

At the request of numerous mentors, and thought leaders in various disciplines, I am embarking on the authoring of this compendium of my perspectives and reflections through my life's work thus far. As of the day of this embarkmentation, I am 23 years old.

As with any great telling of a life story, it is apt for me to start from the beginning chronologically. I was born in Mbeya, Tanzania and adopted at 6 weeks old by my parents. My parents were given the opportunity to adopt me through a family friend who was responsible for placing me with a family.

My mother wanted children, specifically a daughter, and her and my father had tried unsuccessfully numerous times. When they realised (fully realized) that it was not possible for them to have children, my mum suggested adoption as an avenue.

My father was not thrilled with this idea, and they almost broke up because of their disagreement.

When the option to adopt me came along, my mother left the decision up to my father, who decided under duress of time, (the family friends had a deadline to place me)

Thank God, he decided to adopt me.

So now that I belonged to this family, the whole family and friends rejoiced. The blessing that was bestowed was recognized by all involved.

Including my godparents and my parents' closest friends who supported them in their decision, and extended their felicitations.

I recently had a conversation with my mother about the nature of my existence, and I mused that my *raison d'être* was made apparent and evident to me through my journey thus far and experiences of the ineffable and tangible. I am here to do my work. To do justice to my mandate,

to serve as a vicegerent of God's magnificent creation, by raising the levels of connaissance and awareness towards the gifts the divine has bestowed on me; which I am utterly accountable.

Every person comes from a place of divine communion, to the world, where their purpose is to cultivate that state on the plane they currently reside. I realized the nature of this reality and existence at a very young age, and saw it as a responsibility towards all of humankind that I would bear. By the grace of the ineffable, I have seen this as a privilege and responsibility that I can retain my fidelity and unadulterated respect and contentment towards.

I have actively built a milieu of people through my own efforts, and been graced by my parents' deep respect and community relationships which they guard and cultivated with integrity and loyalty to their values.

Through the communities that I have surrounded myself with, and had the privilege and grace to be surrounded with, I cultivated a deep and profound awareness and respect for difference.

I have a perspective that was fostered by a world class education on 5 continents, where I interacted with different and disparate cultures and peoples, in plethoric contexts, that caused my mind to open and become arable for dialogue, collaboration and tolerance.

Our world does not treat difference equitably and with respect, and as someone who was different, I recognized the importance of building societies and spaces that are safe for difference, and that without that, people's gifts and abilities would be squandered.

My own gifts allowed me to retain a certain independence from peoples good opinions, and, as such, was (therefore) enabled to cultivate a

dispassionate analytical mind that could cut through the Maya (illusory) with relative ease.

I have also been blessed with an unfathomable spirituality that has guided me true north regardless of the climates in which I have operated.

Don't get me wrong, my life is far from effortless, lakiki (however) I have persevered with a kind of relentlessness that some people find disconcerting.

My social skills have been forward looking, where I relate to people on whatever level they wish to operate at. My respect for personhood and people's choices, allows me to be non-judgemental of whomsoever I encounter, while retaining my tenets and value system.

I have never dissimulated, rather, cultivating an openness (vulnerability) that disarms, and breaks dams, allowing people to tell me the truth,

because they know that it is safe in my hands.
And indeed a prerequisite of our relationship. That
it cannot be any other way, because when we
dwell in truth, the world is open to us. And we are
open to it, allowing us to foster the dialogues and
relationships, which move our societies and
discourses (qualities of life) forwards towards
directions of continuous improvement, possibility
and amelioration.

As a community leader, I show the way through
my deeds, words and embodied perspective
(living experience)

My work takes place across multifaceted and
myriad mediums. As a multidisciplinary artist who
has the capacity to operate in all the diverse
artistic mediums in a fluid, (flux interdisciplinary)
(non-disciplinary) context that has the power to
transcend form, because it has become a master
of formlessness, and so like water, it becomes the
form while retaining it's fidelity (inherent value)

and beauty, never compromising, yet utterly adaptable and genreless.

To me these are not my ideals, they are my life's work, life blood, breath and water.

I do what I do out of enlightened choice, it is a covenant to which I must always be answerable. And so far, with the grace of the divine, I have been graced with the capacity to uphold the bastions of the valours I was entrusted.

So one may ask, why you, why not me?

I cite the Quaranic Ayat that states that Allah guides to his way (light) whom he will.

Allah's light has always graced me, not out of my own doing or choice, but through his divine intercession and constant grace (smile)

My faith is unshakable and without fault, yet through the vicissitudes of life, I have many faces.

My faces are a test of the people I encounter and myself. They allow me to ascertain the position (astrological-intercession) and truth that lies in people's innermost hearts.

It allows me to see beyond what their deeds entail or their minds think and feel, into the truth of their souls placed in the wax and wane of their journey across the sky.

Afterall, I have sat with psychopaths and benevolent pillar bearers, and felt an equal responsibility to them all.

God is love, and loves all creation equally, without judgement and wrath. The pain that humanity and creation suffer is of their own making and ignorance, not a reflection of God' ever benevolent mercy and grace that is extended as a ladder towards mankind (always).

So in understanding the Marifat' Batin al Batin, the station of no station, one cannot be compelled

towards himself but rather towards the light and source of all wealth and goodness in the universe contained therein.

Inshallah, every soul will come to recognize it's ordained place.

And those who understand this truth must bear it, and lead their brethren towards that absolute reality with steadfastness and honour.

It takes courage, resourcefulness, and a deduction-induction (dedication) that is akin to the Earth's core. A magnetic constant that keeps its distance, yet draws things together.

The founding of my Order of Ineffable Conceptualism is formalization of my acknowledgement of the infinitude that is ever present, yet divined by so few.

An invitation encapsulated as a challenge to myself, and humanity....

Growing up in Tanzania. My precocious and prodigious nature was evident to all those who encountered me, and fostered by my parents.

My father narrated to me the story of an encounter that exemplifies my nature in action. I was 2 years old, and the family had gone to a favourite restaurant and were entertaining guests from Canada. I was impatient for the food to arrive, and my father asked me to be patient. The guest incredulously addressed my father with the query of why he was addressing a 2 year old in this manner, and that I couldn't possibly understand the context.

My father requested me to “tell uncle: what patience meant” I responded in flawless, cultivated english, what patience is. I did not give a cold definition either, it was a living (lived) response only possible, from a person who had lived and embodied the practice....

I started speaking Swahili, Gujarati and English in full embodied sentences with complex grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary from 2 years old. A facility that was met with disbelief (pleasure) from all who encountered it in action.

A lucidity and cogence quite beyond the capacities of any 2 year old, and even beyond most adults (including the intelligentsia) whom i encountered through my parents friends, architects, doctors and pilots all marveled at a capacity to instantly understand and extrapolate concepts that spanned disciplines and contexts, and yet my mind played unhindered, unbound and utterly without dogma in all their fields and beyond with an elegance and grace, that belied an experience that was extraordinary. Beyond time.

Transcending context, yet respectful of everything within.

Such gifts seemed beyond the realm of human experience, and yet utterly informed through and by it. And so, it is through logical induction and

deduction that I realised, my incarnational nature was for the purpose (of the purpose) of enlightenment. Not simply mine, but of the whole human condition.

A standard that would baffle almost everyone that encountered it.

I would give sound advice and discourse to all those I encountered (sometimes before they even asked or solicited it) Such was my nature. I could not help it, because as my tuition teacher Swathi Suchak wrote in a note to me (I could not bear to see anyone suffer).

I got very close with their Matriarch (Baa) and she always called me Akbar instead of Afraaz. I think we must have met in a past life, because she upheld my perspective above everyone else. When Swathi scolded me, I would complain to her, and she would scold Swathi auntie...

As I entered pre kindergarten, I displayed a deep contentment and appreciation for flowers, gardens, fountains, ginans (gnosis) hymns of the Ismaili community, and Dzikr (Tasbih) especially Ya Rahman, Ya Rahim which I had my father recite when he would rock me, putting me to sleep.

My mother read to me and my sister from infancy, so I knew all the stories and narratives from diverse sources, and would frequently make intertextual references, and ask questions about the texts and sources that I was presented with.

My greatest mentor and supporter was my Nana. My mother's oldest brother, whom I treated as my Grandfather, the Patriarch of the Family. He was our Standard Bearer and Gravitas keeper. He steered the family true north, through thick and thin, and entitled a deep sense of social and communal responsibility in all of us.

He used to refer to me in the respectful plural form, Tame in Gujarati. He never addressed me as Tu, as was his right as the oldest person in our family (by age and wisdom) and in our relationship, and further as the family patriarch.

My favourite photograph is of me sitting on his back while he was sleeping on the floor on a persian rug, as was his habit in the afternoon. Playing drums on his back and saying Nana, “No sleep” for all my sophistication, I had an impish and childish sense of humour that I exercised with verve...

A family of the caliber in which I have been blessed to partake and become is a blessing unto itself. Our Cultured ekphrasis was embodied in my family' exquisite tastes in the arts, company and relational understanding, allowing for my own profound gifts to be recognised, foster, cultivated and developed unfettered, wings unclipped.

This is a gift for which Allah foresaw everything. My struggle to come into my own, with safety and resources, but not excess. Enough, but never excess. This equanimity (equilibrium) was the result of deep stewardship (knowing) on the part of my family and their friends. People indulged me, without spoiling me, through providing what was necessary for development, but not indulging whims or fallacies. I was taught accountability from infancy...

My uncle Abdul is a wise and prudent business leader and thinker, who took me under his wing through quiet instruction and deep peace. I could speak my mind, yet was asked to be certain and correct. Like watering a plant, he struck the balance of providing sustenance and piety, without imposing excess.

His friend and our family friend Muslim Harji, a great lover and impresario of Indian classical music and a documentary photographer, documented my formative growth and

development as a multiinstrumentalist, surrounded by homemade, (kit) formal and student instruments in our living room on Seaview on a formal garden motif carpet, that was a constant companion of my childhood and all our family get togethers.

An object imbued with such love and history from many great souls who have traversed its warm and living (loving) tender embrace.

Like all of my family, the curated objects in our home tell stories of a deeply erudite and learned family that has exquisite taste, and understanding. I occasionally joke and ironically refer to my mum and dad as philistines. But really, they are learned (unusually versed) in all matters of life, from material and tangible matters to spiritual and emotional matters (of the heart)

I flowered under their cultivated care and companionship. My father answered my questions, (a constant and ever evolving stream)

and my mother enlisted deep discipline and literate erudition. I learned algebra in kindergarten. And could discuss quantum mechanics and thermodynamics at the age of 7.

In the Second Grade during a Parent teacher meeting in which the students were encouraged to accompany the parents, my teacher lamented the fact that I “didn't spend any time with my peers” My response was my hallmark character and humour at play, “Ma'am, I do, they are just not my age”.

My parents did not dissuade me from the people I wished to spend time with. In Jamat Khane (Our Community Mosque) I would sit with the elders of the community discussing matters of Faith, Social Justice, The Humanities and Sciences, with a special consideration for their life experiences and specializations. I would conduct the discourse in the languages of their conviviality and comfortableness. Interchanging fluidly from

English and Swahili to Hindi, Gujarati, Kachi, Urdu and Arabic.

My conversations always sought to understand and embody the reasons for why they thought what they thought, with special care paid to their particular circumstance and levied experience. Such was my practice, that they spoke to me as their peer and confidante.

In this way, the whole community and intersectional communities in which I operated, fostered a deep respect and place for me, despite my young years and diminutive stature.

When I recited a Quranic ayat for His Highness the Agakhan at a ceremony in Dar es Salaam at our home Jamat Khana in Upanga, Our community leaders and jamat was moved by my fidelity to the verse I recited and the maturity I showed in its recitation. After the recitation, the reciter goes to the Imam for blessings, and I went and what transpired next stunned everyone.

The Imam engaged me in discourse, which I do not remember. It was a privileged conversation that covered what was needed, but I could not share it with the people that asked me what had been said. It was a sobhet, (a meter (matter) of the heart) and an attempt to translate (transmutate) the ineffable was quite fruitless.

Our community leaders have shown me a remarkable amount of difference over the years, and this has enabled me to serve the community in the ways which I have.

It has not been easy or without its deep challenges, but like any worthwhile endeavour, it was through the process of reaching an accord, that much beauty and learning transpired and inculcated deep seated respect for the process with which we were engaged.

A hallmark of a truly learned person is to know what it is they do not know. In this respect, I have

always sought wisdom, through consultation of the Ulama (learned) members of humanity. And constructed relationships that allow us to bear our respective perspectives without tampering with the nature of the subjects we discussed. So as to allow them the freedom to be unencumbered by the retention of dogmatic and considerational thinking.

Such thinking can only be accomplished when the parties involved consent to a checking of the ego and disarmament of arbitrary factors. Age, Status and Rank.

When undertaking difficult discussion and problem solving, one must see beyond one's limited perspective into what can be, instead of what one thinks something should be.

This art form behooves the parties involved, a certain impartialness that is difficult to achieve in daily living, because we are the subjects.

What a novel idea then, to disregard our own needs and considerations for the betterment of ourselves and social contexts?

My nature has permitted me to discard fear of judgement from my peers and society, and given me the courage to pursue excellence and my own standards of excellence, rather than those imposed upon me by society and institutional consideration. I have always had all the privileged access (protection) of being an insider yet retaining my impartiality and freedom as an outsider. All the protections and communal wisdom of the tribe (pack), yet the keenness and hunger of the lone wolf....

My Hassan Mama (uncle) was the most gifted thinker (intellectual) in our family. A true polymath (he studied engineering, mathematics and gemology) was a powerful and dangerous chess player, because of his calculational and logicianal thinking. And his patience. He would outthink and frustrate me by his fastidious studying of the

board and always made the best move by sheer deduction and patience. He was so gifted that he could intuitively, like me, see (fathom) the best move, but he would triple check his vision before making his move, unlike me, and press the smallest advantages positionally and subversive tactics to put to shame a grandmaster...

My father is a gothic logician, whose gift of patience and logic have somewhat passed down to me. My logic is far more intuitive and fluid than my father's, but my father is correct more frequently because of the foundational study he puts into his decision making process. He gets things right by sheer patience and effort, and his steadfastness has seen me spared from many difficulties and problematic situations. This cultivated and erudite wisdom through effort and patience was balanced by my mother, whose kind heart, impulsiveness and impishness as a renaissance woman, allows me to take chances in my thinking both artistic and intellectual, and hold my hand when I fall, as I occasionally do.

So like any great couple, there is warmth and coldness like the seasons, imbued with its lessons. Like nature with its balance and guidance for those who bear its lessons and signs in mind....

Having the ingredients for perfection is not enough, you need the environment, tools, recipe and wisdom to bring that beauty to bear. And my life despite its difficulty and fragility has been a constant source for that perfection.

I was not forced to cultivate perfection, it sought me. Everywhere I turned, the lessons and opportunities aligned in profound symmetry and harmony, to bring to bear a gravitas and countenance that remains elusive to many.

When I was at an ayurvedic hospital for my eyes (I have had a genetic condition that makes my eyes sensitive to light) since birth, I was having a difficult day, and I asked for a sign to show the

power of the divine to give and take away, and as I walked down the driveway towards our cottage, a motorcycle came speeding towards me, and i froze in place, unable to move. I couldn't move, and so my life was in the hands of the person on the motorcycle, and he was only able to stop just in time, to avoid running me over.... He stopped an inch from me.

That showed me the power of my thoughts. Of what I can attract just by asking.... And the consequence for my actions was in account with a tablature that keeps the divine accord, and knows everything.

My Fairy Godmother, Zarina Masi, my mom's oldest sister, whom she refers to as her mother figure. Has a deep faith in me, that she expresses in an intangible way. She helped my mother choose part of my first name, 'Afraaz' which in Farsi means (elevated soul) "One who can bear all the difficulties and vicissitudes borne of a high place (mountain). When my mom is frustrated with

me, she gives my mom the strength to bear my difficulties and arrogance, and see me through my trials and tribulations.

My uncle Zahir Kaka, my dad's younger brother is an irreverent comedian and like my dad, shares a dry english wit, and makes drole intercessions in all our family get togethers, riffing on people's remarks, like my dad constantly makes. But in a more incisive and non-sequitur manner. Hence my love for non-sequitur puns.

My father always answered his phone at his Imagination Computer Center, with the words “Imagination Computer Center, How can I help you”...

My Mother's side of the family are Business Masterminds and Builders of monetary wealth (as their focus) Whereas my Fathers family is Sufi, in the tradition of the Dervishes. Seekers of enlightenment, for its own sake, and seeking to help people with a selflessness that belies no

ulterior intentions, only to serve for its own sake.
The Fidai (Noorani) way.

I am a practitioner of both the Sufi and Zen ways.
And in them both, I find a profound symmetry and
asymmetry.

My Sheiks and Masters have been many, but the
one who must be named, cannot, because like
any master (true master) his ways were never
revealed by dint of effort, but context. His
guidance came through situational references and
happenings.....

My mentor's Michael and Alnoor hosted me and
looked after me in Nova Scotia, and from them, I
learnt comportment and the value of family. And
they taught me this through example, but also
through their engagements with everyone. They
stood by me in tangible and intangible ways, and I
owe them a great debt of gratitude for fostering
my talents by giving me the space to be....

Everything I experience seems to happen only when the time is right. And so I strived, but my direction was never mine, because the hand of Allah was steering the ship. So much like a captain is at the mercy of the competence of his crew, Allah' plan was at the mercy of my competence and ability to submit to his will.

I was not compelled to submit. I was invited, at every turn.

And these are the key(s). Knowledge and ignorance are both keys we constantly must hold, and the one you choose to slot into the lock, determines whether it will open....

God protects us from ourselves by giving us these keys. So things can only happen when we are ready. And never before.

And when we divorce the decisions we make from these keys, then suffering of a magnitude that we cannot fathom occurs, and so we would be wise

to bear our forefathers wisdom and blessings in our every step. Humanity depends on us to bear this counsel and bear it forevermore.

My dreams were unchecked, yet my feet were held to the ground so that I could work teleologically to manifest what I imagine into our reality.

Much like a wind, I could feel.... A dhow my body, the sail, my intellect, the captain (soul). And God the ocean I navigate. The astrolabe my divine thread....

Sage burns and in the air we titillate the olfactory senses. And what wisdom was contained in that sage, is now liberated, yet the diffusion and dispersion of wisdom can be lost if we do not have the place and wisdom(s) to take heed.

So as the muse offers her teat to the infant, the infant must suckle. Forelse, it will not live on, lacking sustenance and benevolence.

God offers all his children the same opportunity and gifts, but only a very select few, take heed.

I thank the muse for offering her “Bismillah” to me in transmitting this work to mankind, and to God for giving me the strength to see it through.

There are an infinite number of ways to bow to the divine, and I feel them all.

Such profound beauty is inexpressible in words, but it shows itself through my art, which is my diwan. Diwan i Bahath, The quest upon which I have sworn allegiance to my (Pir (guide) the truth)

I am hungry for the wisdom contained in every lesson eternity has bestowed on us all, and inshallah, I will be graced to sit at the table where it is served.

Allah Hafeez “God knows all” Inshallah’ (It is God’s will)