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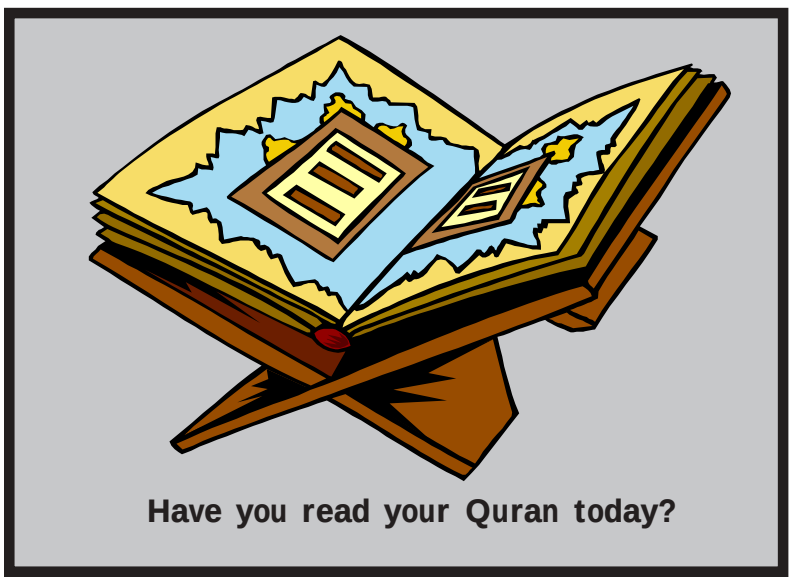


Have you read your Quran today?

The Mosquito and Its Extraordinary Adventure

at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, this knowledge was completely unknown to humankind.

by Harun Yahya

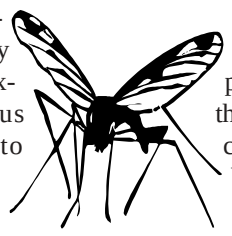
As people are invited to contemplate on their own creation, the Qur'an frequently calls people to investigate the nature and to see the signs of Allah therein. That is because the whole universe, with all its living and non-living elements, consists of the signs revealing that they have been "created." Moreover, they exist just in order to demonstrate the power, knowledge, and art of their "Creator." Humanity is responsible to know these signs and appreciate the Creator of everything: Allah. All living things possess these signs, yet there are some specifically mentioned organisms in the Qur'an. The mosquito is one of these:

"Indeed, Allah is not timid to present an example — that of a mosquito or what is smaller than it. And those who have believed know that it is the truth from their Lord. But as for those who disbelieve, they say, 'What did Allah intend by this example?' He misleads many thereby and guides many thereby. And He misleads not except the defiantly disobedient" (Qur'an 2:26).

When considering the life of the mosquito, we can say that it has a very extraordinary adventure. What is generally known about mosquitoes is that they absorb and feed on blood. Yet, this is not completely true, as only the female ones absorb blood. Moreover, their need for blood is not related to feeding at all. Actually, both male and female mosquitoes feed on nectar of flowers. The only reason that females, unlike males, do absorb blood is for their eggs, which need to mature with the proteins contained in blood. In other words, female mosquitoes absorb blood just to ensure the survival of the new generation.

The point to be stressed here is that the verse of the Qur'an points out only the "female" mosquito (the Arabic word for "mosquito" is in the feminine form). As previously mentioned, it is only the female mosquito that has the superior capabilities detailed below. Therefore, it is surely quite expressive that female mosquitoes are particularly emphasised in the Qur'an. Besides, it is a remarkable fact to point out that at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, this knowledge was completely unknown to humankind.

The development process and its phases, is one of the most amazing aspects of the mosquito. This animal converts from a larva into a mosquito after passing through completely different phases. Let us examine this adventurous story of the mosquito briefly.



The mosquito eggs, which are fed with blood, are laid on damp leaves or dried ponds for maturation by the female mosquito during summer or fall. However, before this, the mother initially examines the ground thoroughly by using a receptor placed under her abdomen, functioning as a humidity and temperature sensor. She aims at finding a convenient place for her eggs. When the most suitable area is found, she starts to lay her eggs. These eggs, which have a length of less than one millimetre, are arranged in a line, either in groups or one by one. Some species lay their eggs joined to each other forming a raft, which may contain up to 300 eggs.

The carefully placed white eggs soon start to change their colour. This takes only about a few hours after they are laid down, and they become completely black in colour. With this change, they attain an excellent protection against birds and insects. Their dark colour cannot be recognised by these organisms.

It takes a winter for the incubation period to complete. Since eggs are created with a structure that resists a long and cold winter, they survive until spring, when their incubation period ends. When the incubation period is complete, the larvae start getting out of their eggs, all at about the same time. The first egg is immediately followed by the others. As soon as they get out of the eggs, they start to swim in wa-

Continued on page 7

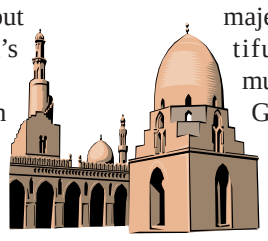
The Islamic Creed: Simple, Yet Powerful

Islam rejects human tyranny, for Allah alone is to be worshiped and served.

by Professor Mohamed Elmasry

Muslims capture the essence of their faith in what is probably the simplest, tidiest "creed" in the entire world: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is God's Messenger."

This two-clause affirmation is universally called "*al-kalimah*," which means "the Word."



In order to formally become a Muslim, one must repeat this affirmation in public. Thus, to understand it is to understand the essence of Islam, the faith by which all Muslims live.

To a Muslim, God is Perfect, Absolute and Infinite; He is also majestic, mighty, beautiful, merciful, and much more. Above all, God is THE ONE.

In Arabic (the language in which *al-kalimah* is always stated, no matter what the native language of the speaker), it is a resonant, rolling, and powerful phrase. It so happens that, of its fifteen syllables, about half begin and/or end with an "L" sound. This liquid alliteration, added to the rhyme and very marked rhythm of *al-kalimah*, is evocative and musical indeed: "La-'i-la-ha-'il-lal-lah, Mu-ham-ma-dur-ra-su-lul-lah."

Then, there is its calligraphic appeal as well. In the Arabic alphabet, which is highly decorative to begin with, it so happens that this particular set of words is strikingly patterned when written out in full and thus lends itself to picturesque presentation.

The Islamic creedal formula is constantly invoked by Muslims. It is whispered in the ear of newborn babies, so that its affirmation of God's Oneness may be the first words that a Muslim hears on entering this world.

Between a person's birth and

Continued on page 10

INSIDE

Make the most of one minute ---------- 3
Let's talk and discuss ----- 4
Take no offense please ---- 5
The table in the corner ---- 5
Ever wonder ---------- 5
The Peacemakers ---------- 6
ISNA conference 2001 ---- 7
ISSA conference ---------- 9

Departments

Editorial
Seeking Knowledge -------- 2
Our Mail
Muslims for justice --------- 2
Newsroom ---------- 8
Kidz Korner
Who am I, Plans for the summer holidays, etc. ---- 11
Muslim Investment
Planning for funeral --------- 12

Please treat this Islamic Journal with respect!

Challenges Facing Muslim Families in North America

There is marked increase in divorce rates, separation, domestic violence, child and elder abuse and so on.

by Wahida Chishti Valiante

The challenges and moral dilemmas facing Muslim families requires an understanding of the shifts in ideological, social, religious and political forces that are shaping the structure and function of families in North America. Families are not static or monolithic; each family is unique, yet it is a 'microcosm' of society at large and is reflective of religious, social, and political values.

The challenge facing the Muslim family is not only to maintain its Islamic identity, but also to initiate change in the social and political spheres in light of the principles of the noble Qur'an. Achieving these goals requires active participation of Muslims in the political, social, economic, and religious aspects of society. Failing this, Muslims will either be segregated or assimilated. Both processes are undesirable since they lead to the loss of self-identity, which is built on religious and social values acquired from one's family and strengthened through constant interaction with the larger society.

Over the past three decades, the North American society has undergone a rapid social, political, and re-

Continued on page 10

Editorial

Seeking Islamic Knowledge

Knowledge precedes faith. So, how can one have faith without knowing what one believes in? The example of the new Muslim clearly illustrates this: Generally, those who voluntarily enter Islam do so once they have acquired knowledge and reached the understanding that Islam is the religion and way of life to which they would like to adhere.

Consequently, the person who has Islamic knowledge is not equal to one who does not (Qur'an 39:9). Those who have such knowledge are aware of the truth and act accordingly, thereby having a beneficial impact on those around them, whereas those who are ignorant fumble through the world, vainly attempting to satisfy their desires, and ultimately fail to gain awareness of their purpose and duty in life. Hence, it should be clear that knowledge is a means to a higher end.

Yet, it must be emphasised that religious knowledge should be given priority. We will not benefit from other forms of knowledge if we do not have Islamic knowledge first. Most importantly, we must have knowledge of Allah, and of His Names and His Attributes. We must also know what is expected of us concerning our service and worship to Him. Then, we should strive to know His Book, the Qur'an. We should learn to read it in Arabic, if we do not already know how. We should also try to memorize as much of it as possible, and stress these things to our children. Reading the Qur'an should be something common to every Muslim home.

Furthermore, we should know about Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his Companions. It is by reading their stories that we learn of their bravery, love for the faith, and their complete devotion to Allah. It is by knowing them that we grow to love them, and through loving them, we strive to become increasingly like them. This is especially true, when most children nowadays want to emulate famous Hollywood celebrities or sports figures, because they know so much about them. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important for us to introduce our children to Muslim heroes instead.

The sincere Muslim who acquires knowledge does so essentially for three related reasons. The first is to build *aqeedah* (belief) in and *taqwa* (consciousness) of Allah. Secondly, the Muslim acquires knowledge in order to practice and implement what he or she has learned. Thirdly, a Muslim who gains knowledge then has a duty to share it with others and invite others towards the way of Allah and His Messenger (pbuh).

In this part of the world, acquiring authentic knowledge is a serious struggle. It requires time, money, and effort. Fortunately, we are in a period where many books on all aspects of Islam are becoming available through local mosques and bookstores. Thus, the main aspect of the struggle has to do with the time and effort that we put in. We should consider the amount of energy we spend on the study of worldly subjects, such as science, engineering, commerce, etc., to realise the imbalance that exists in our approach.

That is not to say that we should not study these in order to earn a living, which is a necessity. Actually, Muslims ought to do their best in order to be among the top-ranking students in all of these areas, because as a nation, we need doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. However, it is a greater duty and obligation upon each of us to devote a certain amount of time and energy in order to achieve an increasing level of *taqwa* through Islamic knowledge, for what good will it do to have a nation of professionals who do not even know the basics of their own religion?

We should all have the intention to learn Arabic, memorize parts of the Qur'an, and comprehend the life of the Prophet (pbuh) and deepen our understanding of the basics of our religion. This requires consistent effort, discipline, and commitment. In the end, if we are clear that it is only this type of knowledge that will ultimately be of value to us on the Last Day, then the effort and commitment required should not be difficult to generate.

Surely, we do not wish to remain spiritually blind, as Allah rhetorically asks us in the Qur'an*: "Then is he, who knows that what has been revealed to you [O Muhammad] from your Lord is the truth, like one who is blind?"* (13:19).

Muhammad Basil Ahmad

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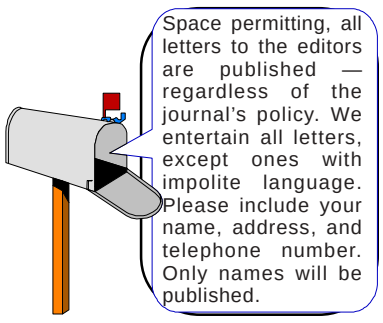
Our Mail



letters@theambition.com

Muslims for Universal Justice

I read with interest the article "Erosion of Justice" by Imam Abdul Hai Patel (May–June 2001). It's an excellent thought-provoking article. I have some comments, which I hope will enrich the discussion.

Br. Patel ends the article by raising the question, "When Allah says that he does not do injustice to anyone, how can he then tolerate injustice on Earth by human beings to one another?"

Let us remember that*: "And never would We punish until We sent a messenger"* (Qur'an 17:15), "[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed" (67:2), and "Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful" (76:3).

Many Qur'anic verses are clear in stating that while angels do not have the option of disobeying Allah, man does. With the freedom of choice (of submission to Allah) comes responsibility. Such responsibility would not be fair if man were forced to act in this or that way.

Thus Allah has sent us a clear guidance, if we follow it then we shall live in peace, tranquility, and harmony in this life as well as in the Hereafter. If we fail to do so, and this is our call, then we shall suffer the consequences, both in this life and in the Hereafter.

It is with this background in mind that I now address the question raised by Br. Patel: Allah is Just, Merciful, but He will not force us to comply with His direction. It's up to us to believe in Him and follow the prescription He provided us for a healthy, happy life where justice prevails and every human being's dignity is respected, where all are equal in front of God. Having said that, I now shift the focus on our duty as Muslims in Greater Toronto Area. Have we stood for justice locally?

In early May, the Centre for Social Justice released a report entitled "Canada's Creeping Economic Apartheid" in which the author highlights the pathetic conditions of racialized immigrants (that's you and me plus a host of others). The report exposes how racialized immigrants are treated like second-class citizens (reminiscent of the much despised apartheid regime in South Africa), and pushed by all kind of discrimination and access barriers (under different slogans such as Canadian experience, non-recognition of professional qualifications, etc.) into providing slave labour. The report can be viewed in full at www.socialjustice.org.

If we dare take a closer look at our community, can we claim to have justice among ourselves? I am not in a position to judge, but this brings to mind the many cases of sexual abuse, domestic violence, the many orphans, widows, and the needy in the community whose needs are overlooked. Yes, some brothers and sisters are doing heroic efforts (notably the Muslim Welfare Centre), but their commendable efforts are far from enough to address the community's needs.

I dare say that charity begins at home, and before crying aloud against the tyrannies of the murderous regimes in the Muslim world (as the reader Javed Zaheer correctly pointed out in the same issue), our challenge as Muslims in the GTA lies right here. We must practice what we preach and establish justice among ourselves in our families and community.

We always cry wolf when the media harasses Muslims on the global stage, and while much of it may be ill-spirited (such as blaming Islam for terrorism), we the Muslims in the GTA fail to do our homework by setting a bright record in standing for justice not only within our community but also on the public stage.

In the recent discussions about increasing poverty, homelessness, the budget deficit of the city, the impact of FTAA, or Mike Harris' plan to charge us more for electricity, one never heard any Muslim voice at all. It was as if 300,000 Muslims did not exist in the GTA!

When I attended the FTAA conference at Ryerson University, I came out admiring those youth who had the guts to stand up for justice. That none of them was Muslim saddened me deeply. In all the fanfare of ISNA or ICNA annual conventions, this issue is never raised or discussed. We prefer to bury our heads in the sand and then cry wolf when the media demonizes our faith.

Haroon Siddiqui in his *Star* column wrote: "Their (immigrants) complaints of unfair treatment by public or private institutions remain confined to grumbling. They will have better luck in having such injustice exposed by the media when they learn to stand up for their rights. To be treated as the first class citizens that they are, members of minorities have to stop behaving like second-class citizens" (May 6, 2001).

We all remember the public outrage when MP Tom Wappel declined to honour his parliamentarian duty in assisting one of his constituents. We all heard about the young Sri Lankan child who died when the ambulance service, operated by white staff refused to take him to the hospital, and about the recent killing of a young black teen in Kitchener by a suspected Neo-Nazi gang. Do you have to wait for it to happen to you to act on fighting injustice?

"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both" (Qur'an 4:135).

"Say [O Muhammad], 'My Lord has ordered justice and that you maintain yourselves [in worship of Him] at every place [or time] of prostration, and invoke Him, sincere to Him in religion'" (Qur'an 7:29).

Allah commands justice, so it is up to us to fulfill that command or to betray it; and only we will suffer the consequences — good or bad. It is our choice. I firmly believe that in failing to stand up for justice we are accomplices in the injustice being committed against humanity both locally and globally. For those who are willing to work to achieve justice, please feel free to contact me at osman_bakhach@yahoo.com. You can visit our website at *www.muslimsjustice.com*

Osman Bakhach
Muslims for Universal Justice

Kind Words from Our Readers

I read ***The Ambition*** whenever I get it with keen interest. I am a student of Islamic studies through American Open University, and it helps me a lot on many subjects. I am also the mother of three daughters who attend Islamic school.

Al-Hamdulillah, it is a great opportunity to seek knowledge of our *deen* in Islamic schools while living here in a non-Muslim country. Such papers like ***The Ambition*** are good for the young generation, which is purely linked with Islamic material. Certainly, it is giving something to the youth.

Sadia Khalid

For the past two years, I have been an avid reader of ***The Ambition***. Your journal is very well organized and has a keen approach towards targeting youth. I applaud your efforts and perseverance; it shows great dedication. Thank you for the informative issues you tackle in your journal, which need to be addressed.

Shirin Almashni
North York

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Make the Most of One Minute

by Shaikh Saalih Al-Munajjid

In our offices and workplaces we can hardly find time to do acts of worship and righteous deeds. What can we do in the short time that we can find in our day? How can we make use of it?

Praise be to Allah (swt). Time is of the essence; it is too precious to be wasted or neglected. The wise person is the one who pays attention to his time and does not treat it as a vessel to be filled with cheap things and vain talk. Instead, he limits it to worthy efforts and righteous deeds that please Allah (swt) and benefit other people. Every minute of a person's life carries the potential to raise his own status and to make his people happier, little by little.

If you are keen to attain the highest position, and bring the most happiness to your people, then forget about relaxing and keep away from empty amusement. In one minute you can do a lot of good and earn much reward. In just one minute, by giving in charity, studying, memorising, or striving to do good deeds, you can make sure that this minute of your life is not wasted. One minute may be recorded in your book of good deeds if you know how to make the most of it and take care of it:

Strive to make the most of each minute. What follows is a list of things that can be done in one minute, by the permission of Allah.

1. In one minute, you can recite Surah Al-Fatiha a couple times, reciting clearly and silently. Some scholars say that the reward for reading Al-Fatiha are multiple Hasanaat, which can all be gained in one minute.

2. In one minute, you can recite Surah Al-Ikhlas (Qul-Huwa-Allahu-Ahad) many times, reciting clearly and silently. Reciting it once is equivalent to reciting one-third of the Qur'an. Reciting this Surah many times in one minute is equivalent to reading the Qur'an about three to four times!

3. You can read one page of the Book of Allah (swt) in one minute.

4. You can memorise a short Ayah of the Book of Allah (swt) in one minute.

5. In one minute you can praise Allah (swt) many times by saying: "Laa-ilaaha-ill-Allaah-wahdahu-laa-shareeka-lah, lahul mulk-wa-lahul-hamd-wa-huwa-ala-kulli-shay-in-qadeer" (There is no god except Allah alone with no partner; to Him be dominion and praise, and He is Able to do all things).

6. In one minute, you can say "Subhaan-Allaahi-wa-bi-hamdihi" (Glory and praise be to Allah) numerous times. Insha-Allah, our sins will be forgiven by saying this.

7. In one minute, you can say "Subhaan-Allaahi-wa-bi-hamdihi-Subhaan-Allaah-il-Azeem" (Glory and praise be to Allah, glory be to Allah the Almighty) over twenty times. These are two phrases that are light on the lips, heavy in the balance and beloved to the Most Merciful, as was related by Bukhari and Muslim.

8. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "When I say 'Subhaan-Allaah, wal-hamdu-Lillah, wa-laa-ilaah-ill-Allaah, wa-Allaahu-Akbar (Glory be to Allah, praise be to Allah, there is no god except Allah, and Allah is Most Great),' this is more beloved to me than all that the Sun rises upon" (narrated by Muslim). In one minute, you can say all of these words more than ten times. These words are the most beloved words to Allah (swt), the best of words, and they weigh heavily in the balance of good deeds, as was narrated in the Saheeh Hadith.

9. In one minute, you can say "Laa-hawla-wa-laa-quwwata-illa-Billaah" (There is no strength and no power except with Allah) numerous times. This is one of the treasures of Paradise, as was narrated by Bukhari and Muslim. It is a means of putting up with difficulties and of aiming to achieve great things.

10. In one minute, you can say "Laa-ilaaha-ill-Allaah" many times. This is the greatest phrase, for it is the phrase of Tawheed, the good phrase, the phrase that stands firm. If these are the last words of a person, he will enter Paradise; there are also other reports that indicate the greatness of these words.

11. In one minute, you can seek the forgiveness of Allah (swt) almost 100 times by saying "Astaghfir-Allaah" (I seek the forgiveness of Allah). The virtues of seeking forgiveness are no secret, for it is the means of entering Paradise, and it is the means of being granted a good life, increasing one's strength, warding off disasters, making things easier, bringing rain, and increasing one's wealth and children.

12. You can say a few brief and concise words in one minute, and Allah (swt) may bring about some good through them that you could never imagine.

13. In one minute, you can send blessings upon the Prophet (pbuh) many times by saying "Sall-Allaahu-`Alayhi-wa-Sallam" (May Allah bless him and grant him peace).

14. In one minute, you can motivate your heart to give thanks to Allah (swt), to love Him, to fear Him, to put hope in Him, to long for Him, and thus travel through the stages of 'Uboodiyyah (total enslavement to Allah). You could do this when you are lying on your bed or walking in the street.

15. In one minute, you can read more than two pages of a useful book that is easy to understand.

16. In one minute, you can uphold the ties of kinship by calling a relative on the phone.

17. You can raise your hands and recite any Du'a you wish in one minute.

18. You can say Salaams and shake hands with a number of people in one minute.

19. You can forbid an evil action in one minute.

20. You can enjoin something good in one minute.

21. You can offer sincere advice to a Muslim brother or sister in one minute.

22. You can console someone who is depressed in one minute.

23. You can remove something harmful from the road in one minute.

24. Making the most of one minute motivates you to make the most of other periods that would otherwise be wasted.

Al-Shaaf'i (ra) said: "When people go to sleep, I let my tears flow, and I recite a verse of the most eloquent poetry. Is it not a waste that nights go by and I do not increase in knowledge, yet this time is counted as part of my life?"

Finally, the more sincere you are towards Allah (swt) and the more aware you are of Him, the greater will be your reward and the more your Hasanaat will increase.

Note that most of these actions will not cost you anything; they do not require Tahaarah (purity) and they will not tire you out or take much effort. On the contrary, you can do them whilst you are walking, or in your car, or lying down, or standing, or sitting, or waiting for somebody.

These actions are also among the greatest means of attaining happiness, expanding the chest (i.e., bringing relief and joy), and removing stress and anxiety. May Allah (swt) help us to do that which He loves and which pleases Him. May Allah (swt) bless our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Reproduced from Abuz-Zubair Al-'Azzami's Home Page (http://www.abuzubair.com/)

From the Qur'an

"Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]? Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding."

Qur'an (39:9)

From the Hadith

Abu Musa (ra) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "The example of guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil that absorbed rainwater and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. [And] another portion of it was hard and held the rainwater and Allah benefited the people with it and they utilised it for drinking, making their animals drink from it, and for irrigation of the land for cultivation. [And] a portion of it was barren which could neither hold the water nor bring forth vegetation (then that land gave no benefits). The first is the example of the person who comprehends Allah's religion and gets benefit [from the knowledge] that Allah has revealed through me (the Prophets) and learns and then teaches others. The last example is that of a person who does not care for it and does not take Allah's guidance revealed through me (he is like that barren land)."

Al-Bukhari (1:79)

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The Ambition

7224 Harwick Drive
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Tel & Fax: (905) 673-2181
editors@theambition.com
www.theambition.com

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Publisher
Asma Warsi

Editors
Asma Warsi
Muhammad Basil Ahmad

Department Editors
Aneesa Lakhi
Ayub A. Hamid
Farheen Zehra

Co-ordinator & Staff Reporter
Sister Wilma

Webmaster
Muhammad Basil Ahmad

Committee Members
Amina Bhimla
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This Journal is dedicated to:
Professor Syed Aley Ahmad Abdi, Former Principal, Government Education College, Multan, Pakistan

Let Us Talk and Discuss

by Sayed Murtaza Kazim
(Part I of a two part series)

Home sweet home! There is no place as comforting, relaxing, and relief providing as the home is. Whenever we suffer from any illness, disease, or pain, we are healed with the comfort of our home. When we are tired, we are relaxed at home. When we are perturbed, we feel relief at home. Other members of family provide the needed comfort, relaxation, and relief.

Our children learn to take actions, sort out decisions, and arrive at practical solutions, when they grow with us, their hard-working parents. The satisfaction of each child is important. Therefore, home develops as a healthy cooperative unit. Home discussions, thus, stay within home. Sensible and discerning family members do not involve and reveal their concerns to outsiders. It is obvious to discuss and solve problems, as soon as they emerge. Simultaneously, we, as members of the family, love, respect, and encourage each other too deep to disagree. Whenever we disagree, we care to agree, and reconcile with excellence. Positive attitude is the very core. It furnishes solution for every problem, as generally there is a medicine for every illness. Therefore, each family member should supplement his or her effort to solve others' problems.

The **first step** is effective and efficient domestic communication. It is very important to express, what we feel within. Primarily we, the parents, should always pray together so that our children understand and pray with us. Secondly we, the parents, should understand, learn, practice, and follow the spiritual, social, and ethical covenant and, then, our children should ensue the same in the home. We should always thank Him for all the benedictions He has provided to us.

We, as parents, should explain our views to one another without any hitch. Mother is the foremost important person and the central figure. After marriage, she dreams for children. The ideal children! Her lap is the first school. There is an insurmountable safety and peace under her arms. Children find refuge by entering into her very heart. She seeks solutions to their emerging problems. She resolves their suspicions and fears. She provides protection, peace, and amity to them. She is the leading instructor, comrade, and guide. She builds up their confidence. She aids to pave the straight path towards their destinations. Although father does share with the mother in the domestic affairs, there is none equal to the mother!

Let us include our children in the interchange of our ideas. We should very carefully comprehend the problems of each child. Each child should express what he or she feels about his or her problem, and how he or she aspires to solve that problem. Each child should also suggest as to how a prevailing domestic problem can be solved. Sometimes even the youngest kid can suggest the best solution. By sharing our discussions, we seek the ways and means to solve our problems. Let every one, through his or her genuine awareness, express what he or she very fairly feels within himself or herself to better understand others in home. Even hot and delicate issues are discussed politely and courteously. Let us be honest, sincere, and tolerant to seek positive guidance. We should stay focused and maintain the domestic decorum and prestige. It enables us to plan our strategies, make best decisions, and take our actions in the future course of our lives in an amicable manner.

Married life is a responsible challenge. Parent should raise children as the responsible citizens of tomorrow. The parents should meet this challenge by working hard right from the very first day of marriage. A clean, simple, and purposeful communication with the touches of smiles and mannered jokes is a substantial domestic process. This is the right way we can transfer our knowledge to our loved-and-concerned children.

The **second step** is to let us first and, then, our children, very fairly understand the proprietary concept. We should comprehend this concept in its broad and inferring sense. The human physique is blessed unto us by Allah. This is His trust, His *amanat*, bestowed unto us. As the custodian, one should maintain the purity and the integrity of the body. This trust, sanctity, and purity should not be injured in any way. When we will retain our bodies duly sanctified, our spirits will then be, by the grace of Allah, sacred. The more immaculate the human spirit, the healthier the human mind is. Haram eating, Haram drinking, and Haram physical contact are detrimental and depleting to the sanctity of the human body; they are sins. "To maintain the personal distance" is one of our most vital, ethical duties we should adhere to, and that we should teach our children. Even for husband and wife, there is a code! After *nikah*, it is their God-given, personal, private, and confidential joint venture. No one is authorized to intervene in this sacred joint venture of the married ones! Open and exhibiting espousal contact is a taboo, a sin, and is not allowed. Wearing a dress or using makeup, which otherwise lures anyone, is too, a taboo — a sin! It's as simple as that!

We should eat Halal food and drink Halal beverages in and outside our home to maintain our appropriate diet and health. The human body should be preserved as *tahir*, i.e., duly sanctified. Therefore, we will be safe on the Last Day. The Glorious Qur'an explicitly explains such norms.

The **third step** is to earn money by proficiently transferring our talents and labour to employers or by honestly managing our businesses. We should take care of our hard earned money, i.e., Rizq-e-Halal. We should not spend all earned money. We must save a feasible part of our income for future targets, e.g., buying a house, establishing or strengthening a family business, marriage of a grown child, helping a needy relative, a community family, or an individual in or abroad. It helps grow our humane family healthier, happier, and stronger. In addition, parents should expertly manage the available and prevailing better amenities. We should take advantage of the advancement in information technology. The connotation of contentment is broader, i.e., to live within our means but to work harder for the betterment of our domestic and social life. It is, then, high time for our children to manage their plans.

The **fourth step** is to let us and our children manage our time. Let us and our children pray five times a day together. Children, yet they are very young, learn discipline by daily practicing of Salat. They learn to accomplish their school and home tasks daily. It enables them to understand and follow the home-mission statement. They then focus for the betterment of their future. They also learn to help parents, brothers, and sisters as a routine. Our children and we should read and understand the Glorious Qur'an at least fifteen to thirty minutes daily. If our mother tongue is not Arabic, we should read its translation and understand its verdicts. By praying Salat and reading Qur'an daily, we practically learn to manage our time. By reading and understanding the Qur'an, we visualize the fear of Omnipotent Allah. We then feel nearer Allah. Therefore, our children and we will successfully march ahead on the straight path, understanding *khair* and *sharr*. Before entering into puberty, our children will learn to differentiate between right and wrong.

The **fifth step** is to avoid competitive trends and conflicts. We, as practically oriented parents, should not borrow ideas from the families that we socialise with. We should not negatively indulge and conflict with others. We have our norms, values, and principles, as prescribed by the Qur'an. So, we *en masse* are ever guided! We should have our own innovation and routine. We should have our own home mission-statement, e.g., "We, the family members, will work diligently, deploy our available resources intelligently, and, by the Grace of Allah, achieve our objectives."

We should have our own techniques and devices to convert our ideas, feelings, and innovation into our expected objectives. We should have our own tastes. We should train our children on the sound foundations of spiritual happiness, dignity of education, and quality of life. Our children should have etiquette, be confident, and cooperating. Our home mission-statement should be founded on the bases of peaceful thinking and continuous progress. We should identify our beliefs, values, and culture to our children in these very lands in which we have been living. We, with a strong faith in Allah, will then move forward. We should leave to Him everything and do our best. It will enable us to maintain and keep up our values, culture, and beliefs intact, as they were saved by our ancestors and we will have a success here and in the Hereafter.

"The Merchant of Venice" Altered After Protests from Muslims

The Stratford Festival, a renowned Canadian institution of theatre, has agreed to alter two scenes in its current production of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice" deemed offensive by Muslims. The festival also agreed to distribute educational information about Islam and Muslims to audiences.

The changes were made after the Canadian office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN) formally challenged the appropriateness of the scenes. CAIR-CAN was alerted to the offensive scenes following a May 29th review by *The Globe and Mail*'s theatre critic Kate Taylor, who criticized the play's director, Richard Monette, writing: "Apparently, [the play's director] inhabits some cultural bubble where anti Semitic jokes have been banished but anti-Islamic ones are still hilarious."

Festival organizers immediately arranged for CAIR-CAN Executive Director Riad Saloojee to see the production, followed by a meeting with the play's artistic director and festival management. CAIR-CAN requested the removal of two scenes offensive to Muslims.

Anita Gaffney, director of marketing and sales at the Stratford, informed CAIR-CAN that the two prostration scenes were removed within days of receiving the request.

We are thankful to both Kate Taylor and the Stratford Festival.

Muslim Community Organisations Asked to Participate in CAIR Research Project

Dr. Mohamed Nimer, Director of Research at Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), is working on a book that will contain useful information about the Muslim community in the United States and Canada. CAIR is asking community organisations to assist with this important work by providing basic information to be included in the book.

If you belong to a centre, school, or another organisation, and have not received a mailing from CAIR regarding this inquiry, or have not responded to it, please fill out the online form to help in this project: http://www.cair-net.org/forms/organizations.asp

Thank you for participating in this worthy effort.

Cloning Is Not Creating New Life

by Dr. Munir El-Kassem

Read the full article with diagrams at http://www.londonmuslims.com/columnists/clone.htm

Take no offence, Please!

A language instructor was explaining to her class that French nouns, unlike their English counterparts, are grammatically designated as masculine or feminine. Things like "chalk" or "pencil," she described, would have a gender association. For example: House is feminine— "la" maison. In English, of course, words are of neutral gender.

Puzzled, one student raised his hand and asked, "What gender is a computer?"

The teacher wasn't certain which it was, and so divided the class into two groups and asked them to decide if a computer should be masculine or feminine. One group was comprised of the women in the class, and the other of men. Both groups were asked to give four reasons for their recommendations.

The men decided that computers should definitely be referred to in the feminine gender (la) because:

1. No one but their creator understands their internal logic.
2. The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.
3. Even the smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval.
4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your pay check on accessories for it.

The group of women, however, concluded that computers should be referred to in the masculine (le) gender because:

1. In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on.
2. They have a lot of data but are still clueless.
3. They are supposed to help you solve your problems, but half the time they ARE the problem.
4. As soon as you commit to one, you realize that, if you had waited a little longer, you could have had a better model.

(From the InterNet.)

The Table in the Corner

Once there was a feeble old woman whose husband died and left her all alone, so she went to live with her son and his wife and their own little daughter.

Every day, the old woman's sight dimmed and her hearing grew worse, and sometimes at dinner, her hands trembled so badly that the peas rolled off her spoon or the soup ran from her cup. The son and his wife could not help but be annoyed at the way she spilled her meal all over the table.

One day, after she knocked over a glass of milk, they told each other that enough is enough. They set up a small table for her in the corner, next to the broom closet, and made the old woman eat her meals there. She sat all alone, looking with tear-filled eyes across the room at the others.

Sometimes they spoke to her while they ate, but usually it was to scold her for dropping a bowl or a fork.

One evening, just before dinner, the little girl was busy playing on the floor with her building blocks, and her father asked her what she was making.

"I'm building a little table for you and mother," she smiled, "so you can eat by yourselves in the corner someday when I get big."

Her parents sat staring at her for some time and then suddenly both began to cry. That night they led the old woman back to her place at the big table.

From then on, she ate with the rest of the family, and her son and his wife never seemed to mind a bit when she spilled something every now and then.

All articles in **The Ambition** *are well researched.*

Being human, we may overlook something.

If this happens, please call us and correct our mistakes.

STATION	DAY	TIME	TELEVISION PROGRAM
60 VTV	Mon	2:00 a.m.	Reflections On Islam
18 WNED	Mon	5:00 p.m.	Religion & Ethics Newsweekly
2 TVO	Fri	11:00 p.m.	Diplomatic Immunity
60 VTV	Sat	7:00 a.m.	Reflections On Islam
4 CFMT	Sat	11:00 a.m.	South Asian Newsweek
60 VTV	Sat	1:00 p.m.	Muslim Chronicle
9 CTS	Sat	3:00 p.m.	Islam Today
9 CTS	Sat	8:00 p.m.	Faith Journal
9 CTS	Sat	9:30 p.m.	Muslim Faith
9 CTS	Sat	10:00 p.m.	Muslim Chronicle
9 CTS	Sun	7:00 a.m.	Faith Journal
60 VTV	Sun	11:00 a.m.	Reflections On Islam
2 TVO	Sun	3:30 p.m.	Diplomatic Immunity
4 CFMT	Sun	7:30 p.m.	South Asian Newsweek
2 TVO	Sun	10:00 p.m.	Diplomatic Immunity

Ever wonder why . . .

A nun can be covered from head to toe and she's respected for devoting herself to God, but when a Muslim woman does that, she's "oppressed"?

A Jew can grow a beard and he's just practicing his faith, but when a Muslim does that, he's an extremist?

When a Western woman stays at home to look after the house and kids, she's sacrificing herself and doing good for the household, but when a Muslim woman does so, she "needs to be liberated"?

When a child dedicates himself to a subject, he has potential, but when a child dedicates himself to Islam, he is hopeless?

When a Christian kills someone, religion is not mentioned (e.g., IRA), but when a Muslim is charged with a crime, it's Islam that goes on trial?

But then again, why is it after all that, Islam is still the fastest growing religion in the world?

RadioIslam Update

RadioIslam has been on the air for the last six months and has decided to switch to radio station AM 530, which reaches the entire Greater Toronto Area. (Markham and Scarborough were not being reached previously.)

Schedule: **Tuesdays from 9-10 p.m. on AM 530**

July 3 - Reflections on his journey to South Africa (Imam Abdul Hai Patel)

July 10 - Islam vs. Culture (Shaikh Yusuf Badat)

July 17 - Internet and the Media (Dawud Wharnsby-Ali)

July 24 - SAMI Fund: Canada's Halal RRSP Mutual Fund (Asif Khan, VP, StrategicNova)

July 31 - Rights of Wives and Husbands (Shaikh Zakariya) - tentative

For more information, visit www.radioislam.ca

Dr. Farhat Hashmi in Toronto

Insha-Allah, Dr. Farhat Hashmi and her husband, Dr. Muhammad Zubair, will be on a speaking tour in Mississauga in the early part of August.

Dr. Hashmi holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Studies with specialization in Hadith Sciences and an M.A. in Arabic Language. She is a renowned lecturer with Al-Huda International School (www.alhudapk.com), based in Karachi, Pakistan. Dr. Zubair is also well educated in Islamic studies and Hadith.

They will be giving lectures and seminars in both Urdu and English on Islamic topics to both the brothers and sisters of the community at various Islamic centres, mosques, and schools.

Shalimar International Housing Corporation, the Federation of Muslim Women (www.fmw.org) and the Islamic Society of York Region will be organizing three one-hour sessions followed by Question and Answer periods on weekends at different locations. Weekday afternoon and evening sessions can be arranged upon request, Insha-Allah.

For further information, please contact Sr. Mubeen Qureshi in Peel Region at (905) 890-4595 or Br. Zafar Bangash in Toronto and vicinity at (905) 474-9292.

The Peacemakers

by Umm Mahmood

Despite the hostility and the existence of stereotypes towards the Muslims, the reasons for the rapid spread of Islam are due to the simplicity of its doctrine and the peaceful way in which Muslims worship Allah (swt).

Islam is not a religion of "terror" nor of "hate" but an ideology of peace and all-embracing way of life. One of the beautiful names of Allah (swt) is As-Salam (Allah is the Peace).

Abu Yusuf Abdullah ibn Salam (ra) heard the Prophet (pbuh) say: "O people! Spread the Salaam (greetings), feed (the poor and needy), behave kindly to your blood relations, offer prayer when others are asleep, and (thus) enter Paradise in Peace" (Tirmidhi #849).

Assalaamu 'Alaykum wa-Rahmatullahi wa-Barakatuh.

May the Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon you.

Did you greet your husband or wife with the "Salaam" today? Have we been training and informing our children about the importance of salutation? Shall we accept a "Hi" in place of "Assalaamu Alaykum"? For some of us, this may seem to be a minor issue. Are we forgetting that this was the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)? We have to realise that practice makes if not perfect, at least better and a practice that we shall carry on for the rest of our lives.

One other issue that seems to be so obvious these days is that even while giving the Salaam, some of us are stingy doing so. For some trivial reason, Muslims feel that some are not deserving of any sort of greeting at all.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was asked to convey the Salaam (peace) of Allah to the Believers: "When those who have believed Our Revelations come to you , say to them, Salaam (Peace be upon you): Your Lord has prescribed for Himself (the rule of) mercy and compassion" (Qur'an 6:54).

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was a peaceful person and was never inclined to war except when forced by the enemies. Allah (swt) said: "O Prophet, if the enemies incline to peace, you should also incline to peace and put your trust in Allah. Indeed, He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. If they intend to deceive you, Allah is sufficient for you. It is He Who strengthened you with His Help, and by means of the Believers" (Qur'an 8:61-62).

"If the enemies surrender and seek refuge, you should not fight against them. Therefore, if they leave you alone and desist from fighting against you and make overtures for

Continued on page 7

The Adventures of Mosquito

Continued from page 1

ter. Now, the underwater days start for the baby mosquitoes.

The continuously fed larvae grow with great speed. Soon the skin covering their body gets too small to let them grow any further. This is the time for their first skin change. The hard and brittle skin gets easily broken. Until this developmental cycle is completed as a whole, the mosquito larvae will change its skin two more times.

Since the life of the mosquito starts in water, the system designed for feeding the larvae is rather impressive. The larva empowers whirlpools in the water with its feathered prolongations located at the two sides of its mouth, which lead bacteria and other microorganisms for feeding. A solution also exists for its respiration: Each larva has innate diving equipment. They breathe via respiratory tubes at their back while standing upside down in water. This system resembles "snorkels" used by divers. During the employment of this method, the larvae secrete a sticky secretion from their body in order to prevent water from leaking inside, through the respiratory openings. Shortly, the animal lives with the help of the combined harmony of all these delicate balances. If it did not have a respiratory tube, it would not survive; if it did not have a sticky secretion, its respiratory tube would be choked. As time goes by, most of the larvae change their skin once more. The last skin change is rather different from the others. With this last change, larvae pass onto the final phase of their maturation, the "pupa phase," and they are ready to become a real mosquito at the end. Therefore, the time has come for the mature pupa to get out of the sheath covering its body.

However, the creature that gets out of the sheath is so different from the earlier phases, that it seems unbelievable for there to be just two developmental phases of the same being. In addition, this metamorphoses is too complicated and delicate to be designed neither by the larva itself, nor by its mother, or any other thing.

During this last transition period, there is a threat to the creature, since the respiratory openings above the water may close with the leaking of water inside. This will naturally mean that the pupa will be out of breath and die. Nevertheless, from then on, respiration will not be done via these holes. There emerge two new air tubes on the head of the pupa. Therefore, before the pupa gets ready for the last skin change, firstly these two tubes rise out of the water. This will be its new method for respiration. During the three or four days of the pupa phase, there will be no nutrition for the coming mosquito.

Now, the mosquito within the pupa cocoon is mature enough and ready to fly with all its organs and organelles such as antennae, trunks, feet, chest, wings, abdomen, and large eyes covering most parts of its head. Then, the pupa cocoon is torn at the top. This stage, where a complete mosquito will emerge, is the most dangerous stage of all. The greatest risk is water leakage into the cocoon. However, the torn top is covered with a sticky liquid preventing the head from contacting water.

The mosquito must get out of water without having any direct contact with water, so only its feet touch the water surface. This instant is extremely important; even a light wind may cause its death. Finally, the mosquito leaves for its first flight after a rest of about half an hour.

It should be noted once again: The animal has gotten itself out of water without even touching the water! At this point, the question that should come to mind is, how has the first mosquito attained such an ability? Might it be that a larva has decided to transform into a mosquito after changing skin three times? Absolutely, these are impossible. This tiny animal, which Allah gives as an example, has specifically been created as it is. This leads Muslims to ponder on the creation of Allah and think that Allah has not created all these for nothing: These creatures fear Allah and act totally to comply by His Will.

As Muslims, we should be among those "who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the Earth, [saying], 'Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire'" (Qur'an 3:191).

ISNA-Canada Conference 2001

by Farah Ali

Islam: The Moderate Path was the theme of the 27th ISNA-Canada Conference from May 19–20, 2001. The aim of the conference was to bring Muslims in Canada together with leaders and scholars to look at ways of establishing moderation, balance, harmony, and ease, both in one's life and at the community level.

Muslim adults, youth, and children gathered at the Toronto Congress Centre in Mississauga to attend the two-day program, which included a number of plenary sessions side-by-side with workshop meetings. Baby-sitting facilities were available with a separate children's program. During prayer times people poured into the large area available for Salat.

There were ISNA, MSA, and MYNA seminars available. Seminars began at 10:00 a.m. and finished in time for 'Isha Salat. One had to be selective in what he or she attended and this was not easy when both plenary and workshop sessions appeared to be interesting. My highlights are therefore just an attempt to touch on some of the sessions that I attended.

The panel of speakers was impressive and the conference was well attended. Speakers included Tariq Ramadan, Muzammil Siddiqui, Ahmad Totonji, Imam Siraj Wahhaj, Imam Ahmad Kutty, 'Abdalla Idris Ali, Altaf Hussain, and 'Abd el-Rasheed Brown.

The topics covered centred on the theme of the conference and dealt with the challenges facing Muslims in the West, particularly in North America. Some topics were: Living a balanced life, Religion and politics in Canada, Politics and extremism, Muslims and the Internet, Jihad and sincere repentance, Getting close to Allah, Who the Ideal Muslim, Islamic medical ethics, and how to promote Islam.

General observations coming out of the discussions are: We should not consider ourselves as Muslims from a specific country (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Egyptian, etc.), but simply as Muslims. We should not see ourselves as Muslims against the rest of society, but rather Muslims living within the community.

We must learn the English language well because we need to present the Islamic message in the best way. Muslims also have to be good examples to their neighbours and society so that others can see that Islam is a better way of life.

The five daily prayers are among the main things that will bring us closer to Allah. We also need to go back to the Ulema (scholars) for Islamic teachings.

Imams should always remember that the *khutbah* (sermon) is not only restricted to the congregation in Mosques, but also to others outside, such as the authorities. This could be a problem when they have to meet with these very people to discuss the affairs of the Muslims and they have spoken ill of them in their *khutbah*.

On medical ethics, we may take loved ones off life-support, providing there is no foreseeable cure and our money can then be used for research to help find a cure for others. Artificial insemination may be allowed only if it is within the boundaries of marriage. Muslims may donate organs on the following conditions: The deceased is not mutilated, explicit approval from the donor or close relative is acquired and they know that the organ would improve the life of the recipient. On cloning, the scholars are still in the process of gathering all the facts.

Some sessions drew larger crowds than others. Overall, the conference was well organized, in my opinion. Insha-Allah, in the future, given the relevance of such conferences to the Muslim community, more emphasis should be placed on publicizing, at both the Mosques and Islamic organizations.

[Farah Ali is currently pursuing an M.A. degree in Journalism.]

Peacemakers

Continued from page 6

peace to you, in that case Allah has left you no cause for aggression against them" (Qur'an 9:9).

"Likewise, if any from the enemies camp come to you for refuge, you should not kill them but offer them peace. If any of the unbelievers asked you for protection, give him protection until he hears the Word of Allah, then convey him to a place of safety; this should be done because these people do not know the Truth" (Qur'an 9:6).

"And make not Allah's (name) an excuse in your oaths against doing good or acting rightly or making peace between persons; for Allah is one who heareth and knoweth all things" (Qur'an 2 :224).

What has war brought this life but painful memories of hatred and blood bath that has been passed on from generation to generation? It seems to me the more bodies each party bags, the arrogant one claims victory with no sense of remorse that another human being is killed whether one is Muslim or not. When everyone is at war, there is no victory except for the Shaytan, whom we have made hero. We are not animals, but human beings with compassion.

When Muslims fight (whether verbally or physically) other Muslims, do we just sit back and watch or should we say something? Why do we fight? Perhaps we lied about another Muslim, slandered, talked idly, were jealous or gossiped, all but which are caused by misusing our tongues. Unfortunately, instead of putting out the fire, some of us help build the fire.

"And if two groups of Believers fall to fighting then, make peace between them" (Qur'an 49:9).

Abu Huraira (ra) narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "There is sadaqa to be given for every joint of the human body and for every day the sun rises, there is a reward of sadaqa for the one who establishes peace among people."

How about when families fight? Husband and wife? In-laws? Our children? Siblings? Families come in all shapes and sizes and the most intense of all human interactions. We can enumerate the lists of atrocities but when conflict arises, usually a person's only tool is a hammer and to see every problem as a nail. A couple with marital difficulties who visit a lawyer end up on the path of divorce. Arguing with our in-laws only leaves them heartbroken because we have disrespected them. Screaming and yelling at our children will only bring misleading signals that their parents do not love them any longer. Perhaps the jealousy among the siblings is the result of our unfair judgement of each of them.

Umm Khulthum bint Uqba narrated that she heard the Prophet (pbuh) saying: "He who makes peace between the people by inventing good information or saying good things, is not a liar."

In view of all of this, when we work at reconciliation between people in conflict, we are also working to bring them closer to Allah (swt). We are Muslims. Together, we are THE PEACEMAKERS.

E-mail: QSNetGroup@qsnetgroup.org
Website: http://www.qsnetgroup.org/

Newsroom

Ottawa police misuses power in praying hall

From CIC Bulletin

The Canadian Islamic Congress today called for full investigation of how Ottawa police raided a small praying hall in Ottawa last on June 13. ”Not respecting a place of worship, mishandling a holy book, intimidating young people, using foul language and abusive behavior are all unacceptable,” said Prof. Mohamed Elmasry, national president of the Canadian Islamic Congress.

”We are seeking legal advice of what steps we should take against the Ottawa police,” said Mumtaz Akhter, Chair of the Ottawa Muslim organization which is following up the incident.

According to eyewitness account, at about 11 pm on Wednesday June 13, 2001 a SWAT team from the Ottawa police entered a small praying room (Musalla) at an apartment building on Clarence Avenue in Ottawa.

”They ordered us to line up, hands up, and searched us one after another. When I asked them to take off their shoes they refused,” said one of the young people who were interrogated. “The Qur’an was thrown out and one of them called someone on the phone saying that there are a lot of literature here needed translation. They have shown no respect for an Islamic place of worship. I wonder if they would do that inside a church or a synagogue?”

CAIR Offers Fall 2001 Internship Program

CAIR is now accepting applications for its fall 2001 internship program. The program is designed to help Muslims gain skills in public relations, media relations, research and development, public outreach, government relations, and in defending civil and legal rights. All interns will receive a monthly stipend.

Obtain application forms by e-mailing Sr. Nancy Hanaan Serag at nserag@cair-net.org.

Montréal Imam Criticises Media Attack on Taliban

by Yahya Abdul Rahman

MONTRÉAL (25/5/2001) — In his Friday sermon today, Imam Syed Bukhari, of the Islamic Centre of Québec in Montréal, defended the recent Taliban actions of distinguishing Hindus with special markers.

The learned Imam, a graduate of Madinah University of Saudi Arabia who is fluent in Arabic, English, Urdu, and Punjabi, made the point that the Western media is biased when reporting about what is taking place in Afghanistan, and Muslims need to set the record straight.

He pointed out that the purpose of the Taliban’s recent decision towards Hindus was not to discriminate against them, but to the contrary — the Taliban wants to protect the religious minorities within its domain.

Imam Bukhari pointed out that the Taliban has said the reason for having Hindus wear the distinctive yellow cloth was to protect them from religious police who enforce Islamic law on Muslims and daily remind Muslims of their duties to pray and perform other Islamic duties.

“They do not want to harm the Hindus in any way or force Islam upon them, thus the distinctive mark,” the Imam pointed out.

The Western press has portrayed the Taliban’s decision as being a Nazi-like action where the Hindus will be rounded up somewhere in the future and slaughtered.

In defending the Taliban’s decision, Mohammed Suhail Shaheen, deputy head of the Afghan Embassy in Pakistan, recently stated: “This is not any kind of discrimination. They (the Hindus) can carry out their rituals as before . . . They will enjoy full rights.”

“Muslims must take the time to educate themselves, their children, and their neighbours of what is really taking place,” said Imam Bukhari in his sermon. He argued that this is necessary in order to counter the disinformation campaign that is currently taking place against the Taliban.

One man’s mission to alleviate the suffering of children

By Faisal Kutty

As millions celebrated Canada Day on July 1st, a young Canadian, Alen Okanovic, started out on his 8,688 kilometre long bike ride to bring awareness to the plight of children in Chechnya, Iraq and Palestine. In the process he hopes to raise at least $250,000 for Human Concern International projects in these devastated areas.

The three and a half month-long journey will take him from St. John’s, Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia. Along the way, he hopes to participate in fund-raising and awareness raising events organized by the local communities. He is expected to arrive in Toronto on July 28th and is scheduled to attend fundraisers on that day at the Bosnian Islamic Association (contact Imam Tayib Pasabegovic at 416-233-5967) and the Islamic Foundation of Toronto. Dr. Muneer El-Kasem from Waterloo will be the keynote speaker at the Islamic Foundation fundraising dinner.

Okanovic will attend a barbeque at Richard Memorial Park in Mississauga on July 29th organized by the Jerusalem Fund for Human Services. He will then participate in receptions at Masjid Al-Noor on July 29th and the Turkish Islamic Center on July 31st before heading out to Hamilton.

The 27-year-old Bosnian spoke with the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs from Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, during a well-deserved break after cycling 151 kilometres on his third day on the road.

In 1994, Okanovic and his sister were among hundreds of refugees who fled the ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia. His wife had the misfortune of losing her father and an uncle in 1992 when she was a child in Bosnia. “They were taken by Serbian soldiers, and were later found dead,” says Okanovic. “War is particularly cruel on children.” ”I was too young to do anything to help during the war in Bosnia which claimed the lives of 250,000, including 6,000 children,” says the Calgary, Alberta resident. “I am lucky I escaped. Now that I’m living in Canada I have the opportunity to help others,” says the native of Bihac in Northwest Bosnia. This is what keeps him going as he struggles along the rugged uphill terrain and against the wind, in many cases, for upto eight hours a day. Okanovic says the response from the media has been good so far. Radio stations in Saskatoon and Montreal have interviewed him. “I hope the media will pay more attention as the tour continues,” he says. The reaction from the general public appears to be encouraging as well. Okanovic says that people respond favorable when they see the promotional writing on the van accompanying him — Second Cross Canada Cylce for the Children of Chechnya, Iraq and Palestine. “People walk up and offer encouragement and money when they realize what the cause is - most people can identify with children,” says Okanovic.

The tour is sponsored by Human Concern International (HCI), a federally registered charitable organization. This is the second cross Canada cycle tour organized by HCI. In June 1995, then 28-year-old Alberta native Housam Kabalan, cycled across Canada covering St. John’s, Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia, to raise funds for the children of Sarajevo. Wael Zahad accompanied the former Alberta Karate champ. It was a very successful fundraising effort for the innocent children of Bosnia (See Washington Report, October/November 1995, pgs. 73-74).

Okanovic, currently a Bow Valley College student, says he decided to go on this one-man mission after learning of the success of the First Cross Canada Cycle through which the children of Bosnia were greatly helped.

Since 1980 HCI has contributed over 20 million dollars towards long-term development projects and in the form of direct relief assistance to poor and war-torn countries. HCI has also been providing assistance to Chechen refugees and the people of Iraq and Palestine. ”Recent wars have exploited, maimed and killed more children, more callously and more systematically than ever before,” says HCI Executive Director, Kaleem Akhtar. “HCI applauds Alen’s determination and willingness to put his life and family on hold for more than three months and to push past pain and exhaustion to achieve his goal.” Accompanying Okanovic on this grueling journey is 20 year-old Zenel Gashi, a former refugee from Kosovo. Gashi will be following Okanovic’s tracks in a van as he makes his way across the country.
For more information please contact Hala Adam, Program Co-ordinator, Human Concern International: (613) 742 5948, Toll Free: 1 800 587-6424, Fax: (613) 742 7733, Email: info@humanconcern.org, or visit http://www.humanconcern.org

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Please tell your friends so that their questions about Islam may be answered.

CIMS website: www.islamicmessage.net

CAIR hosts Chechen presidential envoy

A special envoy of Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov yesterday met with CAIR representatives in Washington, D.C., to brief them on the current political situation in that nation.

Envoy Oumar Sougaipov explained that more than 100,000 people have been killed since Russia invaded Chechnya in the fall of 1999. He also made note of the horrible human rights abuses, including rape and torture of civilians, carried out by Russian occupation troops. Sougaipov asked for support from the American Muslim community in the struggle for Chechen independence.

"American Muslims will do whatever they can to let policy-makers know about the terrible suffering of innocent civilians in Chechnya and to demand that the issue not be ignored," said CAIR Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper.

Lyoma Usmanov, Representative to the United States for the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, also took part in Wednesday’s meeting.

Sarwar wins a second term in Britain

Rreported by Tarek Fatah

In the hullabaloo about the recent British elections, a significant news item escaped most of us. The first ever Muslim elected to the British House of Commons got re-elected with a thumping majority and a 5% increase in his vote over 1996.

Mohammed Sarwar’s election in 1996 was marred by allegations by fellow Muslims that he had bribed them.

Muhammad Sarwar was charged and lost almost three years of his career as MP defending his name. The Labour Party suspended him pending the outcome of the court proceedings. He was subsequently cleared by the courts of all charges against him, allowing him to resume his role as MP for Glasgow-Govan in Scotland.

Mohammed Sarwar overcame many obstacles and won a resounding victory. He remains the only Muslim MP in the British House of Commons.

Although the constituency has the highest proportion of ethnic minorities of all the Glasgow seats, it is a predominantly White electorate. Indeed, the old Govan, and especially its shipyards, were regarded as a stronghold of working-class Protestantism in Glasgow.

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*Please help J. Iqbal, a legal Canadian entrant on a **Mininster's permit** who became paraplegic in a car accident. By the Grace of God he survived after long hospitalization. The insurance company has exhaused all the specified fund on his treatment.*

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Javed Iqbal
900 Dufferin St., P.O. Box 24147
Toronto, Ont. Canada M6H 4H6

*You may send it **directly** to his bank account no. 3140340, transit no. 16042-004, TD Bank, 948 St. Clair Ave. W., Toronto, Ont. M6C 1C8*

ISSA Conference Draws Educators, Practitioners, and Students

by Altaf Husain

The Islamic Social Services Association of the USA and Canada (ISSA) held its second annual conference at the University of Phoenix in Troy, Michigan from June 8–10, 2001. This year's conference was entitled, "Counselling Muslims: Education, Prevention, and Intervention." The nearly 100 registrants emerged with a tremendous boost to their own confidence and a sense of hope that they are not facing the difficulties of counselling Muslims alone. At the Saturday evening banquet, ISSA President Aneesah Nadir commented that she eagerly awaits the chance to meet and network with other Muslims working to uplift the overall quality of life in our communities. "With only a few people doing this kind of work in each community, it gets kind of lonely," commented Nadir.

As a grassroots organisation, ISSA was blessed with conference sponsorship from both the private and public sectors. Among the private sponsors were the University of Phoenix (Troy Learning Centre) and the St. John Detroit Riverview Hospital. In addition, three Muslim communities and one Islamic organisation also extended financial and in-kind support. They are, the Manitoba Islamic Association (MIA), Muslim Community of Western Suburbs (Canton), the Islamic Association of Greater Detroit (IAGD), and the Canadian office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN). IAGD hosted a public lecture of the community and participants, featuring a talk by Br. 'Abdalla Idris Ali on the manners of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Among its many goals, ISSA is striving to strengthen the partnerships between Imams and Muslim professionals in the field of social services. Although the conference did not begin officially until late Friday afternoon, participants were delighted to hear a powerful *khutbah* (sermon) delivered by Imam Sharif A. Muhammad, the Coordinator for Islamic Health Services at St. Johns Hospital in Detroit, Michigan.

In addition, conference participants were delighted to listen to Br. 'Abdalla Idris Ali, who despite his hectic schedule, made two presentations on Friday. After brief opening remarks from ISSA Executive Director, Sr. Shahina Siddiqui, Br. 'Abdalla Idris made an informative and motivational speech entitled, "Prophet Muhammad: Our Model for Social Work and Counselling." Participants marvelled at the detailed presentation and it was obvious that Br. 'Abdalla had done thorough research on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in preparing for the presentation.

Imam Ali Sulaiman Ali of Detroit, Michigan, made a powerful presentation on marital problems in the Muslim community, and Imam Achmat Salih, of Troy, Michigan, presented on a panel on domestic violence with Sr. Bonita McGee of Columbus, Ohio. At the banquet, Imam Abdus Salam El-Minyawe, President of the Montréal Council of Masajid and Islamic Centres, noted that he was extremely pleased that ISSA had placed such great emphasis on partnering practitioners with Imams in the program.

The weekend was packed with nineteen parallel presentations covering a variety of topics and presenters. The program committee was keen on addressing issues ranging from early childhood to later adulthood. Ahson Sheikh traveled from Stanford University to present an intense lecture on "An Introduction to Early Brain Development: Attachment Theory and its Implication for Islamic Counselling." Sr. Shaema Imam, a graduate student at the University of Montréal, spoke on "Supporting Our Muslim Elders: Towards an Islamic Model of Social Work Intervention." There were also sessions sparking intense discussions on topics such as "Biases of Euro-American Counselling: An Islamic Review" (Mona Amer) and "Homosexuality and the Role of a Clinician" (Dr. Basheer Ahmed and Br. Jeewan Chanicka).

Several ISSA Board members also made presentations on topics such as "Palliative Care and Grief Counselling: The Muslim Way" (Sr. Shahina Siddiqui), "Cyber counselling: Giving a Voice to Those Suffering in Silence" (Br. Altaf Husain), "Al Muminah: A Model for Muslim Youth Development and Prevention" (Sr. Aneesa Nadir and Sr. Zarinah Nadir), and "Linking Clients with Resources" (Sr. Kalima Biteye). For the entire program and more information about ISSA, please visit: www.ISSAServices.com

Participants also enjoyed the opportunity to share their own experiences whether as a student, a practitioner, or a layperson interested in counselling Muslims. One such networking opportunity was designated just for students in the field of mental health and social services. Nearly twenty students met and exchanged their areas of interest and specializations.

Students expressed concerns regarding the lack of Muslim presence either as contributing writers or as clients in the literature and research venues. One highlight of this networking meeting was the instant joy that two students felt when they realised that they were both addressing the topic of eating disorders among Muslim women.

ISSA is a grassroots organization committed to creating a network of Muslim professionals in the field of mental health and social services. In true grassroots tradition, conference participants attended a planning meeting following the banquet on Saturday evening. Participants from Montréal, led by Imam Abdus Salam El-Minyawe, were extremely pleased because they will be hosting the 3rd Annual ISSA Conference from June 21–23, 2002 in Montréal, Canada. Mark your calendars and tell others about it!

Source: http://www.islamonline.net/English/Society/2001/06/article5.shtml

Rain or Shine, the Food Fair Went On!

by Sister Wilma, Co-Ordinator

People crowded through the doors of TARIC Islamic Centre, some soaked through to the skin, others lucky enough to be dropped off right at the door, many carrying covered dishes which they contributed to the food fair held at on May 27, 2001.

For those who enjoyed trying new dishes, there was a wealth of delicious foods to purchase. At the same time, there was a children's table, a clothing boutique, and an Islamic bookstall to round things out. The mood was festive and the comradeship evident as people greeted each other.

It was evident that people were enjoying themselves with good food and good conversation in an Islamic environment.

Overall, a most delightful afternoon well spent.

*5,000 copies of **The Ambition** have been distributed free of charge at several mosques in and around Metro from as far as Kingston and Oshawa in the east to Brampton, Burlington, Kitchner, and Hamilton in the west. You may also pick up your copy at many Muslim grocery stores.*

Islamic Creed

Continued from page 1

their funeral, *al-kalimah* will be heard, spoken, and thought about, on numerous occasions throughout every facet and passage of life.

Apart from its ceremonial or sacred use, it is also found in everyday conversation. When two Muslims part company, one may say half of *al-kalimah* (There is no god but Allah) and the other responds with its affirming conclusion (Muhammad is God's Messenger).

One religious use of the Islamic creedal formula occurs within the Adhan, the call for prayer made five times a day. Its sonorous recitative from the minaret of a Mosque summons the faithful to turn from their routine affairs to spend a few moments in the life of the spirit. Thanks to modern technology, Canadian Muslims can even hear the Adhan at home or work, wherever they are, via the Internet.

While the two 'words' or phrases of the Islamic *al-kalimah* do constitute a creedal, or belief statement, Muslims do not call this formula a creed among themselves. Rather, they refer to it as *Shahadah*, meaning "a witness."

In fact, *al-kalimah* is often preceded by the words, "I bear witness that . . . [there is no god but]," and so on. Even when this phrase is not employed aloud, the concept of bearing witness is a basic assumption of the speaker's faith.

Thus, a Muslim's assertion of *al-kalimah* is not so much an affirmation of studied belief, as a proclamation of total conviction.

This, perhaps in a subtle fashion, involves an essence that is common to all deeply religious living. It is not so much that the Muslim states a belief that "God is One and Muhammad is God's Messenger," as it is that he or she takes this for granted as the very foundation of their existence. It is presupposed as an unquestioned truth and one goes on from there.

In most Western languages, the Latin root verb "credo," (meaning, I believe) has come to be used for affirming both empirical intellectual beliefs and the mysteries of religious faith. People of faith have historically tried to insist, "belief that" (applied to science) and "belief in" (applied to religion) are two different concepts, though the line of demarcation is often blurred in actual argument.

However, in Islam, faith does differ from belief in significant ways. One is that faith in God's oneness is recognition of God's unique and exclusive authority. The Qur'an, for example, teaches that faith is a commitment. Therefore, for a truly religious person, the question is not merely one of seeing (i.e., believing) the truth, but of doing something about it.

What does it mean, then, to say "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger?" What does it mean to one for whom these two clauses are not merely true, but profoundly and cosmically true? What does it mean to a Muslim, who grows up in this world knowing that *al-kalimah* encompasses the two most important and final truths in the whole universe, the most crucial truths for human beings and their destiny?

To say that there is one God, and that He alone is to be worshiped, means a categorical rejection of all polytheism and idolatry. Islam has been uncompromising in its doctrine of monotheism (belief in one God) and in its insistence on God's transcendence: Allah as Creator and Judge, Lord of the Universe, is above and beyond all His creatures. He is beyond all their imaginings — and certainly beyond all their abilities to represent or depict Him. Yet, Allah is also near.

The positive, emphatic, and clear doctrine that Allah is the only god has also meant that Islam rejects human tyranny, for Allah alone is to be worshiped and served. To the person for whom this faith is sufficiently vivid, it means that no Earthly power, no human figure, deserves — or can legitimately claim — one's allegiance. Any attempt to impose a purely human yoke on any community is an infringement, not only of human dignity but also of cosmic order. To submit to it would be sin.

To worship Allah alone means a turning aside from false gods, not only in the concrete sense of idols and religious polytheism, but also in the subtler sense of turning aside from the moral polytheism of false values — the false gods of the heart.

To pursue merely Earthly goals, to give them one's allegiance, and in a sense to worship them — goals such as wealth, prestige, comfort, or all the other distractions and foibles of human life — this, says the Qur'an, is to violate the true principle of monotheism.

Similarly, to look for help in purely mundane resources, to rely upon numerous devious stratagems, to trust anything that is not intrinsically good (i.e., from God) — this also means one is following more than one god. For the person of true piety and rigorous sincerity, the affirmation that Allah alone is to be worshiped means that no other objective must claim one's efforts or loyalty: One must fear no other power, honour no other prize, pursue no other goals.

Remember, the Islamic 'creed' begins with a negation, "There is no god . . ." to help the Muslim feel, if only for a moment, the anguish of genuine despair. Then one may, with God's grace, go on to say ". . . but Allah" — and affirm this wonderful truth with the ecstasy of genuine insight.

The second premise, "and Muhammad is His Messenger," is not a statement about Muhammad's status, but about his function. The underlying notion here is that God has something to say to humankind, and has from time to time chosen certain persons in various communities through whom to reveal it.

The assertion here is that Muhammad was one of those persons, as were Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Therefore, this too is a significant, even primary, statement about God. As theologians have observed, it recognizes that Allah is not innately passive, inscrutable, and content to remain only transcendent; rather, that as part of His very nature, He is the kind of God who has had something to say to humankind throughout all eternity.

God created human beings to receive moral awareness, along with the freedom and responsibility to act upon it. He did not leave us to grope about in the dark, to discover morality by our own feeble efforts, as best we could.

Not at all: Allah Himself acted and spoke — through the mouths of prophets and messengers, beginning with Adam — that is, from the very beginning of history.

Nowadays, religion is often spoken of as the human search for God. The Islamic position, however, asserts that God took the initiative and that our religious lives are not a quest, but a response — to the infinite gift of His love and care for us.

[Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, a professor of electrical and computer engineering at the University of Waterloo, is National President of the Canadian Islamic Congress.]

Families Facing Challenges

Continued from page 1

ligious transformation, resulting in high divorce rates, separation, single parent families, and common-law relationships. There are same sex couples, childless couples, and an increasing number of women are choosing to work outside the house.

These changes are reflected in the parameters of the society's functioning on the psychological and emotional planes. "The rate of depression has been doubling in some industrial countries roughly every ten years. Suicide is the third most common cause of death among young adults in North America, after car wrecks and homicides. Fifteen percent of Americans have had a clinical anxiety disorder. Moreover, pathological, even murderous alienation is a hallmark of our time," reported *Time* magazine on August 28, 1995 (p. 38).

The paucity of research on the health of Muslim families makes it difficult to provide specific statistical evidence. However, data collected from different sources including this writer's personal practice as a family counsellor over the last eighteen years, indicates that Muslim families are also experiencing social and personal problems like the rest of North American society. There is marked increase in divorce rates, separation, domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, intergenerational conflict, and teenage pregnancies.

The tendency among young married couples is to opt for separation and divorce, rather than work through differences and disagreements when there is tension or conflict in marriage. Barring violence or psychological abuse in the family, seeking solutions through negotiations is the Islamic norm. Marriage requires collaboration, commitment, and above all a sense of responsibility towards oneself, one's partner, family, and society.

In addition, a significant number of young Muslims are marrying outside the community. One of the major hurdles for young Muslims to find someone to marry from within the diverse Muslim community is the question of ethnicity and culture. Cultural and racial diversity instead of being a positive factor, as the Qur'an tells us (49:13), is becoming a dividing factor, since every Muslim group wants to preserve its own ethnic and culture purity. This limits the pool of young — male and female — from which to choose.

Also, increasing numbers of young Muslim parents, both fathers and mothers, are choosing to work outside the home, primarily for economic reasons, and are relegating the care and nurturing of their children to daycare centres and elderly parents. Both arrangements are inherently insufficient because daycare by its very nature lacks individualized emotional, spiritual, and intellectual care the child needs. In addition, the social environment of daycare is predisposed to producing conformity through the process of socialization and leaves very little room for developing an independent religious or social identity. Although more equipped to provide emotional, spiritual and nurturing environment, grandparents, too, lack the physical vigour to cope with the demands of growing children. In numerous instances, language is also a barrier putting both under undue stress.

The above social trends in Muslim families point to various degrees of assimilation, or adaptation to existing societal values. This has serious implications for the future of the Muslim family. In Islam, family is the centre to creating a stable society and ultimately civilization itself. Therefore, if family as a social system fails to provide sound religious and social values for the total physical and psychological growth of a human being, then society will suffer greatly as is evident from the malaise afflicting Western society.

North America has made much progress in science, technology, psychology, medicine, human sciences, as well as in the standard of living. It insists its social, political, and economic values are the only viable option to achieve human equality, financial prosperity, and peace and justice. Yet, it finds it exceedingly difficult to provide its own citizens the peace of mind and a healthy social environment in which parents can raise their children without the fear of random violence in schools, homes or in the streets. According to social scientists, the American society is becoming increasingly violent, aggressive, self destructive, narcissistic, and uncaring towards those who are less fortunate, including members of the immediate family.

The Qur'an, which Allah revealed to the Prophet, upon whom be peace, provides numerous examples of what happens to nations, peoples and individuals who exceed the limits prescribed by Allah: "Have they not travelled in the earth and seen how evil was the end of those who were before them? And they were stronger than they in power" (35:34).

Malek Bennabi in his book, Islam in History and Society, says that corruption and colonization of people can only take place when human beings are in a state of moral and psychological decay. "Moral paralysis results in intellectual paralysis: when one ceases to perfect oneself morally, one also ceases to modify the conditions of one's life and is reinforced by moral, social and political paralysis." Unfortunately, Muslims in North America, and the Ummah in general, seem to fit Bennabi's description, since their apathy and inactivity indicates that they may be suffering from political, social, and moral paralyses. It is easy to blame others for the present predicament of Muslims worldwide, but to hold others responsible for one's own weaknesses and shortcomings contradicts the Qur'anic injunction of personal responsibility: "God does not change the condition of a people until they change that which is in their souls" (13:11).

If Muslim families are to survive the current social and structural changes in North America, they must actively initiate social changes in the society in which they live. As vicegerents of Allah (Qur'an 2:30), humanity is under moral obligation to reform its own thinking and behaviour in order to create a just and morally balanced self and society (3:110). The challenge in the next millennium for Muslim families is not from the external environment; it is from within. Islam has a lot to offer to the ongoing debate on the future and status of the family. The practical implications of the answers found in the Qur'an for those who advocate stability of the family and society are immense.

[Wahida Chishti Valiante, Vice-President and Vice-Chair of the Canadian Islamic Congress, is a psychotherapist, specializing in Family Counselling. She has made numerous presentations on treatment of families from an Islamic perspective to academic institutions and professionals, in both Canada and the USA.]

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Kidz Korner

What am I?

byYomna Khatib

As someone who has lived in North America since the age of two, I feel very little loyalty and devotion towards my homeland. When someone asks me where I'm from, I reply with little enthusiasm, "Syria." I was neither born there nor have I ever stepped foot there.

The only thing that connects me to "my" country is the fact that my parents were born and raised there. That is not enough to make me truly love and honour my country.

What am I to feel towards a country and government that forced my parents to escape because of oppression? At that same time, while my family was in the worst circumstances, Canada embraced my family with open arms. This is why I am proud to say I am Canadian.

I have been raised in Canada, thus I have the culture of a Canadian. But there is one thing that is engrained in me that will never change no matter what country I'm from, where I was born, or where I was raised. That is my beloved religion, Islam.

To me, and many other youth who have been raised in Canada, culture has very little importance and significance in our life. In fact, I often feel I disagree and dislike the culture of my homeland. The only thing that really deserves my dedication and loyalty is my religion, which I would never give up for anything.

How to Spend Your Summer Holidays

by: Marium Fatima Ahmad

Well, summer is just about around the corner, and most kids and teenagers are faced with the same question they encounter year after year- "What to do?" Most of us end up spending these valuable two months holed up in our homes, wasting away our day watching T.V. In reality, though, there are many things out there that you can do. All you have to do is a bit of searching.

First, as Muslims, we must realize that there is in fact A LOT to do, without any time to waste. We have a purpose and goal in life, which is to please Allah and to prepare for our permanent home in the Hereafter. The sole purpose of our creation is to worship Allah. However, worship is not only limited to praying or reading the Qur'an alone (although those are two very important aspects of it), but encompasses working, being active, and socializing. The key is to be moderate in everything, and not to indulge our time in this world, or to waste our time, but to look towards our next life. As Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, *"And the life of this world is only an amusement and a play! Verily, the home of the Hereafter – that is the life indeed (i.e. the eternal life that will never end), if they but knew."* (Surah 29, Al-Ankabut, Ayah 64).

Upon saying this, we must realize that life is short, and we must make the most of it in good works. Time is flying by with each passing day, and is something precious that will not return. Allah has revealed an entire surah on time: *"By the (passing) time. Verily, man is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience."* (Surah 103, Al-'Asr, Ayahs 1-3).

Thus, we must understand the importance of not wasting our lives doing useless things. Rather than sit home and watch T.V. all day, there are many things to do in the Muslim community. Camps are being organized specifically for the youth and children, and organizations welcome any new members. The Muslim community is always in great need of help, so we can at least dedicate some of our time to volunteering - it's fun, rewarding, and a great way to make new friends. We can also spend more time in the mosque, or take Islamic and/or Arabic classes to gain more knowledge. And if that's not appealing enough, get together with some friends and play basketball, soccer, or any other enjoyable sport or activity. The bottom line is: Make the most of your summer, and remember - time is precious.

Below are a number of organizations that you can volunteer your time with and/or you can call to see if they are holding any camps this summer.

Islamic Society of North America
http://www.isnacanada.com/

Benevolence International Fund
http://www.benevolence-ca.com/

Camp Al-Mu'meneen
http://www.muslimcamp.com/

Islamic Circle of North America
http://www.icna.com/

Islamic Social Services Association
http://www.issaservices.com/

Khalid bin Al-Waleed Mosque
http://www.khalidmosque.com/

World Assembly of Muslim Youth
http://www.al-muslim.org/wamy/

For a more complete list of organizations, visit our website at http://www.ummah.com/ambition/

A page from the Life of the Prophet (peace be upon him)

More Enemies of Islam

The number of Muslins in Madinah was growing very fast. More and more people were learning about Islam and accepting it with all their heart. As more people in Madinah became Muslim, the strength of Islam grew even more.

However, although the number of Muslims was growing, so were its enemies. The Kuffar, who had driven the Muslims out of their homes in Makkah, were angry that the Muslims had become so powerful in Madinah and wanted to destroy Islam. As some of the Jews in Madinah started to accept Islam, the Jewish leaders began to see Islam as a threat to their power. Although the Jews had signed a peace treaty with the Muslims, which encouraged co-operation between the two religions, the Jews slowly joined the Kuffar of Makkah as enemies of Islam. Both these groups saw Islam as a threat to their superiority and wanted to stop the spread of the religion.

In addition to the growing number of Kuffar and Jewish people who were against Islam, Muslims had another group of hidden enemies, the Munafiqun. The Munafiqun were more dangerous to the Muslims than the Jews or Kuffar because the Munafiqun were hypocrites who pretended to accept Islam but really wanted to destroy it. These hypocrites of Islam pretended to accept Islam by saying the Shahadah but in their hearts they were not true Muslims. The Munafiqun pretended to love Islam when they were with other Muslims, but secretly they planned against the Muslims. One such person was Abdullah ibn Ubai. He was a Munafiq who wanted to become the leader of Madinah, but knew that if Islam became powerful, it would destroy his chances of leadership. Although he pretended to be a Muslim, he became an ally for the Kuffar and told them all of the Muslims' secrets and strategies.

With enemies all over the place, the Muslims were in a very tough situation. The Kuffar of Makkah were very open about taking action against the Muslims. Although the Jews said "we have an agreement with you and you should trust us", the Muslims knew that the Jewish leaders did not have good intentions. And to make matters even worse, there were hypocrites amongst the Muslim people themselves! Rather than seeing Islam as something good, these groups were more concerned about losing their power and authority over people than obeying Allah's commands and listening to the words of the Prophet (pbuh).

Even though the enemies of Islam were strong and had more ammunition and power than the Muslims, the Muslims were not afraid. The Muslims had faith in Allah and His Messenger Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The Muslims all prayed to Allah. They prayed that Allah would not only protect them from the enemies of Islam but the true religion of Islam as well.

Fill in the blanks

1) *Abdullah ibn Ubai was one of them _____.*
2) *The non-muslims were afraid of losing their _____*
3) *The Jews had a peace _____ with the Muslims*
4) *The true religion of Allah _____*
5) *Drove them out of their homes in Makkah _____*
6) *The Muslims had _____ in Allah*
7) *People who wanted to destroy Islam _____*
8) *Has originally promised to co-operate with the Muslims _____*

HEY KIDZ
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Muslim Investment 101

Planning for The Funeral

by Gemma Salamat

As Muslims we know that "From Allah we come and to Allah we return". But, while this is certain, the vast majority of people, Muslims and non-Muslims too, make no plans whatsoever for the end and for the funeral arrangements which must follow.

I cannot count how many times we have been jolted from sleep in the middle of the night by a call from a distraught relative asking us to help them arrange for the funeral of a loved one because they do not know what to do or where to go for help. Muslims believe that a funeral must take place as soon as possible and hopefully within 24 hours and hence there is extreme urgency to get the arrangements underway.

The Muslim funeral involves preparing the body for burial by giving the dead the final bath, wrapping the body in a white cotton shroud, placing it in a simple pine box, conducting the funeral prayer or janaza and then taking it to the cemetery for burial. The grave must be dug in a special way and the body must return to the earth. Cremation therefore is out of the question. Because of these requirements we cannot just walk into the closest funeral home and make the necessary arrangements. So planning ahead is critical, particularly if you live in a place where Muslim burial services are not available.

Death brings immense grief and confusion. The grief we can do nothing about except seek comfort from God, family and friends. But to avoid confusion we can have a process or plan in place which will make life easier for all around. Look at this as a four stage process—the planning stage, the funeral arrangements stage, the post-funeral stage and the end stage. A checklist for each stage follows and it should be adapted to your particular situation.

The Planning Stage

You should:

* Decide who will be your executor to handle estate matters and advise your family or person closest to you what the plans are and where documents are kept
* Decide who you want to be responsible for handling funeral arrangements and advise them of it
* If you have minor children and dependents arrange for guardians or trustees
* Find out whether Muslim services are available in your community and make the necessary arrangements for services and purchase of funeral plot
* Prepare/Update Will, Power of Attorneys (Financial and Health Care)
* Leave written instructions and telephone numbers of people to contact when the times comes
* Review circumstances, legal documents and arrangements periodically and make changes as needed

The Funeral Stage

The persons with overall responsibility for funeral arrangements should:

* Assign "to-do" responsibilities re phoning, funeral services, payment for services, coffin etc
* Decide date, time, place of funeral
* Advise close relatives, Employer, other family, close friends
* Notify funeral coordinator to notify Imam, Mosque and Cemetery and make necessary burial arrangements
* Arrange temporary accommodations for dependent family members
* Finalize hospital pick up and transportation of deceased to funeral home, cemetery, etc
* Make arrangements for post-service refreshments, etc if any
* Place newspapers notice, if desired
* Advise Executor, Trustee, Guardian, etc
* Arrange for Memorial Services or Quranic readings
* Delegate persons to handle post-funeral arrangements

The Post- Funeral Stage

The persons responsible for post-funeral matters should:

* Assign persons to tasks and prepare a "to-do" list
* Arrange for professional help such as lawyer or accountant
* Advise Executor, Guardian, Trustee
* Get copy of Will and seek legal assistance for probate
* Collect Death Certificate and get multiple copies as they are essential for most things
* Arrange permanent care for dependents
* Make claims for life insurances and other death benefits from CPP and Employer
* Notify banks, Canada Pension Plan Office, Government Offices, Mortgage Company, Employer
* Cancel insurances, pay off debts and bills and terminate leases
* Arrange for sale or transfer of titles for homes, autos, investments, businesses
* Advise Post Office, Utility Companies, and Card Companies, e.g. Visa, Master Card, Sears, Bay, American Express, distant relatives and business associates
* Send Thank-you notes, when appropriate
* Arrange for gravestones and cemetery upkeep

The End Stage

Within 3-12 months, the executor and persons responsible should ensure that:

* The death benefits have been collected and assets distributed as per the Will or deceased wishes.
* Notification of Death has been sent to all
* Personal and household effects have been distributed, sold or discarded.
* Final Tax Return has been prepared
* Wills have been revised if necessary
* Files have been tidied up and put away.

This is not an easy time for those close to the deceased and hopefully this list will help in ensuring that most matters are handled in a timely fashion. My final words—please discuss with your family, imam and mosque in advance if you want to have a Muslim funeral and make sure that the arrangements are in place to do so.

[Gemma Salamat, CFP, CHRP, CEB,is a Financial Advisor.]