

WHEN WORDS INSPIRE



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In the name of Allah, The Source of Mercy, The Most Merciful. Peace and blessings of Allah be upon His Beloved and final Messenger, Muhammad, his Companions, his family, and those who follow his example.

Have you ever wondered whether it is only the information in a set of words forming a sentence that actually makes sense, or is it also the words that form that articulation?

And have you ever wondered what is the smallest form of our language that actually carries meaning? The modern theory of language is that the smallest particles of our language are the letters of the alphabet, and that they do not carry any meaning. It is by combining them to form words that they actually provide meaning. For example, "D" has no meaning, nor does "O", or "G", etc. however, put the letters "D", "O" and "G" together, and they form a word, "dog", finally making sense to us mere mortals.

But even so, I find it difficult, if not impossible, to be really inspired by the mere words of the modern languages, particularly English. The words really need to be constructed into sentences to carry deep meaning, let alone inspiration.

Imagine if the mere sounds, or the letters of the alphabet, the basis by which the larger particles of words are actually formed, actually carried a meaning. Imagine then, that the set of letters defining the basis of generic meanings form a word which now carries a multitude



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of descriptions to provide the boundaries of its meaning. It would be a language of precision at the very least. It would be a language of articulation, and poets would simply love it, as would romantics. The media, politicians and Hollywood would despise it.

This type of a language is in fact not theory at all. I am not losing the proverbial plot and becoming ultra-philosophical. This language exists, and is the language of the Final Revelation of God- Arabic.

Arabic is a powerful language. Although it may not sound like it, It is a romantic language. It is the most precise language to ever exist in any civilisation this universe has seen or is to see. A single word in Arabic would literally need sentences or even pages to translate in another language, particularly, English.

To illustrate this fact, something not widely known at all, let me use a few examples. I am no expert in the Arabic language, but I have had the blessing to learn a certain extent of it from amongst the most learned in the Arabic language in the world today. Having said that, a lot of the deep and delicate intricacies of the Arabic language were lost with the conquering of the Islamic lands by the Mongols. It is said that the Tigris River turned black, literally, from the amount of books the Mongols discarded into the river. They knew that the power of an ordinary Muslim was intellect, preserved in writings within volumes of books. With that part of history lost, humans also lost a precious piece of civilisation. Interestingly, in the midst of conquering the Muslims and slaying them by the thousands, the Mongols started to



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learn the same knowledge that illuminated the Muslims of the time. Soon enough the conquerors and destroyers of Islam became conquered by the sheer brilliance of Islamic knowledge, and its application for better humanity, as they, the Mongols, accepted Islam as their way of life.

A good example to use to illustrate how the letters themselves carry meaning in the Arabic language, to give a superbly encompassing meaning to the very words they form, would be to use a universal value, love. There are different kinds of love, as well as different levels of the same love.

In simple terms to suggest that one "loves" something or someone, the Arabic term for it is from the generic verb, "Hibb". You love her. You love ice cream. You love your parents. This word would suffice.

Another word, that I want to use as an example, is a type of love that is intense, and lasting. This type of love causes an undefinable bond between the lover and the loved... Laila and Majnu... Romeo and Juliet... mankind for the Prophet of God. This word is "'ishq".

'Ishq is formed by three letters of the Arabic alphabet: 'ayn, sheen and qaaf. Briefly, almost all words in the Arabic language are formed from the base of three letters from the alphabet. Essentially, the meaning is in fact formulated by the first two letters. The third provides a closure to that meaning. These words are usually a past tense of a verb. So, there are many words with the same first two letters, but a different third letter, and hence the meaning is expanded further from the base meanings of the first two letters.



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To really understand the word, one needs to look at each of these letters, and what secrets it holds.

When a word starts with the letter 'Ayn, it generally refers to a pure source of something. It is the essence of that thing. Sheen is normally used, especially when in between other letters, to indicate a willing diffusion. Qaaf is an amazing letter of the alphabet. It articulates a returning to the source. It also indicates a sense of commitment or the sealing of a fact.

Pure source, the essence.

Diffusion of that source.

Returning to the source with commitment.

What brilliant manner to describe intense love! Love that is pure, that continues to diffuse outwards, selfless, and returning to this source of such great love, with commitment.

And that is ONE word, 'ishq, nearly taking a page to be truly described.

I also wanted to use two more examples to end with the actual reason to write this.

Let us have a look at another important word, "Haqq". It means truth- a solid undeniable truth.



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The word is essentially made of three letters, Ha, Qaaf and Qaaf again.

The letter Ha, is pronounced from one's inner chest area rather than from one's throat. This letter articulates matters of the heart with sincerity. It simulates responsibility, as in the saying, "these matters are heavy on my chest", meaning they are important matters requiring utmost care and concern.

Qaaf, as mentioned previously, articulates the returning to the source, as well as a commitment to a fact. The letter is repeated as if to give emphasis to this fact itself. Quite a unique and genius way to provide an unshakeable meaning to something.

Matters of the heart, requiring utmost care.

Returning to that source of requiring care, with commitment and emphasis.

"Truth" cannot be articulated any better in carrying such undeniable meaning.

My last example is of profound importance to the very existence of humanity, captured in one word.

Ihsaan.



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This is the status of a human being who is enlightened of the Truth despite the self, is dynamically aware of his or her Creator, and pursues excellence in the remainder of the journey of life. I do not mean to dwell into the theological significance of this word and spiritual state, but the explanation of the very word will shed significant light on it regardless.

This state is considered to be a recognition of complete trust in the purpose of being and the reality of Truth... Haqq, a word we dissected earlier on. In the Islamic Tradition, this is referred to as “Haqq al-Yaqeen”, the third stage of human enlightenment.

Before a person attains “Haqq al-Yaqeen”, he or she will firstly pass through the first stage, called “ ‘Ilm al-Yaqeen”. This is the acceptance and trust upon the Knowledge, or the blueprint provided. It is almost like a traveller putting his trust upon a map for the directions given to him by a credible source. This person, upon walking through life with consistency, attaining “ ‘Ilm al-Yaqeen”, would discover a second more enlightened level, “ ‘Ayn al-Yaqeen”. This is synonymous to “seeing is believing”. The traveller having placed trust on the credible blueprint or map, arrives at the transit point of his journey. The map having warned of dangers and guided him to the easier paths. Upon arrival, this traveller can actually see what the map had promised. Islamic Tradition holds that whilst seeing is believing, there is nothing like experiencing, touching, feeling what you see, of course in this case, metaphorically. The state of excellence is an abstract state, not a tangible one. A really good analogy is fire. One can see fire, for example, but one would not know its real strength, until one touched



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it. Upon touching it, and quickly pulling back, one completely believes and accepts the power of fire. The same analogy can be used in a positive sense, of say a fruit. One may observe it, but not until taking a bite into the fruit, does that person really and truly appreciate and accept the delicious taste of that fruit. This is "Haqq al-Yaqeen", the state of appreciative contentment- Ihsaan.

We return to the word, Ihsaan. This term is formed by three letters, Ha, Seen and Nun, and is a derivative of the base verb, "Hasana" or its passive noun, "Husn". The term generically refers to something of lasting quality, of beauty, pleasantness. It also refers to an extrinsic appreciation with sincerity and without hypocrisy.

The letter Ha was explained previously. In brief it articulates matters of the heart, with sincerity. It simulates responsibility upon matters requiring utmost care and concern.

The letter Seen when used in the middle, articulates a carrying of the original to the end. It also signifies emphasis via an outward movement.

One of the most beautiful letters of the Arabic language is the letter Nun. It, in many ways, also describes the natural state of things. Nun signifies a returning of the original into itself, containing in it, silence. Interestingly, the actual shape of the letter is similar to a water container...



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Here is an all-encompassing description of a sincere state of pleasantness, quality and beauty, which lasts over time, where nothing is expected from it, simply returning to its source in silence.

Ihsaan. A state of human excellence, contentment, sincerity and a dynamic aspiration to retain this very state within oneself, in silence. This state is only attained when one is aware of their place in existence, and is grateful for that very existence. It is a state when one acquires peace in oneself with one's surrounds- physical and spiritual. A state when one is in Tasleem.... Submission with peace to the Reality. This reality is the Creator, Allah. This submission is Islam.

It is noteworthy that Ihsaan is a returning of oneself to its origin. In theology, Ihsaan is the third state, after Islaam and Imaan. Ihsaan is the reality of Islaam, having come full circle.

Even in the Qur'an, Allah, the Author of the Final Revelation, announces certain chapters that simply begin with one, two, three, four or five letters. They are called *al-Muqatta'aat*. Some conjecture has been made as to what these letters may suggest. These suggestions emanate from what the base meanings the letters of the Arabic alphabet articulate. However, it is unanimously agreed, that only Allah knows their exact meanings as revealed in the Qur'an. These letters carry secrets that are beyond human understanding, in this world. It is not a type of mystery where some traditions expect you to believe beyond reason. Islamic Tradition makes it quite clear that the vastness of the



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universe and all that is contained in it is filled with a complex set of knowledge that humans will not be able to comprehend.

There is a more profound and humbling reason for these letters to exist as they do. It confirms and establishes the foundational reality that only Allah Knows All.

These letters radiate a Sign for those who reflect, as if asking, “do you not realise that there is meaning, articulated and deliberated meaning, in everything that exists?” Even the smallest parts of the whole... Like the letters of a word? Words may be the smallest “particle” to mean anything to us mere mortals, but there is a deeper purpose that only Allah knows. And, the Prophetic Tradition of Islam taught humanity, to say “Allah knows best”.

There are deeply inspiring Signs in all of creation. Whilst the Speech of Allah is not a created entity, the language of humanity is. The language of Allah to His Final Messenger upon humanity, is Arabic. In a verse of the Qur’an, Allah says, “Verily, We have revealed this Quran in Arabic, so you may use your intellect”. Islam does not consider intellect to be based on one’s academic excellence in, say for example, Science. What Islam considers intellect, real intelligence, is the ability of a person to observe and read Signs of His Creation. And then, when one recognises the Majesty of Allah through reflecting on His Signs, the person submits to the Laws and Guidance of the Creator of those Signs.

Will we not see the Signs from our Creator, regardless of how small they may be, celebrate our intelligence, and so submit to Him Alone?