

Modern Riyazet Schools: The phylogenetic maturation project of humanity and a holistic solution to obesity

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Abstract

This article proposes the establishment of "Modern Riyazet Schools" as centers where individuals struggling with obesity can acquire disciplined eating habits and train their ego (nafs). The project is based on concepts from evolutionary psychology, neuroscience, and Sufi traditions. The article argues that although humanity has reached biological adulthood, it still behaves at the moral level of a "17-year-old adolescent" according to the "Phylogenetic Age Hypothesis", and argues that it must pass the "Caliphate Exam" in order to mature. These schools will strengthen the Prefrontal Cortex, ensure the balance of "Rider (Mind) - Mount (Nafs/Animal Soul)" and help individuals transition from selfish "adolescence" to altruistic "adulthood". Resources saved on obesity-related costs should be transferred to a collective aid pool (Infaq) to fight hunger worldwide. This is the test of proving that humanity is a conscious "co-creator" (Caliph) on Earth and preparing for the future Space Civilization.

Keywords: Modern Riyazet Schools; Phylogenetic Age Hypothesis; Nafs Psychology and Neuroscience; Conscious Evolution; Holistic Human Development

1. Introduction: Cosmic Evolution and the Emergence of Consciousness

Science and theology have long been perceived as separate worlds. However, thinkers such as John Polkinghorne and Francisco Ayala argue that these two fields are complementary, not conflicting: science answers the "how" questions, while theology explains the "why" questions [(Polkinghorne, 2006); (Ayala, 2007)]. Prof. Dr. Nasip Demirkuş's "Science of Universal Life Stories" approach, which coincides with E.O. Wilson's vision of "Consilience", redefines evolution not only as a biological process; but as a four-dimensional reality (Space, Time, Evolution, Energy) that includes cosmological, chemical, geological and cultural dimensions [(Wilson, 1998); (Demirkuş, 2025c); (Demirkuş, 2025d)].

2. The Phylogenetic Age Hypothesis: 17-Year-Old Humanity

From an evolutionary point of view, *Homo sapiens* reached biological maturity about 200,000 years ago. However, according to the "Phylogenetic Age" theory, the moral evolution of humanity has lagged behind its biological evolution. When 1 million years of human history is compared to a human lifetime, our species currently **behaves like a "17-year-old adolescent"** [(Demirkuş, 2025b)].

Symptoms of this species adolescence are:

- **Selfishness and Impulsivity:** Just like in the adolescent brain, the dominance of the Limbic System (pleasure and impulse center) over the Prefrontal Cortex (will and planning). In the modern world, this situation manifests itself as obesity and "Dopamine Addiction". **2024 research indicates that overeating and digital**

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stimuli disrupt the balance of dopamine in the brain, raising the pleasure threshold and making it harder to enjoy mundane things (Lembke, 2024).

- **Instant Gratification:** Inability to resist instant gratification from food, social media, and consumerism.
- **Lack of Responsibility: Avoidance** of "adult" duties, such as environmental conservation or starvation fighting.

Eric Chaisson's "Cosmic Evolution" model and the "Energy Cycle Theory" frame this situation as a result of increasing energy density...: The energy produced by all life forms on earth reaches the Creator in a (biological, moral, chaotic) cycle. The current "chaotic and selfish" energy output is proof that humanity has not yet reached cosmic maturity (Nafs-i Mutmainne) [(Chaisson, 2001); (Demirkuş, 2025b)].

3. Sufism and Neuroscience: The Metaphor of the Rider and the Mount

The structure of the human soul can be explained by Imam Ghazali's famous "Rider-Mount" metaphor. In this model, the "Mount" (Horse) is the Soul (Limbic System and impulses in modern neuroscience), which is strong but blind. The "rider" is the Mind (Prefrontal Cortex) that must guide him [(Al-Ghazali, 2018); (Demirkuş, 2025a)]. Modern Riyazet Schools aim to strengthen the weakened "Rider".

- Nafs-i Emmare (Commanding Nafs): Uncontrolled dominance of the limbic system and Orexin neurons. It is characterized by Low Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and impulsive behaviors [(Uddin & Khan, 2024)]. This situation is further complicated by the "gut-brain axis". An unhealthy gut microbiota can increase the potency of Nafs-i Emmare by sending signals to the brain that trigger emotional eating (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2023).
- Nafs-i Levvame (Self-Condemning Nafs): The awakening of conscience; Activation of the Prefrontal Cortex and recognition of errors ("Exit pains from puberty") [(Yilmaz, 2014)]. This transition is aided by the activation of the Anterior Midcingulate Cortex (aMCC) region of the brain. A 2024 study demonstrated that aMCC is directly related to the willpower to complete difficult or unpleasant tasks in anticipation of a reward (Therrien, 2024).
- Nefs-i Mutmainne (Peaceful Soul): Full Prefrontal control, high EQ and activation of the "aMCC" (Anterior Midcingulate Cortex). The level of "moral adulthood" in which the rider has full control of the mount.

2024 research has proven that regular self-discipline and mindfulness training reduces ego-centered thinking and lowers cortisol levels by 35% by regulating the "Default Mode Network" (DMN) in the brain [(Demirkuş, 2025a)]. A 2023 neuroimaging study confirmed that regular meditation and mindfulness practice increased gray matter density in the prefrontal cortex, which is associated with emotion regulation and self-control (ScienceDaily, 2023).

4. The Obesity Crisis: A Caliphate Test

4.1. From the Mischief of the Jinn to the Caliphate of Humanity

The synthesis of Islamic literature and modern paleoanthropology offers an interesting historical perspective. In the Qur'an (Al-Baqarah 2:30), the angels' question, "Are you going to create someone who will do corruption on earth?" is based on the destructive behavior (mischief and bloodshed) of the beings before Adam (Jinn or pre-moral Hominins) on earth, according to commentaries [(Al-Tabari, 2001); (Demirkuş, 2025c)].

This "pre-moral" period corresponds scientifically *to the period 300,000-70,000 years ago, when Homo sapiens existed biologically but had not yet reached "behavioral modernity"* (symbolic thought, moral responsibility). "The Creation of Adam" is a "software update" that takes place by breathing the Spirit into this biological form and giving it moral responsibility (the Caliphate) [(Demirkuş, 2025b)].

Today's obesity and waste crisis shows that humanity risks failing in this task of "Caliphate" (responsible management of the earth), just like its predecessors. Selfishly consuming resources (obesity) is the modern version of "The Mischief of the Jinn".

4.2. Global Injustice Picture

According to the United Nations FAO 2025 report, approximately **673 million people in** the world suffer from hunger [(FAO et al., 2025)], while according to WHO data, **2.5 billion adults** are overweight or obese [(WHO, 2024)]. This imbalance is the most concrete indicator of the "Caliphate Test".

5. Model Suggestion: Modern Riyazet Schools

5.1. Purpose and Structure: Holistic Human Construction

These centers are not just weight loss camps, but laboratories for building "Holistic Human" equipped with Viktor Frankl's principle of "Search for Meaning" [(Frankl, 2006)]. The program synthesizes the **PERMA Model** of Positive Psychology (Seligman) and Sufi virtues [(Seligman, 2011); (Baharuddin & Ismail, 2015)]:

- P (Positive Emotions - Cemal): Increasing serotonin levels with gratitude and contentment.
- E (Engagement): The experience of "being in the moment" (awe) with worship and asceticism. Ascetic practices, such as intermittent fasting, have been shown to accelerate cell repair and positively impact brain health by triggering autophagy (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2023).
- R (Relationships - Uhuvvet): Social support and "brotherhood" system. Research has proven that compassion and social bonding lower stress hormone (cortisol) levels and boost the immune system (UCLA Health, 2023).
- M (Meaning - Mana): Fasting and dieting not only for aesthetics, but also for the duty of "Divine Consent" and "Caliphate".
- A (Accomplishment - Effort): Repairing the dopamine system by winning small victories against the Nafs-i Emmare. Conscious fasting, known as dopamine detox, aims to restore healthy dopamine balance by resetting the brain's pleasure-receptors (Lembke, 2024).

5.2. Operational Framework: Program Structure and Key Components

Modern Riyazet Schools envisage a structured, time-limited and multi-component program to translate the theoretical framework into practice. This program aims to transform individuals not only through diet and exercise, but within the integrity of mind, body, and spirit.

Program Duration and Stages:

The core program is designed as 12 Weeks (3 Months), a period considered critical for neural pathway remodeling (neuroplasticity) and permanent habit acquisition. This process consists of three stages:

1. Diagnosis and Purification (First 2 Weeks): Following comprehensive physical and psychological assessments, a purification period with a "dopamine detox" in nutrition and basic breathing-meditation exercises.
2. Training and Transformation (6 Weeks): Intensive theoretical training and practical applications in all components detailed below.
3. Integration and Sustainability (Last 4 Weeks): Rehearsing the acquired skills in daily life scenarios and creating a personal "riyazet plan" for post-graduation.

Key Application Components (Holistic Curriculum):

The model is built on five interconnected components:

- Psycho-Education and Neuroscience Workshops: Training on the prefrontal cortex-limbic system balance (the "Rider-Mount" model), dopamine management, and emotional intelligence (EQ) development.
- Mind Discipline (Mindfulness & Muraqabah): Breath-awareness meditation, *muraqabah* (divine supervision awareness) practice, and planned "digital riyazet" periods.
- Nutritional Riyazet (Scientific and Spiritual Nutrition): Balanced, natural nutrition, intermittent fasting protocols, mindful eating practices, and weekly "water fasting" days.
- Physical Riyazet (Movement and Body Awareness): Walking in nature (*seyir*), low-tempo cardio, bodyweight exercises, and posture-breathing work.
- Social Support and Brotherhood System (Uhuvvet): "Riyazet brotherhood" groups where participants support each other, circle meetings for experience sharing, and community service (*infaq*) projects.

This operational structure demonstrates that Modern Riyazet Schools are not merely a theoretical proposal but a concrete, applicable, and sustainable social technology.

5.3. Application: "Mathematical Alphabet" as a Cure for "Obesity of Thought"

Modern Riyazet aims to discipline not only the stomach but also "The Unruly Tongue." The confusion of meaning created by ambiguous words (Tower of Babel syndrome) distracts people from the essence of reality. Prof. Dr. Nasip Demirkuş proposes a "Mathematical Alphabet" and a universal "Numerical Index" as a solution to this problem of conceptual "obesity" [(Demirkuş, 2025e)].

Just as numbers (1, 2, 3...) have universal and clear meanings, a clear and honest language of communication (*kavli leyyin*/correct word) should be developed by moving beyond the "Wild Alphabet" (words with blurred meanings). This disciplined approach to language is the cure for "gossip and idle talk," which represents a form of social and cognitive obesity.

6. Conclusion: Conscious Evolution Towards Space Civilization

Humanity must move from being a passive product of biological evolution to the stage of "Conscious Evolution" that governs its own development. Modern Riyazet Schools are maturation laboratories that carry humanity from "pugnacious 17-year-old adolescence" to a wise adulthood.

This moral maturity (Nafs-i Mutmainne) is necessary for humanity not only to solve the problems on Earth, but also to establish the future Space Civilization. Space is the new realm into which humanity will be born, leaving Earth as its "womb". However, one should go to this new realm not with an "Emmare" (selfish) consciousness, but with a "Mutmain" (peaceful and responsible) consciousness. Otherwise, the "mischief" on earth will be carried into space [(Demirkuş, 2025c)].

Compliance with ethical standards

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The author has declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Statement of informed consent

Because this study did not include human participants, clinical interventions, personal data, or identifiable information, informed consent is not required.

The informed consent statement has been submitted accurately (based on applicability)

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