**Third Place: Preserve the Omani Man!**

**Author: Sheikha Hilal Hamed Al Busaidi**

As a modern Omani youth, you most probably have wondered once in a while why you have to wear the traditional *dishdasha* when you go to school or work, and why your grandparents have to mind the way you greet your home guests. These habits have been passed to us through generations and they belong to the past. You may read this and think to yourself “God! She is not going to talk about traditions, is she?” And the answer to that would be: “She is!”

As a matter of fact, the term “traditions” has long been covered with dust and left down in the storeroom. So why don’t we take a chance and bring it out to air again? Why don’t we even try to look at it from a different perspective? It could be worth it. All of us know that traditions are usually associated with backwardness and the past. The reason behind that is that there are several old beliefs and habits which go against science, modernity and freedom such as the belief that women shouldn’t go to work. Therefore, some people decided that those who follow traditions closely are illiberal and fanatic so they should give them up. However, there is no doubt that there are also plenty of traditions that seem to be positive or neutral. People might not mind these, but at the same time, they may not be able to appreciate them as which hand you use to pour coffee for guests doesn’t seem to bother the course of the universe!

They say if you want to move forward, you shouldn’t look behind you. And it is the same way so many people look at “traditions.” However, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos has something different to say about this. He says “those who don’t have a “past” don’t have a present or future.” This shows you how important yesterday can be for today and tomorrow. We learn from the past and we get inspired by it. One might argue that we can learn from others or just be creative in our own modern ways. In this case, we are neglecting treasures that are exclusive to us. You may think of the old proverbs that your grandparents keep repeating while they talk as just common sayings. What you may have missed is that these proverbs have not been said anywhere else in the world. They carry between their letters the experiences of the Omani people. You can see the values and ethics in them such as the proverb that says “فتح بابك وتجمل ولا صك بابك وتخمل” which means if you choose to give others, then be generous in giving; otherwise you would rather not give anything. This very short proverb reveals a value that’s restricted to the Omani mentality.

Now, you can see that there is a possibility that you have been dragged by forces like globalization and media, to think of your traditions holding distinguished thoughts and wisdom as insignificant. This way you let yourself be controlled by other nations’ identities by neglecting yours. The result would be far away from development. Wearing a traditional dress shapes your identity. The *dishdasha* with the *kummah* or *musar* can tell whoever meets you that you are an Omani. This tangible sense of identity reminds you always of your uniqueness. You can be modern like the world, but you can simultaneously add something different and special to humanity and be creative. When you preserve traditions and heritage, you don’t only preserve precious materials and thoughts, but you also preserve the YOU, the Omani Man.