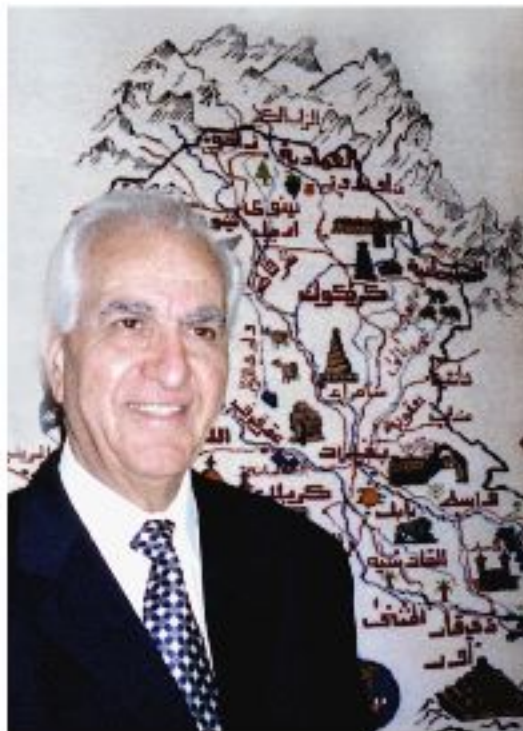


Water, the essence of tourism and its vital artery



As a universal religion born initially in the harsh deserts of Arabia to complete the message of former prophets and convey the divine revelation in its last testament (the Quran), Islam ascribes the most sacred qualities to water as a life-giving,

sustaining, and purifying resource. It is the origin of all life on earth, the substance from which Allah (God) created man. The Holy Quran asserts that water is, by the will of God, the sole basis for the emergence of life: "We have made every living thing out of water." However, that water fills the entire inanimate universe with life. Thus, for the Qur'an, water is the symbol of life. Allah, all grandeur to Him, says in His Glorious verses:

"Give the good news to those who believe and do right actions, that they will have Gardens with rivers flowing under them..." . (Surat al-Baqara, 25)

What a wonderful Quranic metaphor in which water is used to symbolize Paradise! The Qur'an announces that the

people of Paradise are blessed with the finest sources of pleasure.

As we observe in this earthly life, the human spirit derives great pleasure from water, especially flowing water. Lakes, rivers, waterfalls and streams flowing in a forest all speak to the human spirit. All artificial pools and fountains in mansions, residences, estates, and villa gardens, as well as artificial and natural streams, arise from this longing for the spiritual aesthetic.

The main reason these aesthetic views are so pleasurable is because the human spirit has been created for Paradise. These beauties are described elsewhere. The sight and sound of flowing water comfort and gladden the human heart. The sight and sound of water falling from above give pleasure and are a means whereby people can give thanks to Allah and praise His name. Especially if the talk is about 'The marshlands

(al-ahwar) of Mesopotamia, in Southern Iraq, 'Garden of Eden'.

The marshlands were once home to several hundred thousand inhabitants whose unique way of life had been preserved for over 5,000 years.. Their largely self-sufficient economy, structured around the aquatic environment, was based on the traditional occupations of fishing, cultivation, buffalo breeding, and reed gathering (from which the cane handicrafts industry evolved)

The marshes, among trees and greener than the trees, are a really impressive sight. It is a sign of an everlasting and unique leisure area for trippers and tourists' adventure that is designed around water features. Hence, water and beauty of natural landscape can fill the human soul with faith, happiness and joy. So, would such a charm exist in the absence of water?!!!

Water is the vital artery for all types of tourism

There is no better way to get to know nature than to travel along water arteries of the world, which is very rich in rivers and lakes. For many people water arteries are considered the finest feature of the landscape and certainly the most unique leisure areas for trippers and tourists or visitors to obtain both relaxation and excitement.

•No wonder that tourism is a continuously growing. Whether diving or sailing, surfing or canoeing, the nature offers water sports fans a true paradise.

•So, in summer it suits for swimming. In winter, on mountains bold peak slopes skiing and snowboarding tracks can be routed.

•Some prefer to visit sheltered bays and calm waters, while others may like to sail on a yacht to the various high seas.

•If you enjoy nature's company,

you can choose to go sailing in the quiet river waters with your family, watching sea birds and experiencing the cool breeze. You might like to indulge in water sports to add a tinge of adventure to your sailing holiday.

•Some of you might like to explore the unknown or discover the depths of the blue seas on a scuba diving or snorkelling vacation. If riding gigantic waves is your passion, water will provide you with all the elements of adventure.

•Does this adventure sport interest you? If you would like to experience the thrills and chills of the water, go rafting on the deadly rapids.

•How about riding down an ocean wave standing on a surfboard? Surfing is a favourite sport of many. If you are one of them, plan your vacations around the surfing destinations in different parts of the world.

•Try modern treatments. You can get a soothing massage right on the beach, being greeted with charming smiles. Book massage treatments at health spas or luxuriate and relax at very popular resorts and then sink blissfully into the jubilant pace of life of this idyllic, laid-back beach resort, famed for its glorious white sands.

From the information mentioned above, it is evidently clear that water is one of the prime elements responsible for life on earth. Water has been used since antiquity as a symbol by which, contrary to the past, our recently developed technological society has become indifferent to this miracle of life. Our natural heritage (rivers, seas and oceans) has been exploited, mistreated and contaminated to express devotion and purity. The need to save water has never been greater as it is urgently needed today. The Hadith by

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in our religion of Islam urges moderation and thriftiness in the use of water without exaggeration in our daily life using the Prophet's actions as a guideline. In recent years, we experienced the worst period of drought and lowest stream flows in human history. At the present time our planet is facing a huge international water crisis due to conflicts among countries concerning 260 rivers and political borders all over the world. Statistics have proved that about a milliard persons suffer from the lack of pure drinking water. The unexpected news is that this number will increase by 2030. Without doubt, tourism will be greatly affected as happened previously in Saudi Arabia when, at Al-Taef, the ministry of electricity and water failed to resolve the problem of the water shortage during the tourist season. The same crisis occurred in Britain in 2006 because of the rare amount of rainfall all over Britain.

Many of our urban populations are increasing, stretching our water supplies.

Governments all over the world have to seek practical solutions to the water problem by attempting to secure urban water, through a worldwide strategy that sets out a long-term regional plan aiming to secure water for local growth, while maintaining the balance of the area's water system and safeguarding the future of its rivers and other natural water sources. Water strategy will provide a stock-take of all the water resources available within a region, and outline the planning and actions needed to respond to risks and ensure we have secure water for our communities, business, industry and the environment into the future. Saving water can be so simple, provided you know how. The most obvious place to start saving water is at home. There are a few simple tips that will allow you to conserve fresh water by only changing your

habits slightly. All you have to do is to think a little about how easy it is to waste water in everyday activities. Today, water is one of the world's most precious resources, and yet we are using more of it now than ever before. We need to focus on decreasing water consumption.

Whether there is a drought or not, people still need to save water in the long term – tourists in particular in order to play a major role in the prosperity and welfare of the sector of tourism anywhere. It's about preserving precious resources. It's a high time we started treating water as blue gold.