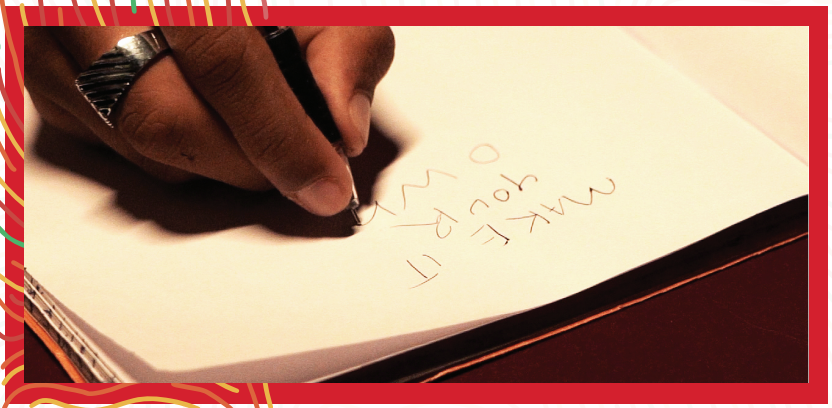

DARUL HUDA
SIBAQ
NATIONAL
ARTS FEST '26
MAKE IT
YOUR
OWN



Make it Your Own

Allah entrusted the human being with the responsibility of **stewardship on earth**, endowing him with an intellect that enables him to recognise truth, distinguish right from wrong, and understand his moral responsibilities. This intellect is accompanied by a conscience that rejects wrongdoing and inclines towards what is right, along with the will to uphold ethical principles and divine guidance, even when the path is difficult.

What makes the human intellect unique is the desire that exists alongside it, drawing the human being towards what is easy and pleasing. Imam al-Razi (R) explained this distinction by observing that angels possess intellect without desire, animals possess desire without intellect, and human beings possess both. When intellect guides desire, the human being can rise above the angels. When desire overcomes intellect, he can fall below the animals. Other beings act according to their nature, but human beings must choose his intellect over the pull of ease and that effort gives it a worth that belongs to him alone. But a worth that belongs to him alone can also be taken away.

When the human being fails to exercise his own intellect, something else takes its place. The danger is no longer merely neglecting the intellect, **but surrendering the self itself.**

This begins with the **algorithmic self,** shaped by whatever appears on the feed.

Here, choice is the first to slip away. “What is recommended for us” gradually becomes a list of what to consider, believe, and follow. We begin choosing only from what an algorithm places before us, rarely questioning the limits it sets on our choices.

What is chosen for us soon begins to shape what we know. **Knowledge,** too, becomes vulnerable. We believe what is repeated most often and seldom question whether it comes from an **authentic source.** As the feed leads, the crowd follows, giving rise to the **imitative self,** shaped by whatever the majority is doing.

Here, **identity** begins to suffer. Whatever is trending starts to seem right, while our own dress, language, and habits begin to feel like things to hide. As identity bends to the pressure of trends, our emotions begin to follow the same course.

We grieve over today's news, only to forget it when something new captures our attention, while the suffering of the person beside us goes unnoticed.





Beyond feeds and crowds lies another force: the **AI-driven self,** shaped by whatever the machine produces. Here, creativity itself is handed over. Ideas, content, and designs arrive in an instant, until the human being is left merely approving what has been made for him. Yet creativity is a way of expressing what we truly feel and experience, and a machine has never felt joy or loss as a human being does.

The intellect entrusted with the stewardship of the earth can still take the lead, not merely following the current **but giving it direction.** Whatever the feed recommends, the crowd follows, or the machine produces; hold to this:

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

The way forward begins with **choice:** doing what is right even when others do wrong. But a free choice requires true **knowledge.** We must therefore study, seek understanding, and accept knowledge only from authentic sources. Knowing what is true helps us understand who we are. Our worth lies in *taqwa,* not in appearance, and we therefore have no need to imitate others.

Taqwa also calls us to take responsibility for how we treat others. It teaches us to feel the pain of the person beside us and to wish for others what we wish for ourselves. Such a heart also seeks to communicate what it feels, giving rise to creativity that comes from within. We must use our own intellect to create and strive for **excellence** in what we do, for Allah loves work done well.

This call is older than the feed, the crowd, and the machine.

SIBAQ Looks back.

SIBAQ looks back to our ancestors, who walked this path without feeds, trends, or machines. Their traditions enriched their intellect, and this is reflected in the artists of our faith, whose minds remained independent and their creativity their own.

In architecture, the **Dome of the Rock** in Jerusalem developed its own distinctive language through golden mosaics, inscriptions, and plant motifs. The Alhambra and the Taj Mahal, too, expressed this artistic spirit through their own distinct styles.

Beyond stone and tile, their art was rooted in deep learning. In geometry, **Abu'l-Wafa** contributed to the mathematical understanding of shapes and patterns. In calligraphy, **Ibn Muqla** helped establish principles of proportion and form in Arabic lettering that continued to influence the art for generations.





Knowledge, skill, and imagination came together in a living tradition. These artists drew inspiration from distant lands, yet shaped each work in their own way, **never allowing outside influences to dictate their vision.** They turned to authentic sources, understood them deeply, and built upon that knowledge with originality.

They were never ashamed of their heritage. A mosque, a page of script, or a carved door carried a distinctive identity that made its origins clear. Their work reflected devotion, love, and awe, allowing anyone who encountered it, even centuries later, to feel something of what its makers had felt. Their tools, whether the compass, the mould, or the pen, remained in their hands, never becoming masters over their minds. Every creation bore the mark of its maker.

This is the legacy SIBAQ looks back to. Those artists learned deeply, mastered their craft, and made it their own. The same path remains open to us today.





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