faith that I was grappling with were put into perspective! Especially with Feminism! Though I do not agree with some of their arguments and the way they set about addressing gender inequality, I do get the essence of it and understand where they are coming from. And as a Muslim woman from India, who chooses to add an extra piece of clothing to her wardrobe, I feel I have something different to offer to the ongoing discussion.

Another reason I wanted to add something to the discussion is that there aren't really many Muslim women's voices in regards to these issues. It's usually a western, non-Muslim woman who talks about the headscarf or the veil. Very few people turn to Muslim women to know why they really wear it. And if there are Muslim women out there who say something about it, their voices aren't pushed into the public eye with the same enthusiasm as someone who criticises the hijab.

I've been wearing the headscarf for some years now and over the years it has become one of the things that defines me. It's a public declaration of my faith and something that arises out of my desire to place God as my guiding point rather than the culture or society.

Even though I've been wearing it for some time now, I really understood the wisdom behind dressing modestly only when I read about the objectification of women in the past (even now). The hypersexualisation of woman's body to sell things to the male audience, it disgusts me. Why do shaving cream adverts require a half naked woman to prance around the man? Why does a sleek sports car need a bikini-clad woman to lie on top of it, in order to sell it?

Aren't they catering to the male gaze? The camera is looking at the female body from a male eye. That's why in movies we have the extra focus on the woman's curves

and the man's eyes eroticising them. I can't even count the number of times I have seen the camera lingering on the woman's cleavage. Laura Mulvey, when talking about the male gaze in cinema, said that the representation of women in cinema has been through the projection of male desire on her body. "The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly." By herself, she doesn't stand for anything, her character is usually that of a seductress, someone who through her sensuality toys with the male lead's emotions. Her body has become the plane where she interacts with the society.



It is at this juncture that I fully appreciate my hijab. It shields me from this objectification. I am not instigating that the entire male population is out there fantasising over the female body, but what guarantee do I have that when I walk out, wearing whatever I want, **none** of them would do it? I am in no way justifying the whole notion that "she asked for it". She never did. No woman in her right mind ever does. But what Islam has given me is an option to guard myself against the gaze. Doesn't the requirement of modest clothing, in effect, repel the current patriarchal system, which makes women feel that they have to dress in a certain way (sometimes even at the risk of discomfort, e.g.: high heels, tight tube tops) to feel attractive and admired?

“ What has happened is that the majority in the Muslim community places more emphasis on the part about the woman covering herself than the man lowering his gaze, which is why most people end up believing that Islam asks too much of women.

And the woman is not the only one responsible in avoiding the "gaze". The Quran, in the verse before the one that asks the women to cover, says:

*Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things) and to protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All Aware of what they do. (Quran, 24:30)*

Hence, the primary obligation is on the MAN to avoid looking at the woman in an inappropriate manner (no matter how she is dressed). So it's not as though the burden lies on the woman's shoulders alone, the man is also accountable for the gaze, since he, the *believing man*, HAS to lower it. And only then comes the verse about the *believing women* covering themselves. And I understand why we have to be particular about the way we dress because no matter how civilised, modern and developed the society is, there will be people out there who **will** still objectify women with their gaze.

Now, coming to the problem at hand. What has happened is that the majority in the Muslim community places more emphasis on the part about the woman covering herself than the man lowering his gaze, which is why most people end up believing that Islam asks too much of women. In Muslim-concentrated areas, a woman not wearing hijab faces more criticism than a man who does not control his gaze. This maybe because by its nature the hijab is a very physical act, the gaze, on the other hand, is more capable of escaping the public eye. Again, can we hold religion accountable for something which the man is accountable for? So the focus should be on the reformation of cultural notions that cause people to twist religion rather than the religion itself. In order to get the essence of any religion, we have to look at it in isolation of the cultural baggage it has come to accumulate. So to understand Islam, we don't look at the Afghans, Pakistanis, Malaysians or Arabs. We look at the scripture. We then hold up what it says against the wider social context and see how and where religion and the present day practices deviate. So we look at Honour Killings–Culture. Female Genital Mutilation– Culture. Female Infanticide–Culture. Racism–Human Idiocy. More often than not, it is these deviations that the media has been pushing as "religious backwardness".

Islam asks people to think, to reason, to ponder. It tells us not to blindly follow everything our fore fathers did. So even those of us who are born Muslims, we have to ask questions. We need to know the difference between what our book says and what our people practise. We need to question whether what we have grown up believing in is cultural or religious. We have to open our critical eye.

Marx said religion is the opium of the people. I think not. I think religion in general and Islam in particular is very counter-cultural when it comes to understanding mankind.

It opposes to most of what culture has dictated. Example? In pre-Islamic Arabia, female infanticide was a common practice. But Islam strongly condemned this and questioned the idiocy of the practise.

*And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked. For what sin she was killed. (Quran, 81:8-9)*

During those times there were also clashes between tribes and there existed this feeling of Arab superiority over the others. What does Islam say about this?

*O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. (Quran, 49:13)*

What did the Prophet say about racism?

*All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action.*

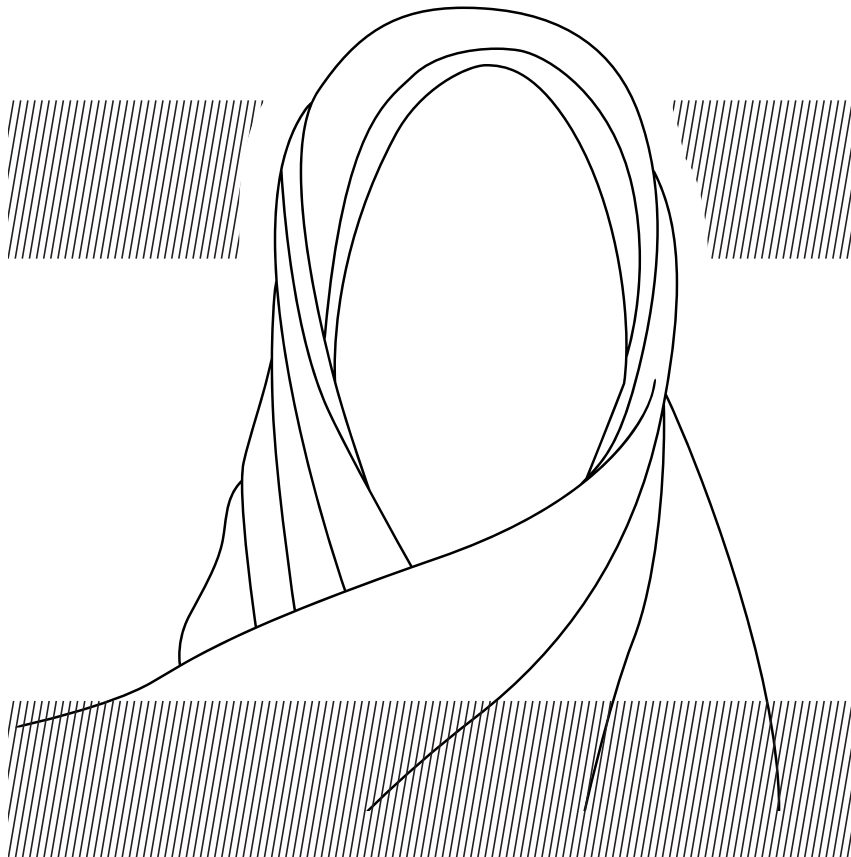
The rich are obligated to look after the poor. Neighbours have to look after each other. The society has to take care of its orphans and widows. The husband has to treat his wife kindly. The environment has rights over the people. We have to fight for the oppressed. Justice, in spite of class or familial superiority...

*Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous. (Quran, 2:177)*

Replacing the million little things in this world – which have enslaved us (family, friends, peers, culture, society, career, fashion...) – with submission to just One Master.

This is what my religion is about.

And if this is still opium for you, then yes, I am an addict.



# QUESTIONING RELIGION

by TS

Our lives are entangled with beliefs. Whether we are polytheist, monotheist, atheist, a free thinker or a philosopher, we are deeply matted in the beliefs that make us see the world in a particular way. Or we share the same sets of beliefs. When it comes to religion, it is never right to judge the other religions just because you think yours is the best. And no one has the right to censure what you believe in. Therefore, I will not name or take sides on any existing or extinct religion; rather I will stay anonymous and untethered throughout this quest for my own ontology on the concepts of religion.

It is not easy to define “religion” but there have been a lot of philosophers out there torturing their brains, endeavour to define what religion is. Nevertheless, since I’m not much of a book-lover person and people like me only see the library as a kind of caffeinated drink for the exam, I don’t have anyone here to refer to for my personal realisation of religion. (If you are my lecturer and got disappointed, do forgive me ;) but I will let you have a wild guess since I’m using my pseudonym here). Besides, I don’t want to repeat the mistakes committed by the academics, who were into brain fetish, by letting students hate them for making simple things complicated. Rather, I prefer to write simple and straightforward philosophy, but on the question of whether I could still write the cumbersome, convoluted, yet boringly intellectual stuff, I will let them be baffled: the future yet-to-be-born students. Otherwise, without mysteries and secrets, fields of studies like archaeology and anthropology would go extinct :D

Now let us go back to our original conversation and let’s get serious. There are 2 main reasons why religions exist in society:

First, we seek for protection. Prehistoric man sought refuge in inanimate objects like trees, thunder, fire, and rivers so that they could feel secure and confident when facing dangers or tragic events. That’s what the anthropologists claimed. But admit it! We do try to ask for help from an inconceivable external power when we have things that we think we are unable to handle. That is how the word “pray” found itself a place in the dictionary.

Second, it explains concrete ideas – the existence of things and beings in the world. Then, it also provides an explanation for abstract ideas. The exploration in our deepest consciousness takes refuge in religion. Now, let me discuss the conflict thesis: the conflict between religion and science. But we must first examine the meanings or the epistemology of religion and science (well if I want to sound like an intellectual :P ). As said before, religion is a set of beliefs, explanations of the things that human mind cannot verify, and an exploration of the inner consciousness. It even acts as guidelines for the proper way of life, for one to conform to the society and avoid conflict. And what is science? I believe science explains systematically complicated matters and the way they process. And it also provides guidelines on how to create things or how to live, just as religion would guide us on how to behave. Both explain our lives differently, but they overlapped; religion is science and science is religion. In short, both explain why we are on earth!

Religious extremism occurs when one begins to think of one’s own belief as superior, which blinds them from appreciating the practices of other faiths. As one adheres to such dogma, it constructs an unconscious egoism in the mind. The egoism becomes the root of the conflict between religions, which may grow into bigger conflicts, even wars. We may be subjugated by those beliefs or have chosen to accept them to conform to the society, but if we accept them by our own heart, there is no problem in practising them, so long as they do no harm to the society and the other fellow dwellers on the earth. It is never right to twist religion to justify the doings of wrong things that may afflict other beings. It is not a religion if it stimulates hatred, atrocities and conflicts. Religion only promotes peace, harmony, compassion, freedom, salvation and, physical and mental well-being. No one has the right to question what you believe in; only you have the right to question yourself.

Lastly, one does not necessarily have to follow the practices and beliefs just because everyone is doing it. Don’t be the slave of religion, but be the practitioner of religion.





# **H E L L O**



# **U P T H E R E ?**



*by CHI LENG*

There is a struggle in apprehending religion — a very thin line between seeking the truth and blasphemy. I ask myself “the big questions” sometimes like, “Is God really there?” or “Why do You permit bad miracles to happen?” or “What is the criteria of a ‘bad miracle?’” There is faith in religion, in existence. A preacher once shared a story with me, that even as we sit on the second floor of a building, we have faith that it will continue to support all of us and would not crash down. There is faith and there is logic in it too: the architecture of a building or the materials used. That is why we have faith that the building would not collapse.

The following was a snippet of a conversation between a philosophy/theology professor and me. I share this, despite risking oversimplification (he wasn’t giving me a lecture after all), because it made sense to me in relation to our subject. My interest in Christianity could be that I have been influenced by the “West”, where logic is indispensable to apprehending anything, including faith per se. There are reasons for a beginning, a middle and an end. It is a framework for thought that I am accustomed to. This is in contrast to the “East”, whereby the things (the natural, the spiritual, etc.) can exist in contradiction and is seen as a whole. The context is not important because it is always about the future. Similar to the Chinese culture, for example, where we hope for wealth and good health (which are of the future). The past is of ancestors we hope that we would be able to please and honour; it is of fear. The present feels like a bubble being stretched at both ends, where one end is the past and the other the future.

So is it wrong to search for logic in Christianity, in religion? Is it wrong to search for the truth of the truth? It has been difficult for me to discuss such philosophical questions with people who have only chosen to see faith. Partly because I was afraid of offending them and I was afraid that I might insult his/her God. But now I believe discussions like these are important to understand your faith. It is not that I doubt the existence of God. It is a way, a rational way, for me to reaffirm my beliefs. It has been, and still is, my journey in seeking the truth.

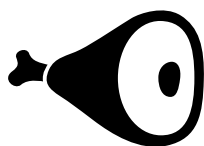




# RELIGION & ME: MY-STORY

by XIAO MING WEE

Religion should be part of how I lead my life. Should. Growing up in a conservative Taoist family, I am accustomed to much of the rituals whom my mother perform. We pray, burn incense papers, offer gifts like fruits and cakes. As a kid, I followed blindly what I had been told. I woke up early, placed the joss sticks and participated in religious ceremonies. I never question why did we carry ourselves in such a manner, why couldn't we do some stuff, why shouldn't we lead our lives this way... and as a kid, the funniest question that I always ask my mother is: why can't we eat beef?



However, things have changed. Moving away from home, I lived by my own for a period of time. I stop following these rituals with my mother anymore. Religion, god, or whatever it is, I have moved away from it. It was not a part of my life anymore, so to speak. I do still visit the temple when we travel back to grandmother's place, but it does not mean that much to me anymore. I start to lose my own faith on what I should believe in. When I moved out and got my own place, there was a Guan Yin placed in my living room. Yet, for the first year I never pray at all. It is simply not part of my "system".

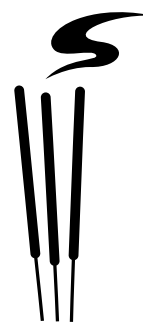
Things began to change when I started working. My workplace was located opposite a Hindu Temple and next to a Taoist Temple. It was a street full of cultural artefacts and places of worship. I passed by the Taoist temple every day, watching people of all ages walking in and out of the temple. Flowers, joss sticks and fruits were sold along the street. At that time, my workplace was a relatively dangerous place. Then, of course, there was a bunch of superstitious people that had influenced me. After few days walking by without doing anything, I decided to enter and pray, I asked for peace and safety. When I told my mother that I had been going to the temple regularly, she was happy, on the fact that I began to understand what she has always wanted me to. Unfortunately, I didn't. It is not the case where there is an inner calling to me where I started believing or so. I just went in to pray because I thought that I should.

I have numerous friends that I can label as "religious". They go to churches, mosques, temples, or other places of worship of their own beliefs. However, I do realize that not all of them understand the concept of religion. Some of them believe in it because they were brought up in such a way. Some of them did, however have questions that they were not supposed to have. For me, I have always asked the question "why". Why do we do this? Why do we believe in this? But why must I ask "why" to begin with?!!

I had the luxury of bunking in with a "religious person" over my winter trip. I have known him for a while, and was surprised that he had changed drastically in terms of his way of life. I was also curious about his understanding on his religion too. We have long conversations, and he was happy to answer my queries. At the end of the whole conversation, I questioned myself: why didn't I understand my religion the way he understood his? The focus is not "why" or "the way", but "I".

I am the problem here!

Obviously, there are lots of problems regarding me, my faith and my desire to understand the rationale of me believing in my religion. I want to understand everything. However it wouldn't be clearer just because I wanted to. I need to do some soul-searching regarding... well everything!



So, why am I still writing this article, when this publication wishes to challenge the young minds on these so-called "sensitive issues"? Any Ben, Jane and Tom will go through these self-doubting themselves. I am not someone famous, not much attention will be placed on this article. However, you will read this eventually because there will be less than 10 articles here, and you have.

What is so special about my story that it is worth publishing? Well, no.

There is nothing special about this story. It is just my own god damn business with my own faith! Period! So people, why make a big fuss about religion?





# Conversations

between

a Father & a Son

by NUHA HALIM

I know the story of a young boy who was not more than five and who used to walk along the coast bare-footed whilst sporting a mini afro. He was a bright child and he was curious of so many things in the world. On any other day, one could see him walking alongside his father, asking so many questions.

“Father, why do waves crash by the shore, can’t they go on without crashing?” asked the curious little boy.

“Because God intended it,” answered his father, smiling at his frowning son.

“How do we come up with words like sky and bread?” frowned the young boy again, looking up to his tall father. The boy’s head barely reached his father’s hips.

“Because Man intended it,” answered his father once more, looking down again smiling at his son.

“Father, why do sons and daughters exist?” asked the young boy again as he stopped in his tracks and gazed at a baby crab popping out of the sand and walking sideways to the sea.

“Because mothers and fathers intended them to,” again, his father replied without annoyance of his son’s many questions.

“What about wars, father? God and Man could not have intended wars too, right father?” asked the curious and bright young child.

His father laughed and smiled widely at his son, running his palm down his son’s head, “Dear Son, you are such a curious little fellow. Child, God and Man intended for many things to happen. Sometimes those things are bad, while others are good.”

“But how can God intend for bad things like war to happen? Isn’t he supposed to help people, Father?”

his son was confused now and his father crouched in front of him, his hands holding his son’s worried face.

“My dear, dear, Son, God never intended for bad things to happen, dear one, there are some things that He knows will happen and there are reasons why He does not stop them, but He created us, Child, we too, must put effort into helping out other people.”

“But wars, father? Why does Man intend to have wars? Do they not love each other as we were created equal? Do they not see that we are not that different from each other? We all have blood and flesh and bones and skin, don’t we father? That’s the same, right, Father?”

Father laughed merrily and hugged his son tightly, “My Son, you speak so maturely for your age. I’m blessed with a bright child, and you are so innocent and little, I cannot possibly tell you all that is ugly with the world, and the flaws of Man, but my Child, you must listen closely to what I am about to tell you now, okay, Son?”

The boy nodded his head and looked seriously into his father’s face, “Yes, Father, I will listen closely.”

“Son, even if Men are created equal, and like you said, made out of skin, flesh, bones and all, we have different beliefs, principles, different backgrounds, fears and such. We may all be equal, Son, but many don’t wish to accept that. Most people don’t want to know that they are the same as other people who are of different religion, background and culture, Son, they fear to be the same as others. Not everyone will

accept everyone, Son, if you are not like them, they find it hard to accept you, and sometimes they see you as a threat. The world is a far more frightening place, my little one, you will see and understand this when you are much older.”

“Maybe I am too young, Father, but I can’t see why Man cannot accept another Man just as he was made the same. The World could not be intended to be a cruel place, could it, Father?”

“Son, there is always light in the darkest of all places. There is always love beneath the misery and pain, and that love can be found in a thousand disguises.”

“I don’t understand you, Father, my mind is not that big yet to understand your wise words.”

Father began to laugh heartily as he patted his Son’s head, “Boy, oh my dear Boy, how cheeky you are. Indeed, Boy, you are a blessing to me. What I meant is, dear Son, although you say that the world is a cruel place, there is always goodness that can be found, there is always love that can be found despite all the suffering, Child, and it comes in all of God’s creations, the sea,” he pointed out to the stretched water, “the sky,” he pointed out to the twilight above them, “the birds,” he pointed out to a flock of seagulls that passed by above them, “the singing man,” he pointed out to a man with a sitar who sat and sang the tale of a goat and a farmer, his voice echoing with passion, “everything, Child, everything represents God’s disguises, what he has given us, and this earth, your body even, all is His, child, being alive is not a right, it is a privilege, He has given us this privilege and we must use that privilege with a humble heart and with all the humanity that is left in us.”

The Boy smiled a little, understanding his father, “Yes, Father, I understand that now. It’s like a coin, there are two sides to everything, and eventhough the two faces of the coin are different, still, they’re made of the same material. That is how the world and life are, aren’t they, Father?”

Father’s smile softened and his eyes were beginning to shed a tear as he gazed deeply and lovingly at his Son, “Son, I stand here and as I listen to you saying that, I feel so much smaller, as if you’re the wise man and I’m merely a student.” He pulled his son into a warm embrace and said, “What else is there that you wish to ask, Son?”

His Son was quiet for a while as though he was in a deep thought and as he started thinking, his father stood up and continued walking with his son by his side. Finally, the young boy spoke, “Father, do you think that one day, Man will come to accept each other and all the wars will stop?”

Father looked down at his son as they walked and his smile, fading slowly, gave a response, “Son, when that time does come, I’m afraid all of the world will be lost then. There are always people who try to make this world worse, Son, you must accept that fact.”

“Father, how can Man be so greedy even with all the blessings they have in life?”

Father held his Son’s hand and gently spoke, “Emptiness, dear Child, there is a bottomless pit inside Man’s heart that can never be satisfied with any amount of blessings that they’ve been given. The only way to close that hole is to put as much love in you, and humanity, and thankful that you are still alive and well.”

His Son sighed heavily, “I want to be a Bird, but I’m afraid I’ll get eaten by other animals. I want to be a Cheetah but I’m afraid I’ll get shot by hunters. I want to be the Wind but sometimes the wind can be harsh, like tornados. I want to be the Sun but sometimes I will be too warm that I’d give people heatstroke. I want to be the Forest but I’m afraid that someone will remove me wholly and build a building in my place. I am Human, yet still I have threats like diseases and poverty. Oh the many problems, Father!”

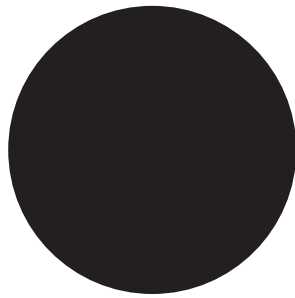
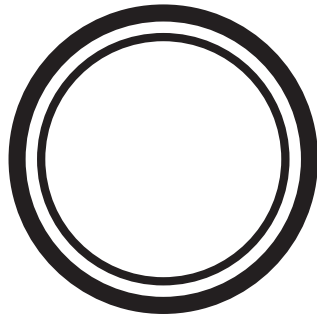
Father was amused with his son. “Child, why do you think that you ask these questions and have these thoughts?”

“Because I intended to, Father. I intend to understand the world and people when I go to bed at night, at least, in my sleep, I will imagine a better world that is nothing like you tell me.” Father’s eyes were blurry as his mouth stretched into a small smile, tears welling up as he looked into his Son’s face, the love and feeling of being blessed for having this boy firing in his heart and soul. Oh how marvellous must the world be in that boy’s sleep! The innocence and purity, how his Father long to see the world as how his Son saw it in his dreams.

*Past the seeker as he prayed came the crippled and the beggar and the beaten. And seeing them... he cried, “Great God, how is it that a loving creator can see such things and yet do nothing about them?” God said, “I did do something. I made you.*

– Sufi teaching





**studentsinresistance.tumblr.com**  
**studentsinresistance@gmail.com**