



# **FORGOTTEN WISDOM OF FIRASAT**

**MR. ISA KAMARI**

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**ISA KAMARI** has written 11 novels, three collections of poetry, two collections of short stories, a book of essays on Singapore Malay poetry, a collection of theatre scripts and lyrics of 3 song albums. His novels in Malay have been translated into English, Turkish, Urdu, Arabic, Indonesian, Jawi, Russian, Spanish, French, Korean, Azerbaijan and Mandarin. His collections of essays, selected poems and short stories have been translated into English. His first novel in English, *Tweet*, was published in 2016.



Isa was conferred the Southeast Asia Write Award from Thailand in 2006, the Singapore Cultural Medallion in 2007, the Anugerah Tun Seri Lanang from the Singapore Malay Language Council in 2009, and the Mastera Literary Award from Brunei Darussalam in 2018.

### SYNOPSIS

We live in a world which creates an alienation in our lives. This talk offers an insight into the forgotten wisdom of *firasat* as a manifestation of a more profound and more extensive body of integrated and reiterative knowledge derived from an attitude of mind, existential spirituality and a growth path that enables us to walk beautifully, and live mindful, exploratory, creative, wholesome, and meaningful lives in a fragmented world.

## A WRITER'S PERSPECTIVE

This talk is presented from a writer's perspective. I believe that literature is an essential component and barometer of the health of our mental, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of life. I also feel strongly that ideas are best presented not in an abstract manner, but within the context of the human condition. As such, I would be reading poems, telling stories, and presenting examples of human experiences to illustrate and explain concepts that influence and shape our lives. I would also include a bibliography of works related to the topic.

For this talk, I would like to focus on two main concepts. The first is alienation. The second is *firasat*. I would attempt to link these two concepts in an antithesis-thesis relationship. Let us begin with a poem:

### **The King**

*I bow to you*

*King*

*I bear the torment of your sadness*

*In the embrace of my sleep*

*May it transform into*

*Glad tidings*

*For the days of your people*

*This exploration is*

*To find your throne*

*Which has disappeared*

*From our hearts*

*For my love to you*

*King*

Let us begin our journey to find the missing throne, which I would like to present to you as the forgotten wisdom of *firasat*. I believe we have lost it due to the dominance of modern culture, which creates conditions of alienation in our lives. What, then, is alienation?

## **THE CONTEXT & ANTITHESIS**

Alienation is so prevailing and has seeped into every aspect and level of our lives that we fail to realize it exists. We are like fishes in the sea that do not know the meaning of 'wetness', which is the alienation that has impacted and shaped our lives, both consciously and subconsciously. I would attempt to illustrate this phenomenon through stories contained in my latest book, *Maladies of the Soul*, recently released in July 2022. The following are synopses of the stories:

### **THE ORCHID**

It is a story about a gay person who has abandoned God and religion. He acknowledges that he has internal conflicts that need to be resolved. He seeks help and peace at a remote temple in the jungle to cure his ailment by abandoning worldly pleasures. There he meets a handsome monk and is sexually aroused.

### **THE BARGAINING**

A man prays at Sultan Mosque and visits a bookshop that sells religious books and another that sells heritage kris and swords. He does not have enough money to get all he likes, and he has to choose which one he wants to buy. He receives a text message from a prostitute stating the price for her services. He visits the prostitute after receiving a good bargain. He wants to redeem himself by re-visiting the mosque but realises he is in an impure state and needs a ritual bath. He is knocked down by a lorry while crossing the road.



## GLASS

A teenager is suffering from injuries inflicted by her attempt to commit suicide. Her career-woman mother wants her to be the best in class and plans and controls her activities, while she has failed twice in her marriages. The teenager suffers from hallucinations, shame, a sense of guilt and abuse by her step-father. She attempts suicide for the second time and succeeds.

## GREEN MAN PLUS

A man suffering from an incurable disease receives signs from God of his impending death. The signs come progressively 100 days before the appointed time. He sees the Angel of Death, one of the signs and is terrified. Absurdly and in desperation, he tries to prolong life by using the Green Man Plus card for the elderly repeatedly, in an attempt to add six seconds to each crossing duration, thus his life too, he imagines. But the Angel of Death has his plans too.

## OTAI

A man waits for his friend, who is an *otai* or expert in heritage blades, outside Sultan Mosque. A youth approaches and gives him a flyer to protest the selling and consumption of alcohol in the heritage area of Kampong Glam. He recollects his arguments with the *otai*, who insisted that heritage blades like the kris must be designed and forged in accordance with established rules and traditional methods. At the same time, he suggested that modern aesthetics and processes could be employed and fused in the manufacture instead. The *otai* arrives, and they visit a restaurant in the area. The *otai* orders fusion food while he has a traditional meal. They drink beer when the azan from the mosque is sung.

## **THE GARDENER**

A gardener laments the felling of his favourite jasmine tree. The jasmine tree was a gift to his wife, who passed away delivering their child. He gets close to nature and God in his garden by observing and tending to the plants, especially the jasmine tree. He is envious of his son, who has the proper education and would deeply understand the sophisticated growth process and other natural phenomena. He was dejected to know that it was his son who had felled the jasmine tree, and he rushes to his bicycle to go to his son's school to seek redressal.

## **THE CLINIC**

A religious teacher visits a clinic to seek a remedy for his numb right hand. He recollects his arguments with a young man who accuses him of teaching religion devoid of solutions for societal problems like high divorce rates, drug addiction and under-employment. He retorts that those are not his concerns. His duty is to convey religious teachings per se. He meets the doctor, who is revealed as his alter-ego, and the remedy he seeks is within himself.

## **DOOR**

A man leaves home to go to work. He routinely passes a series of doors at his house, the bus, MRT station, train, and company bus. When he reaches the office, he has a stomachache. He had tom yam soup the night before. That was not part of his routine. He rushes to the toilet and slams shut the cubicle door. Then only he realises he has the privacy and time to ponder.

## **THE ARCHITECT**

An architect visits the tower he designed and supervises the construction. He won the competition to design the tower, which symbolises the epitome of the city's development. As he climbs up the tower by stairs, he recollects life events that portray him as alienated and unhappy. As he reaches the top of the building, he is hesitant to fulfilling his wish to end his life. The tower is both his success and failure.

## **THE BULL**

A man is overwhelmed by his desire to accrue as much wealth as possible from the stock exchange. He puts everything he has as bets for his stocks. His greed pushes him to the limit as he bets his soul on one stock that has rocketed in the bull run. He is shocked to learn that he has become the raging bull itself.

## **THE MIMBAR**

Year 2219. A 'person' is shot dead by the police for severely defacing the *mimbar* of a mosque and threatening public peace and security. The police find an old newspaper report in his sling bag which tells about peculiar events related to the *mimbar*, designed and built to commemorate the first president of the city, and the mosque has since been turned into a museum. The structure of *mimbar*, which looks like a phallic symbol from the front and a Chinese coffin or dugout from the side, has created controversy within the community. The police retrieve the memory chip of the 'person', an android unit 777, which stores the teachings of an ancient book called the Koran. Police are also hunting for his clandestine religious teacher.

## THE SCULPTOR

A sculptor has become insane. His friend tries to find out the causes of his insanity by visiting the factory he owns. Previously, he produced sculptures in his studio, at the back of his house. But since business was good, he changed the mode of production of his sculptures. He is no longer involved in the creative process but only acts as a Quality Controller. His friend is shocked to discover the real cause of the malady of his soul.

## RENDEZVOUS

A reporter is assigned to do a scoop on a unique restaurant frequented by bureaucrats, technocrats, and members of corporations of the supercomputer age. An artist-painter and his friend are also in the restaurant. The reporter is shocked to discover the antics of the restaurant's visitors, contrary to their profession and status. He is even more shocked at the food served, which is his own heart.

## ALIENATION: SIGN & CHARACTERISTICS

There is nothing earth-shattering about the stories. They are everyday occurrences of life in a city. However, Toh Wen Li, an Arts Correspondence of The Straits Times, said the following in a review of *Maladies of the Soul* dated 13 August 2022: *The collection, at its best, will inspire readers to do some serious soul-searching. Many of the "maladies" seem fairly quotidian but are no less unsettling for being so. Placed under the magnifying glass, they prompt us to question: Do we really have to live like this?*

The above stories tell of misfit & displacement (The Orchid & Glass), incongruence between religion, knowledge and culture (The Bargaining, *Otai* and The *Mimbar*), dehumanised concept of achievement and development (Glass and The Architect), desolation and conflict between feelings, mind and soul (Door, The Bull, Green



Man Plus, The Orchid), dehumanised concept of education (Glass and The Gardener), detachment of religion from societal problems (The Clinic), incongruence between creativity and method of production (The Sculptor and The Architect) and dehumanised effects of technology (Rendezvous).

From these signs and characteristics, I derive the following principles of alienation. I believe thinkers have deliberated these principles on alienation, such as Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Erich Fromm, and others. I would like us to keep these principles at the back of our minds, as I will be bringing them up again when we discuss the principles of firasat later:

## **PRINCIPLES OF ALIENATION**

- a) Disunity
- b) Imbalance
- c) Chaos
- d) Obscurity
- e) Reductionist

The following is a commentary on the effects of alienation in our lives, which are underpinned by the five principles mentioned above:

## **FRAGMENTED WORLD**

We live in a fragmented world that has caused isolation and desolation of our lives in many spheres and at multiple levels. We fail to detect what more to delve into the cracks and crevices of such alienated lives in the social, political, economic, technological, cultural, artistic, psychological, and spiritual spheres.

## **LEVEL OF MADNESS**

Every day, we live at levels of madness that envelope our lives caused by estrangement, isolation, desolation, and loss of meaning in the contemporary world. The disheartening fact is that such alienated experiences are perceived as normal and acceptable to many.

## **SUPERFICIAL LIVES**

We live superficial lives at the surface of existence and seldom dive and brave the currents of uncertainty or controversy to discover the hidden meaning of tranquillity in embracing truth, beauty, justice, and service to mankind and all other creatures.

## **COMPARTMENTALISED LIVES**

Our lives have been compartmentalised, demarcated, and bifurcated by disciplines of knowledge, reduced by rational and objective thoughts, and denied by the fear, inability and unwillingness to accept possibilities and the unknown. As a result, we fail to find richness and depth that arise and grow from the interconnectedness of various dimensions and layers of life.

## **DISJOINTED MEANINGS**

At a fundamental level, due to alienation, we fail to find coherent and meaningful answers to the basic questions of why, where, how, what, and who we are in this world, granted that circumstances and life are fluid and change all the time.

## INTROSPECTION & MINDFULNESS

But there is still hope if we open doors of introspection and mindfulness to begin healing our hearts, minds, and souls. We must continue the journey of feeling, thinking, acting, praying and loving as a unified life above existence that uncovers the hidden and suppressed, and look at the blind sides of living and see parts in the whole, and the whole in everything.

But there are challenges and hindrances that we must overcome to achieve this desired state:

### **The Mountain**

*God*

*Smash the mountain in*

*My soul*

*Obliterate*

*The entire me*

*With your Grace and*

*Love*

*I could no longer bear*

*The torments of Alienation*

What, then, are the 'mountains' in our lives that have caused so much suffering in alienation? I would like to put forth, these are our ego, prejudice, bias, hate, captive mind, and false consciousness.

Ego, prejudice, bias, and hate would prevent us from looking at things from an honest, holistic and balanced perspective. Our captive mind and false consciousness would obscure and sully our judgements and hinder us from understanding issues, events, and phenomena in a clear and objective yet multi-faceted and interrelated manner.

We can only be aware of these negative elements in our thoughts and feelings if we consciously create time and space to ponder over them. In fact, the alienation we experience provides the opportunity to be 'strangers' by choice, free and independent in our thoughts and feelings, and be in constant introspection and creative consciousness to overcome our alienation and open new vistas of understanding and endeavours. The keywords are sincerity and mindfulness. The writer Jhumpa Lahiri said, *"From the beginnings of literature, poets and writers have based their narratives on crossing borders, on wanderings, on exile, on encounters beyond the familiar. The stranger is an archetype in epic poetry, in novels. The tension between alienation and assimilation has always been a basic theme."*

Therefore, acknowledge our alienated states, and aspire to walk gently and beautifully in life. Only then would *firasat*, the antidote to alienation, enter and flow into our hearts and minds to return them to a state of unity, balance, harmony, clarity, and holism. My point is that when *firasat* takes over our conscious and sub-conscious aspirations and yearns, the creative and healing processes would ensue almost naturally and immediately. How would this happen? Let's discuss the concept of *firasat* next.

## **THE THESIS**

In traditional Malay-Muslim philosophy, there is a term that embodies an intuitive, interconnected, holistic and layered vision of life.

It is called *firasat*, loosely translated as a kind of hunch, premonition, mystical intuition, clairvoyance, or presentiment. It is derived from the Arabic word *farasa*, which means to pounce or hunt (as that of a wild animal upon prey). In Urdu, it alludes to clear-sightedness, sagacity, wisdom, shrewdness, quick and penetrating intelligence, and keen sensitivity.

My proposition is that *firasat*, commonly understood above, is just the 'tip of the iceberg'. I am proposing that a whole body of validated and reiterative knowledge is shaped by a particular attitude of mind and life aspiration that supports and nurtures it. In other words, the meaning and practice of *firasat* have broader and deeper connotations and demand preparedness, a suitable framework of mind and belief, and a growth plan to attain its full potential and wisdom.

Let us look into some writings that deal with the subject. The purpose is to sieve through and distill characteristics and principles of *firasat* embodied in them. The following provides summaries of some books that deal with the topic:

### ***Firasat – Physiognomy***

*Imam Fakhruddin Ar-Razi, Tuross Pustaka, Jakarta, 2019.*

This book explains the meaning and practice of *firasat* in the field of physiognomy. It tells about how body features and language are means to read and delve into a person's character, behaviour, psychological and spiritual states. Many examples of human responses to events and their behaviour and body language are given to elucidate this abiding relationship. It also provides techniques to sharpen skills to decipher such human states and characters using observation, intuition, and discernment.



Beyond the scope and techniques illustrated in the book, what is important to note is the principle of unity and balance between the physical, psychological, and spiritual states of a human being and the environment. The obscurity and discord between these states provide clues to the remedy of returning them to positions of balance and harmony with fellow human beings and the immediate surroundings or context of a person's life.

### ***Firasat* – Intuitive Justice**

*Imam Ibnu Qayyim Al-Jauziyyah, Pustaka Azzam, Jakarta, 1986.*

The book covers the areas of judgements on matters of dispute, which are made not based on documentary evidence alone, but also informed by an intuitive evaluation of circumstantial evidence, intent and outcome, and perception of behaviour and body language of those involved in the case at hand. Again, many examples of how leaders and kadis made judgements based on *firasat* are given to illustrate this phenomenon.

A pertinent point to note is that the practice of *firasat* in this area adopts holistic and balanced approaches to both physical and inner dimensions of the case at hand, listening to and observing the behaviour of all parties concerned, to discern the case with more clarity before making valid judgements in the interest of maintaining harmony in society.

### ***Firasat* – Almanac of Malay Magic**

*Ismail bin Abdul Muthalib Asyi, Tajul Muluk, Sidratul Muntaha, Kuala Lumpur, 2021.*

This is an almanac of Malay beliefs, customs and practices that provides guidance and solutions to challenges and incidences of daily life in traditional societies. It includes geomancy that prescribes methods of planning, design and construction of buildings based on observation and evaluation of the physical, psychological

and spiritual realms of the land and owner of the building, respectively. Observation and assessment of the terrain, micro-climate, compass and wind direction, and physical attributes such as forest and river are taken into consideration in the siting and orientation of the building. Measurements from the owner's body are taken and translated into the dimensions of the building. Many superstitious practices are associated with the construction, such as pouring fowl's blood into the hole of the house's *tiang seri* (main column), taking a sample of the soil of the plot of land and putting it under the owner's pillow before sleep. If a good dream ensues, then the plot of land is suitable. But if not, a new plot of land should be explored for building the house.

Regardless of the superstitious beliefs stated in the book, what is significant to note is that the practice of *firasat* in this aspect of life involves a yearning for clarity to achieve a holistic, balanced, and harmonious relationship between the site and its surroundings, building and owner. For a long time, the almanac provided answers and meanings to what, why, when, where and how of Malay daily life before it was banned in the 1970s in Malaysia.

### ***Firasat* - Spiritual Dimension**

*Abul-Qasim Al-Qushayri, Epistle on Sufism, Garnet Publishing, United Kingdom, 2020.*

*Firasat* has also impacted the realm of spirituality beyond the physical, cosmological, mental, and psychological dimensions as mentioned above.

Imam Muhammad Al-Wasiti, in chapter 32 on *firasat* sees it as a ray of light that enters the heart. It involves mastery of inner meanings that conveys secrets into the heart through layers of the unseen until the person can see as God sees.

It also enables a person to communicate with other creatures.

Imam Abu Said Al-Kharraj, in the same book and chapter, said that whosoever sees from the light of *firasat* sees with the light of Ultimate Truth. He sees and speaks with the light that is specifically given to him by God. In *sufistic* parlance, it is called *Ilmu Laduni*.

### **Realms of *Firasat***

In summary, *firasat* pervades all realms of human existence. It involves the cosmos and physical environment. It influences the physical self, actions, behaviour, and community. It penetrates and shapes the human mind and impacts a person's psychological and spiritual states. In a nutshell, it embodies a human being's 'existential spirituality', which encapsulates unity, balance and harmony between all realms, facets, and layers of life.

I have been thinking about these realms, their meaning, and their influence. They are so pertinent and encompassing, yet their presence and significance are obscured by the prevailing culture that blocks and cuts the ties that bind them. The following poem attempts to crystallise and elucidate my thoughts on it:

#### ***Firasat***

*People nowadays do not know firasat*

*People nowadays do not use firasat*

*Purity brought down from Elders*

*First intuition without veil*

*Stirrings and effects of unity of experience*

*Nature, knowledge and actions unified*

*Moved by eye of soul*

*Nurtured by discipline of mind*

*Based on strings of reiterative knowledge*

*Demonstrated by signs from layers of Nature  
Validated by proofs in actions and life forces  
The mind, soul and spirit  
Moulded in self and surroundings  
Ever since, it is compartmentalised by thoughts  
That distinguish object from subject  
Dissecting issues to the atom  
Limiting conclusions and acceptance  
Denying possibilities and visions  
Veiling light by separation of knowledge  
Is not this world a mirror  
Is not this universe a sign  
Is not this life a labyrinth  
Is not a problem interlinked  
Science, philosophy, psychology, history and religion  
Are only points of views  
That need to be reunified  
That need to be rejuvenated as a whole  
With stirrings and effects of firasat  
That will pierce layers of existence  
That will open secret doors of  
The manifest, symbolic, transcendent and immanent worlds  
Are not all that fall from sky  
Grow on the surface of earth  
And return to sky  
Belief in unity of everything  
Dust that floats in the air  
Remember the moment of attesting of spirit  
That is gently blown at boundaries of seven worlds*

*Am I not your Lord*

*The Malay testifies in firasat*

*Yes, we affirm!*

The poem attempts to portray the meaning and practice of *firasat*, which embodies unity of experience, physically, mentally, psychologically, and spiritually. The foundation of such practice is the layering and permeation of reiterative and validated knowledge in the mind and soul. As such, the practice of *firasat* overcomes reductive objectivity and compartmentation of knowledge and experience, offers points of reflection into inter and intra-disciplinary knowledge, and opens windows of perception, exploration, and discovery of unknown possibilities of interconnectedness, stratification and nuances. And what is most important to note in the meaning and practice of *firasat* is the affirmation of life itself in all realms, facets and layers as a unity that embraces balance and harmony.

I am not talking about the subject in the abstract. The following are examples of our past culture and customs, which breathe and embrace *firasat* in its concept, belief, and practice. I strongly believe we have lost part of its wisdom due to the alienation that pervades our modern lives, which we have taken for granted and accepted as a norm.

### **EXAMPLE 1 – BALINESE CULTURE, ART, AND RELIGION**

If we were to visit Bali and stay in one of the *losmens* (chalets), we would notice the hospitality of our hosts and the care and concern they accord to their guests. During one of my stays there, I was served steamed tapioca with coconut shavings during breakfast. It was a simple meal, but what caught my attention was the way it was presented. It was served on a plaited bamboo plate decorated with aesthetically pleasing flowers. In addition, I noticed that the same meal with the



decorations was also served to the gods in the house *pura* (temple). I was deeply moved to have witnessed the manifestation of the unity of life between daily needs, art, culture, and religion through a simple gesture.

In addition, I was also enthralled by the way the Balinese located their temples. For example, the temple is situated on an island at Tanah Lot. At Besakih, it is located on the mountain slope and faces Gunung Agung, the supreme mountain in Bali. At Batur, it is atop the mountain and looking down at Lake Batur. At Ulu Watu, it is perching at the precipice of a cliff with a ravine of about 50 metres deep and facing the vast ocean. These temples are deliberately placed at the junctures of land, sea and sky, and form gateways between the temporal and spiritual worlds. They evoke a sense of heightened spirituality that is rooted in the existential. They enhance the concept of unity and balance between the *Sekala* (temporal) and *Niskala* (spiritual) to maintain harmony and clarity of belief, philosophy, and practices in life.

## **EXAMPLE 2 – BUNGA RAMPAI IN MALAY CULTURE**

We have a similar embodiment of such unity, balance, harmony, and clarity in life. Still, it is waning due to the onslaught of alienation affected by modern life. I want to present a poem in Malay for us to ponder upon:

### ***Bunga Rampai***

*Subur pandan di tanah lembap  
Berhampiran paya lubuk becak  
Melata bebas menghijau kerap  
Akar mencengkam bumi dipijak*

*Tumbuh melur di laman rumah  
Dijadikan pagar penanda kawasan  
Dahan tegap daun bercambah  
Kembang mercup menyapa awan*

*Pandan dihiris halus di petak  
Melur ditabur di atas dulang  
Atar direnjis tambah semerbak  
Bunga rampai sambut yang datang*

*Majlis nikah disempurnakan kadi  
Dijab kabul sepasang pengantin  
Harum adat budaya mewangi  
Syariat dijunjung di atas pelamin*

*Cukur rambut turun tanah  
Keranda diusung mengiring mayat  
Bunga rampai menghias ranah  
Terikat erat sepanjang hayat*

The poem describes the *bunga rampai*, a potpourri of flowers, mainly jasmine, and slices of screw-pine leaves, sprinkled with perfume. The potpourri is placed and decorated in small receptacles or wrapped in cloth and given to guests attending ceremonies like the shaving of a baby's hair and first footsteps on the ground, circumcision, engagements, weddings, and even during funerals, which are part of Malay culture. Most often, Koranic verses and prayers are offered at these ceremonies. It exemplifies the unity of art, customs, culture, and religion that are significant to a Malay.

Incidentally, the words, rhythm, and tone of the poem in Malay above allude to this unity and harmony also. The following is the English translation:

## **Potpourri**

*Screw pine thrives on damp soil  
Next to swampy pond  
Spreads its green in the wild  
Roots clench the earth we tread upon*

*Jasmine grows on lawn  
Marks boundaries of property  
Sturdy branches, leaves flourish  
Petals open, greet clouds*

*Sliced screw pine in a receptacle  
Jasmine blossoms spread on the tray  
Perfume sprinkled to enhance the scent  
Potpourri of bunga rampai welcomes guests*

*The ceremony officiated by the kadi  
The couple duly married  
Customs and culture celebrated in fragrance  
Religious laws honoured on the dais*

*Shaving of the baby's head, first steps on soil  
Coffin carried to the grave  
Potpourri of bunga rampai adorns every domain  
Binds entire life's moments firmly*

## THE KRIS

In the past, the *kris* used to represent the person. It is specially made and presented by the head of the family to his son(s). If a person cannot attend an important meeting, he will send his *kris* to represent himself. There is an enduring bond between the object and the subject.

In addition, the *kris* is a cultural symbol of the elite's status as noblemen. It is then proliferated as weaponry for the masses, especially the warriors. There are mystical and scientific dimensions in both the forging and maintenance of the *kris*. Periodically, the *kris* is smoked over burning amber and incense, which is believed to be the food for the spirits of the *kris*. Yet scientifically the process is to dry up the *kris* thoroughly after a wash with lime to remove rust. The design of the blade and sheath of the *kris* also depicts its origin and local culture, thus shared values that are distinctive of the region.

In summary, the *kris* is not just an object of weaponry but an embodiment of self, community, art, culture, and beliefs of Malays then. The following poem attempts to allude to this unity, harmony, and holism:

### **The Kris**

*Heppp!*

*Hold tight the hilt of faith*

*Insert the base pin of endeavour into the hollow of destiny*

*Adorn the ring with carvings of identity*

*Gild the heart with gold on the transverse base piece*

*Welcome the strong spirit on the elephant's trunk*

*Ensure the side finials are neat although spiky*

*Meditate on the rejuvenated fallen tree at the base of intention*

*Sprinkle spilled rice grains on life's damascene*

*Complete the trio pattern with golden showers  
Dance in the rhythm of odd waves  
Honour loyalty of the blade on the forehead  
Make sure the thrust is sharp on target  
Once the blade is drawn out, the task must be accomplished  
Adorn the self's sheath with morality  
Clean the rust of misdeeds with lime  
Accompany every move with fragrance of perfume  
Warm up intuition with smoke from freshness of incense  
Slip the calling of motherland on the waist  
Heppp!  
It is unforgivable for a warrior  
To surrender before the fight  
It is not death before its time  
Mantras of faith and glory  
Will always be honoured  
Will always be upheld.  
Cisss! Come forward!*

## **THE BATIK**

The *batik* is a cultural symbol of the Malays. It is worn both by nobles and the masses. It alludes to the status, locale, and shared values of the community. The process of making *batik* by lyrical waxing and reverse-dye technique is unique. Each *batik* is infused with the soul of the creator. It is synonymous with balance and harmony in the process and discipline of the artist. It is a mark of impeccable and distinct craftsmanship. The artist, the creative process and the art are one. The following poem illustrates the dynamic holism of *batik* and *batik*-making:



## **Batik**

*A piece of white cloth  
Although clean does not begin to tell a story  
Absorbs whatever that is spilled  
Wet becomes damp, then dry  
That is thought without rigour  
That is feelings without limits  
That is life without mindfulness  
And the canting teaches perseverance  
And the canting develops decorum  
To contain the hot molten wax  
Focus the flow through a pinhole  
The deliberate and gentle movement of fingers  
Controlled drawings of patterns  
Limits that are artistic  
Sensitivities that are cultured  
Leaving boundaries  
Traces of white dried wax  
The cloth is coloured by choice  
According to taste and temperament  
The resultant pattern is soaked in boiling water  
Control and limits melt  
Leaving behind principled white lines  
Behold and gaze intently  
If satisfied, it is dried on the clothe-line  
If not beautiful yet, is redrawn  
Representation of worth of a dynamic personality  
Moulded from both freedom and control  
The dance of the canting and molten wax*

## EXAMPLE 5 – PANTUN

The *pantun* is a traditional form of Malay poetry. It is written in stanzas of two, four, six or eight lines. Structurally, the first half of the stanza (e.g., the first two lines in a stanza of four) is the *pembayang*, a preamble of the *maksud* portrayed in the ensuing half of the stanza. The *pembayang* gives a hint of the *maksud*, and both are interdependent. The *pembayang* is intrinsic and expressed symbolically. Typically, it depicts the immediate surroundings, be it of nature or aspects of Malay life then. On the other hand, the extrinsic *maksud* is the manifest thought. It expounds values and philosophy of life of Malays. In addition, in a four-line pantun, the middle and end words of the first line rhyme with those of the third line. Similarly, for the second and fourth lines. This compositional structure gives unity, balance, and harmony to the pantun as a literary form.

What is pertinent about the pantun is that it represents how a Malay thinks. Not only does a Malay observe his surroundings, he sees and expresses life in symbolic and metaphorical terms, yet at the same time seeks clarity, harmony and meaning through unified, balanced and holistic perspectives of life. Clarity in this regard does not pertain to lucidity alone. Still, it embraces ambiguity in the sense that accrued meanings are layered and nuanced, depending on the receiver's levels of discernment and experience. Incidentally, the *peribahasa* (proverb) and *bidalan* (idiom) in classical Malay literature also depict similar modes of thought and aesthetics.

## EXAMPLES OF MANIFESTATION OF FIRASAT

In summary, all the above examples demonstrate the concept and practice of *firasat* in Malay life that is unified, balanced, harmonious, clear, and holistic. Such embrace of philosophy gives meaning and stability to a Malay with fellow human beings, nature, and surroundings.

The following are aspirations and thoughts that could be considered to deepen and enhance the concept and practice of *firasat* to overcome the alienation of life that we are experiencing at the present moment. It is an attempt to refresh *firasat* to suit contemporary life:

### **FIRASATIC THOUGHT 1 – INTEGRATED LIFE**

Modern life has distanced the 'I' in a person from the 'We', 'It' & 'Its' of his or her existence. It has created individuals who rarely see the community (We) as part of their character or well-being. Similarly, they mostly see the environment, such as the place of abode, clothes, tools, and food (It), as external commodities. The attitude demonstrated would be that these external things are only important to enhance the 'I' in them in an individualistic or narcissistic way. At the societal level, these external things could either be discarded or destroyed to achieve selfish aims either politically or economically, for example, in the case of deforestation, which could result in erosion of land and destruction of the ecology, displacement of wild-life and communities, or demolition of historical buildings due to unsustainable infrastructure and facilities developments in the city. Similarly, the prevailing political, economic, and social systems, ideologies, beliefs, and values in society (Its) are only significant as far as these protect or elevate the 'I' in the person or group of persons sharing the same destructive and divisive agenda, beyond the concerns or needs of a larger community.

Due to enhanced mobility, rapid developments and fractured social realities rarely does a modern man show deep care and concern and think and feel in an integrated manner between the 'I', 'We', 'It' and 'Its' that would provide interconnectedness, deeper and more refined understanding of multi-faceted issues at hand. Thus, we would miss out on the holism of the layered deliberations on interrelated questions of why, where, how, what and who we are in this world.

Alternatively, and *firasatically*, a mindful and integrated vision of life would offer more profound meaning and a more sensitive manifestation of care and concern between the person, community, environment, and values in life. Traditional societies in many parts of the world have lived in such a manner before the onslaught of colonization, modernisation, industrialisation, and technological advancements that have defined our modern life.

## **FIRASATIC THOUGHT 2: ESSENCE OF BEAUTY**

*Firasatic* thought embraces and manifests the concept and experience of Beauty in a layered and multi-faceted way. It is not only felt physically by the five senses of touch, smell, hearing, taste, and sight. Beauty is also perceived in the mind, experienced authentically by noble and beneficial actions, and elevated spiritually by soul devotion to the Creator of beauty, whose name is Beauty. The following poem illustrates this concept:

### **Essence of Beauty**

*The morning is fresh with caress of dew*

*The morning is fragrant with scent of rose*

*The morning is joyous with chirping of birds*

*The morning is invigorating with a hearty breakfast*

*The morning is captivating with a painted sunrise*

*The morning is cheery with a calm soul*

*The morning is solid with a clear mind*

*The morning is clear with demands of responsibility*

*The morning is firm with steps to work*

*The morning is blessed with a dedication to make a living*

*The morning is earnest with utterance of 'In the Name of God'*

*The morning is dependent on destiny of efforts*

*The morning is submitted in consistent devotion*

*The morning is echoed with His Beautiful Names*

*God is Beauty and loves the beautiful*

*The morning reveals the face of His Benevolence*

*The morning expresses layers of His Majesty*

*Everything returns as things beautiful*

*To His Benevolence and Mercy*

### **FIRASATIC THOUGHT 3: INTERCONNECTEDNESS**

Another important concept that is central to *firasatic* thought is 'interconnectedness'. This is best demonstrated in Nature itself. From the rivers, branches, veins, roots, capillaries, nervous system and synapses, the key element in all of them that ensures function and integrity is interconnectedness, without which all the systems would fail. The human body is a masterpiece demonstrating the interconnectedness between all organs and biological systems and functions that sustain life. There is even interconnectedness between the animate and inanimate objects. The connection between mass and energy best illustrates this. According to Albert Einstein, mass itself is the most inert form of energy, and both are interchangeable with the required stimuli and conditions.

This interconnectedness also applies to modes of human existence between the physical, mental, psychological, and spiritual. Sturdy and meaningful relationships between these modes would ensure unity, stability, and harmony in human existence. Discord between them would cause the opposite, as deliberated in the alienation section above.



Even in how we think, interconnectedness offers a richer and deeper understanding of the issues at hand. If it is moved forward creatively, it provides more viable possibilities, resolutions, and meanings. Thus, we ought to depart from thinking in dots and lines and be more attuned to thinking in patterns and harmonies.

Harmony in interconnectedness is critical, as seen in experiments involving the effects of different musical forms on plants and water crystals. For example, classical music cultivates growth and aesthetically pleasing forms, while rock music kills life and distorts symmetry and balance. It is apparent that harmony brings in healthier and more resolute states of existence. It creates beauty and stability compared to discord or chaos, which estranges or destroys life.

#### ***FIRASATIC THOUGHT 4: REITERATIVE AND VALIDATED KNOWLEDGE***

The modern development of knowledge emphasises specialisation, which has resulted in rapid progress and growth in each field of knowledge. However, it has also resulted in the focused and deliberate demarcation, truncation, and separation between branches of knowledge. If the purpose of knowledge is to elucidate, enlighten and instil wisdom in human beings, the specialization and separation of knowledge have produced a reductionist vision of knowledge and reality. Having said that, there are already movements toward re-unifying branches of knowledge through the reiterative and validated approach of experimenting, exploring, testing, and developing them in a multi-disciplinary manner. For example, the lines between physics, biology and chemistry are progressively blurred. So are those between physiology, psychology, and spirituality. A return to such a balanced and holistic embrace of knowledge must be supported to achieve a more wholesome appreciation of reality.

Recent developments in Artificial Intelligence, especially in the realms of 'deep learning', further illustrate the importance and benefits of interconnected, reiterative, and validated approaches to developing and using knowledge. Deep learning is a type of machine learning that uses algorithms meant to function in a manner similar to the human brain. It creates more complex hierarchical models that mimic how humans learn new information. This is akin to a *firasatic* endeavour to create an artificial mind by simulating the human mind in structure and function similar to that of the brain.

Incidentally, the average human brain contains about 100 billion neurons that can be connected to up 10,000 other neurons. Thus, there are 1,000 trillion synaptic connections in the brain communicating with one another via electrical and chemical signals. This is equivalent by some estimates to a computer with a 1 trillion bit per second processor. For some context, modern home computers can perform 4 GHz or higher, which is 4,000 million cycles per second. A trillion is a million times a million. It is mind-boggling. That is how intricate and complex the synaptic system of the brain is. And some studies have indicated that only an average of 10% of the brain have been utilised by us thus far.

Imagine what *firasatic* aspirations and practices could do to provide a spark and energise these neurons and synapses. If only we could master the means to utilise our brains fully. Sincerity, mindfulness, and discernment are a start. The Muslim practice of *zikr*, *solat* and reading the Koran are some good habits to develop the focus and stillness of mind and expanse of soul so essential for a wholesome and creative life. Other faiths suggest meditations and chants.

## **FIRASATIC THOUGHT 5: SHAPES OF TIME**

Human beings exist in at least two dimensions of Time. First, 'serial time' is like a string of beads with moments of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. From such a conception of Time, concepts like context, relevance and lessons learned to come into play in our construction of meaning in relation to human activities and the surroundings. Second is the concept of time as 'pure duration' or a 'big now'. With the understanding and embrace of such notion of Time, concepts like timelessness, ultimate truth and eternity are purported to make sense of our relationship with existence. The two conceptions of Time inevitably exist in a dialectical relationship in our minds and souls, and determine our feelings, thoughts, and actions. A *firasatic* vision of life demands that we are mindful and responsive to this dynamic relationship of Time so that we remain relevant on the one hand, and significant on the other, in and of life itself. Most of the time, in our modern way of living, we are unaware or callous of this dialectical concept of Time and thus put our life to waste or folly.

## **FIRASATIC THOUGHT 6: NATURE MEDITATIONS**

Human beings are part of Nature, but we often think and act as if we are separate from it. Our attitude toward Nature is that of dominance and conquering to satisfy our wants that go beyond needs. Such an alienated relationship has proven to be destructive, as demonstrated by the increase in carbon footprint, erosion of the ozone layer, global warming, destruction of the vast expanse of forests, decline of large land masses, depletion of sources of oxygen, rise in sea levels and others. We must return to a more intimate and gentle relationship with Nature. Only then would Nature reveal its beauty and provides blessings upon us and our lives. Ancient communities know of this vital relationship and embrace life through it, as illustrated by the following:

## **Apache Blessing**

*May the sun bring you fresh energy by day*

*May the moon restore you by night*

*May the rain wash away your worries*

*May the breeze blow new strength into your being*

*May you walk gently through the world*

*And know its beauty all the days of your life*

Activities like forest bathing and walking barefoot to 'earth' our bodies are some examples of nature meditations that bring peace and joy to body, mind and soul by being part of Nature.

## **SUMMARY OF ASPIRATIONS AND THOUGHTS ON *FIRASAT***

In summary, the aspirations and thoughts to deepen and enrich our lives based on *firasat* are best exemplified by the following words of Albert Einstein: "*A human being is a part of a whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. One experiences oneself, one's thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest...Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.*"

The following are examples of my attempts to convey some of these *firasatic* aspirations and thoughts in my novels:

## **EXPRESSIONS OF *FIRASATIC* THOUGHTS IN MY NOVELS**

These passages are created not through my deliberate effort to demonstrate them from the beginning. Still, they have grown intrinsically and extrinsically through my observations, analyses, discernments, and creative explorations through the years. In other words, it has germinated and matured organically

with my creative process all this while:

## **RAWA – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN, CULTURE AND NATURE**

*Rawa realised how well-planned and coordinated everything is. Nothing like this happened in real life. Much thought has gone into planning and building the park, he's sure, for an enjoyable and safe experience. His life has always been about living by instinct, one with the forest, animals, rivers, and seas. He sees before him a lifestyle organised by reason for people who lived in cities. He sees the advantages in that but wonders if it would not be better if people lived with both the rational and the essence, and make the world a better place for both humans and nature. But how does one make that happen?*

*Rawa and Hassan go to a food court at the end of the lake after looking in at the enclosure for gibbons and macaques, and they see a station there for the tram that goes round the zoo, a children's playground, a water-themed park, and exercise stations. Again, Rawa can't help, but smile. Everything has been thought of. Rawa concedes that it is a triumph of the rational culture. It is an attempt to improve the bond between man and man, and man and nature. Hassan's is a lucky generation to have so much. But still, he worries about nature being trampled upon and destroyed, and of man being suspicious of man, in the relentless pursuit of all things material, with no regard for the essence.*

## **INTERCESSION – HOLISTIC AND LAYERED VISIONS OF REALITY**

*Sunlight glinted off the surface of the Sanggang River. Nature cast its shadows on the surface of the water, taunting the eye to make out meaningful shapes among the shifting images. My soul and the river both grasping and reflecting shadows, haunted by glimmers of speculation and surmise — each apparition a different light, depending on the angle and brightness of the source.*

*Something stirred in me. I had the peculiar sense that my present journey was not physical in nature, but a voyage into a mystical realm of the spirit. The river I travelled on was not the Sanggang, but a metaphysical stream that linked past and future — a river flowing over the sedentary bed of History, fluid with the movements of the ever-changing Cosmos; a river turbulent with possibility, whose banks and shorelines were Truth. I, with my boat, was sullyng and scarring its unblemished surface. Because of my actions, the real and spiritual worlds would be turned topsy-turvy. I would tip the delicate cognitive balance between Truth and Fallacy and start their war afresh. Was all this necessary? Was it not better to leave things as they were and bury the past?*

### **INTERCESSION – SHAPES OF TIME AND REALITY**

*I had to remind myself that strange things happened everywhere, what more in this valley said to exist only in the mind. At the same time, I felt like a time-traveller, tumbling back and forth from one era to another. But wasn't this feeling quite typical of anyone who had ever wandered through the present, imagined the past or speculated about the future? Which then was the true reality — the physical world, the spiritual realm, or one's mental constructs? Well, come what may, I would take all of it in, and experience every shade and facet of truth as it appeared before me.*

### **TWEET – UNITY OF PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL EXISTENCES**

*Then of a small bird with a brown body, striped wings and a fan-like crown appears. It looks like the legendary hoopoe. More birds appear, at first one by one, then in groups. The thrashing of wings and the tweeting, whistling, and screeching of birds fill the aviary. He sees an assembly of whimsical and fanciful birds encircling the air above. They indeed look like angels. He is rapturous and loses himself in the entrancing dance. Jati is bewildered by his grandson's capers. However, not wanting to be left out in the merriment, he starts to dance too, albeit clumsily. Ilham holds his hand, and they move together joyfully, laughing unabashedly.*

## **THE THRONE - RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, ARTISTIC AND SPIRITUAL LIVES**

*Had he dived into the depths of his troubled thoughts and feelings to bring out the antidote that was regarded as poison by many who knew him? Had he who we regarded as drowned in the tumultuous ocean actually reached the shore of meaning that was calm, although, in the eyes of many, he had been thrown by the waves and marooned onto hard rocks and then deserted?*

*Was it that the insanity that he projected all along actually a mask or veil that hid a sensitive, gentle, and mindful soul from the perception and assessment of others, and even from the manifestation of himself who walked on this earth? He related once about the Manifest, Symbolic, Transcendental, and Immanent worlds. Had he been to those worlds?*

*Subhanallah, Glory be to God. I felt small, weak, and dumb while I pondered.*

*The poems seemed to invite and receive light from the cracks of his soul. More than inspired by personal inspiration, the poems seemed to emanate the benevolence and sacredness of humanity. I was astounded, although I was unsure whether his refined and tender voice was a reflection of souls who had followed the path of saints.*

### **SUMMARY OF EXCERPTS OF NOVELS**

The excerpts above illustrate my *firasatic* aspirations and thoughts to foster unity, balance, harmony, clarity, and holism in my works. These arise from my creative process triggered by my embrace and engagement of life through the process of psychosis, catharsis, and synthesis. I have stated on many occasions that I do not begin to write unless I am disturbed by events, ideas, or issues. Then I go through a discipline of research and analyses the contradictions and challenges surrounding them. Only when I have found the resolution or seen a



to put words on paper. Incidentally, Prof Harry Aveling from La Trobe and Monash universities noted the following in his review of three of my novels on Singapore (A Song of the Wind, Rawa and 1819): *“Hope and harmony” are keystones for Isa’s vision of a racially integrated Singapore. These three novels struggle with disharmony and tension within the Malay community and beyond, and their historical and sociological origins. They are deeply important works and a sure sign of the growing recognition that will be paid to his significant analyses of “the Singapore dilemma” and the choices for a peaceful way forward.*

Another point to note, I have two streams of creativity in my works. First, I interrogate and reconstruct the past as exemplified by my historical novels like One Earth, Nadra, A Song of the Wind, Rawa and 1819. Second, I investigate and imagine the future reflected in my speculative and conceptual novels like Intercession, *Kiswah*, The Tower, Tweet, and The Throne. Basically, I visit the past and project into the future to define and shape the present in my works, in the spirit of embracing the dialectical nature of ‘serial time’ and ‘time as pure duration’ as deliberated earlier.

I once worked on three separate novels, Intercession, *Kiswah* and The Tower, simultaneously and within a short period. These are heavy novels that dwell upon the problems of interpretation of Islamic history (Intercession), the relationship between sexuality and spirituality (*Kiswah*), and modern life and alienation (The Tower). It was the most intense episode of my creative life. Incidentally, the three novels were published together in 2002. Performing *solat*, *zikr* and reading the Koran helped to create the stillness of mind and expand the soul that I needed to dive into deep research and produce the novels, which have now been translated into several languages.

I firmly believe now that I have gone through an immersive and intense period of creativity that was a manifestation of *firasatic* aspiration and thought processes

then. It has been with me since.

## **PRINCIPLES OF *FIRASAT***

In summary, the above references, examples, manifestations, aspirations, thoughts and expressions clearly crystallise the following principles of *firasat*:

- a) Unity
- b) Balance
- c) Harmony
- d) Clarity
- e) Holism

As you would notice, these principles are the exact opposite of those of alienation that have been deliberated in earlier sections above. It is no surprise that it is such, as each is born from two distinct cultures that run contrary to one another. The following attempts to explain this distinction.

## **NAÏVE DIALECTICISM**

In cultural studies, under the subject of cultural psychology, there is a term that describes and encapsulates a group of beliefs that originate from Asia. These beliefs like *Tao*, *Zen* and *Dharma* run contrary to the Western philosophy of life. It is called Naïve Dialecticism. The principles underlying these beliefs, and the characteristics that distinctly differentiate them from the Western way of life, are the ways they respond to the following concepts:

- a) Change
- b) Conflict
- c) Holism

While Western ways of life tend to confront and dominate to overcome change and conflict and condone a reductionist approach to achieve them, Naïve Dialecticism as illustrated in Eastern beliefs offers the ‘Middle Path’ that propounds unity, balance, and harmony as the solution to the above situations. I would like to propose that *firasat*, as practiced by Malays in traditional societies, belongs to the same group of Eastern philosophies of life.

The following table illustrates how *firasat* stands in contradistinction from the alienation of modern and Western philosophies of life. The concept and practice of *firasat* are thus put forth as an alternative and antidote to the effects of alienation that is caused by the Western way of life:

| <b>Principles of Alienation</b> | <b>Principles of <i>Firasat</i></b> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Disunity                        | Unity                               |
| Imbalance                       | Balance                             |
| Chaos                           | Harmony                             |
| Obscurity                       | Clarity                             |
| Reductionist                    | Holism                              |

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the above deliberations propound that *firasat* is not just a hunch, premonition, mystical intuition, clairvoyance, or presentiment but a manifestation of a more profound and more extensive body of integrated and reiterative knowledge and life experiences derived from an attitude of mind, existential

spirituality and growth path that enables us to walk beautifully and live mindful, exploratory, creative, wholesome and meaningful lives in a fragmented world.

Through a refreshed and deeper interpretation and practice of *firasat*, the madness of the mind, maladies of the soul, disrespect of other human beings, and irreverence of nature and the environment arising from alienation of life are acknowledged, addressed, given an antidote and a chance to heal.

At a fundamental level, *firasat* enables us to find coherent and meaningful answers, albeit shifting and ever-evolving, to the fundamental questions of why, where, how, what, and who we are in this world.

As described above, although waning, it has always been part of the culture of Malays who profess Islam as a way of life. The following verse from the Koran embodies the concept and manifestation of *firasat* as a testament to this belief:

### **Koran An-Nur (The Light) 24:35**

*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a niche, in which there is a lamp, the lamp is enclosed in crystal, the crystal is of a starlike brilliance, it is lit with the olive oil from a blessed olive tree which is neither eastern or western, its very oil would almost be luminous though no fire touched it – as though all the means of increasing Light upon Light are provided – Allah guides to His Light whom He pleases. Allah cites such parables to make His message clear to the people; and Allah has knowledge of everything.*

### **Significance of the Verse**

The interpretation of 'Light' in the verse is threefold. First, it refers to the physical light that emanates from the sun and is reflected by the moon. It is a source of heat to the earth and life to Nature. Second, it alludes to the guidance that God gives to mankind which comes in two forms, i.e., the Koran, which is described as

*Nur* (Light) and the Prophet Muhammad, called the *sirajun munirah* (radiant sun) in the Koran. The third meaning of Light in the verse refers to Allah, but humans do not have the faculty to comprehend it, as Prophet Moses could not bear to look at the Light of Allah on Mount Sinai or when Prophet Muhammad was only able to see the veil of Light at the highest level of heaven, *Sidratul Muntaha*.

The niche, lamp, and crystal in the verse refer to the stages or levels of the human soul that is lit by oil from a blessed tree which is not bounded by a sense of place and time (neither east nor west), and it is almost always luminous. This is due to the fact that from its original state or *fitrah*, the soul has knowledge of and attested to the glory of God at the point of its creation. In contradistinction, an authentic prophetic tradition refers to the soul progressively becoming dark through committing sins that block Light.

Then the verse refers to the phrase 'Light upon Light', which alludes to the guidance and knowledge given by Allah to souls which are already luminous with Truth. The phrase is the embodiment of the *firasat* that Allah has given to whom He pleases in accordance with the human's stages or levels of being, as in the niche, lamp, or crystal. It implies degrees of preparedness and stature of the human soul to receive Light.

Upon deeper discernment, the verse clearly illustrates the principles of unity between God's existence, human beings, and Nature. It alludes to the balance and harmony between levels of existence of the manifest (light from sun and moon), symbolic (niche, lamp, and crystal), transcendent (Allah as Light of heaven and earth) and immanent (Light upon Light) worlds. It refers to the clarity that God has given to mankind pertaining to the questions of who, where, what, why and how we are in this multi-dimensional world. In other words, it is the heart and epitome of the concept and practice of *firasat*.

The following poem is my humble response to the verse and conclusion to our discourse on the forgotten wisdom of *firasat*:

## **Jasmine**

*Earth jasmine, sky jasmine*  
*String of jasmine encircles the heart*  
*Jasmine poured with water from the hills*  
*Jasmine sprinkled with a pinch of compost*  
*Seven rivers, seven clouds*  
*Rain pelts onto forlorn petals*  
*Beauty is in the form, beauty to the eyes*  
*Beauty is the hand that tends to the soil*  
*Beauty is the fingers that caress the leaves*  
*Beauty is the cut on the arm of the gardener*  
*The scorching sun, the shade of the foliage*  
*Bountiful is the soul of the tree that delivers*  
*Witness of a life devoted to hard work*  
*Laws of nature as the axis*  
*Strong roots clench the earth*  
*Shoots look up to the sky*  
*Feet stand firmly, the soul sings*  
*Blossoms waft fragrant dreams*  
*Earth jasmine, sky jasmine*  
*Blooms in the early morning*  
*Say your prayers, introduce yourself*

And with that, rejoice, and I thank you.

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