

# The forgotten way of expression

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**S**ending a handwritten letter to our loved ones has become a thing of the past as it heads towards extinction. Yet in a world that is very much dominated by emails and Whatsapp, getting a hand-written note is a welcoming and emotional feeling of acceptance.

As the world celebrated the International Post Day recently, Weekender visited the Post Museum of Bahrain, situated near the Bab Al Bahrain, adjacent to the police station. The establishment of postal services in Bahrain started in the year 1884. But the mail processing was very lengthy as it would take weeks and months for a letter to be delivered. Mails were often shipped on boats travelling from Bombay to Basra and then to Bahrain.

But, the Indian government during 1912 introduced a steamship line between India and Arabian Gulf states which regularized the postal service in Manama. Later on, due to the rise of

outgoing and incoming letter, the postal operation widened to Manama and Muharraq. In 1950 a third post office was opened in Awali, which served as an independent office for BAPCO. Since 1965 the government of Bahrain assumed full control over the stamps and postal service and the stamps carried portraits of Bahrain rules with an inscription of "Bahrain". In 1973, Bahrain joined the universal postal union, and in 1977 Bahrain became a founding member of GCC post. In 1986, Bahrain post joined the Arab postal union and by 2002, the postal directorate expanded with multiple offices, at different locations.

At a time, where post offices and letters are dying out by the instantaneous flow of internet based messages, there are still a few who love to collect stamps and preserve them as a treasure that could one day yield unlimited fortune. Hafedh Abdulghaffar was one among them who got introduced to the world of philately right from his school days in 1980s. As long as he can remember, he had been collecting stamps. Mr. Abdulghaffar, who is nowadays media secretary at Bahrain Philatelic Society believes that stamps represents the country's history; he has been the commissioner for Hong Kong International Stamps Exhibition 2015, and has participated in Sharjah stamps exhibition 2016. "For me collecting stamps is a passion which is driven by the quest of acquiring knowledge about the culture and tradition of other countries. I consider stamps as a formal representative of their countries. They reflect the information about the nations worldwide and throughout the globe. In the same time stamps are opening new horizons of entertainment and communication among the collectors all over the world", he elaborated to Weekender.



When asked about the importance and role of posts, Mr. Hafedh Abdulghaffar who works as Chief Editor of his quarterly (Antique magazine) said that in his impression letters have their own space in the world of communication. It has a personal touch and a feeling of intimacy. "Letters will have a prominent status throughout because during the correspondence, the collectors or the receivers find a unique touch of love and acts as a token of affection. Speaking about his future plans, Mr. Abdulghaffar said, "I am planning to attend a training workshop in Netherlands next December which will focus on stamps security printing and designing and it will be attended by stamps collectors from all over the world." Inspiring his cousins and friends into philately, he said that the real challenge for a stamp collector is the preservation and the patience in collecting. He believes that the real challenge is the patience in following up all the latest about the new editions of stamps being issued, besides the first day covers.



## AMERICANS TAKE ON 'INSHALLAH'

**Hey Anoud, am I going to see you Friday?"**  
**"Inshallah."**  
**"... so is that yes?"**  
**"Inshallah."**

Americans are very confused by the concept of Inshallah. Well, more specifically, bemused by our simplistic understanding of "inshallah time." In a culture dominated by timetables, schedules, and the ever important deadlines, we just don't get it. Not that inshallah time is unique to the Arab world- while living in Paraguay, it took me a solid two months to be fully admonished into accepting the concept of "tranquilo," of sitting back and enjoying life in the moment. Culturally, I would say Americans have a lot to learn about not rushing through sunsets. Instead of being taught to appreciate the beauty of a crystalline heartbeat, we are taught to "achieve" and "make things happen."

As specifically regarding the punctuality aspect of "inshallah," well, I would argue there is room to meet in the middle. Sometimes deadlines actually do

matter (yes, I have literally run through airports to catch flights), but more often we need to place more value on truly being with the people around us instead of watching the clock. Now, savvy Westerners may come to appreciate the flexibility of the Inshallah answer. One can easily avoid embarrassing the host with a flat out demurral. But this more cynical approach again escapes from appreciating the concept, of the utter acknowledgment that we do not control our fates.

There are many reasons Americans could shy away from this- our national attribute of do-it-yourself individualism, for one, or a much more personal vice governmental role in religion. When considering opportunities, we tend to forget the many advantages being born into one society vice another affords. Whenever pride gets in our way, puffing up anyone with self-importance,

simply voicing "inshallah" can be a useful reminder- there are so many circumstances in life we truly do not control, so many undeserved blessings.

A brief jump into a treacherous pool of metaphysics, perhaps, but also a good thought to consider the next time you promise your coach to learn not to foul... inshallah. Or yes, we are definitely going to learn to cook better, to do our homework sooner, to mind our tongues... inshallah. It's an easy term to abuse, to laughingly transmit our disbelief in the likelihood of something actually happening (sorry coach!). And again, regarding "inshallah time," recalling Americans' addiction to punctuality may aid in smoothing over relations. But still... it's a powerful concept, and maybe one every individual can learn to appreciate more.



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