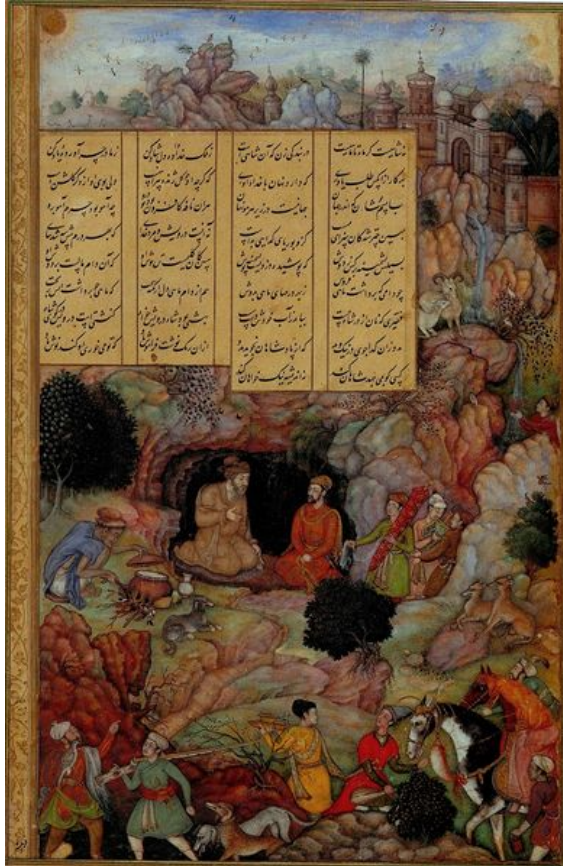


The Culture of Islam



The Islamic Educational and Cultural Research Center

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Definition of Abbreviations.....	1
Islamic Culture	3
Ritual Practice of Islam.....	6
Spirituality of Islam.....	8
Dhikr – The Remembrance.....	11
Nami Danam Che Manzil Bood.....	15
Islamic Spiritual Healing Remedy	17

Definition of Abbreviations

❁ May Allah Almighty send peace and blessings upon him

Part of a series of IECRC publications

© All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording in language or otherwise, without the prior written permission of author as well as IECRC, California, USA.

Date Published: September 2011 (First edition)

Publisher:

Islamic Educational & Cultural Research Center, North America, P.O.
Box 1646, Union City, CA 94587, USA

Telephone: (916) 473-3343

E-Mail: info@iecrcna.org

Web: www.iecrcna.org

Islamic Culture

In the Name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful

Greetings of peace and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammadﷺ, his family and companions (May the mercy of God be upon them)

Culture quite often means different things to different people. In Western societies, to many, culture may mean partaking in elite activities such as listening to classical music and museum-caliber art. As such, one is a “cultured” person. In the corporate context, it means the particular manner in which a group of people behave and interact with each other and carry out policies at their place of employment. Then there is Popular or Pop-culture, which generally means that which is commonly observed by the masses. Culture may be expressed in diverse ways. Quite often, culture is expressed through folk dance, music, dress, chanting or singing, and through observance of religious rituals.

Etymologically, the word culture has been derived from its Latin, *cultura*, stemming from *colere*, meaning “to cultivate.” Based on its root meaning, one may conclude that culture is really what makes a people rich, that its expression describes the deep roots of a people. It is for this reason why one may say “such and such a culture is very rich.”

Academically, culture has been defined as the patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance and importance. That culture is manifested in music, literature, lifestyle, painting and sculpture, theater and film and similar things. [A Vocabulary of Culture and Society] Cultural Anthropologists generally define culture as a universal human capacity to classify, codify, and communicate their expressions symbolically.

As one can observe, wrapping our hands around the concept of culture is not an easy task, because culture means so many

different things to so many different people. The definition of culture to one group is not necessarily the same to another. That which holds value in a culture is known as a cultural value. Each cultural group has their own set of cultural values that define them. However, that which is valued in one culture is not necessarily valued in another.

Misunderstandings and misconceptions between cultural groups naturally occur when one group tries to impose its values over the other. Religious values, as opposed to cultural values, is unifying in the sense that despite the cultural differences, it is supposed to unite people based on universal values such as truth, honesty, respect, modesty, noble character, love, and belief. The Latin etymological root of the word “religion” is religio, which means to tie, to constrain, to restrain, or even, to divinely constrain. Thus, religion ties us to a set of common values that unite diverse cultures, despite their cultural differences.

However, when values are common, the greatest challenge to unity occurs when diverse groups impose a particular custom (way in which a cultural value is practiced) over the other. For example, the value of modesty through its customary practice or expression of the hijab (head scarf or veil) is diverse, and quite often, when diverse Muslim societies come together, one culture may perceive the other as not being modest enough or on the other hand, too strict. However if we recognize that the core value behind the custom is one, a religious value of modesty, then common ground is found. In another example, customary expression of Islamic spirituality may vary from culture to culture because of language, mannerisms, clothing, music and so forth. However, if each culture tries to recognize that behind spirituality is the goal to reach the true knowledge of God, a common goal of all spiritual aspirants, then the obstacles of customary expression melts away and understanding of each other takes place.

Before I pass judgment, I want to recognize that Islam did not consider customary practice a bad thing, and that Islam

incorporated custom within its law as it spread through the Muslim world as long as custom did not contradict core principles of the faith. Thus, good custom became very much part of the fabric of Islam with all the different threads and stitch-patterns that comprised the adherents of the Muslim faith.

To understand another's custom, one must look at it from the perspective of the person practicing the custom. One must place themselves or attempt to place themselves in the shoes of the other. Sort of, look through the eyes of that person to feel what she feels. That is where understanding occurs. And that is why events such as the Sacramento Cultural Festival are so important. They allow for diverse expression of cultural values which keep the tree of community alive and vibrant in the fruitful production of ideas and its flowering creates beauty and attraction for all to enjoy.

Thus, the Islamic culture is not necessarily one in its beautiful customary expression, but rather immensely diverse and colorful. However, its values are one through belief and practice of the Islamic faith and that is the greatest unifying factor.

--Sharaaz Khan, Qadri

Mr. Sharaaz Khan, Qadri is one of the Directors of IECRC (iecrcna.org) and lives in Sacramento where he along with his wife and family offer many community services including counseling, Islamic spiritual healing, dhikr, and education to Muslims and non-Muslims individuals and families.

Ritual Practice of Islam

The ritual practice of Islam consists of five pillars which form the foundation of the religion:

1. **The Testification (Shahaadah)** of the statement La Ilaha Il-Allah Muhammadur Rasul-Ullah, which means “There is no God but Allah (God Almighty), and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah.” Islam is the religion which embodies this statement. When one testifies to this, he or she enters Islam and is called a Muslim. This phrase is also called the key to Paradise. Note: Allah is the Arabic term for God. Arab Christians and Muslims both use this term to describe the term God.

2. **Prayer (Salaat)** is an obligation on Muslims five times a day. Salaat (ritual prayer) is the second pillar of Islam. It becomes binding on the one who has borne witness to the testimony of faith (the first pillar), the sane, and one who has attained puberty to pray five times a day without fail. It is blameworthy to miss one's Prayer without a valid excuse such as insanity, occasional sleep, unconsciousness, menstruation, post-partum bleeding, or occasional forgetfulness. Its condition includes ritual purification and intention among others. The minimum are the obligatory five times but the Muslim can add to the number supererogatory of prayers as excellence.

3. **Charity (Zakaat)** is the third pillar of Islam. The obligation is fulfilled by giving away two and a half percent of surplus wealth, which must reach a certain amount to qualify, and is distributed to the poor each year after deducting debts and expenses. This charity is called zakaat. Anything above and beyond this is excellence and is encouraged. That sort of charity may be given at any time and is called sadaqah.

4. **Fasting (Siyaam)** is the fourth pillar of Islam. During the month of Ramadan (the 9th month of the Lunar calendar) from dawn to dusk, the believer refrains from food, drink, and marital relations.

Special attention is paid to guarding the tongue from profanity and backbiting, the eye from obscenity, the ear from listening to backbiting and slander. Muslims are urged to carry on their good and praiseworthy actions throughout the year. Many non-Muslims fast in solidarity with the Muslims and this act increases love and tolerance of each other. The health benefits to fasting are numerous. The minimum fast is the month of Ramadan but Muslims may choose to fast additional days throughout the year for spiritual closeness to God.

5. Pilgrimage (Hajj) to the House of the Lord is the fifth and final pillar of Islam. It represents a culmination of all the other pillars because all of them may be performed during the Pilgrimage at some point or another. Muslims from all over the world start gathering in Makkah each year to begin the rites of the Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage to Makkah is a tradition of the Prophets Abraham and Ishma'il (peace be upon them) and is performed solely for seeking Divine Pleasure. In it the Muslims must gather in the plain of Arafat that signifies the plain of Resurrection. Several rites are performed during the Hajj and after the Hajj is completed, the Muslims visit the Mosque and Shrine of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him in Medina Munawwarah. A sincere and complete Hajj washes away all previous sins. The Hajj is the minimum, but the Umrah is a smaller and shorter version of the Hajj and is optional. The Hajj is performed at a specific month of the year, which Umrah can be performed at any time.

This is a very brief introduction to the Islamic Practices. Please visit the following link for the Inner Dimensions or spiritual aspects of these practices at the following link:

http://www.iecrcna.org/publications/books/spirit_of_islam_ed1.pdf

Or call us at (916) 473-3343

Spirituality of Islam

Islam as a religion is very simple—belief in One God (the Creator or the universe), His Messengers, His angels, His Books (The Gospel, Torah, Quran, and Psalms) in their original form, destiny or fate, the Day of Judgment, Heaven and Hell. Its practice consist of five pillars—belief, ritual prayer, fasting in the month of Ramadan, charity to the poor, and pilgrimage to the Holy City of Makkah if one is capable and can afford it. Islamic spirituality, or Sufism, requires treading a path to overcome the self, the ego, its yearnings along with personal sacrifice, good character, good opinion, devotion, service of humanity, love for all things connected to God, including the human soul, be it Muslim or non-Muslim, to name a few.

As we learn from our elders, this journey to God is first about perfecting external ritual and practice both outwardly, then inwardly, then maintaining this throughout the journey. It is about taking a guide , obeying and loving this spiritual guide who eventually leads him to the Prophet (peace be upon him), who in turn leads him through love to God Almighty. But in order to reach one's Goal, one must rid oneself first of the illnesses of the spirit—anger, laziness, pride, arrogance, conceit, envy, hatred, backbiting, and a host of other diseases of the heart. Once one rids themselves of this, which is the hardest of struggles, overcoming the levels of the path is possible, but not without complete obedience and honor to one's guide who has been on the path, who understands its pitfalls and devices of the devil along the way, whose purpose is to delude the aspirant to the fullest extent of his power.

The spiritual aspirant eventually may be fortunate enough to reach his Goal, and a few do, with the help of his master or spiritual guide. At this level one may experience a stage where the self no longer exists because in reality the only true existence is that of the Creator. This state is not possible without the blessings of God, a true spiritual guide, personal struggle and sacrifice, overcoming ones blameworthy qualities, then embellishing the self with beautiful characteristics with the greatest example being that of the character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This state has been described by the Prophet ﷺ as God saying, *“And when I love him, I become the hearing by which he hears, the vision by which he sees, the grasping of his hands by which he grasps and the feet by which he walks”* everything belongs to God, nothing is his. This is truly the state in which he becomes God’s vicegerent on Earth. By his prayers the sick are healed, the rain falls, the calamities lifted. It is during these states that words cannot express the beauty beheld by the eye of the beholder, but inspirational poetry gives the reader an inkling of such experiences.

After experiencing this state of Oneness with God, the aspirant must return and live among other human beings with all their limitations and shortcomings. He or she must serve humanity and guide others now with this clear vision. But, the soul of such a saint is separated from its Source. The pain of separation is unbearable until he meets his True Love once again. This separation from closeness to God is often again expressed in poetry as songs of love that outwardly seem to be about the worldly love

for a woman, but whose meaning reach far beyond the world, and that is Love for the Divine. The poetry of Rumi (may God have mercy on him) for example, is often mistaken for being love songs except to those who know and realize its depth. For example, below is a selection from his *Song of the Reed*:

Listen to the reed (flute), how it is complaining!
It is telling about separations,

(Saying), "Ever since I was severed from the reed field,
men and women have lamented in (the presence of) my
shrill cries.

(But) I want a heart (which is) torn, torn from separation,
so that I may explain the pain of yearning."

Anyone one who has remained far from his roots,
seeks a return (to the) time of his union.

I lamented in every gathering;
I associated with those in bad or happy circumstances.

(But) everyone became my friend from his (own) opinion;
he did not seek my secrets from within me.

Islamic spirituality is an experiential knowledge and one can get some feeling from its expression but unless one doesn't walk the walk and talk the talk, it remains a mystery for many. Some of the songs presented today are an attempt to express this reality.

Dhikr – The Remembrance

Dhikr is the means by which Stations yield their fruit, until the seeker reaches the Divine Presence. On the journey to the Divine Presence the seed of remembrance is planted in the heart and nourished with the water of praise and the food of glorification, until the tree of dhikr becomes deeply rooted and bears its fruit. It is the power of all journeying and the foundation of all success. It is the reviver from the sleep of heedlessness, the bridge to the One remembered.

—naqdhbandi.org

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar,

God is Greater (*than my ego*)

God is Greater (*than my loftiest perception of Him*)

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none worthy of worship other than He

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar,

God is Greater

God is Greater

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none worthy of worship other than *He*

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I witness that there is no god other than He

Ya Rasul Allah - Muhammad ﷺ

O Messenger of God – Muhammad ﷺ

Ya Habeeb Allah – Muhammad ﷺ

O Beloved of God – Muhammad ﷺ

Ya Shafee' Allah

O God's Intercessor,

Muhammad Rasul Allah

Muhammad, Messenger of God

Ya Nabi Allah – Muhammad ﷺ

O Prophet of God – Muhammad ﷺ

Ya Mustafa – Muhammad ﷺ

O Chosen one of God – Muhammad ﷺ

Ya Hidayatullah - Muhammad ﷺ

Guidance of God - Muhammad ﷺ,

Muhammad Rasul Allah

Muhammad ﷺ, Messenger of God

Allahu Akbar,

Allahu Akbar,

God is Greater

God is Greater

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none divine other than *He*

Allahu Akbar,

Allahu Akbar,

God is Greater

God is Greater

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none divine other than *He*

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none divine other than He

Anta Shafee, Anta Kafee

Ikfinaa Ya Allah

You are the Healer

You are Sufficient (*for me*)

Suffice for me O God!

Ishfinaa Ya Allah Allahu Akbar

Heal me, O God! God is Greater!

Allahu Akbar,

Allahu Akbar,

God is Greater

God is Greater

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none divine other than *He*

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none divine other than He

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar,

God is Greater

God is Greater

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none divine other than *He*

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is no god other than God

Ya Rasul Allah - Muhammad ﷺ

O Messenger of God – Muhammad ﷺ

Ya Habeeb Allah- Muhammad ﷺ

O Beloved of God - Muhammad ﷺ

Ya Shafee' Allah

O God's Intercessor,

Muhammad Rasul Allah

Muhammad ﷺ, Messenger of God

Ya Nabi Allah -Muhammad ﷺ

O Prophet of God - Muhammad ﷺ

Ya Mustafa – Muhammad ﷺ

O Chosen of God – Muhammad ﷺ

Ya Hidayatullah - Muhammad ﷺ

O Guidance of God - Muhammad ﷺ,

Muhammad Rasul Allah

Muhammad ﷺ, Messenger of God

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar,

God is Greater (*than our perceptions*)

God is Greater (*than ourselves*)

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is none worthy of worship other than *He*

Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha ill-Allah

I affirm that there is no god other than God

—Lua Hightower

Nami Danam Che Manzil Bood

نمی دانم چه منزل بود شب جائے کہ من بودم
بہ ہر سو رقص بسمیل بود شب جائے کہ من بودم
پری پیکر نگارے سرو قدے لالہ رخسارے
سرایا آفت دل بود شب جائے کہ من بودم
خدا خود میر مجلس بود اندر لامکاں خسرو
محمد شمع محفل بود شب جائیکہ من بودم

Nami danam chi manzil bood shab jaay ki man boodam;

Baharsu raqs-e bismil bood shab jaay ki man boodam.

I wonder what was the place where I was last night,
All around me were half-slaughtered victims of love,
tossing about in agony.

Pari paikar nigaar-e sarw qadde laala rukhsare;

Sarapa aafat-e dil bood shab jaay ki man boodam.

There was a nymph-like beloved with cypress-like form
and tulip-like face,

Ruthlessly playing havoc with the hearts of the lovers.

Khuda khud meer-e majlis bood andar laamakan Khusrau;

Muhammad shamm-e mehfil bood shab jaay ki man boodam.

God himself was the master of ceremonies in that heavenly
court, Oh Khusrau, Where (the face of) the Prophet ﷺ too was
shedding light like a candle.

—Hazrat Amir Khusrau (tr. S.A.H Abidi)

Hazrat Amir Khusro

Ab'ul Hasan Yamīn al-Dīn Khusrow (1253-1325 CE), better known as **Amīr Khusrow (or Khusrau) Dehlawī** (may God have mercy on him), was an Indian musician, scholar and poet of Persian descent. He was an iconic figure in the cultural history of the Indian subcontinent. A Sufi mystic and a spiritual disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya (may God have mercy on him) of Delhi, Amīr Khusrow was not only a notable poet but also a prolific and seminal musician. He wrote poetry primarily in Persian, but also in Hindavi.

He is regarded as the “*father of qawwali*” (the devotional music of the Indian Sufis). He is also credited with enriching Hindustani classical music by introducing Persian and Arabic elements in it, and was the originator of the khayal and tarana styles of music. The invention of the tabla is also traditionally attributed to Amīr Khusrow. He has written Ghazal, Masnavi, Qata, Rubai, Do-Beti and Tarkibhand.

A musician and a scholar, Amīr Khusrow was as prolific in tender lyrics as in highly involved prose and could easily emulate all styles of Persian poetry which had developed in medieval Persia, from Khāqānī's forceful qasidas to Nezāmī's *khamasa*. His contribution to the development of the *ghazal*, hitherto little used in India, is particularly significant.

–Sufipoetry.wordpress.com

To learn more about music (or Samaa') and the Chisti Sufi order in Islamic spirituality visit:

http://www.iecrcna.org/publications/books/Khwaja_Ghareeb_Nawaz_rahmatullah_alayh_SP.pdf

Islamic Spiritual Healing Remedy

If you would like to experience Islamic healing with the Names of God, you are encouraged to do the following when you have a need (alleviating stress and anxiety, general peace of mind, good mental health):

الرَّحِيمُ

2. AR-RAHIM
The Mercifull

الرَّحْمَنُ^{1.}

AR-RAHMAN
The Beneficent

Instructions

1. Take a shower and intend purification at the beginning of this remedy course.
2. Read the following daily after dawn (morning) and before retiring to sleep for 11 days:
 - a) Read the words *Ar-Rahmaan Ar-Raheemu* 190 times and blow on your heart.
 - b) Blow on water and drink the water.

You may then recite (190 times for each use) as often as needed once the 11-day course is over.

We hope that you found this publication of benefit to you. Share with anyone you wish who you think may benefit irrespective of their religion.

Kind regards

IECRC Healing Staff