



Cultivating our Spiritual Ores

Today, under the heavy burden of modern life and the influence of contemporary notions about the separation of the realm of reason and the realm of the heart, we seem to have lost the connection with our inner spiritual ores.

The instinctive voices of the immutable creation of the human being with a design to yearn for spiritual quests and contentment are being heard loud and clear. Yet, we cannot forgo the questioning impulses of the reason. Perhaps, as the famous twentieth-century Muslim scholar, Said Nursi, proposed the answer lies in the marriage of reason and the heart to produce spiritual wisdom.

A large part of the Western world has ignored spirituality in response to religious wars and due to the influence of secularism and materialistic philosophy. To an extent, the Muslim world has also ignored spirituality due to focusing on survival, economic worries and overreaction to some unorthodox spiritual practices. Ironically, the rich Islamic spirituality coupled with informed reason inherent to Islam may be the key contribution of Islam and Muslims to the modern world.

It is through this unique but constructive contribution that Muslims can help the world get out of the chaotic state it is in - provided Muslims can cultivate their spiritual ores to have beautiful souls.

Mehmet Ozalp

UP COMING EVENTS:

Affinity Intercultural Foundation Youth Leadership Team present

10th Panel: 'I am a young Australian Muslim because..?'

Are Muslim youth muslim by chance or choice, social and cultural expectations that challenge youth and stereotyping.

Keynote speaker is Dr Paul White who will be addressing the factors contributing to the behaviour of Muslim youth towards just solutions.

At: Carlton Hotel, 350 Church St, Parramatta Saturday, 2nd July 2005 at 7.30 pm

Limited seats available. Please register at www.affinity.org.au, by phone (9702 0789) or email registrations@affinity.org.au



Spirituality of Islam Panel

The 9th Affinity Panel titled: The Spirituality of Islam and Sufism, on the 10th of April, proved to be a unique and enriching event. Islam and its rich spirituality were discussed at length by three panelists: Afroz Ali, Amine Atalay and Stuart Clark.

In this era of material indulgence and pursuit there is a deeper yearning for that spirituality innate in us all ... there has to be something beyond the physical needs and desires of mankind ... these were the opening sentences by the evening's Master of Ceremonies, Ahmet Keskin who begun this unique panel to an interested audience of around 170 people of diverse backgrounds.

The first speaker, Stuart Clark, discussed what Sufism really is and gave a brief historical development of Sufism whilst highlighting some well-known Sufi personalities overtime and finally touched on the integration of Sufi development into the orthodox Islam.

'Demystifying Mysticism' followed up Clark's discussion, as the second panelist, Afroz Ali, presented his reasoning, '*Tasawwuf is the spiritual awareness of self ... inner dimensional aspect of guidance to excellence ... every action we do is based on selfless motif*' was the definition provided by Afroz.

In Islam, he explained, '*the letter of the law emphasises the spirit of the decree (God's decree).*' The wisdom underpinning Islamic theology was the endeavour or '*jihad*' to maintain the balance between the outward and the inward dimensions of faith.

The third speaker was sister Amine Atalay who presented an inspiring account of the spiritual Leader of Islam, Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) embodiment and modelling of balance and spirituality.

Melbourne Youth Lecture

On 3rd of April, Selimiye Foundation Youth Group, held a lecture in Melbourne, inviting guests, Mehmet Ozalp, Prof Gary Bouma and Sheik Abdul Aziz (An Australian Sufi leader) to speak. Affinity's Mehmet Ozalp spoke to the youthful audience of about 100 people about the five challenges of being a young Muslim in Australia and emphasized the need to develop and Australian Muslim identity.

Indonesian Exchange Student Program

A group of Indonesian ladies came to Auburn Gallipoli Mosque on 23rd April as a result of an exchange program aimed at young Muslim leaders going to Indonesia from Australia and vice versa. The ladies were hosted by Affinity's Zuleyha Keskin. During the informal meeting, there was exchange of activities and ideas in the areas of interfaith dialogue and Islamic education. The ladies also got to meet a number of other members of the community during their visit who are active in different areas within the community. The meeting was organised by Zubeda Raihman from MWNNA.

Granville Youth Association lecture on the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Granville Youth Association held a lecture on 22nd April, titled, "The Prophet (pbuh): A Living Example". The two key speakers were Sheikh Yahya Al-Safi and Mehmet Ozalp, who both delivered an informative and exciting speech on the Prophet (pbuh).

The event was attended by the local Muslim community members especially the youth and representatives from the Lebanese Muslim Association.

Australian Sikh Association Interfaith Event

A Living in Harmony seminar on 30th of April, was organised by the Australian Sikh Association. Affinity members Adnan Karapinar, Jo Hassan, Injilay Hassan and Makiz Ansari and Zuleyha Keskin attended the event. Zuleyha gave a presentation and spoke of her experience in the community in terms of ethnicity and dialogue, and in particular, the benefit of dialogue in crystallising one's own identity and in achieving peace and harmony within the community. Thanks to special guests Phillip Ruddock, Stepan Kirkyashan and Laurie Ferguson. The overall event was positive ending with the prospect of future projects together.

Talk on Islam at Pymble Uniting Church

Pymble Uniting Church invited Affinity to speak on Islam to its members on 29th April. Mehmet Ozalp, Ahmet Keskin, Omer Sacan and Adnan Karapinar along with Rifat, Ercan and Gurgun attended the evening. The first speaker Rev Graham Ellis spoke of his involvement with Islam and Affinity through Home Encounters project. Mehmet Ozalp spoke on Islam's view on Monothiesm, Prophethood, Revelation and gave general Islamic information. This was followed by an hour long of Q&A session covering contemporary issues with Islam and Muslims. The event ended on a very positive note.



Tour of Turkey 23 April to 3 May

Affinity Intercultural Foundation along with their partner organisation in Melbourne, Australian Intercultural Society, organized a Cultural and Spiritual tour of Turkey. The tour entailed a visit to many amazing cities in Turkey.

Highlights of places and people visited included; the Topkapi Palace; Sultan Ahmet Mosque aka Blue Mosque; Fatih College, Hagia Sophia (now a Museum); Armenian Orthodox Patriarch of Istanbul; Catholic Vatican Ambassador to Istanbul, Monsignor George Marovitch.

Attending the Anzac day dawn service in Gallipoli was one of the major highlights of the trip. Turkish locals were touched, seeing 'the Anzacs grand-children' praying with their Muslim friends.

An inspiring comment by Dr William Emilsen to reflect upon: 'the difference between Melbournians and Sydneysiders are far greater than the difference between Muslims and Christians'. Hon. Murray Thompson MP, (Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs), felt he had never witnessed such hospitality in his life as he did in Turkey.

Prof Gary Bouma, (Chair, UNESCO in Inter-religious and Inter-cultural Relations, Asia-Pacific), was amazed at the harmony between Muslims, Orthodox Christians and the Jewish community, wishing for a model like this in Australia to exist.