

The Ambition.com

The First Journal for Young Muslims in Canada (since 1987)



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Have a great Summer, Insha-Allah.

Who is a Canadian Muslim?

Living in a world in which religion does not really matter is a challenge to Muslims.

by Dr. Mohamed Elmasry

If the question of identity and self-definition still occupies a prominent place in the minds of Canadians, a similar question poses an even greater challenge to Canada's Muslims. Canada's

Muslims are a small minority. But they are the largest non-Christian minority in the country. They comprise a variety of immigrants from some forty different countries, representing various linguistic, national, and racial backgrounds. Over fifty percent of them are Canadian-born. Muslim identity in Canada has been influenced by the country and by the self-perception of the Muslim immigrants.

Canada offers a unique and dynamically challenging environment to develop this identity. A Muslim in the USA is usually being identified as a black Muslim. In France a Muslim is a North African, in Britain an Indian or Pakistani and in Germany a Turk. Not in Canada. A Canadian Muslim is just that, a Canadian Muslim.

Canadian society offers challenges as well as opportunities. Since it is our destiny to be in Canada, some by choice and some by birth, we must be able to live as Muslims here in Canada, and not in India, Egypt, or Bosnia. First, it is essential for Canada's Muslims to maintain their Islamic identity. This way they can contribute culturally, socially, and more importantly, spiritually to Canada's well-being. Historically, Muslims, whether a minority or a majority, have been able to create an Islamic culture suitable for their region. Thus there is the Islamic culture of the Arabs, the Africans, the Persians, the Indians, the Malays, the Chinese, the Russians, and the Turks.

But Islam has not yet devel-

oped an American nor a Canadian culture. Thus Canada's Muslims should work towards developing an expression of Islamic culture within a Canadian context. In the Indian subcontinent Muslims form a minority of some 300 million. That's a very large minority, but still a minority. Yet they created one of the world's greatest cultures. And in the process they built remarkable architecture including the Taj Mahal. But there is an incredible challenge in creating a new form of a Canadian Islamic culture. The challenge is that we live in a society which is indifferent to religion, any religion.

The problem of indifference, living in a world in which religion does not really matter is a challenge to Muslims. But this challenge is also faced by others who wish to fully practice their religion and pass it on to their children. But Canadian Muslims suffer from a historical experience which they do not share with other religious minorities. For example, the crime of the Holocaust has created a favourable Western environment for Jews, while Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism are considered non-threatening to Christian theology. But the case of Islam is different. It is not considered an exotic religion. Moreover, it is perceived to offer an alternative world-view and ideology which are not compatible with Western civilisation. However, the idea that the foundation of our Western civilisation is based only on Greek and Judeo-

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Future of Elder Care in our Community

The Muslim community, has not really freed itself from the orbit of mosques and school projects.

by Imam Abdul Hai Patel

The Canadian-Muslim community's visibility began emerging in the late 60's and it is not incor-

rect to say that the actual community took firm roots, in major cities throughout Canada, in the early 70's.

A large majority of these early settlers are now either retired or approaching retirement. Last year I was reminded of this reality by a phone call from a Muslim brother, from one of our site offices, that he would soon be taking the retirement and would like to know, if we have any Muslim seniors' residential complexes or seniors' homes and if this question was being addressed in the community? My reply was obvious: There is no seniors' residence or elder care facilities in the GTA, but there was an effort to establish such facilities by the now defunct group called Ihsaan Rest Home. This was an ambitious project by some dedicated sisters, but had to be untimely laid to rest, because of the lack of support and people who were looking for instant results and solutions.

Until now we have focussed all our efforts to fulfil the needs of adults and youth, i. e., all community efforts were directed to plan for the future, the coming generation, but not the future of the living generation about to be aged. To this day, the needs of seniors remains unaddressed, whereas, other religious and ethnic communities have taken full advantage of all the available government programs to establish viable projects, such as subsidised hous-

ing, nursing homes, Meals-On-Wheels, special health facilities, etc. We, the Muslim community, have not really freed ourselves from the orbit of mosques and school projects, some of them based on ideological differences, rather than community needs.

So now in the 21st century, in this decade, suddenly we are faced with this question: What will be the life of Muslim seniors in the coming years and what should be their current role in the community?

Our population is ageing. It is estimated that by the year 2021, Ontario will be home to three million senior citizens, up from one and a half million in 1998. I cannot say what percentage of Muslims seniors there will be by 2021, but based on current population trends, we can expect a very sharp increase in the number of Muslim seniors.

Muslims have debated the idea
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At the Crossroads

How will freedom come to Muslim women? By embracing the West or going back to Islam?

by Asma Warsi

So much is being said and has been said about women's rights that the topic has become stale and there is nothing novel about it. Everybody seems to be jumping on the bandwagon of

women's rights. Just a few months ago, the world celebrated International Women's Day. It seems that the West is our saviour and any benefits we have as women are due to the plight of Western women and the feminist move-

ment.

But the very idea of "women's rights" gives the notion that women are not entitled to human rights, only women's rights.

Once, I was talking to a non-Muslim friend of mine who showed interest in reading the Qur'an, so I presented to her a copy of its English translation. Later, I asked her if she had a chance to read it and what she read. She told me that she was looking for women's rights in Islam and found nothing except for polygamy and Hijab. I had to explain to her that in Islam, men and women are considered equally human. Hence, their rights are not

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Editorial

Give Islam a chance to eradicate poverty!

We're number one! Again!!

For the seventh straight year, the United Nations has chosen Canada as the best country in the world in which to live. However, the latest UN report on human development shows Canada ranks just eleventh out of eighteen industrialised countries on a poverty index, which is down from eighth place last year. Canada's ranking on poverty is a disgrace and undermines this country's overall first-place spot. It seems that Canada's continual ranking at the top of the list has provided an excuse to some governments to do nothing and make no improvements.

If the government cannot take care of its own poor people, then what are we, as Muslims, doing for the comfort of the poor among us? Islam has rightly given a mandate to all believers that negligence of the needy does not earn the good will of God. Instead, sharing whatever one has with one's fellow beings will enrich us in many ways.

We have two methods of raising funds for poor at our disposal: Zakat and Sadaqah. Zakat, is obligatory and is the right of the poor over the wealth of the rich. It amounts to 2.5% of a person's annual savings. The word Zakat itself means "purification," and its purpose is to purify legally earned wealth, just as Salat (prayer) purifies the soul. It is for this reason that Zakat remains obligatory even if there are no needy persons in a community. The other is Sadaqah, or voluntary charity, which depends on need in the community and the amount of excess wealth one has.

Zakat and Sadaqah are the means of narrowing the alarming gap between the rich and the poor. It helps distribute wealth fairly and is a form of social security. Since there is no Islamic State today, our Islamic institutions would ultimately be responsible for providing the necessities of food, clothing, housing, medicine, and education to every Muslim. No one should have any fear of insecurity or poverty.

Miserly folks tend to think that their money will decrease or that they will become poor by giving to charity, but our religion tells us the contrary: "The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it grows seven ears and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to whom He pleases; and Allah cares for all and He knows all things" (Qur'an 2:261).

We should encourage people, with kind words, to give in Allah's cause. We must also inform them that charity should not be used as a tax shelter or to win personal recognition, but only for the love of Allah: "And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive (saying): 'We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: No reward do we desire from you nor thanks'" (Qur'an 76:8-9).

With 2.5% of the savings of the rich people throughout the Muslim Ummah going to its poor every year, the basic needs of everyone could be satisfied. In fact, if only Zakat is collected from all Muslims and implemented properly, it could put the World Bank, IMF, and similar institutions that have been enriching themselves, at the expense of the poor, out of business in Muslim countries.

Our institutions can prove to be immensely effective agencies. However, at present they are too weak and poorly managed. A system that is a trust created for the benefit of the poor should be restructured and its role well defined. Experts with a sense of commitment should be sought. Overall, trustworthy and capable Muslims should manage these institutions. Let every Muslim contribute in the name of God to this "Bait-ul-Maal," with all Zakat funds properly accounted and audited.

It should be noted that besides economic input, what is equally required is a positive social outlook in life. Such concepts as honesty, hard work, self-respect, self-reliance, avoiding wastage, and aspiring in life to become better than the status quo would help many in social development. These are not at all alien concepts to Islam.

Even for our economic problems, Islam is the solution if only we would give it a chance. All we need to do is propagate an Islamic blueprint for socio-economic development. Our Imams too have a vital role to play in taking up practical measures while they give their sermons to ensure a slow but radical transformation.

Perhaps a day may come when the poor do not perpetuate poverty. They may come out of the shackles of poverty and see rays of a better future. This is not a myth or a utopian theory; it can be a social reality, as it has been in the past.

At times, we may feel frustrated by the lack of progress in eliminating poverty. As Muslims, we must remember to be patient and not get caught up in the radical methods that we have recently seen on the lawn of Queen's Park. Instead, let us work together in an Islamic manner to see this glorious day, for only then will Allah (swt) grant us His promise: "He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them" (Qur'an 7:157).

Muhammad Basil Ahmad

Our Mail

In Response to Our Reader's Concern

It is a pleasure to see that our readers take the time to write when they are displeased by a phrase in one of our articles. It shows that they care enough to correct what they believe to be an error in theology.

In order to set the record straight though, I would like to take this opportunity to explain what "God's innocent child" means in Canadian terminology.

A young child, if he or she has not been ill-treated by mankind, generally is sweet and unsullied by evil. In Canada, when one uses the term "an innocent child of God" one means that he or she is wholesome and untouched by evil. One does not mean that the child is "begotten" by God through the agency of normal birth procedure. All of us are creations of God and come from Him and one day will return to Him.

I hope that this has made this particular terminology clearer to our readers and cleared up this misunderstanding.

Sister Wilma,
Staff Reporter

Editors' Note: Insha-Allah, we will try our best to avoid potentially confusing terminology in the future.

Readers Appreciates the Quality of The Ambition

I am writing to express how impressed I am by *The Ambition* journal. I first started reading *The Ambition* two years ago, and have been hooked on it ever since! What I appreciate most from your paper is the quality of the content, which is always informative and community oriented. Young Muslims in Canada need a forum to share their thoughts and concerns, and *The Ambition* serves this purpose. Your journal is the only one I never throw away. I keep them stacked neatly in my library to share with others and for future reference. Keep up the excellent work. Jazak-Allah Khairan.

Ahmad Muinuddin, (Toronto)

I've enjoyed looking at your newspaper over the past few months. As far as content, it's a beautiful, well-written thoughtful publication. I was quite impressed. I especially like that little Qur'anic calligraphy piece you usually have at the top of page one. That's a nice signature.

Khalil Bandib, USA

Prophet Muhammad's Date of Birth

A very interesting and knowledgeable research paper produced by Mr. Fazlur Rehman Shaikh, entitled "The Prophet's Real Date of Birth," was published in an Indian weekly called "Radiance" on August 14, 1994.

According to the paper, the date of the Prophet's birth is the Second of Rabi' al-Awwal, corresponding to June 23, 570 CE.

The author had evaluated the dates put forward by about ten historians including Mahmud Pasha Falaki, an Egyptian astronomer who wrote a book on the birthday of the Prophet (pbuh), as well as other renowned international scholars, and came to the final dates through intensive research.

Mohammed Ali Rizvi

Editors' Note: Many other dates for the Prophet's birth have also been put forward. The majority of scholars and historians give preference to the Twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal. We do know for certain that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born on a Monday (related by Muslim). However, for Muslims, knowing his exact date of birth should be a minor issue.

Support Those Who Support Us

Hopefully agree with me, the media has not been fair with us in its news coverage. Very few journalists stand behind justice, fairness, and truth when the issues relate to Muslims.

I have not seen good journalists, other than Eric Margolis (www.foreigncorrespondent.com) and Michael Coren, who tell their audience the truth about our related issues.

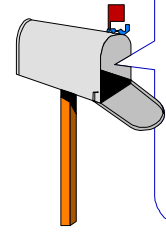
Michael Coren used to work for CFRB. He then moved to TALK 640 Radio but was later fired. Now he works for CTS television station on weeknights.

I once told him that I wished he was back on radio and he said that he wants to go back to CFRB. He suggested that I write to the station.

I think we as Muslims, should support those who support us. We should stand behind them. I would like to suggest you the following:

Please write e-mail to Mr. Steve Kowch, Programming and Operations Manager, CFRB Radio Station, and ask him to bring Mr. Coren back on the air. His email address is steve.kowch@cfrb.com

Abubakar Kasim



Letters to the editors are published unedited regardless of the paper's policy. We entertain all letters except ones with impolite language. Please include your name, address and telephone number. Only names are published.

Celebrating Prophet Muhammad's Birth

Re: "Celebrating the Prophet's Birthday: The Ruling on Maulid-un-Nabi," (May-June) against celebrating the birth of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The person who wrote the article had no understanding of the concept of Bid'ah and did not search through Hadith or history to prove whether his claim was true or not.

The article claimed that "most of these 'Maulid' celebrations, besides being Bid'ah (innovation), are also not free from other sinful practices, such as the mixing of men and women, use of songs and musical instruments, sometimes even the consumption of alcohol and other intoxicants, and other evils."

One of the first rules of celebrating Maulid-un-Nabi is to have men and women segregated. As for the other sinful practices the author claims, he seems to have a very wild and evil imagination.

Maulid was celebrated in Saudi Arabia since the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It has only recently been banned in the country since the Saudi family came into rule. All other Arab and Muslim countries celebrate Prophet Muhammad's birthday officially.

I advise the editors to carefully examine the articles that you place in this paper. If even one Muslim is wrongly guided, then you will be responsible on the Day of Judgement.

Aamer Naveed

Editors' Note: Although many Muslim countries officially commemorate Maulid-un-Nabi, there is not a single Hadith that mentions Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), his Companions, or the Rightly-Guided Caliphs gathering to celebrate the Prophet's birthday. Neither is there any mention of this occurring in the first and best three centuries of Islam.

Muslims have the right to differ, as long as we fear Allah (swt), respect one another, and sincerely seek the truth from legitimate Islamic sources. May Allah (swt) forgive us if we have offended any Muslim and grant all of us the wisdom to clearly see truth from falsehood.

For further reading on Bid'ah and Maulid, consult the book entitled "The Observance of Mawlid An-Nabawi and Other Birthdays" by Umm Muhammad, published by Abul-Qasim Publishing House (1994) ISBN 9960-792-25-0.

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Muslim Role Models

Mus'ab ibn Umayr

(May Allah be pleased with him)

by Ayub Hamid

Mus'ab ibn Umayr was a child of a very rich family. From childhood, he lived in the lap of luxury all of his life. Being an especially handsome young man, he was lavished with special love and attention. In his luxurious tastes, he was unique! He wore the most costly clothes and changed them twice a day. His shoes used to be the most expensive available at that time. He was also fond of wearing fragrance. The scent of his fragrance was unique that as he moved around, the odour would alert people that Mus'ab was passing by. Together with his luxurious lifestyle, he was very intelligent, had an elegant personality, keen mind, and a mastery of language and speech of such depth that he was exceptionally eloquent when he spoke. Because of these qualities, he was able to participate in the deliberations of the influential circles of chiefs of the Quraysh at a young age.

When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) started inviting people to the Islamic message of peace and submission to Allah (swt), Mus'ab heard about it and noticed the vio-

lent reaction of the Makkans. He also witnessed the persecution and abuse to which the Muslims were subjected. However, he wanted to personally explore what Islam was all about. He ventured to meet the Prophet (pbuh) in the House of Arqam where Muslims used to privately gather, learn from the Prophet (pbuh), and pray. When he met the Prophet (pbuh) and listened to the Holy Qur'an, he was touched by its beauty and truth. The Prophet (pbuh) put his hand on his chest and Mus'ab felt a strange peace and tranquillity deep in his soul. He immediately accepted Islam!

Mus'ab was well aware of the dangers to which he was exposing himself by becoming a Muslim. Nevertheless, he was not scared or worried about the persecution from the chiefs of Quraysh. However, his mother whom he loved very much was a very tough, domineering and hard-willed woman. He was scared to confront his mother, so he decided to keep his Islam secret.

The secret did not last long. His eagerness to learn the Qur'an and wisdom from the Prophet

(pbuh) and his devotional prayers to Allah (swt) were noticed and his Islam was known. When confronted by his mother and the elders of his family, he confessed the faith and even invited them to accept it. The reaction was as expected. He was tied up and imprisoned in a corner at home well guarded so that he would not get a chance to escape or to visit the Prophet (pbuh). When some Muslims were ready to emigrate to Abyssinia, he was able to escape and join the emigrants. As the first emigration to Abyssinia did not last long, he came back with the rest of the Muslims. When in Makkah, his mother tried to imprison him again, but he was able to resist. His mother then disowned him. Before parting company, Mus'ab lovingly invited his mother to Islam again, but she would not budge.

Mus'ab had to sacrifice his life of luxury for the sake of the truth of Islam. For his love of Islam, he was deprived of every penny of his wealth. After losing everything he had, he himself devoted all his time and energies in acquiring Islamic knowledge and being in the

service of Allah (swt). He had neither the time nor energy to participate in any viable economic activity nor did Makkah hostility and persecution afford any chance for Muslims to do so.

This resulted in abject poverty. So much so that the young man who was famous for his elegant dress, costly shoes, and the best fragrance was seen in the same streets of Makkah in tattered, coarse clothes. However, he did not even complain. He had found the greatest wealth of all: the love of Allah (swt) and the truth of Islam. He knew that the temporary life of this world would quickly pass. Then he would have all the wealth, better luxuries, and everything he would desire forever in the eternal life of the Hereafter. His keen, intelligent mind had unveiled and accepted the religion of Islam by trading in the temporary pleasures of this world for the permanent luxuries of the Hereafter. Moreover, the greatest luxury of all was that he would enjoy the pleasure of Allah (swt), his Lord and Master.

Although his attire had deteriorated, the beauty of his personality became more polished and shining. The elegance of his personality matured with his knowledge of Islam, his eloquence was enhanced with the beauty of the Qur'an, and his service to Allah (swt) bestowed him with serenity and a collected calmness regardless of circumstances. These qualities were especially demonstrated when the Prophet (pbuh) selected this young man over many of the elder Muslims to send him to Madinah to call those people to Islam and to educate them in Islamic behaviour and the Qur'an. The way he handled the situation there and the way his mission succeeded is a prime example of how the Islamic message was given and Islam was spread.

When he reached Madinah, many people listened to his call and became Muslim. This created some concern among the leaders of that area. One of the leaders, Usayd ibn Hudhayr, upset and fuming, came with a spear in his hand and shouted, "Why have you come to us to corrupt our young and weak? Keep away from us if you want to stay alive!" Mus'ab kept his cool and in a calm, collected manner replied to him with a warm smile, "Please have a seat and listen to our point of view. You are a wise man. If you like what you hear from us, accept it. If you dislike it, we will stop and leave your neighbourhood." Finding the proposition reasonable, Usayd sat down to listen. Mus'ab told him about Islam and recited the Qur'an to him. Usayd

From the Qur'an

Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah and then do not follow up what they have spent with reminders [of it] or [other] injury will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.

(Qur'an 2:262)

From the Hadith

Abu Huraira (ra) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Every day, two angels come down from Heaven and one of them says, 'O Allah!

Compensate every person who spends in Your cause,' and the other (angel) says, 'O Allah! Destroy every miser.'"

(Al-Bukhari 2:522)

was impressed with the teachings and was touched by the Qur'an. He accepted Islam. Within a short period, other leaders also came, listened to Mus'ab, and accepted Islam. Through Mus'ab's positive attitude, calm responses, and eloquent speech, Islam spread quickly in Madinah.

Islam was always spread by winning the hearts and minds of people through selfless sacrifices and shining characters of the Muslims, superb behaviour, logical approach, appealing message, and beauty of the Qur'an.

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Munawar Merchant
Ahmed Mian
Abdullah Sabree
Muhammad Saleem Shaikh

Young Reader Outraged At Russian Soldiers

I just finished reading an article [in the previous issue] about the torturing of the Chechens. I always wondered if these Russian soldiers ever stopped and thought for a minute about what they are doing [torturing the Chechens]. Some girls as young as 13 are being tortured, raped, and killed. These young girls are so innocent.

My dream, that I always thought about is having a chance to save one or more of those innocent girls from being raped and killed and those young boys from being tortured everyday.

I just do not understand why these Russian soldiers don't realise that these poor, innocent Chechens have feelings of hurt when they are beaten to death with rubber batons. These 10- to 15-year-old children are being tortured for no reason. I think the Russian soldiers just torture them for fun. Now this is what I call cruel.

I am 14 years old, and I still cannot understand what is the matter with the Russian soldiers. I just cannot picture myself in the situation of the Chechens and if I were, I have no idea what I would do!

There is one thing that I cannot imagine, which is an innocent girl at the age of 13 being raped! I

just cannot believe it! This sounds so impossible, but it is really happening! My heart cries out to hear about such innocent Chechen children whose ribs and fingers are broken by the cruel Russian soldiers.

I am just a useless person, who will try as much as possible to stop this nonsense and will not be able, because I am only one person out of millions, but all I know is these innocent Chechens will enjoy themselves in Paradise, Insha-Allah. The Russian soldiers will come before Allah (swt) and He will likely be angry with them.

All I have to say to my Chechen friends is to wait and keep being patient, because Allah (swt) is with those who are patient. Also, hang on as tight as you can, because there will come a time when we all as Muslims will have our happy time in Allah's Jannah forever, Insha-Allah. Don't think that these Russian will get away with their cruel actions. They might get away in this life, but in the Hereafter they won't.

Just remember that Allah (swt) is always watching and He sees everything that people are doing. Allah (swt) will catch them and punish them in the worst of ways anyone can imagine. Just wait and see, the time will come . . . the time will come.

Tahira Pirkhan

Editor's Note: This is a letter that was meant to go on page 2, but due to limited space, we are putting it on this page. As for little Tahira's concerns, we appreciate and advice you to pray to Allah to help all the human beings in the world.

Learning Disabilities and You

This is an invisible disability which affects so many people.

by Sister Wilma, Staff Reporter

Did you know that approximately 10% of our population is learning disabled? They are the invisibly disabled. You cannot tell just by looking at them.

The learning disabled are often times creative people who excel in the creative fields. Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein both had LD. Yet what a contribution they made to humanity!

There are many types of learning disabilities. Some people may have several of them, some people may have only one of them. Your medical professional can assist you to learn more about this invisible disability which affects so many people, or you may wish to contact the Learning Disability Association in Toronto for further information.

In this short article, we will peek into the lives of three mythical persons who will represent people with LD.

Ahmad is a cute little fellow with curly black hair, beautiful brown skin, and a smile that lights up his face. He goes to public school and is in the lower grades. His teacher, Ms. Hawthorne, asks him to read out loud a page from the story of Tomas, the Tom Cat.

Ahmad wishes he were anywhere else but school, as he squirms in his seat trying to figure out the words on the page. With his learning disability, which has not as yet been discovered, he sees things differently. Instead of

"Tomas, the Tom Cat," he sees "samoT, eht moT taC."

In a halting voice, sinking lower and lower into his seat, he tries his best to please the teacher. As he struggles, the other kids snicker and point at him. His attempt was not successful, just another blow to his self-esteem. At recess, the children call him names and laugh at him. Fortunately for Ahmad, he is a student in the year 2000, and has good parents and a teacher who recognises his problem.

The next person we meet is Patricia whose sixty-five years of life on this planet has not been very easy. In the days when she was in school, there was not much information on learning disabilities. Children such as her were often called "retarded" and "slow learners," and were lost in the midst of mainstream education.

Patricia's anger and lack of self-esteem have caused her to do many destructive things both to herself and to others and her impulsive nature has led her into many dangers. She has had trouble weighing the consequences of her actions and made many wrong decisions, which have adversely affected her life.

She is a person who cries out for understanding. She has tried her best to learn, but every failure has made her feel more and more inadequate and has alienated her further from society. Her lack of education and her impulsive na-

ture has led her to a life on the streets of Toronto, an object of pity or to some people, disdain.

With the proper training, she could have had a better life and contributed to society. Instead, she has become a faceless one, wandering the streets, looking for her next meal.

Our last person is Hafsa. She is a victim of downsizing. No matter how much she tried, she could not learn to use the computer. The complexities and ever changing programs proved too much for her with her visual perception disabilities and her slow speed of information processing. She also could not see how things fit together, which was a definite handicap for her.

All these examples are fictional, but represent different types of LD. They may be similar to people you know, or even remind you of problems you may have that have not been diagnosed. Take heart, as today there is help for people with LD.

People with LD are often times very creative, artistic people who bring a fresh perspective to problem solving and who know how to overcome insurmountable odds and thus are valuable members of society willing and able to work and contribute to the Canadian scene.

[Sister Wilma has been the Coordinator for a province-wide LD group for employees of the Government of Ontario and was a member of the Advisory Committee for Disabled People which advised the former government on disability issues.]

ISNA Canada

Continued from page 12

plained the concept of Hijab and what it entailed, defining many terms specifically, such as Khimar and Jilbab.

Both days of the conference included surprise guests from the political arena. On Saturday, Stockwell Day, Canadian Alliance leadership candidate, addressed conference attendees with his

campaign platform. He said he would work to subsidise religious schools, support tax policies that encourage traditional families, and support diversity and open immigration (with the goal of family reunification). He claimed to have supported similar policies in Alberta with much success.

On Sunday, Hazel McCallion,

long-time Mayor of Mississauga, told the audience that "all religions are welcomed in Mississauga." She went on to say that religious wars have divided us, so instead, let us work together for peace: "If you want peace in the world, it has to start with you and with me." Br. Mohammad Ashraf, ISNA-Canada's Director General, then presented Mayor McCallion with a copy of the Qur'an.

An important aspect to most conferences is a bazaar. ISNA-Canada's conference bazaar had many vendors from across North America, with a variety of products ranging from prayer rugs and clothing to books and computer software. The bazaar was always abuzz with activity, but came to a halt during prayer times.

On Sunday afternoon, MYNA displayed a beautiful PowerPoint slideshow on mosques from around the world. Br. Jawad Jafry, from Sound Vision, emphasised the importance of media in teaching everyone about Islam. He showed off clips from the latest Sound Vision productions and everyone loved it.

The conference ended with storytelling to the adults by Sr. Rukhsana Khan and a Nasheed by Br. Dawud Wharansby-Ali. Br. Dawud encouraged all parents to sing or do similar teaching activi-

ties with their children: "Everyone has creativity, so let's get involved." He also noted that the conference "began with a White, former musician (Yusuf Islam) and also ended with one."

Besides the speakers mentioned above, others included Syed Imtiaz Ahmad, Abdullah Idris Ali, Shafia Baig, Jeewan Chanicka, Muneer El-Kassem, Omar Fisher, Hussein Hamdani, Abdool Hamid, Nader Khan, Shariq Khan, Harry J. Kits, Ahmad Kutty, Faisal Kutty, Rania Lawendy, Abdur Rahman Malik, Ruqayyah Waris Maqsood, Parvez Naseem, Len Rudner, Muzammil Siddiqi, Anwaar Syed, Ahmad Totonji, Wahida Valiante, Siraj Wahhaj, and Rehan Zaidi.

According to Br. Shamim Haq, Conference Director, this year's ISNA-Canada conference had the highest attendance so far, with close to 2,000 people over the weekend. Altogether, the conference was a success. If you would like to order video or audio tapes of the conference, please e-mail isna@isnacanada.com or call ISNA-Canada at (905) 403-8406.

Pen is Mightier than Sword.

So why not write?

We invite writers, interviewers, community news reporters, story writers for children, etc. to send us their contributions.

Please send your articles by August 31st, 2000 to be included in Sept. 2000 issue. Articles should not be more than about 1500 words.

Include your full name, address, and phone number. You can send your picture and a little introduction about yourself if you wish.

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At the Crossroads

Continued from page 1

discussed separately but collectively. The Qur'an addresses us as "Ya Ayyuhan Nas," meaning, "O human race." The Qur'an tells us about human rights and it goes without saying that they are meant both for men and women.

If Muslim women have the same status and rights in Islam as men do, then why do we see so much disparity in our society between the two genders? We preach equality and Islamic teachings but in practicality, women are considered second class, even third class citizens.

No doubt, Muslims have the best record for respecting their mothers, sisters, and daughters. However, in case of their wives, they are totally ignorant of her position in Islam, or so they portray. To be honest, some Muslim men are so unjust toward their female counterparts that they have become notorious for female abuse. The situation is upsetting to the extent that a few young girls I have talked to do not even want to get married.

What is the reason of this sorry state? To analyse it, we will have to look back at the cultural influences our society has gone through.

In the pre-Islamic era, Arabs as a nation used to treat women as chattel and they were supposed to be a possession of their male relatives. People used to bury their female children alive and used to mourn the birth of a baby girl. A woman did not have any share in the wealth of her father or husband. She was kept uneducated and the only purpose of her life was considered to be pleasing her husband. Men used to marry as many women as they wanted and then let them suffer emotionally and otherwise. There were no laws governing the male and female relationship.

Islam gave women a very high place in society. We are all aware of this and I do not want to emphasise it repeatedly. The history of early Muslim societies tells us that woman had always been very well respected and they achieved high positions as thinkers, Muhaddiths, teachers, writers, warriors, nurses, etc. In her home she was the in-charge of her family and worked shoulder to shoulder with her husband. She was equipped with Islamic education and this education gave her the power to be on equal footing with her male partner.

Islam expanded very quickly to all corners of the world. Islam spread so fast that many civilisations accepted the new religion but most of them did not have a chance to fully adapt to the teachings of Islam. These societies did not have an exemplary past in terms of dealings with women. They considered women as the source of evil and treated them as such.

In addition, women did not have any respect or honour in these societies. For instance, in

ancient Iran, there was no difference between mother and wife, and in Rome, a man could even marry his mother after his father's death. In India, one woman could be the sexual partner of many brothers. She had no dignity. She was only a means to satisfy the male lust and longing. In the case of her husband's death, she was burned alive at the pyre of her husband. If she somehow lived after him, her life used to be even worse. She was expected to bring dowry when married and was not expected to see her parents or family again. She was responsible to do all the housework, serve her husband and his family, and yet be the last one to eat. She had no say in family affairs and did not own any money or property. The list goes on.

The local culture and custom seeped into the Islamic traditions and the hold of true Islamic teachings and the Qur'anic injunctions became clumsy. As people became out of touch from the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh), they started losing their Islamic character.

During the colonial period, Muslim states were seized by Western powers. Among these were the English, Dutch, French, Italians, etc. They too, did not have any code of conduct about male-female relations. In the 16th and 17th centuries, many women were brutally burned alive after being suspected of practising witchcraft. The ruling eras of Alexander VI, Luis X, and Adrian VI are a living proof of this. In England, a special committee was designed to make laws regarding women and they were subjected to very harsh punishments upon any little offence. In the Christian Church, it was debatable whether a woman had a soul or not!

All these societies left their mark on Muslims and they became ignorant of their duties toward their households. Consequently, girls and women were denied of their human right to have an education and economic security. Illiteracy became common among Muslim women and slowly they even be-



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came unaware of their own rights. Partially educated Maulwis (clerics) aggravated this ignorance by lecturing them only about their responsibilities and not even mentioning a word about their rights. They incorporated cultural ideas into the religious doctrines and presented them to people as divine laws. Women were rendered limited to their homes. They were banned from going to school or even mosques. The only activity they were supposed to get involved in was related to the kitchen or housework. The fact that in the days of the Prophet (pbuh), women were fully involved in all sort of activities, became a myth.

Knowledge is power. The knowledge was gone and so was power. Now, Muslim women became totally dependent on men to guide them. The source of guidance, the Holy Qur'an, was taken away from them and they had been left at the mercy of the men in their lives. Men used them, abused them, and enslaved them.

Then came the French and the Industrial revolution. Women in the Western world were "liberated" so that they could go and work in factories to fill the vacan-

cies created by men involved or killed in the wars. This gave women some economic freedom. She became worth the money she earned. With economic freedom came the sexual revolution and it gave way to feminism. In the West, a woman saw her salvation in losing her femininity and acquiring male characteristics. She fought ferociously to gain the right to work, to education, to economic security, to vote, to marry the man of her choice, and to divorce.

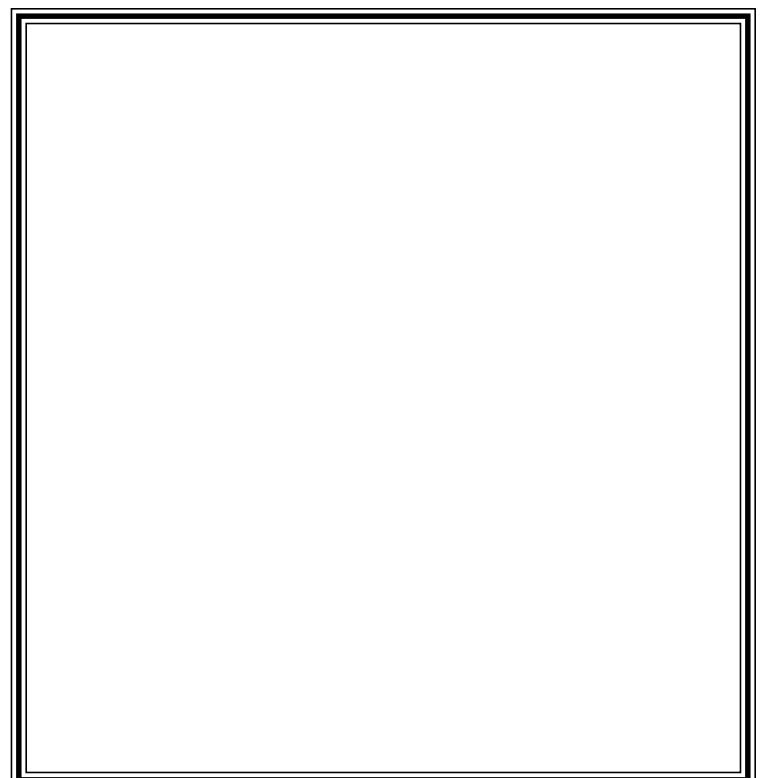
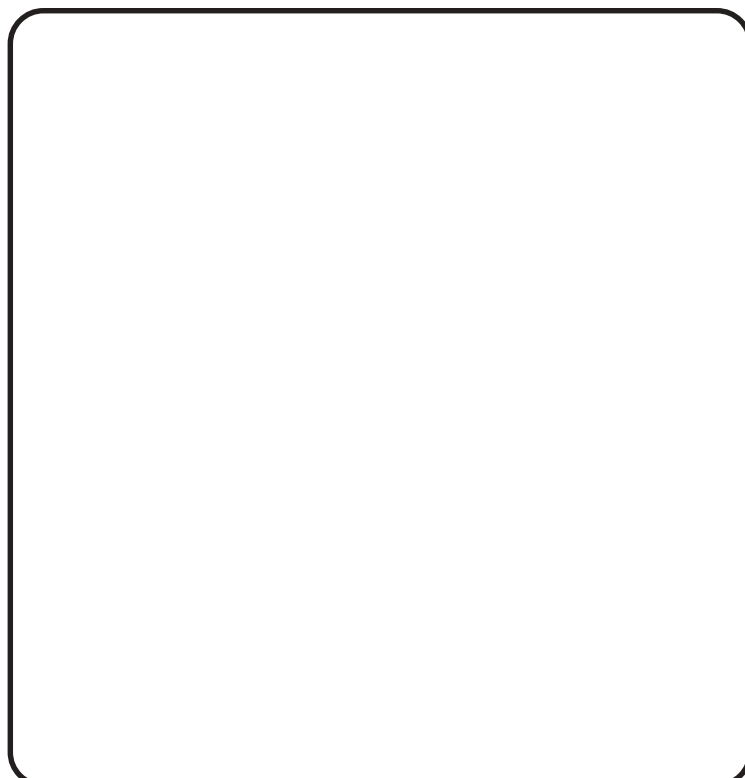
She had to pay a very heavy price, though. She had to give up her modesty. She became an object, a showpiece, a model, a sales pitch. They made her believe that this was the apex of her liberation and she believed. She was told that her modesty was an obstacle in her progress and she said goodbye to it. She was told that it is good to be scantily dressed and she posed herself in string bikinis. Man, for his own benefit, fooled her into satisfying his lust without taking the responsibility of marriage and raising a family, and she presented herself to him on the plate. And in doing so she was made to believe that it was all for her freedom and she *even believed that*. She had to. She had no divine guidance or rules telling

her what was right for her and what was wrong.

How will the freedom come to Muslim women? The Western-styled liberation is not the answer. The Muslim woman does not have to fight for anything. She does not have to behave like a man to get respect. Neither does she have to give up her modesty. Islam gave her all the human rights fourteen centuries ago. All she has to do is to reclaim them. Islamic education and practising Islam is the answer. Fear of Allah (swt) is the answer. Obedience to the Creator is the answer. One who submits to Allah (swt) and fears Him has nobody else to fear and has nothing else to worry about.

Today, Muslim parents have to take it upon themselves to educate their daughters and more so, their sons, about the human rights in Islam that encircle both men and women and guarantee a pleasant life for both in this world, and the pleasure of Allah (swt) in the Akhirah (Hereafter). If the parents of this generation start the campaign today, we can surely expect the next generation to be liberated and more satisfied with their lives.

May Allah (swt) help us find the true path and grant us the desire to follow it. Ameen.



Profile of a Community Organization: Camp Al-Mu-Mee-Neen

by Ahmad Muinuddin

Camp Al-Mu-Mee-Neen is a volunteer organisation that has been serving the Muslim community in Canada for over 26 years. The aim of Camp Al-Mu-Mee-Neen is to instil in campers an awareness of the basics of Islam, a sense of pride in being Muslim, and the motivation to work for the entire Ummah. Over 1000 campers have participated in this worthwhile program.

The Islamic sessions that are provided for the younger campers usually involve the memorisation of Surahs, the instruction in the basics of Islam and stories from the Qur'an. For older campers, the sessions focus largely on discussions regarding issues a young Muslim faces today in

North America. A special "Leadership in Training" program is offered and designed for campers aged 16-18. It helps them to develop the interpersonal, organisational, and leadership skills that are needed to become the future leaders of camps, the Muslim community, and the larger Canadian society. Islamic songs, skits, cheers, and games are used throughout the program to reinforce the Islamic environment at camp.

Campers also enjoy a variety of other activities during the week. These activities include swimming, canoeing, arts and crafts, camp crafts, nature and environmental studies, and a wide range of outings. Of course, all daily prayers are performed and only

Halal food is served. The highlight of the fun-filled week is Jumu'ah prayer and Olympic Day on Friday.

This year, Camp Al-Mu-Mee-Neen will be held at the Muslim-owned Long Bay Campgrounds, located near Perth, Ontario. The grounds have a dining hall and kitchen well equipped to serve meals for over 100 campers and staff. Campers will be accommodated in modern cabins complete with electricity and heating. Wash-room facilities include hot and cold running water, flush toilets, and showers. The Imam and other adult volunteers provide supervision. Qualified lifeguards and a camp nurse will be on site for the duration of the camp.

All staff and counsellors are

carefully interviewed and several staff meetings and training sessions are held between May and August to ensure their highest level of performance. The camper:staff member ratio is 4:1. The amount of time each staff member is required to invest in the camp is great compared to the fact that the camping program is only one week long. However, this serves to ensure the quality of the Camp Al-Mu-Mee-Neen program.

Contact Ahmad at (416) 512-2106 or Nadine (416) 283-8649 to find out more about the camping program. Please visit the camp's website at <http://www.muslimcamp.com/>.

Ahmad is a Graduate Student at Playfair Neurosciences Unit, University Health Network

A VISIT FROM THE MESSENGER

(Peace Be Upon Him)

If Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) visited you
Just for a day or two,
If he came unexpectedly,
I wonder what you would do?

Oh I know you would give him
your nicest room,
To such an honoured guest,
And you would serve him
your very best.

You would be the very best,
Cause you're glad to have him
there,
That serving him in your home
Would be a joy without
compare.

But ...when you see him coming,
Would you meet him at the door
With your arms outstretched
in welcome,
To your visitor?

Or . . . would you have to
change your clothes
Before you let him in?
Or hide some magazines and put
The Qur'an where they had been?

Would you still watch those
movies
Or your TV set?
Or would you switch it off
Before he gets upset?

Would you turn off the radio
And hope he had not heard?
And wish that you did not utter
your last loud hasty word?

Would you hide your worldly
music
And instead take out Hadith
books?
Could you let him walk right in
Or would you rush about?

And I wonder . . . if the Prophet
(pbuh) spent
A day or two with you,
Would you go doing the things
You always do?

Would you go right on and say
the things
You always say?
Would life for you continue
As it does from day to day?

Would your family conversations,
Keep up their usual pace?
And would you find it hard each
meal,
To say a table grace?

Would you keep up each and
every prayer?
Without putting on a frown?
And would you always jump up
early,
For Fajr at dawn?

Would you sing the songs you
always sing?
And read the book you read?
And let him know the things with
which,
Your mind and spirit feed?

Continued on page 10

Journey to Islam

Highlighting the experiences of new Muslims

by Anisah David

Looking across the men's prayer area at the end of a Jumu'ah prayer may very well bring your attention to someone who has a striking look, unique from many of his fellow Brothers. Amidst all the Brothers sitting shoulder to shoulder, with their heads bowed in Du'a, protrudes the upper torso of one rather tall, ruddy-complexioned, Norwegian-American named Eric Paul Wenger. Raised as a Lutheran (Christian) in a predominately Lutheran area of south-east Minnesota, Eric embraced Islam after a long and arduous path to Islam.

Eric grew up in a family of three boys. He admits that organised religion was something that was celebrated only on holidays, in his childhood home. It didn't start out that way, but as the years progressed, the family went to church less often, until finally they just went for holidays and funerals.

Exposure to other religions, in his limited experience, during his early life was relegated to interacting with Catholics in the community. It wasn't until Eric reached high school that he had any real exposure to other religions. It was during a short study of history in which Eric got his first glimpse of Islam, though Eric recalls the subject was only a blip of information providing very little insight into the religion.

When Eric was in college, in the 1980's, he came to meet some Muslims. Eric attended the University of Wisconsin in River Falls, and was studying in the field of Fine Arts. It was during the Iranian hostage crisis and the college students he came to know were from Iran. Eric recalled the situation when he said, "As you can imagine, they kept a low profile." Americans were pretty hostile to everything Middle Eastern and Islamic at that point in time. "So they didn't talk about Islam," Eric explained.

He had seen Christian fanaticism during this same period, so he didn't stereotype all Muslims based on the actions of those he saw on television marching in the streets of Tehran.

During this rise of fundamentalism both in the Christian West and in Iran, Eric was travelling on his own journey; One that led down a completely different path.

Eric Paul Wenger On His Way to Islam, Finally.

"When you walk along the river valley, especially in the spring, it becomes hard to believe that it was created by accident."

"I really didn't think I believed in God at that point", he recalls.

He believed that intellect was the answer to human chaos and strife. "I had faith in man's intellect, but the older you get you come to realise man doesn't know anything," he explained. During this period in his life, he witnessed radical religious movements such as the Moral Majority, which was a fundamentalist Christian group led by Evangelist Jerry Falwell. The evolution in Eric's spirituality created a problem for him in his field of study. "All the technical expertise in the world doesn't mean much in art, if you have nothing to say," Eric points out. So he was encouraged by his Japanese painting teacher to explore spirituality so that he might find his spiritual voice.

Eric worked at a variety of jobs, "almost able to scrape by, but never quite making enough." This slump lasted four years, during which time, he spent his weekends at the Renaissance Festival as an interpreter and actor. He admits that he has little recollection of much of those years at the Renaissance Festival, primarily due to his massive consumption of alcohol. He calls this period as being, "blissful drunkenness on weekends." Later, he came to realise that this habit was, in part, an effort to self-medicate and blot out the daily grind that seemed to mean nothing.

He decided to return to his academic studies once again. However, this time he didn't come to the university as a young boy straight out of high school. He had lived and struggled to make ends meet. He had come to realise that people tend to take themselves way too seriously and had adopted an attitude that manifested his own beliefs. This was in stark contrast to the academic world around him. Although Eric came to feel that pride and arrogance was not the approach to use in life, he felt the academic world had too many that very much embraced that philosophy.

Within a month or two of returning to his Fine Arts program,

his father passed away. This tragedy in his life caused Eric to once again look at spirituality. He said that the effect of evaluating his father's life and death made him recognise that there had to be more than the struggle for material goods and living life. In the end, despite his Yale education and business success as an engineer, Eric said his father didn't have much happiness. Eric added that his father "constantly struggled to prepare for tomorrow and never enjoyed today. Basically," he said, "my Dad worked himself to death."

Eric continued his academic program for another year, after his father's death, but finally decided to leave the university. He once again entered the labour field as a blue-collar worker. During this phase of his life, it was a hand-to-mouth existence, even though he worked fifty hours per week.

In an effort to change his earning possibilities, he started a wooden toy business with a couple of other men. Unfortunately for him, the partnership consisted of him supporting his partners. After only a year, the business collapsed. Eric said it was during this time that he was struggling to find a creative avenue through which to express his artistic drive. This was also a period in which he was exposed to pseudo-intellectual spirituality through one of his business partners. "I lived with this great big emptiness for a long time and it [pseudo-intellectual philosophy] filled the void," Eric said.

Once again he began to believe in a God. He knew there was a power of good, but still couldn't perceive that Good could be stronger than Evil. This belief was due in part to the personal experiences he had. "With people around you who do harm to you solely because they see you as a tool and a means to an end," Eric said, "You can see why it would be hard to envision Evil overcoming Good."

The dark cloud of depression and despair continued in Eric's life. By this point in time, he was in a deep depression so acute, that it

manifested itself physically in the form of sheer exhaustion.

Through the help of one of his father's friends, he obtained a new job that helped him somewhat in pulling out of the depression. Within six months, he was blessed with a job opportunity at Murphy's Landing, an open-air museum near Minneapolis, Minnesota. The job was that of a historical blacksmith and gunsmith's apprentice.

During his time at Murphy's Landing, he was exposed to people who professed to practice European style pagan religions. Though encouraged to try it, Eric never did. However, this exposure helped him to recognise the concept of the unseen world as being an integral part of our daily lives. While living as a historical interpreter at the open-air museum, Eric learned to appreciate the simple pleasures of a warm place to sleep and having enough to eat. While at the museum, Eric came to appreciate the simple joy of walking along a tree-lined river and witnessing the beauty of life found there. Eric states that it was a stark difference from the urban concrete and noise. It was during these months, Eric said, that he "discussed topics of interest, but of little importance" and that he began to have a strong belief in God. "When you walk along the river valley, especially in the spring, it becomes hard to believe that it was created by accident."

After approximately a year at Murphy's Landing, an administrative shake-up at the museum threatened the employment of Eric and fellow interpreters. It was during this crisis that he was invited to relocate to South Dakota. He agreed, very reluctantly, to move to South Dakota after his girlfriend at the time persuaded him to do so.

Once moved to South Dakota, Eric experienced some of the harshest treatment he had ever experienced from his supposed business partners and friends. He lost all interest in human interaction, became even more reclusive, leaving his home rarely, and began to search inwardly for answers to what he thought he was doing wrong.

It was during this period of time that Eric was blessed with a new job with a secure income. Working only twelve hours per day, Eric felt that it was a relief. It was the first time in a long time that Eric felt a sign of hope.

During the winter of 1994-1995, he woke to the sound of clomping footsteps and giggling on his roof. This was despite the fact that it still appeared to be dark outside. He was in fact buried, trailer house and all, under a massive snowdrift that had engulfed his home. This was one of the severest winters in South Dakota's written history. The region had been pounded

with snowstorm after snowstorm and severely cold temperatures. For most residents, it was a difficult time, but not for the neighbourhood children. They had discovered that Eric's buried trailer house was an ideal sledding hill, in a geographical area that was pretty flat. It was the sound of these children that had awoken Eric.

As he came out of the house to discover what the unusual sound was, he discovered a small crowd of children all poised on the top of the newly created hill, snow sleds in hand. They all stopped and looked at him, certain that he'd get mad at them. Instead he began laughing, as he considered how fun the idea of sledding down that hill looked. With this being the initial encounter and the children realising that Eric wasn't so scary after all, two of the boys began to visit Eric regularly. The visits were fun for the boys since Eric always seemed to have pop and snacks around, which he gladly shared with them.

One of these boys was a young Muslim-American, named Hussayn, of about twelve years of age. Eric spent hours just talking to the boys. Eric described it as "talking about things of interest, but of little importance." They spoke about a broad range of topics, including blacksmithing, history, philosophy, and even religion every once in a while. It was during one of these discussions that the topic of Islam came up and Eric asked Hussayn if he had a book on the subject that he could borrow.

Hussayn went home and relayed the request to his mother and suggested that she should visit the neighbour and discuss Islam with him. So after several months, she finally agreed to stop in and visit him. After a period of visits, Umm Hussayn began to meet daily with Eric in his shop to discuss Islam and other topics while he worked. During one such visit, he asked her for a copy of the Qur'an, so that he could read it before he slept. Shortly thereafter, she brought him one. The initial book Umm Hussayn gave Eric to read was the Qur'an with an English translation and commentary.

"This was what I had been looking for. I had been reading the Bible before this, but it just seemed so deluding. It [the Qur'an] was clear and concise; very much to the point."

After several months of study, Umm Hussayn asked him about his beliefs. He acknowledged his belief in the Oneness of God and the fact that he believed in Muhammad as being the Messenger of God. Yet Eric continued to hesitate when it came to declaring his Shahadah. During the rest of that summer, Eric spent time studying Islam and trying to understand the regulations regarding the laws and commands about art and images. Finally, after several months of study, Eric chose to declare his Shahadah. Inviting several Muslim Brothers from the surrounding area, Eric declared his Faith in January of 1998 in Bushnell, South Dakota.

Newsroom

Halal Food Bill Passed in New Jersey

Reported by Roger M. Othman, Regional Director, IFANCA (314-276-9573)

(Chicago, Illinois: June 9, 2000): New Jersey becomes the first state to pass the "Halal Food Consumer Protection Act," also known as the Halal Food Bill.

This legislation (Bill No. 1919, Section 1-6) is a major step in preventing consumer fraud in the preparation, distribution, and sale of Halal food. Under the bill, Halal food "dealers" must disclose the basis for representing the food as Halal. The bill defines "Halal" as food prepared under and maintained in strict compliance with the laws and customs of the Islamic religion. The Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs will determine the means of disclosure. Violating the disclosure requirements will be unlawful under the consumer fraud act.

Manufacturers, slaughterhouses, wholesalers, stores, restaurants, hotels, catering facilities, butcher shops, summer camps, bakeries, delicatessens, supermarkets, and nursing homes are all considered dealers under the bill.

This bill is a major legislative effort to curb fraud in the Halal trade.

"Last year IFANCA provided valuable assistance in formulating the bill," explained Dr. Muhammad Munir Chaudry, President of IFANCA. Halal is a symbol of quality in defining the religiously mandated requirements for Muslim food. It cannot be taken lightly. In New Jersey, the passage of the Halal Food Bill has acknowledged this fact. Authentic Halal certification is the best way to demonstrate compliance with the law.

We applaud the New Jersey legislature and encourage other states to follow suit.

Khalid Ghait Released

(Toronto: June 23, 2000): The Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association (CMCLA) has been informed that *Alhamdulillah*, by the Grace of God and the efforts of the Canadian Muslim community, Khalid Ghait's deportation has been cancelled and he is now back in Edmonton. Ghait had faced deportation from Canada amidst claims he could face torture or execution for his religious practices.

Thirty-two year old Khalid Ghait, a self-proclaimed devout Muslim, arrived at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology in 1997 to further his studies. He requested refugee status just one month upon his arrival, on the grounds of religious persecution by Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi's regime.

Ghait claims the Libyan authorities arrested him in 1989 and

Turkish Student Sentenced Over Scarf

Recently, a Turkish court sentenced Nuray Canan Bezirgan, a former medical student at Istanbul University, to six months in prison for wearing an Islamic-style headscarf to her exams three years ago, but commuted the sentence to a \$3 fine.

The sentence was the first involving jail time for a breach of Turkey's strict secular codes, which ban Islamic headscarves in public schools and state offices. The government regards headscarves as political statements that threaten the secular regime.

"I didn't wear the headscarf to obstruct education," Aksam newspaper quoted Bezirgan as telling the court. "I wear it because it's God's will."

Several women, covering their heads in the Islamic style, attended the hearing in a show of support.

1995 for his religious practices, including associating with people who attended mosques and grew beards. The Libyan security service released him after he denounced his association with a Muslim group.

Ghait had gained support from the 700,000 strong Canadian Muslim and Arab communities, many of whom turned out for a protest rally in Edmonton, calling on the Minister to reconsider Ghait's case. Numerous other individuals and organisations including the Canadian Islamic Centre, the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) and the CMCLA had written protest letters to their local MP's and the Immigration Minister.

Further details will be sent out, as they become available. Please check our website at <http://www.cmcla.org/>.

Calling All New Muslims

Rasha Madkour and Maliha Shaikh are, Insha-Allah, planning to publish a compilation of converts' stories to be used primarily for Da'wah purposes. They request your help in this endeavour.

Please submit to them YOUR story: How, why, when, and where you converted to Islam. Please include any details and incidents that you deem important.

Please write your story with the purpose of sharing your experiences on the path to Islam with people who may have little or no prior knowledge about Islam. A glossary and explanative notes will be added as needed.

Rasha and Maliha will edit the stories, typeset them, and submit them for publication.

As of this time, no fixed dates can be given for the publication of the book. However, we request that you send your story as soon as is convenient for you.

Please realise that the reward for passing on knowledge is one of the ways in which blessings can be earned even after death. You will Insha-Allah be blessed for your help in this endeavour and for any good that comes out of it.

"Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness, and says, 'I am of those who bow in Islam'?" (*Qur'an* 41:33).

It has been narrated on the authority of Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari, who said that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "One who guides to something good has a reward similar to that of its doer" (Muslim 4:4665).

Do not deny yourself this opportunity to earn blessings. Please send your story to Maliha Shaikh and Rasha Madkour via e-mail (convertstories@mail.com). We thank you very much for your help and ask Allah (swt) to reward you for your time and effort.

Obituary

Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Ludhianwi shot to death

By Khalid Dhorat

Maulana Yusuf Ludhianwi was gunned down in cold blood on the morning of Thursday, May 18, 2000, on his way to the International Khatm-e-Nubuwwat offices in Safirabad, one of the central districts of Karachi. His driver, Maulana 'Abdur Rahman was also killed, and both his sons were wounded. The son, Maulana Muhammad Yahya, critically wounded, died a day thereafter in the 'Abbasi Shahid hospital.

It has come to light that Maulana was followed from his home, and when he stopped to purchase some fruit from a vendor on MA Jinnah Road, the terrorists took the opportunity of assassinating him. The fruit vendor, in an attempt at saving Maulana, was also wounded. Maulana Yusuf Ludhianwi was 75 years old at the time. May Allah illuminate his resting-place with celestial light and grant his family fortitude and perseverance in patience. Ameen.

Maulana Yusuf was a distinguished teacher of Hadith at Darul 'Ulum Newtown and the editor of Al-Bayyinah and held a column advising on various issues of a religious nature in The Jang, a daily of Karachi. All these verdicts have been compiled in about eight volumes called Apke Masa'il Aur Unke Hal.

Amongst his more famous publications are: Ikhtilaf-e-Ummat Aur Sirat-e-Mustaqin, Sunni-Shi'i Ikhtilafat Aur Sirat-e-Mustaqin, Sir Zafrullah Khan Ko Da'wat-e-Islam, and a plethora of books on Qadianism like Tuhfah Qadiani, Al-Mahdi al-Masih, Qadiani Aur Dousre Ghair Musلمان Me Farq, Mirza Qadiani Apni Thariro Ki Nazar Me, and many others. His knowledge on Islamic jurisprudence and of the various deviant sects of Islam won him world-wide acclaim. The Muslim Ummah will sorely miss this great and erudite scholar of Islam.

Links to Internet News Bytes

1. Russian Federation Continuing Torture and Rape in Chechnya

<http://www.amnesty.org/news/2000/44603600.htm>

2. Mississauga Teacher Tells Grade 4's She's A Lesbian

<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2000/june/000619.html#4>

3. Palestine Before and After Occupation by Israel [video]

<http://interactive.hlf.org:19091/ramgen/inthememory.rm>

4. Stories of Muslim Children from Occupied Palestine [video]

<http://interactive.hlf.org:19091/ramgen/childrenstories.rm>

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World Affairs

Brazilian Muslims: Reverting To Their Islamic Past

by Maria Moreira

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America. Although there are no official statistics, the Muslim population in Brazil is estimated to be approximately one million people, with a total population of more than 170 million.

This number includes reverts to Islam, Arab immigrants, and their descendants. Brazilian reverts make up for no more than 1% of this number, about 10,000 people. Therefore, within a population of over 170 million, the small number that make up Brazilian reverts to Islam have very little power.

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. However, in Latin America and specifically in Brazil, this is not the case. Why?

One could argue that this is due to the strong influence of the Catholic Church. Brazil is considered to be the largest Catholic country in the world. However, a closer look proves that this is not true. Despite its strong presence, Catholicism has been losing followers in Brazil to other religions.

The argument has also been made that it is due to the Latin culture, which encourages Brazilians to always be playing, dancing, and engaging in activities that are not lawful in Islam. As such, it is assumed that Brazilians simply aren't fit to be Muslims.

This is generally the excuse used by those responsible for Da'wah work in Brazil for their failure. It is, of course, not true. Brazilians are, by nature, very religious and have in the past been an easy prey to all sorts of innovative religious movements. So, what is really happening?

Through the statement of Shaikh Khalil Saifi, Co-ordinator of the Centre of Divulcation of Islam to Latin America, we can easily identify the real problem. The Centre is located in Sao Bernardo do Campo, in the most important state of Brazil: Sao Paulo. Its President is Mr. Mohammed Saifi, a Leba-

nese immigrant who came to Brazil several years ago. Mainly his relatives and close friends compose the Centre's staff. In an interview with "Isto" magazine, one of the most important magazines in the country, Shaikh Khalil Saifi said: "Our main concern is to attend to the Muslims who descended from Arabs to help them preserve their link to their language and culture." And, continuing in his statement: "The Brazilians who come to us come through the contact with Muslims out there."

Based on such statements, we are led to conclude that a group of persons, who are supposed to make "Da'wah," have decided who has the right to be Muslim or not.

When a Brazilian decides to go against their "plans," he or she is treated as an intruder in the Arab-Muslim community. All his/her misbehaviours concerning religious teachings are highlighted and pointed out, even if the same mistake is occurring among the Arab-Muslims. Normal mistakes due to lack of experience in the religion are presented as "proof" of an "incapacity" to practice and understand the religion. Little attention is given to the fact that the right teachings are not easily available to reverts.

The new reverts then have to fight alone against the criticism of his/her family, friends, the Brazilian society, and worst: fight against the criticism of their own fellow Muslim brothers and sisters.

The feeling of isolation leads some to abandon Islam after a while. Others keep insisting and all these difficulties just increase their faith and search for knowledge.

For those who persevere, they face another problem—the lack of good books about Islam available in the Portuguese language. The other Latin people are Spanish speakers and can depend on good works translated to Spanish. How-

ever, Brazilians are the only Portuguese speakers among Latinos and this fact increases their difficulties.

The Centre of Divulcation of Islam to Latin America provides the few books available. The books that have been chosen for translation are often of poor content quality. When a good book choice is made, a bad translation often destroys the work of its author. And even these few and badly translated books are difficult to find.

The lack of interest in spreading Islam is quite clear when one observes that the institution which is responsible for "Da'wah" not only in Brazil, but in all Latin America, doesn't maintain a website about Islam. When such a resource is available nearly for free to everyone and day-by-day more and more Muslim individuals and institutions are using the Internet to inform about the Islamic teachings, this attitude is undoubtedly proof that the Centre fails to fulfil its most vital function.

Brazil will soon celebrate 500 years of its discovery, and a major controversy is surrounding the event. In traditional Brazilian history, the discovery of the country is attributed to a Portuguese navigator named Pedro Alvarez Cabral. New historical sources however, seem to offer another fact: that the discoverer might have been a Spanish navigator.

More and more historians, both Muslim and non-Muslim, are becoming aware of the strong Muslim presence in the early Americas. Many evidences of the Muslim presence in Brazil, including inscriptions with the name of Allah, have been found. In the language of the Native Americans, words of Arabic origin have been identified, and even the names of some Brazilian cities which were supposed to be related with the Native American language, seem to have Arabic origins.

If all this information is confirmed and introduced officially as part of Brazilian history, it means that faithful Muslims were the first ones to discover Brazil more than 500 years ago.

Also, through the Muslim

slaves brought from Africa, we can easily identify the influence of the Islamic culture, although greatly distorted nowadays. This is especially evident in the north-east region of the country.

All of this proves that Islam is not alien to the Brazilian culture. It's indeed an important part of it. Presenting Islam to the Brazilian people in a comprehensive manner is important not just to preach one religion; it is also to help them to restore their original culture, carefully erased due to political and religious interests in the past.

Unfortunately, political and personal interests in the present, coming this time from Muslims themselves, seem to be prevent-

ing or at least delaying such tasks. Let us hope and pray to Allah that faithful Muslims of the present could "rediscover" Brazil and give to its people the chance to know the beauty and wisdom of Islam.

Maria Moreira is a Brazilian revert now living in Egypt. She has worked with the Muslim Beneficent Society of Rio de Janeiro, giving speeches about Islamic teachings, women and family. She also taught an extension course entitled "The Changing Situation of Women in Arabic Society Through the Qur'an," at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. You can visit her website at <http://www.geocities.com/islamicchat/> or e-mail her directly at islamhchat@yahoo.com.

This article was reported by

(Islam Online, Egypt)

<http://www.islam-online.net/>

Friday Sermons No Longer Obstacle For Deaf

"No one should get in the way of a person wanting to be closer to God."

(CAIRO - July 1, 2000) — Friday prayers at Cairo's Sayyeda Zeinab Mosque were translated into sign language this week — a first in an Egyptian mosque. Hundreds of deaf Egyptian Muslims were among those worshipping at the mosque, where a sign-language interpreter is to be a regular feature. Sign language translator Alaa Eddine El-Sayyed, 28, stood at the foot of the preacher's minaret gesturing to around 500 deaf worshippers sitting cross-legged on the carpets of the Sayyeda Zeinab Mosque as the voice of the preacher resounded around the vaulted chamber.

Ahmed Yunes, head of the Egyptian Organisation for Rights of the Disabled, said no one should get in the way of a person wanting to be closer to God. "The deaf and the mute, all over the world, are living in a prison of isolation," he said. "We are opening the way, and we hope it will never be closed again."

Egypt's ministry of religious affairs approved a recent proposal from Yunes to improve the lives of Egypt's handicapped.

Yunes, who is blind, said the Ministry of Religious Endowments gave his organisation approval to start with sign-language interpreters in three Cairo mosques and to expand in the future. Some churches in Egypt also have started to provide sign-language interpreters at Sunday services, he said.

"The important thing is that the deaf and mute — no matter what their nationality, social class, wealth, position, colour or religion — know their way to God," Yunes

said.

As the Imam spoke from a pulpit, Friday, about the good deeds of Islam's Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), hundreds of people watched as Alaa Eddine El-Sayyed delivered the Shaikh's remarks in sign language.

"I wasn't able to sleep the past two nights for being so excited and happy that I would be the first person to translate the Friday prayers," said El-Sayyed, who works for the Egyptian rights group. "The happiness that I saw in the faces of the deaf and mute made me even happier."

"I used to try desperately to follow the lips of the Imam, but he was too far away and I could never see him clearly enough. When my students read the news in the papers, they were brimming with impatience," said Ismail, who learnt sign language to be able to communicate with his two deaf and mute brothers.

Thirty-year-old Hassan, another deaf Egyptian who sat amid around 3,000 hearing Muslims with his eyes fixed on Ismail's hands, said the experience made him "feel normal" for the first time in his life.

The prayers took place in the mosque of Cairo's patron saint, Sayyeda Zeinab, the granddaughter of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who lived in Cairo for around a year before she died here in 680 CE.

"This is a positive step for us on the long path towards a normal life," said Hassan. "It's through simple improvements like this that we can begin to feel integrated into daily life."

Mohammed Abdel-Fattah, who is deaf, has attended Friday prayers every week for decades. This Friday, he was finally able to follow every word. "I used to get angry about attending the prayers and not being able to understand," Abdel-Fattah, 60, said through a translator. "I am very happy that something like this is happening."

Source: <http://www.akhbar.com/article/0,1690,ArabiaLife|24059,00.html>

Five Thousand copies

of The Ambition are distributed free of charge every two months at several mosques in and around Metro from as far as Ajax in the east to Brampton, Burlington, and Kitchener-Waterloo in the west and as far as our volunteers go. You can also pick up your copy at many Muslim grocery stores.

Who is a Canadian Muslim

Continued from page 1

Christian tradition is false.

The Islamic influence on the creation of a civilised Western Europe has been great. Thus, Canada's Muslims must forge closer links with other religious groups. They, as Muslims have always done, must share the knowledge of their religion and their history with others.

Where are the oldest churches of the world and where do Christians, still to this day, pray in Aramaic, the mother tongue of Christ? Not in Rome, nor Paris, nor Toronto; it is in Muslim Syria. Who saved millions of Jews from the Spanish Inquisition and the Russian holocaust? Muslims. Which world religion makes it a religious duty upon its adherents to tolerate and respect other peoples' faith, whatever that faith may be? Islam. Who built a Western super-power civilisation which did not pose a threat to world peace and justice? Muslims in Spain.

Until Canadians get to know that there are fellow Muslim citizens who are mirror opposites of the images portrayed by the media, the entertainment industries, evangelical preachers, and hate-mongering groups, the distorted image of Islam and Muslims will remain unchallenged. Thus, Muslims must assert and reaffirm their cultural, social, and political mem-

bership in the larger Canadian community. This will reassure non-Muslim doubters that Muslims are not just marginal actors in Western civilisation. Creating a comfort zone called Islam by building Muslim ghettos, physically, culturally, or socially, is Islamically unacceptable. Such attitudes are against the teachings of the Qur'an, against the practice of the Prophet (pbuh), and against the history of Muslims. Such attitudes only give a false sense of security while others capture the political, moral, and cultural high grounds.

We, Canada's Muslims, are being watched, First, we are being watched by the Creator. Can we be faithful? We are being watched by our children. Can we be more Canadian and more Muslims? We are being watched by our fellow Canadians. Can we contribute culturally, socially, and spiritually to the well-being of our country? And we are being watched by our fellow Muslims world-wide. Can we contribute to world peace and justice? I believe that to all these questions, our answer is: YES, we can.

[Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Waterloo, is National President of the Canadian Islamic Congress.]

Taking Care of Our Elders

Continued from page 1

of seniors' residences or nursing homes for some time — evaded this issue — based on our Islamic obligation to take care of our parents and aged people in society. I fully subscribed to this viewpoint, but are we taking care of them or abandoning them to the existing institutions? What about those who have no one to care for him or her?

Then again, what is the definition of "taking care of seniors"? It is a generally accepted principle that older folks can best be cared for in our own homes. However, let us ask ourselves, if this is the best solution for us. Our current lifestyle and lack of extended family in this country, makes this even more difficult for us to provide the necessary care. Those of us who have had the experience of looking after disabled or sick elders at home find that it is a very big challenge. It calls for a full-time person in attendance and sacrifice of personal freedom. It calls for many adjustments, especially for working class people. Many cannot afford a live-in caregiver. Home-care and nurse visits are available, but can never match the personal care necessary for them.

Under the circumstances, seniors will be better off in seniors' residences or nursing homes, for the reasons outlined below.

At present, we are witnessing an increase of Muslims in nursing homes, seniors' residences, and even among the homeless roaming the streets of Toronto. Gener-

ally, as the population ages, the ability of service providers to meet the needs of older persons, as well as access to appropriate facilities and housing become increasingly important.

The dignity and worth of older persons are infringed by stereotypes about ageing, and neglect and abuse of seniors in services and facilities that have been reported in several parts of the country. For example, elder abuse in institutionalised settings is the subject of an inquiry in the province of Quebec.

The Muslim senior population can be categorised as follows: (1) Aged and retired, (2) Sponsored parents, and (3) Injured and disabled.

People that immigrated in the 60's and 70's have now retired or are approaching retirement. Their children have grown up and are living on their own, sometimes in other cities. Most are living by themselves. There is no one to look after them if they suffer health problems.

Sponsored parents are some of the worst victims of abuse and mistreatment by their families, not just among Muslims, but among almost all ethnic communities as reported by numerous social agencies. The abuse ranges from emotional and physical to blackmail for old-age security cheques or even for assets in home countries. Many cannot speak English or French and are helpless.

What choices do we have?

When Affliction Strikes Us

by Khadijah Bintu Villarmil

Why is there so much suffering in the world? Why do we face so many problems in our life? Many people turn to drugs and alcohol. Millions of people are depressed, and more and more people are committing suicide. Why?

Every day brings us an array of things that try our patience. In the intricate paths of life when difficulties and hardships confront a man, and the darkness of adversities and suffering becomes long, it is patience only that acts like a light for Muslims.

People want purpose and meaning in their lives, but they have not found it.

You buy something that needs to be assembled and the instructions don't make sense; we are quick to loose patience. Even though we constantly struggle and strive to be the best Muslim that we can, we still get into this roller-coaster effect.

How often times do you hear a Muslim saying: "Yes! I do believe in Allah and His Messenger (pbuh), but . . ."

"Yes! I try to be a good Muslim, but . . ."

"Yes! I try to stay away from Haram things, but . . ."

We keep finding the most unreasonable excuses to justify our action at the expense of others. Don't we? Again, we lose patience.

When we were little and disobeyed our parents, we paid the price by being grounded. When we cheat in our homework or test, we paid the price by getting suspended. When we lied and were caught, we paid the price by losing our credibility. When we break Allah's Law, what is the price

we pay for our deviant actions because of our lack of patience?

When we Muslim suffer because of our wrongdoings, we should blame ourselves and straighten our course and weigh our actions: "Whatever misfortune befalls you is because of what your own hands have done, yet for many He grants forgiveness" (Qur'an 42:30). Another verse mentions: "Whatever of good comes to you, it is from Allah, and whatever misfortune befalls you, it is from your own selves" (Qur'an 4:79).

The bounty of Allah (swt) is something He favoured and the misfortune that strikes us is caused by our own actions. Good and bad, blessings and misfortunes are Allah's grace and justice.

Allah (swt) mentions to us: "Never does Allah change the condition of a people, until they change themselves, but when Allah wills punishment for a people, then there can be no turning it back, nor will they find besides Him any helper" (Qur'an 13:11).

We need to repent and change. We may not change all at once, but Allah, the Exalted, loves those who seek Taubah (repentance) and practice the Sunnah.

Lack of Sabr (patience) and being too hasty prevents us from Tarbiyya (cultivation and culture)

Insha-Allah, let us all try to follow Allah's advice: "So patiently persevere . . . and let not those who have no Yaqeen (certainty of faith) discourage you from conveying Allah's message" (Qur'an 30:60).

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The Community Sounding Board sponsored by the Islamic Council of Imams Canada in October 1992 at Metro Hall, identified the following areas for seniors' needs and resources:* The breakdown of the extended family; the decrease of the size of the extended family resulting from immigration patterns; the high rate of unemployment, which has decreased the ability of some families to respond fully to the needs of their senior family members; the increasing number of seniors who are forced to either re-enter the work force or to extend their years of work in order to avoid poverty; the increasing use of income maintenance programs; the increasing incidence of elder abuse such as financial abuse (the handing over of cheques from income maintenance programs and employment to family members), physical abuse, and emotional abuse; the necessity of developing mental health programs to address the needs generated by loss of identity and a sense of alienation, boredom, frustration; the need of literacy programs; and the need to recognise the scarcity of social and community services and to develop innovative responses to transportation difficulties, oppor-

tunities to develop new relationships in the Muslim community in order to decrease social isolation, changes in family composition and relationships, and the need to provide supports which would allow seniors to practice Islam as a way of life.

Two things are urgently needed: Seniors' residences and nursing homes. Some of the advantages of seniors' residence are that seniors enjoy a sense of independence; they are in the company of people of their own age; they are safe from frequent abuse from their family; families are not burdened with their care or support; there is access to government funding; recreational facilities/programs available; regular prayers can be offered; regular lectures and educational programs geared towards them; and Islamic events can be celebrated as a community and an Islamic environment.

Islamic nursing homes are very important for religiously- and culturally-sensitive care and services, which will put them at ease and comfort.

What role can Muslim seniors play in the community? We are

A visit from the Prophet (pbuh)

Continued from page 7

Would you take the Prophet (pbuh) with you, Everywhere you plan to go? Or, would you maybe change your plans, Just for a day or so?

Would you be glad to have him meet Your very closest friends? Or, would you hope they stay away, Until his visit ends?

Would you be glad to have him stay Forever on and on? Or would you sigh with great relief, When he at last was gone?

It might be interesting to know, The things that you would you do. If Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came, To spend some time with you.

by Sr. Camalia Bedu

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one fortunate community because a very high percentage of retirees are highly skilled and qualified men and women. They have a lot to share with our youth. The question is where?

Not all mosques are open to permit the use of the facilities for this purpose. My suggestion would be to use any facility available in your area, even your own basement. Start such activities, as tutoring, organisational development, job search skills, career counselling, and health matters. Whatever your expertise may be, please share it with others and guide our community for some extra blessings. Volunteer in mosques, hospitals, libraries, social services, etc.

Recently a new organisation called the REH'MA Foundation was established primarily to address some of the seniors' needs. They have successfully organised two one-day forums at City Hall so far and I urge others to get involved, to do more needs-assessment, and establish services. REH'MA can be reached at 905-737-7123 or <http://www.rehma.org/> on the Internet.

* Full report is available from the author (416-282-2642).

Free Internet or is it?

By Sohail Tariq

There was a time when few people had access to the Internet. Today, it is different. Internet has changed the life of millions. It has changed the way we live and we interact with each other. Geographical boundaries have shrunk to the one click of the mouse. Visiting the online merchant store, doing e-mail, voice mail, fax, collaborating the business with the intelligent documentation system, video conferencing, are all done with the click of the mouse on the Internet.

It was expensive to do all these tasks but as the technology advanced the cost dropped. It has dropped to a level that accessing the Internet is becoming **free**. You

might have heard of and used it too.

As the old saying goes, there is no free lunch in the world. So how come you can get the free Internet? Well, there actually IS a price that you pay.

All those who provide you Free Internet Services are putting a banner (a rectangular box of about an inch wide or little more) either on the top or bottom of your computer screen. Some of them are movable on the screen but you **cannot avoid or close them**. These banners run the advertisements of other company's products and services to generate the revenue to support and run the operation of free Internet services. These ads, if clicked with the mouse, take

the Internet user to that company's web site and thus the company hopes to attract the customers to their virtual shops (web site) and sell their products and services. These ads work for these companies and boost their sale. Companies, in return, advertise more and thus the cycle continues and the end user keeps getting the free Internet services. The problem is that the moment you close the ad banner, the Internet connection is terminated. Any program open while you are running the Internet cannot overlap the ad banners i.e. your Internet Browser, word processor, spreadsheet etc. etc. This is a nuisance. A typical ad banner takes an inch or more space on your screen in depth. Some of the ad banners require you to click on the running ads in a certain amount of time or the Internet connection is dropped. The moment you click the ad, it will drive you to that particular Internet site which is **quite an interruption** in the middle of your personal & business activities on the Internet.

Parents may have concerns for running ads in exchange for free Internet services. There are ads that may not be appropriate for children i.e. adult ads or related products or services. The worth of a free service is, thus, questionable.

The other side of the story is related to the technological issues. You get the free Internet at the cost of using your hard disk by these companies. These ads are sitting on your hard disk and consuming the hard disk space. You need a huge hard drive to store these ads plus the browser software. The ads often change and new ads are sent to the user's hard disk every now and then when you log on to the Internet. The moment you run out of your hard disk space, your account is disabled. You must make room on your hard disk for more ads. You cannot delete the existing ads. The moment you delete them the whole system to access the Internet is jeopardize. You need to uninstall and reinstall the software to access the Internet, provided you do have enough disk space.

All these companies are running on this pattern to provide you the free Internet. They have their **Portal** software. The portal software is the one that you use to log on to Internet with these services. Using these free services you cannot directly log on to the Internet with only clicking on your browser (like you do with your paid services.) You must log on through these companies' portal software that runs the ad banners on your screen. (In the paid services the only requirement is to have the

browser and dial-up connection but not portal software.)

There is good news, though.

There is a company that provides you the free service without portal software and add banners.

Smart World Technologies is the only company in the whole North America that provides you a free internet service without any ad banner and any portal software through its official dealer **AssistNetwork™** (www.assistnetwork.com.)

As there is no portal software and there are no advertisements, there is no worry of running out of disk space or having the concerns of inappropriate ads.

AssistNetwork™ also provides other free services too. Like having your own free fax number. Any one can send you a fax or voice mail on that telephone number. This telephone number is assigned exclusive to you. You can use it as a regular fax number for your personal or business use. The fax and voice messages sent by others will reach in your e-mail box. AssistNetwork™ will be providing in future other services in the area of web hosting, e-commerce, wireless internet, telephony communication over the Internet to name a few.

AssistNetwork™ can be visited at their website www.assistnetwork.com.

Voice of a Destitute and Paraplegic person

Please **Help Javed Iqbal**, a legal Canadian entrant on a **MINISTER'S Permit**, who became completely paraplegic in a bad car accident. By the Grace of God he survived after long **hospitalization**. The insurance company has exhausted all the specified fund on his treatment.

Now he totally depends on the community for help. **He does not have any access to the Ontario Health Insurance Plan and Services Assistance until the year 2003** (proof of documents can be sent on request).

Please come forward and generously spare even a dollar for this innocent person. May God help you, bless you and reward you in this world and in the Hereafter.

To those who have already donated, my heartfelt thanks and any further dona-

tion would be greatly appreciated.

Please make cheques payable to Javed Iqbal, 403-180 Sheridan Ave. Toronto, Ontario M6K 3C7. Phone (416) 588-6667 or send it directly to his bank account no 3140340, transit no. 16042-004 TD bank, St. Clair and Oakwood branch, 948 St. Clair Ave. West, TO, Ont. M6C 1C8

ISNA-Canada's 26th Annual Conference

reported by M. Basil Ahmad

ISNA-Canada's 26th Annual Conference was held at the Toronto Congress Centre on the weekend of May 20-21, 2000 CE (Safar 15-16, 1421 AH). The theme of the conference was "Living Islam: Family, Youth, Community" and it examined the issues and concerns facing Canadian Muslims as they continue to build and develop their community.

The conference was divided up into ISNA, MSA, and MYNA sessions, with topics geared towards adults, university/college students, and high school students, respectively. There were also plenary sessions for everyone that included: Living Islam in the 21st Century, Travelling Along the Straight Path, Striving for Excellence, and Recapturing the Minds of Muslim Children: Islamic Alternatives to Video Games. The Children's Program included arts and crafts, skits, movies, physical exercises, storytelling with Sr. Rukhsana Khan, and Nasheeds with Br. Dawud Wharnsby-Ali.

Starting Saturday morning off was Br. Yusuf Islam, formerly known as pop star Cat Stevens, who defined culture in the Islamic context. He then turned his focus on to secular countries and their degradation of culture: "Look at the pathetic and unfortunate situation of Turkey! They have gone very low in degrading their women, by depriving our young Muslimahs from wearing Hijab and from continuing their education in their own country. Where are the human rights activists? While there was a time when, this very country, Turkey, used to be known for its justice to non-Muslims, and for freedom of expression and it was when Turkey had the Islamic Khilafah! This is what happens when you remove Islam from the culture!"

Br. Yusuf did not stop there. He talked about the hypocrisy of Western nations in their treatment of Muslim nations: "What was it that Europe was trying to eradicate by the 'ethnic cleansing' of Bosnia? It was the culture of Muslims, for example, the mosques, their names, their heritage, etc., that they were afraid of, despite the fact that majority of Bosnian Muslims were not even much practising at that time."

Later in the day, Dr. Jamal Badawi spoke about raising righteous children and had a good presentation that made use of PowerPoint slides. Everything was

easy to follow and notes were easy to take. One of his other lectures was about Ihsan, which is "to worship Allah (swt) as if you see him, but if you do not see him, you know that he sees you."

Another keynote speaker was Dr. Ingrid Mattson, who was born and raised in Kitchener-Waterloo. Since embracing Islam over thirteen years ago, Sr. Ingrid has visited many Muslim countries, including Egypt, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Morocco. She is fluent in classical Arabic and received her Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from the University of Chicago. She is currently a professor at the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

Sr. Ingrid focused on understanding the importance of gaining Islamic knowledge in conjunction with secular learning. She emphasised the fact that Halaqas (study circles) must be an integral part of every student's life. An essential point was that some of the Prophet's companions devoted themselves only to studying the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but most were not "scholars" in today's sense of the word. However, this did not prevent them from applying Islam to all aspects of their lives and confidently spreading the pure message of Islam throughout the world. Sr. Ingrid also encouraged us not to ignore the use of computer technology to help in the teaching of Islam.

Interestingly, on Saturday, the MSA and MYNA sessions were packed to capacity. In some cases, people had to be turned away. Perhaps this was due to the nature of the topics presented in those sessions. For example, Br. Altaf Hussein told a large crowd about his near-death experience in an accident and how that made him become an "intentional Muslim." He went on to tell the young Muslims that Allah (swt) would ask them on the Day of Judgement how they spent their youth. When asked why the youth should carry the banner of Islam, he responded, "Because we have zeal."

Fortunately, on Sunday, conference organisers realised the attraction to the youth sessions and decided to move them to the larger room used by the ISNA sessions. This was a good idea, as a capacity crowd attended all of Br. Abdullah Al-Adhami's sessions. His sessions tended to focus on women and gender-relation issues in Islam. In one session, he ex-

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Success Stories

by Sister Wilma, Staff Reporter

Eighteen-year-old Nosheen Mian, daughter of Mr. Tanvir Ahmed Mian and Mrs. Shamim Mian, who fast tracked her way through high school, has been honoured to receive the biggest scholarship of its kind in Canada from Canada Trust.

This scholarship entitles her to full tuition for four years of undergraduate studies at any accredited Canadian university or college, a \$3,500 stipend per year for the duration of the scholarship, and a guaranteed offer of summer employment during her studies.

Nosheen first learned of this scholarship through her school guidance counsellor, Ms. Cynthia Henry of Weston Collegiate Institute, who encouraged her to fill out the papers and apply.

She fit the criteria that Canada Trust was looking for: "A well rounded individual with good academic standing who shows initiative and gives of themselves unselfishly to worthy causes which benefit others."

In Nosheen's case, she has been active through the auspices of the Muslim Ummah of Weston (MUW). As many of our readers will remember from a previous article, Ahmed Rafi Mian, Nosheen's brother started this organization in 1994 while a student at Weston Collegiate in order to meet the Islamic requirement of Jummah prayer. The organization blossomed under his hard work and guidance and is currently involved in helping others as well as holding prayers. Ahmad, (who had also won a similar, though not quite lucrative, scholarship 2 years ago,) as her elder brother, has always been an inspiration to her throughout the years. Nosheen has participated in T-shirt sales, food/clothing drives, selling chocolates, sporting tournaments, dinners, coin collecting, etc., in order to aid the people of Bosnia, Chechnya, Kosova, Kashmir, Palestine, as well as the local mosques. She did this at the same

An Honour Well Deserved

Nosheen Mian receives the biggest scholarship of its kind in Canada from Canada Trust.

time as she devoted herself to her studies and her family.

When asked what the award means to her, Nosheen said that it means "hard work, and the time and effort I've devoted to these worthy causes has been recognised. Furthermore, it brings recognition for the Muslim community due to the causes we have helped. As well, it obviously lifts a great financial burden from my shoulders."

When asked what affect this award has had on her immediate family, she replied: "Although my parents and family are obviously happy for what has happened, they're mainly just very thankful to Allah (swt), for verily, all praise is due to Allah (swt)."

Nosheen has some suggestions to make for would-be scholarship winners.

"Deadlines are fairly early on in the year, sometimes in October, so it would be wise to obtain one, early on in the school year or at summer's end from any Canada Trust branch. Also, type all information. If more space is needed, type it on a separate sheet and indicate that you have done so on the application itself."

She feels that impressions mean a lot and that more Muslims should apply for available scholarships.

Well done Nosheen, and congratulations to you and your parents!

Nosheen has also been an active member of *The Ambition* and has freely given us her time helping in our annual picnic and other activities. We are very proud to have her on our volunteer list and wish her all the best in the future.

Pass this copy of
The Ambition to a friend
after reading.
Help us bring
the message of Islam
to others.