



## INSH'ALLAH GOD-WILLING

*We can hear this saying in the Arab countries as well as from Arabs living all over the world. It is a very common saying, used and understood by all Arabs. It is like a secret or magic word, used by old and young alike, in all the daily occurrences of life. It is a powerful and far-reaching concept that is linked with LIFE.*

Insh'allah has spiritual connotations. It reveals a dependence and reliance on God. We trust in Him, He is the Source of Life; all things are His and He has the final say in everything. He is the ultimate Decision maker. This is why we put all things in His Hands. He wants what is good for us and His will and desire are for our good. This is the origin of the saying "In Sha' Allah", Sha' - being the verb 'to will', i.e. 'the will, the will of God, God's desire.'

He knows what is best for us. This is why we put our trust in His will. When we want something or want to achieve something we ask for His permission, by using this expression – Insh'allah, meaning if God so wills, if it is in accordance with His desire for me.

I would like therefore to present an overview of the usage of this expression, its origins, how its usage and understandings deviated from the initial meaning, and how it is used nowadays.

### **ARABIC CULTURE:**

I am an Arab man from Syria and Lebanon. My father comes from Lebanon and my mother from Syria; I grew up between the two countries. I also lived in Egypt for 3 and half years, and while I was in France I met a lot of Arab people from all the Arabs countries.

The Arabic Culture and the Arabic language were present prior to the Christian and Islamic Religions. The Arab poetry is a well-known Classical poetry and is especially rich because of its extensive vocabulary and its abundant poetic images.

Arabic is one of the languages used by the first Christian writers. There is a number of poems and religious liturgy that originated in Arabic and more especially to the Virgin Mary. They are used in the Oriental Church Liturgies till nowadays.

When the Islamic religion started in the middle of the seventh century (A.D.), the **QORAN** "The Holy Book of the Muslim people everywhere", was delivered in Arabic, with the formal injunction to be taught in Arabic while all translations were forbidden; this is why the Muslim people all over the world, and even in

Indonesia for example, read the QORAN in Arabic.

This brought about the confusion between the Arabic Language and the Muslim faith and more especially in the Western Countries that started to equate any Arab person as being automatically Muslim, notwithstanding the fact that most Arab countries were originally Christian. The famous Saint Augustine, who is widely recognised in the West and considered as a Western Saint, is originally from Tunis, which is an Arab Country. Till nowadays, the Christian Arabs are prevalent in most Arab Countries such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine. Unfortunately, the West still looks at these nationals as Muslims versus Arabs.

### **THE TRUE MEANING OF THE WORD INSH'ALLAH**

*The Arabic people resemble the Arabic language in that they use metaphors and images in the written and oral language alike. They have a good sense of humour and enjoy telling stories and jokes to convey a message. They have a positive outlook on life trusting God for their daily life. They are a people who trust, depend and rely on God for every minute of their life. They are a people who have a huge Faith in their God that leads them to depend on God for everything. This is the concept behind Insh'allah.*

One of the European Orientalists, who had spent numerous years in the Arab Countries, said: "I have never seen or met any person in these countries who doesn't believe in God or is an atheist. All the people believe in God".

This is how the expression **Insh'allah** was born. **Insh'allah** reveals the Will of God, His desire, if He wants, if He desires, if it is His Will. So, the Arab people consider that all our life is linked to God. Any one of us cannot make a decision without taking God into consideration. So, the final decision is somehow, God's. I cannot promise you anything for sure, because, it is only valid if it is in harmony with **God's Will**. This is why I end my promise or my word by saying **Insh'allah**. Because of their considerable faith, All the Arabs were aware of the full meaning of the word insh'allah and used it accordingly.

*Therefore, according to the Arab people, the Will of God comes first and should be first to be obeyed. My decision is dependent on/follows God's Will and it will be realised only if it really is according to His Will. I am therefore confident that He will give me His Will for me to realise my decision.*

Faith in God brings about the Trust in God. This is why we can depend on Him. And we believe and we know fully that God's Will for us is good for us. He only wants what is good for us. Even though sometimes what we have wanted or decided does not come through, we admit that this did not happen because it was not in our best interest. This is why we know that the fact that it did not happen is because of God's good will for us. So, we say that "God did not want this for us; because it is not good for us".

This is in short the true meaning of Insh'allah, which has been used throughout the centuries. All the Arab people, whether Christians or Muslims, used this expression in the same way.

### THE USE OF "INSH'ALLAH" FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY TILL TODAY

With the Advent of modern civilisation and scientific culture, the new discoveries and innovations led to the emergence of new scientific theories and a new vision of the creation which in turn brought about the emergence of new political systems and of secularism. Man started to depend upon himself. He became able to make all the decisions by himself; he can direct his life by himself and doesn't need to know and/or depend on God's will anymore.

These new theories became widespread in the Arab countries having their own educated thinkers and defenders. These emerging theories were used by the prevailing political parties becoming essential components of their ideology. The political parties started to have their own newspapers and magazines to help them publish their new ideas. After some time, they started to have their own conference rooms for their meetings and their activities, conferences, cultural meetings and the like. So they became very popular and a lot of people from the universities and factories joined in. This has impacted on the relationship with God, Faith in Him and Reliance on Him.

The men who still believed in God were considered 'backwards' (outdated). Here, the relationship between the parents and their children became very difficult.

On the one hand were the parents, who believed in God with their traditional dependence on **God's Will - INSH'ALLAH**, and how this "will" is very good and can help a lot in this life; and on the other hand, were the youth and the children who looked up to SCIENCE for their beliefs and decisions because Science was providing them with new beliefs which provided proofs of their existence and were useful in nature. The youth started to question the presence of God, "where is He? Who saw Him? Etc."

This is why the youth started to use "**Insh'allah**" in a derogatory manner because they wanted to make fun of the elders' orders, ways of thinking and their traditions.

Furthermore, they started to use the expression 'INSHALLAH' in order not to comply with the parents' wishes or orders, instead of saying an outright 'NO'. Here, the meaning of the word changed completely.

### INSH'ALLAH TODAY

*The expression Inshallah is used today in a variety of meanings. This expression is used by Arabs everywhere, young and old alike. However, it is seldom used according to its original meaning. Its meaning is unstable. Throughout my experience and my observations of Arabs from various backgrounds, I can tell that the word Inshallah takes different meanings when used even by the same person. We can understand the meaning by reading into the tone of the voice as well as the body language used.*

*When one uses **Insh'allah** to run away from answering a question or to avoid a situation, the voice would be faint and we feel that the person is unsure of herself. Here we know that the person is not interested and doesn't have an answer.*

*When he/she uses **Insh'allah** and is sure and committed and wants God to give him/her the Grace to achieve the matter at hand, the voice is loud, firm and confident. The body language is assertive. This means that the person is committed to the issue at hand.*

*These uses of the expression **Insh'allah** became popular with everybody, young and old alike and from all levels of society. This has now become usual and everybody understands and uses both meanings.*

### CONCLUSION

*The expression **Insh'allah** is still a very spiritual one showing the degree of faith of people. It reveals God's daily presence in the life of the Arabs. It is highly present in the every-day life. The dependence and trust in God are the secret of the outlook on life of the Arab people. This is why the expression **Insh'allah** is present in both of the Christian and Muslim traditions alike. **God "Allah"** - is present here and now, and he is the owner of this world and of our destiny.*

**NB:** I have first thought about this expression and written this article in Arabic because its inherent meaning is truly Arabic and is hard to be translated. I tried to keep the spirit of the article alive, as much as possible. I apologise if the end result is a bit hard to understand in English.

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