



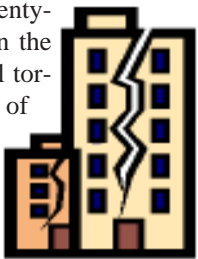
"... and He (it is who) sends down rain ..." (Qu'an 31:34)

The Rise in Natural Disasters

According to the Islamic perspective, disasters occur to remind us to remain loyal to Allah's teachings.

by Imam Abdul Hai Patel

We are witnessing a sudden rise in natural disasters around the world. There have been twenty-seven major earthquakes in the last twenty years. Powerful tornadoes ravaged many parts of North America in the last ten years. Volcanic eruptions in different parts of the world, even from dormant volcanoes, have occurred frequently. Lastly, the floods in many parts of the world devastated many



agricultural lands and localities.

In all of these natural disasters, four elements are involved: Earth, Air, Heat, and Water. If we are to analyse this from an Islamic perspective, we need to pause and reflect on the question: Why has the frequency of these calamities increased now?

Frequent earthquakes are mentioned in a Hadith as a sign of Qiyamah (Doomsday). We hear Adhan five times a day and in Adhan, the first four words mentioned are Allahu-Akbar, the acknowledgement of Allah's Power. Ulemas' analysis tells us that these four times occurrences can be referenced with the four elements mentioned above, i.e., Earth, Air, Heat, and Water. They are under His full control and His greatness is exhibited by commanding any one of them to generate powerful forces of destruction whenever He desires. This is only done to remind us that we remain loyal to His teachings.

The Muezzin cries out this reminder on a daily basis thirty times a day, from the time we are born. (Recall that for every Muslim baby at birth, Adhan is given in the right ear and Iqamah in the left ear. The new human being is told at birth that here is a message of Tawheed and you will be hearing this on a daily basis,

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Some Attributes of the Believers

Surah al-Mu'minin begins with the attributes of the believers and discusses the signs of Iman.

by Sheikh Faisal Abdur-Razak

One of the amazing miracles of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that Almighty Allah bestowed upon him, was aiding him with an outstanding community of believers who fully understood the meaning of Iman or Faith.

The nature of that early Qur'anic generation of believers, the Sahabas or Companions, was governed by their righteous deeds and virtuous attributes. Today, Muslim societies are starving for such qualities and attributes that will uplift their faith and strengthen their consciousness with the Exalted Creator. The success of the entire Muslim nation in this life and the next, is only possible when they truly comprehend the meaning of Iman, and hence, reflect or embody the noble attributes of true believers.

Almighty Allah states in the Holy Qur'an "Successful indeed are the believers, those who humble themselves in their Prayers; Who turn away from vain talk; And who pay their Zakat" (23:1-4).

These exalted verses are from Surah al-Mu'minin (the Believers) which takes its name from the first verse. The Surah reflects its theme and defines its subject, in that it begins with the attributes of the believers and discusses the signs of Iman in the human individual and in the world around us.

The tone of the Surah is that of declaration and calm argument, of sentimental logic and of feelings that inspire the thought and the consciousness. The mood that dominates the Surah is that which its subject presents, Al-Iman (the Faith). Its opening verse pictures the scene of solemnity and full submissiveness in Salat, "Those who offer their Salat (prayers) with all solemnity and full submissiveness," followed by the splendid description of the believers and the attributes they possess.

The fact that the people who have accepted the Message of the Prophet (pbuh) have started acquiring noble qualities of character, is a practical proof of the truth of the message.

According to a tradition related by 'Urwan bin Zubair, 'Umar (ra) who had embraced Islam by that time, said: "This Surah was revealed in my presence and I myself observed the state of the Prophet (pbuh) during its revelation. When the revelation ended, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) remarked: 'On this occasion, ten such verses have been sent down to me, that the one who measures up to them, will most surely go to paradise.' Then he recited the initial verses of the Surah" (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, An-Nasaa'i, Hakim).

"Successful indeed are the believers." This is the true promise and the declaration of success to the believers. "It is a Promise of Allah, and Allah fails not in His Promise" (Qur'an 30:6).

The "Believers" who have attained true success, both individuals and the groups (or Jama'ah), are those who have accepted the Message of Muhammad (pbuh), and have acknowledged him as their guide, and followed the way of life taught by him.

This assertion cannot be fully appreciated unless one keeps in view the background on which it was made. On the one hand, there were the well to do and prosperous chiefs of Makkah, the opponents of Islam, whose businesses were thriving and who were enjoying every good thing of life, and on the other hand there were the followers of Islam, a majority of whom were either poor from the beginning or had been reduced to poverty by ruthless antagonism to Islam. Therefore, the assertion, "Successful indeed are the believers" with which the discourse begins, was meant to tell the disbelievers in every age that the criterion of success and failure that they had in mind was not correct. It was based on misconceptions besides being transitory and limited in nature, it led to real failure and imaginary success.

On the contrary, the followers of Muhammad (pbuh) whom they regarded as failures were truly successful, because by accepting the invitation to the Right Guidance

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Islam in Canada: Past, Present, and the Way Forward

by Farah Ali

The purpose of this informal survey was to study the perceived changes in the Islamic environment in Toronto and surrounding areas that have occurred over time and to outline the improvements which were suggested for the betterment of Islam and Muslims in Canada. People chosen to provide information for this survey were selected mainly through the criterion of being known to the author as friends, relatives, or people connected to them. The method of sampling respondents was not random because of obvious difficulties, such as time, lack of resources, etc. In this sense, the study can be considered as a first effort to a more comprehensive study.

hensive study.

Information was collected through a carefully designed questionnaire by telephone or face-to-face interviews, and in some cases, given to respondents for completion. Fifty questionnaires were completed covering approximately three hundred people who migrated to Canada as far back as thirty years ago. On many occasions, whilst shopping or at the mosque and when questionnaires were not readily at hand, responses were obtained to selected questions during conversations with people. These have also been incorporated in the study.

Respondents to the study are originally from the following coun-

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Please treat this Islamic Journal with respect!

Editorial

Saving Idols, Killing Humans

The world has misplaced its moral concerns once again. First, the West hollered when a young Nigerian girl was flogged for fornication, and said nothing when Palestinians children's heads were being blown off in the streets. Now, the world has lashed out with strong condemnation against the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan for smashing all of the country's idols, including two towering Buddhas carved into sandstone cliffs.

We must remember that the Taliban are not destroying any places of worship. They are not doing anything illegal either, as the stone artefacts belong to their country and they hold a title to them. Whether or not others like it, the Afghans have a right to do what they want with the mountains and statues in their country, as long as they do not endanger anybody else. Since the world chose not to recognise the Taliban regime, why should they obey the world now?

Besides, what right do world nations have in criticizing the Taliban? These are the same nations that nuked Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killed hundreds of thousands of people in Iraq, and are killing people in Afghanistan through recently imposed sanctions. It is strange that they should be raising their voice in support of stone relics.

The United Nations' Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) urged all concerned, especially Afghans, to "stop the destruction of their cultural heritage." Does the world really care for cultural heritage? Where were the "righteous" nations when mosques, libraries, schools, historic buildings, and museums were being destroyed in Europe? The Serbs destroyed more than 1,200 mosques in Bosnia and 200 in Kosova. However, unlike the Taliban, they also killed thousands of innocent civilians.

It is highly ironic that India, a leader in the current anti-Taliban tirade, is ruled today by the same people who had led psychotic mobs in destroying the historic Babri Mosque just eight years ago and killed 2,000 people in subsequent protests. Why is it that these butchers have been quick to display "righteous" anger over the Taliban's "medieval and barbaric" acts?

There has been an outpouring of grief over stone statues, yet none for the Afghan refugees who have mostly died of hunger and exposure to cold weather. In drought-dried Afghanistan, more than one million people now face starvation or death in the bitter cold, due to a famine that is the worst in thirty years. After a three-year drought, every village well has run dry, and the goats and sheep have died. A relief official in neighbouring Pakistan said, "Afghanistan is going through its worst crisis since the 1979 Soviet invasion and nobody seems to care."

Aimed at forcing them to give up Osama bin Laden, the UN sanctions against the Taliban have also tightened on innocent Afghans. Two rounds of embargoes have reduced the traffic of goods into Afghanistan by air and road, making some essentials, such as gas and kerosene, more expensive. (The sanctions have already been perfected in Iraq, where it has killed almost one million, according to the UN's own statistics.) For the Taliban, tariffs were a major source of revenue for the ongoing war. With those gone, they raised taxes on farmers from 10% to a devastating 60%.

In all, more than 700,000 people (4% of the population) have been on the move in a desperate migration, according to aid groups. They have flocked to bigger towns and cities or crossed the border into Iran and Pakistan. Usually a proud and rugged people, the Afghans are now begging the world for help.

It is perplexing that the world only knows how to condemn, but not how to praise. There has been a lack of international support for the Taliban's crackdown on the heroin trade. Last July, they announced a ban on poppy cultivation. At first, anti-drug officials were sceptical, since Afghanistan produces 75% of the world's opium. However, earlier this month, UN drug-control officials surveyed four main opium-growing areas and found the land clean of opium poppies. So far, however, neither the USA nor any other country has offered to help the Afghan farmers with crop-substitution programs. As a result, poppy farmers are now among those famine victims swarming into relief camps near Herat and across the border in Pakistan, which has accommodated nearly two million refugees over the past twenty years and can barely handle more.

There have been no invitations to house these refugees as conditions in the camps are expected to deteriorate. Yet, the world is offering to house idols of wood and stone! It seems that we are living in a world where animals are more valuable than humans. Now, even stones are more valuable than humans, as those who have hearts of stone are showing their love for stones. We can only conclude, from all the media frenzy, that the world community cares more about ancient relics than it does for precious human lives.

Muhammad Basil Ahmad

Our Mail

Christian Seeks Common Understanding

A friend kindly gave me a copy of *The Ambition* (Jan–Feb 2001). In the article "Knowing Allah," while the author notes plainly and correctly that God is one, she continues: "Yet there are many religions in the world that have a belief in more than one god. For example, the Hindus believe that there are three gods: Creator, Destroyer, and Preserver. . . This idea of Trinity is also seen in Christianity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Zoroastrians believe that there are two gods . . . People of understanding would surely reject all these beliefs and come to the conclusion that there could only be one God . . . Many religions portrayed God as being human. For example, the Jews wrote in the Torah: 'Then God said, "Let Us make a man in Our image after Our likeness . . ."'

In the light of the above quotations, kindly consider the following comments, more so since your paper mentions that "all articles in *The Ambition* are well researched and checked by the editors" and that they welcome corrections:

1. It would appear that all adherents of the above religions are polytheists and idolatrous and lack understanding, unlike Muslim who believe that God is one. Is this what both Muslims and non-Muslims are to understand or at least infer?

2. Regarding man created in God's image, are you aware that Saheeh al-Bukhari reports that man is made in the image of God? In addition, are all your readers to infer that the Jews wrote the Torah?

3. Regarding the idea of Trinity, to judge from the context here, your reader is to infer that the Hindu concept of the three Hindu deities is similar to the Christian Trinity, i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While Muslims may affirm this similarity, would Hindus and Christians agree with it? Is their opinion important at all to the author, your editors, and your readers?

As a Christian, may I add the following?

1. The author of the article is to be commended in that she sees the Christian Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not as God, Mary, and Jesus as many Muslims believe, when they perhaps infer the latter from the Qur'an (5:116, cf. 4:171; 5:73) and the wrong assumption that the Qur'an addresses the Trinity and rejects it. (Shall we add that Yusuf Ali wrongly translates the Arabic *thalathatun* (4:171) as "Trinity" rather than "three," as Pickthall correctly translates? From this wrong translation, how many Muslims and others are misled into believing that the Qur'an actually mentions the Trinity?)

2. Indeed, Christians believe in the Trinity, i.e., the Tri-Unity. As

Trinitarians, they believe in one God, whether they are Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Protestant. They believe in one God as the Holy Bible throughout proclaims. They are monotheists, not tritheists (believers in three gods). They do not believe that God is male or female and procreates, or that Jesus is the Son of God through procreation. They do not turn a man into a god or a second god alongside God. In fact, they understand the Trinity to be their serious defence of the unity of God, His greatness and His love and holiness. Therefore, Christians sometimes wonder why some Muslims misrepresent them and their faith, do not understand them or even try to understand them, or dismiss them as *mushrikun* (idolaters) and *kafirun* (blasphemers), without giving them a serious opportunity to explain their faith. Cannot they expect Muslims to want to understand Christian faith better even as Muslims expect Christians to understand Islamic faith in a fair way?

In brief, kindly consider printing this letter in the interest of better understanding between the various religious communities so that your readers too may see the religions of others as others see themselves and their religions. Is it not to treat one as one would like to be treated an Islamic principle of integrity and fairness?

I would be grateful for your response. God's peace be with you.

Ernest Hahn

[*Reema Kamboh, author of the original article, has chosen to allow a more qualified person to answer some of the questions raised by Mr. Hahn. As there is limited space in this journal for lengthy debate, The Ambition reserves the right to forward such letters to appropriate forums for further discussion.]*

The Answer: The article "Knowing Allah" by Reema Kamboh was meant for a Muslim readership — indeed, so is *The Ambition* as a whole. Nevertheless, it is interesting to know that non-Muslims are also reading the articles. Ernest Hahn's letter is useful in at least alerting us to be careful in what we write lest we inadvertently offend the sensibilities of our non-Muslim neighbours. Hahn has raised a number of questions that I will try to address here after I first offer my sincere apologies for any offence the article may have caused. Our intent is to promote understanding, not to cause offence. Muslims and Christians have a lot in common, and the Qur'an describes Christians as being close to Muslims in love. This alone deserves a separate discussion, but let me here address Hahn's questions and concerns.



Space permitting, all letters to the editors are published — regardless of the journal's policy. We entertain all letters, except ones with impolite language. Please include your name, address, and telephone number. Only names will be published.

letters@theambition.com

First, Hahn takes exception to the article's association of the Hindu Trimurti with the Christian Trinity. Hahn would want to distance the two concepts, and indeed there is some distance between them. The article did not intend to equate the two concepts. It merely intended to stress that both share a problem that is not shared by our concept of monotheism. This can be seen in Sr. Reema's assertion: "Imagine the problems caused if the 'Destroyer' god wants to destroy something but the 'Preserver' god wants to keep it." Hahn did not include these words in his citation of the article. Yet, these words add an important piece of context useful in understanding Sr. Reema's mention of the Trinity.

While it is not correct to equate the Christian Trinity with the Hindu Trimurti, the similarity between the two concepts should not be overlooked. Hahn explains the word "Trinity" as meaning "Tri-Unity." Although Hahn calls upon Muslims to understand Christianity, he is here extremely economical in his explanation of the Trinity. However, I understand him to be asserting the traditional belief that there are three in one. The similarity with the Hindu Trimurti can be seen from a description in Jan Knappert's *Indian Mythology*. Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu are represented as three heads on one body. Knappert writes:

"The Trimurti is called *guhya* 'secret' because it is difficult to understand for non-philosophers. It is also called *Parama* 'The Supreme Being' because the three gods, merged into one being are supreme. . . In general, Christians can understand the doctrine which holds that, with reference to the divine, 'threeness' does not exclude 'one-ness.' The texts indicate that the Trimurti was the result of an original division of the Creator by himself" (Knappert, *Jan. Indian Mythology*. UK: Diamond Books, 1995, p. 248).

Hence, while I do not deny the differences between the two concepts, I hope that Hahn will not deny the similarities. Hahn wonders if Hindus will describe their concept as a Trinity. On my recent flight from Trinidad, I chanced to read a local newspaper. I recall the article regarding a festival involving the worship of Shiva who, according to the Hindu writer, is one of the Hindu Trinity.

Second, Hahn cautions that according to Saheeh al-Bukhari, man is

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Five Good Reasons to Advertise in *The Ambition*

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Islamic Mannerism

Kindness and Courage

by Mrs. Anwari Ali

Ever since my school days, when it was the practice to exchange autographs, I distinctly remember to this day, a verse that I found in my friend's autograph book. Unfortunately, I still do not know who the author is. Nevertheless, these few lines have made such an impression on me, that barring my faith, Islam, and the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith, they have taught me a great lesson. For your perusal and reflection dear reader, they are:

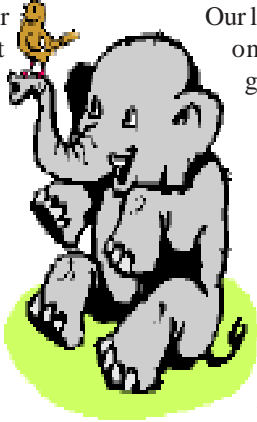
"Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own."

Kindness is a virtue mentioned in the above stanza by the unknown author. We must teach our children at a very tender age that they should be kind to every person. As they grow up, more opportunities will crop up. There are some children at that stage who need a helping hand — maybe in their school work, at the playground, on the street or road, on the bus, in their home life, and so on. Even a word of encouragement will do wonders.

The dimensions of morals in Islam are numerous, far-reaching, and comprehensive. The Muslim has to

guard his external behaviour, his word and thoughts, and his feelings and intentions. Truth and virtue are his goal. He must show kindness to the kin, concern for the neighbour, kindness and help to the orphan, respect for the elderly, compassion for the young, sympathy and cheer for the depressed, and disapproval of wrong.

Our great Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is our greatest teacher and the best example of good conduct. As mentioned in the Qur'an, "there has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often" (33:21).



Our lives are not always one happy merry-go-round or a bed of roses. We have to face problems and obstacles on life's path — maybe health, finances, wayward and disobedient children, old age, and so on. Just as we cling to

rocks and boulders when on the point of drowning, so also, there is one "rock" that we can cling to in

TARIC Martial Arts

The TARIC Martial Arts program has been training its students to a level of excellence for the past nine years. There have been many accomplishments by these students over the years; the year of 2000 was no exception.

Some students participated in the Canadian National Golden Belt Tournament. This tournament is one of the largest of its kind in North America, with competitors in Kung Fu, Karate, Kick Boxing, Tae Kwan Do and most of the major styles of fighting.

Alhumdulillah, TARIC Martial Arts students were a force to be reckoned with. Delair Khan places first in the 14- to 18-year-old Black Belt Division for patterns. He executed his pattern with precision and power to take the Golden Belt. His brother, Deen Khan placed third in the Junior Black Belt Division for patterns. He won second place in the Fighting Division, Nabeal Hack competed in a very hard division, but with skill and determination and won first place and took home the Golden Belt.

our own troubles: Courage.

We may have no one to turn to in our crises, except and above all, our faith in Allah, our prayers to him, and our own courage. Prayer and supplication definitely will see us through eventually. We have to rise

above our own fears and have the courage to overcome all the obstacles and problems facing us. Insha-Allah, we will overcome them and find the peace and contentment we crave. We often fail to remember and realise that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

It is our duty as parents and elders to educate and train our children whilst they are very young in these qualities of Islamic morals so that when they grow up and are confronted with problems of their own, how with the help of Allah, they can be kind and help others in their troubles and face their own courageously. The Almighty is there as always, to help and guide us.

Although a small group participated this year, they left their mark in a tournament where there were nearly 2,000 participants.

We congratulate all of the TARIC Martial Arts students who participated, on their skill and efforts. We would like to extend

our congratulations also to Omar McKnight on being the year 2000 Black Belt graduate.

He has joined the ranks of previous year graduates such as Sister Hal Murshad, Jihad Sabree, Mahad Osman, Admir Foco, Amir Sabree, Abdurahman Yusuf, Steve Pitt, Absher Yusuf, Delair Klan, and Deen Khan.



Going to University? It's not about books only, it's about your future!

If you're going to university sometime soon, then you have come to the right place. *Young Muslims Canada's* Academic Services is here to help you make the decision that will influence your life greatly.

We understand that choosing a university and a program is an extremely difficult process. We want you to make a well-informed decision. That is why *Young Muslims* has come up with contacts at different universities and different programs, with the help of Muslim Students' Associations. These are the people who have gone through what you are going through right now, and you can definitely learn from their experiences.

Who can get help? Any brother or sister who is planning to go to university within the next two years. Just write to our e-mail address at academics@youngmuslims.ca and we will hook you up with the resource person(s) in the university and program of your choice.

We can help you with choosing a career path, selecting OAC courses, choosing a program, choosing universities to apply to, filling info sheets for different universities, finding residence if going away from home, and selecting university courses.

Disclaimer: We are not qualified academic counsellors. We are here to give tips based on our own experience only. We cannot force anyone to make any decision. We act as guides only.

From the Qur'an

"And mention in the Book [the story of] Abraham. Indeed, he was a man of truth and a Prophet. [Mention] when he said to his father, 'O my father, why do you worship that which does not hear and does not see and will not benefit you at all?'"

(Qur'an 19:41–42)

From the Hadith

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr (ra) narrated: "A man asked the Prophet (pbuh), 'Whose Islam is good or what sort of deeds (or what qualities) of Islam are good?' The Prophet (pbuh) replied, 'To feed [others] and to greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know.'"

(Al-Bukhari 1:11)

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Politically Active

A talk with Mr. Howard Hampton, NDP Leader

by Naseer Syed

A “more equal Ontario” and putting equality and equity at the forefront was the theme that ran throughout most of our discussion that afternoon on Wednesday, January 24, 2001, when *The Ambition* had the pleasure of meeting with Howard Hampton, leader of the Provincial New Democratic Party (NDP) since 1996. This interview was requested and arranged by Mr. Grace Edward Galabuzi, the Ethno-Cultural Outreach and Media Relations Officer for the NDP Caucus, who came to know of our journal when he picked up a past edition at a community event.

Mr. Hampton represents the provincial riding of Kenora-Rainy River, an area in northwestern Ontario that comprises over a quarter of the landmass of the province with many small towns and native reserves. He is originally from Fort Frances, Ontario, but has been in Toronto for a long time, even before being first elected as a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) over thirteen years ago. His university degrees include an LL.B., B.Ed., and B.A. Mr. Hampton had worked as a lawyer and as a teacher before entering politics.

Interestingly, Mr. Hampton is married to Shelly Martel, who is also an NDP MPP representing the Nickel Belt around Sudbury. They have two children with a unique arrangement in politics in that they come to work in downtown Toronto as a family (one child at school and the other at daycare, both near the legislature) and go home as a family.

Mr. Hampton puts healthcare and education as the top issues on his list. He feels that people are feeling insecure and worried about the situ-

ation of healthcare in Ontario; public schools are battling with teachers’ unions and education is too expensive at the post-secondary level with the increases in tuition fees for students.

He believes that quality of life for working families is worsening; those with high incomes have done well with tax cuts and other measures taken by the Harris government, but those on modest or middle-class incomes are finding the times to be difficult. The minimum wage has been frozen for the last six years and people are working harder and longer.

Further, he says that housing has become more expensive and changes to the Employment Standards Act can result in a 60-hour workweek with no assurances that workers will get weekends off or have one- or two-week blocks of vacation time. All this places extra pressure on families.

Before the current Conservative government, the NDP was in power under its then-leader Bob Rae. At that time, Mr. Hampton served as Attorney General for Ontario from 1990–1993 and Minister of Natural Resources from 1993–1995. Some of the policies and programs that were in effect at that time were cut back or eliminated under the Harris government. One of these was the Employment Equity Program. Contrary to campaign slogans and media “sound bites,” the program did not impose quotas on employers to hire women and minorities. Mr. Hampton said one of the lessons to be learned from the Harris government is to implement programs quickly with less consul-

tation. He believes that if the NDP had done that, positive results of their programs would have become apparent before the next election had to be called.



Mr. Howard Hampton

When asked about his opinion about utilising foreign-educated and foreign-trained professionals in such fields as medicine, dentistry, law, and other self-regulating pro-

fessions, he said that for physicians, the number of residency positions funded by the current government has been dramatically reduced. In the legal profession, he said that the NDP government’s Employment Equity Program had promoted government hiring and allowed the work performed in government departments to count towards qualification in Ontario. He was not as familiar with the other areas.

The NDP’s outspoken support for equality rights based on sexual orientation and how that stance would be at odds with the Muslim community’s position came up next for discussion. Mr. Hampton said that given the Charter of Rights and Freedoms under the Constitution and how the courts are interpreting laws to grant equality, the question was whether government will force each instance to litigation or act in what he terms the “enlightened” way. When asked whether it was wrong for the courts to be doing what elected representatives ought to be debating and that if rights are to be granted on this basis, why not also implement greater privacy in public facilities such as washrooms, change rooms, and showers, he replied that government makes rhetorical flourishes, but does not think these issues through. He also said that we are unlikely to see any government use the “notwithstanding” clause to override the courts.

The Ambition pressed Mr. Hampton further on this issue because it was also reported that he had at-

tended the recent double wedding of gay and lesbian couples. He confirmed this, but attempted to deflect attention to the commitment of the couples rather than their sexual orientation. He said that New Democrats are not afraid to take on unpopular issues and felt that historically they have been consistent in their positions on equality and human rights and that they would be proven right in the long run.

On a side note, it was pointed out to Mr. Hampton that one of the most visible NDP figures in the Muslim community was Tarek Fatah, yet many of us were surprised that he had not been asked to run in the last election. While acknowledging Mr. Fatah’s activism, Mr. Hampton cautiously advised that there were some things that Mr. Fatah had not done at that time, and that had he done them, he would have been in a better position to be considered a candidate.

Upon asking Mr. Hampton whether the relations between the NDP and the labour movement in general were estranged he said that it is only Buzz Hargrove of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) that has problems with the NDP, which allows the *National Post* newspaper a “hook” to attack the NDP.

As a general observation, Mr. Hampton said that social democrats will always be swimming against the stream, especially in a society that is “money-infused.”

Questioning as to what he could offer to the more affluent segment of society that has benefited under the Harris government, Mr. Hampton replied that the NDP advocates a more inclusive society and that a more fair and egalitarian society would be better for all of us in the medium- and long-term. He said that it would be a more productive society — one that would make better use of all people. He believes that such a message over time will get through to people as shown after experiences with conservative governments in the UK and the USA.

The Ambition is a non-partisan journal and does not promote any one political party. Upon request, other party leaders can be interviewed.

RADIO ISLAM by United Muslims
(www.islam.am)

A family oriented Islamic show trying to bring more of Islam into our lives at CJMR 1320 AM, every Sunday from 9:00–10:30 p.m. in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Program opens with Qur’an, Muslim World News, Weekly Tafseer of Qur’an by Maulana Nafees (Imam of Jami Masjid in Mississauga), Lecture on a Topic of the Week by different scholars, Live Call-In Show, Weekly Biography, Talk by invited Alims, Islamic Songs, Obituaries, and Final Du’a.

Phone in and have your questions answered by Islamic scholars in light of the Qur’an and Sunnah. Listen to us on the Net at anytime (www.radioislam.ca).

Radio coverage is available for all of GTA, from Scarborough to Kitchener and Hamilton to Barrie.

Witness-Pioneer Virtual Islamic School

is offering a **FREE** online course on the “**Islamic Perspective of Parenting.**” The course starts on March 1st, 2001.

To register please go to:
<http://www.witness-pioneer.org/school/gsl01>
Source: *Islamic News and Information Network* (www.inin.net)

Condolences on Deaths of Two Great Scholars

The Ambition offers its condolences on the death of Islamic scholar **Shaikh Muhammad ibn Saleh al-Uthaymeen**, who passed away in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, and Islamic scholar and community leader **Shaikh Mohammed Mehdi Shamseddine**, who departed from this world in Lebanon following a long battle with cancer. “To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.” This is a great loss to Muslims worldwide.

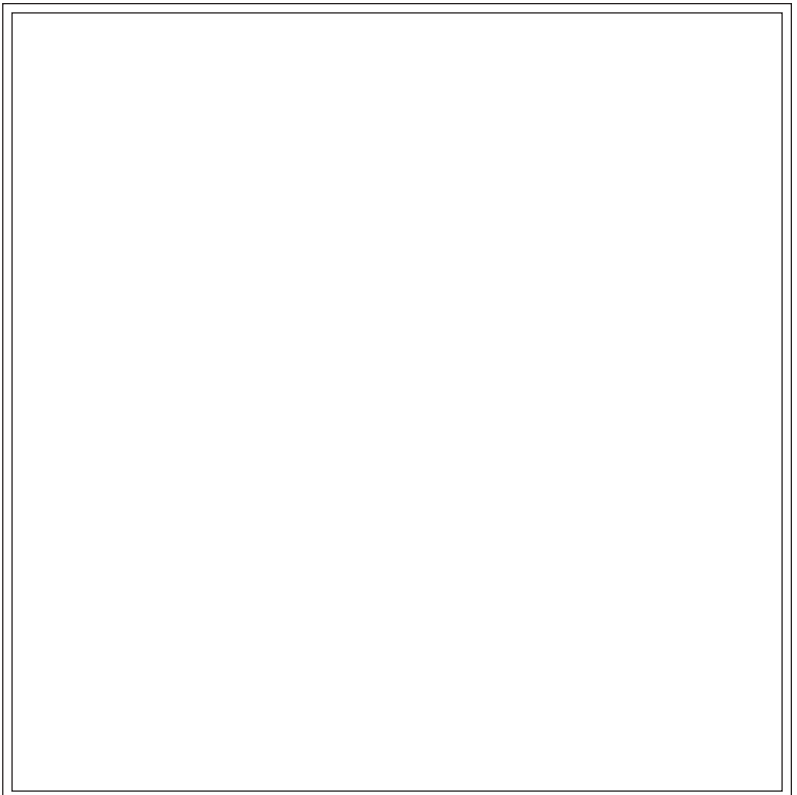
Pen is mightier than the sword
So why not write?

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

Send your work by **March 30, 2001** to be included in the May–June 2001 issue

Articles should be less than 1,500 words

Include your full name, address, and phone number. You may also wish to send your picture and a little introduction about yourself.



Position Paper by the Canadian Islamic Congress on Proposed Legislation to Deregister Charities Proven to be Fundraisers for Terrorist Interests

by Professor Mohamed Elmasry

1. Introduction

1.1 The federal government is set to introduce new legislation that would strip charitable status under the Income Tax Act from any Canadian NGO proven to be raising funds directed to terrorist organisations. At a meeting held in Ottawa on Monday, February 27, 2001, attended by CIC, federal officials outlined the intent of new legislation that will revoke the charitable status of groups that fund acts of political violence. The meeting was sponsored by the Solicitor-General and the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

1.2.1.2 Under the new law, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and/or the RCMP would notify the Solicitor-General and the Revenue Minister if their investigation(s) conclude(s) that a charity registered under the federal Income Tax Act is in fact knowingly raising money for terrorism.

1.3.1.3 CSIS will be able to provide such information in secret — “in the interests of national security” — and once the two ministers support its findings, the process of stripping the group of its charitable status would begin. A federal certificate would be issued and a federal court judge appointed to hear the case. Secret evidence provided by CSIS will not be disclosed to the suspected organisation(s), but the affected NGO(s) would have the right to legal counsel, as well as to call and cross-examine witnesses.

1.4 The federal judge’s ruling will be final, with no right of appeal. Even if a group’s charitable status is maintained, the supporters of this position paper are concerned that its good name as a legitimate organisation

would be permanently smeared.

1.5 For several reasons, certain Canadian charitable organisations would be particularly vulnerable under the new law, if due process is not open or complete. It is understood that, while Canadian charities should not be in the business of helping foreign groups achieve their political agendas through terrorist activities, there are dire humanitarian needs overseas that no Canadian should be prevented from alleviating.

1.6 Another cause for concern is the “profiling” technique that would be used by intelligence agencies in targeting suspected charities. Due to habitual cultural stereotyping — that often (and misleadingly) equates members of certain ethnic or religious groups with terrorism — Canadian charitable organisations operated by those communities could be disproportionately targeted for investigation.

1.7 CSIS relies heavily on foreign intelligence agencies, some of which have a vested interest in shutting down Canadian NGO’s that they perceive as their political enemies. Thus, a closed process that does not fully utilise Canada’s justice system could easily be hijacked politically. This would go against basic Canadian values of fairness and justice.

1.8 It is essential, therefore, that the new legislation not be vulnerable to cultural bias and political abuse. Ill-defined and emotionally charged terms, such as “international terrorism” and “national security,” must not be used to deprive Canadians and their organisations of basic civil and human rights. In particular, they must not be prejudicially subjected to guilt-by-association notions that would compromise or deny their freedom to support genuine humanitar-

ian causes, no matter how unpopular.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The name and integrity of accused charitable organisation(s) must be protected and not, under any pretext, disclosed to the media or public during the trial. Similar guidelines in place for the Young Offenders Act should be used as a model.

2.2 The new legislation must not violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, especially Section 7 regarding the “right to counsel.” Legal aid services must be made available to deserving NGO’s whose fiscal health could be seriously undermined by the costs of successfully defending their status.

2.3 The new legislation must not violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, especially Section 11(d) on the right of an accused individual or group to be “presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.” The right to appeal must be included.

2.4 The legal definition of a “terrorist act” must be included in guidelines to the new legislation and be accessible and understandable to all parties involved.

2.5 As noted in the Introduction, the new legislation must make it abundantly clear that there will be no possibility of finding an NGO guilty “by association.” There must be enough incontrovertible evidence to prove a direct link between funds raised in Canada and specific terrorist activities.

2.6 When a given NGO is found guilty, its mandate and intentions must be fully considered. To be found guilty, the NGO must be proven, be-

yond any reasonable doubt, to have knowingly and willingly intended to finance specific terrorist activities.

2.7 The officers of the accused charitable organisation(s) and their legal defence team(s) must be given access to the specifics of the accusation and any relevant evidence, in order to protect their rights and to enable them to mount an informed defence. Safety measures should be taken against the public disclosure of any information related to Canada’s national security.

Professor Mohamed Elmasry is the National President of Canadian Islamic Congress. He can be reached at (519) 746-1242. His e-mail address is cic@cinow.com

Ten Sicknesses of the Heart

1. You believe in the existence of Allah, but you do not fulfil His Commands.
2. You say that you love Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), but you do not follow his Sunnah.
3. You read the Holy Qur’an, but you do not put it into practice.
4. You enjoy all the benefits from Allah, but you are not grateful to Him.
5. You acknowledge Satan as your enemy, but you do not go against him.
6. You want to enter Paradise, but you do not work for it.
7. You do not want to be thrown into Hell, but you do not try to run away from it.
8. You believe that every living thing will face death, but you do not prepare for it.
9. You gossip and find faults in others, but you forget your own faults and bad habits.
10. You bury the dead, but you do not take a lesson from it.

Airline caterer changes uniform policy

Minnesota - Some fifty female Muslim employees at the Bloomington, Minn., facility of in-flight catering giant LSG Sky Chefs challenged a uniform policy that would have forced them to wear pants and sports shirts. The women said the uniform violated Islamic standards of modesty.

Representatives of CAIR’s Minnesota office (CAIR-MN) contacted LSG Sky Chefs’ corporate office to request religious accommodation for the workers. Company officials agreed to CAIR-MN’s request for a modified uniform. The revised uniform policy gives Muslim women the option to wear their own ankle-length non-flowing skirts under long-sleeve

make, spokesman for LSG Sky Chefs responded, “LSG Sky Chefs respects your requests with an open mind and moved quickly to implement a simple policy that makes sense for every-

Advice for Sinners

A man came to Ibrahim ibn Adham, may Allah (swt) be pleased with him, and said, “Abu Ishaq, I am unable to control myself from committing sins. Please give me some advice to help me with it.”

“If you accept five conditions,” said Ibrahim, “and are able to put them into practice, your disobedience will not cause you any problem.”

“Just tell me what they are, Abu Ishaq!” the man said.

“The first is that when you want to disobey Allah (swt) you do not eat anything He provides.”

“Then how will I get anything to eat? Everything on the Earth is from Him!”

“So is it right to eat His provision and disobey Him at the same time?” replied Ibrahim.

“No, it is not. What is the second condition?” asked the man.

“When you want to disobey him, move off His land.”

“That is even more difficult!” exclaimed the man. “In that case where will I live?”

“Is it right to eat his provision and live on His land and then to disobey Him?” asked Ibrahim.

“No, it is not. What is the third condition?”

“When you want to disobey Him in spite of eating His provision and living on His land, find a place where He will not see you and disobey Him there.”

“What do you mean, Ibrahim? He knows everything that happens even in the most hidden places!”

“So is it right to disobey Him when you eat His provision and live on His land and when you know that He can see everything you do?”

“It certainly is not!” the man replied. “Tell me the fourth condition.”

“That when the Angel of Death arrives to take your soul, you say to him, ‘Give me a reprieve so that I can repent and act righteously for Allah (swt).’”

“But he won’t listen to me!”

“Then if you cannot ward off death long enough to give yourself time to repent, and you know that when it comes there will be no reprieve, how can you hope to be saved?”

“What is the fifth condition?” the man asked.

“That when the Angels of the Fire come to you to take you to the Fire, you do not go with them.”

“They will take me whether I like it or not!” exclaimed the man.

“So how can you hope to be saved?”

“Enough, enough, Ibrahim! I ask Allah’s Forgiveness and I turn to Him!”

The man’s repentance was sincere and from that time on he was assiduous in his worship and avoided acts of disobedience until the day he died.

Department Store allows Prayers

Ohio - More than fifty Muslim employees at Columbus-area Value City Department Stores will now be allowed to take time off to perform their obligatory Islamic prayers. The workers, most of whom are refugees from Somalia, were asking to take few minute prayer break.

Women’s Gala Dinner Supports Sports

On January 15, 2001, The Alternative For Her Community Centre (TAFHCC) held its first Annual Gala Dinner for Women. Over 100 women in fancy gowns attended the event from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds. The attendees had the opportunity to network and socialise with other women while helping to raise funds for women-only sports and recreational programs.

The keynote speaker was Shyrose Dhala, an anti-racism educator, who spoke about her personal experiences with prejudice. Dhala discussed the need for women to engage in healthy dialogue and to support each other in social and recreational programs. Self-acceptance and a positive attitude were other examples of key success factors.

“At TAFHCC, our goal is provide women with a comfortable environment, where they can come and be active. The support we’ve received from volunteers, staff, and our board has been incredible. Their support makes it possible for TAFHCC to provide urgently required women-only programs that aren’t being offered — whether it’s this dinner or our sports

and social programs,” stated Priscilla Machado, Executive Director of TAFHCC.

Everyone enjoyed the program, appreciating the opportunity to have fun and mingle with others in an environment sensitive to their cultural needs. Response was so overwhelmingly positive that planning has already started for the next Gala Dinner in October.

TAFHCC is an incorporated non-profit, non-charitable organisation made up of volunteers and professionals. It aims to address the unique needs of women and girls in Ontario whose cultures include gender segregation by promoting interest in athletics, sports, and recreation, and establishing and maintaining facilities and equipment for the same purpose, and by providing culturally sensitive social services and support, and maintaining facilities for the same purpose.

TAFHCC is currently holding aerobics classes for women only in the Don Mills/Sheppard area and is planning swimming — lessons and recreational — for Spring and Summer. Those interested in aerobics,

swimming, or volunteer work should contact the TAFHCC office at (416) 496-9562, extension 52, or visit tafhcc.tripod.com on the Internet.

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.

Islam in Canada: A Survey

Continued from page 1

ties: Egypt, Ethiopia, Guyana, Trinidad, Pakistan, etc. There is some revealing information and concerns and more importantly, interesting suggestions and ideas as to how the Muslim environment can be improved for the betterment of Muslims in Canada.

Except for a few Caribbean respondents who thought otherwise, most people were of the opinion that the environment when they arrived in Canada was less conducive to practising Islam than that in their home country. However, most say that in their home country, they were practising (but not like here) in terms of praying five times a day everyday and not only in Ramadan. A few even said that they were accustomed to a more cultured Islam in their home country. Most respondents also said that more people in Canada can afford to go to Hajj and more often now.

Twenty to twenty five years ago, the facilities available to provide Halal products were very limited and it was very difficult for people to get these products if they desired them. There were also not many mosques available at that time and getting to these prayer places required a significant amount of time and effort. According to the results of the survey, the two most popular places to pray in Toronto were Jami Mosque and the Islamic Foundation.

The situation now is completely different. Islam is the second largest religious group in Toronto. Most view the Islamic environment in Canada presently as being well and think that people are practising more now than about twenty years ago. The environment is also very helpful to Muslims who want to practice their religion properly. There is more awareness by the public of Islam and its practices. There are more women that are visible in Hijab now and more Muslim-owned businesses. Muslim communities are well established and more services are offered to the community. More mosques and prayer places are available within everyone's immediate locality and therefore, they are easily accessible. Halal products and stores are plentiful so that there is no excuse for using Haram products. The growing number of Muslims of various nationalities has also

meant that Islam is better known and consequently, there is more acceptance in Canada of Muslims and their beliefs. Muslims are also exposed to several scholars from different parts of the world and there is an abundance of knowledge and information available.

The study has revealed significant concerns about the Islamic environment and suggestions for improvements, as mentioned earlier. Some of the things said included:

- Mosques were easily accessible in our home country and it was easier to participate in Islamic activities for those who wanted. It is very difficult to perform prayer on actual times, whereas, in our home country it was easy.

- More businesses and services are needed to cater to the local community as well as unified relationship with other organisations.

- There should be more co-operation and tolerance among Muslims themselves and more skills such as those of teachers.

- Mosques and organisations need more activities such as sports, especially for teenagers, to get them involved and interacting with other Muslims, thus limiting the interaction with non-Muslims.

- There is the need for Islamic schools from kindergarten up to the end of high school. In public schools, subjects such as homosexuality and sex education are taught.

- Muslim children who are born here or came at a very young age are following other kids at public school in doing wrong things. In this regard, they do not seem to have as much respect for their parents and even call the police on them when scolded.

- Muslims need to concentrate on themselves and bond together to become stronger.

- Muslims need to focus on the practices of Islam and eradicate their various cultures if it detracts from these practices. In this respect, parents should start teaching their children Islam as being distinct from culture if they want the next generation to adhere to Islamic values.

- All the various nationalities need to co-operate instead of bonding together in their own cultures and causing division. This is one of the

major problems with Muslims. To live in peace with each other and to ignore the culture and treat all Muslims as one must be the goal of everyone.

- Political representation is needed at all levels.

- Mosques should be made more women- and youth-friendly and they should be more viable and practical, rather than just used as a place of worship.

- Some sects are not adhering to Qur'an and Sunnah.

- Homes for Muslim senior citizens are needed along with transportation to mosques and hospitals.

- Encouragement of Muslim women in important positions in our community leadership is needed. This needs to be done for our success as a community and particularly for the next generation.

- Social resources are needed to educate immigrants and to help them to integrate into society without much difficulty. More sources for marital and family counselling are also needed.

- More social occasions, such as women's gatherings, are needed for sisters to meet and have discussions.

- More ways are needed for youngsters looking to get married to meet. Since they do not get to talk or meet with other Muslims, many seek others outside Islam to marry.

- More co-operation with each other is needed. Muslims at mosques only seem to fight for power and position but are not thinking about the welfare of Muslims. What is needed is peace and not the kind of uneasiness that presently exists.

- There is no readily accessible information for everyone to know what resources are available. Documentation is needed, and preferably, at the community level.

Muslims in Canada need to become more aware of the resources they have available at this point in time and utilise them, while at the same time they should understand there is much more room for growth and improvement. The survey, although covering a limited sample and restricted to only Toronto and surrounding areas, has some significant findings. The way forward has to be

Promised Land

**They wrenched it violently from my shaking hand:
MY stone, MY symbol.**

**Sirens screaming resounding in my skull,
gripping me and tearing into my innermost core,
flooding my entire being.**

Where is my promised peace!?

**But I am entrenched in this land,
my roots as deep and extensive as those of the
olive tree,
whose bitter plant, now nurtured by the wailing
blood-soaked earth,
gives no sustenance.**

**My soul has been crucified,
upon the land which I cultivated,
upon the land where my innocence was shattered,
into a million pieces,
and curdled into cold black rocks
tempting me and beckoning to me wherever so I
walk.**

Randa Hammadih

Randa Hammadih is a Muslim-Canadian. She is currently co-host of a television show called Munawaat Arabia on CFMT, and is finishing her degree in Political Science at the University of Toronto. She went to Iraq in December to address the Iraqi Parliament on the issue of the sanctions.

Who Fuels Wars Around the World?

The main arms exporters ranked by sales for 1999 (in millions of dollars):

1. USA (\$10,442)
2. Russia (\$3,125)
3. France (\$1,701)
4. Germany (\$1,334)
5. Britain (\$1,078)
6. Italy (\$533)
7. Ukraine (\$429)
8. Australia (\$298)
9. Canada (\$168)
10. Sweden (\$157)

The USA makes 37% of world profits from arms sales.

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

that the people, especially leaders, should pay heed to the concerns and suggestions mentioned and to consider these in their deliberations.

Finally, the survey suggests the need for a more in-depth study and an even wider study covering the whole of Canada to make Canada not only a place where the Islamic way of life can be practised easily and harmoniously, but also a better place in which to live.

All articles in *The Ambition* are well researched and checked by the editors. Being human, we may overlook something. If this happens, please call us and correct our mistakes.

Ten Ways You Can Support Muslim Media

1. Subscribe

What is one of the major killers of Muslim media? We so easily pick up those free copies from the local Masjid (mosque). While a number of publications are given out free for the purpose of promotion, avoid taking this easy way out. Make a point to subscribe. This way, you will lend your support in a systematic way and you do not have to go hunting on the Masjid shelves for the latest copy of the newspaper or magazine. You will get it right at home.

2. Share a Subscription

What if a newspaper or magazine's subscription rate is far beyond your means? Then get two, three, or more interested others and subscribe as a group, with everyone pooling their money. Then a system could be worked out where each subscriber gets to check out the latest copy for one week. The advantage of such a system, apart from saving money, could also be that the publication is more likely to be read, instead of stacked with older, unread copies, since there is a limited time each person has to read the latest issue.

3. Give Feedback

What is the first reaction of many of us when we see something we dislike or like in our communities? Usually, if we like it, nothing is said about it. If it is something we dislike, we tend to express our dislikes in a harsh, intolerant manner and distance ourselves from the person or project in question. If we want to see Muslim media thrive, we cannot take this approach. The Islamic way is to give wise, gentle Naseeha (advice). In the case of a publication, there should be a "Letters to the Editor" section. Write a simple letter and express your concerns.

4. Give Out Extra Copies

How can you promote Muslim media if people have not been able to read or check them out themselves? There are two ways you can do this: One is by giving out free,

extra copies. Simply call the publication's office and ask if they have extra copies of old issues that they are willing to give away for promotional purposes. Then you can give these out to people who you feel would take an interest in reading and subscribing to the publication.

5. Use Your Mouth

What is one positive way of using your mouth (which tends to get most of us in trouble more often than not)? It is by promoting the good. Spread the word about a publication to friends and family and encourage them to subscribe and donate.

6. Donate to this Muslim Cause

When you think Sadaqah (charity), you think Masjid, right? Well, why not give to more than your local Masjid? Why not devote a small amount, like even five dollars a week,

to your favourite Halal publication? This way, you can support a good cause beyond just subscribing.

7. Encourage Libraries and Institutions to Subscribe

Shouldn't Muslim institutions support Muslim publications? While Muslims as individuals or families may not understand the importance of media, any Masjid or Muslim institution with a library should include a range of Muslim publications. Encourage them to subscribe and give an extra donation if the publication does not already have a specific sub-

scription rate for institutions.

8. Encourage Muslim Businesses to Advertise in Them

How can Muslim businesses do Muslim publications a favour and get something in return? By advertising in Muslim newspapers and magazines. Advertising is one major way publications generate revenue. Encourage Muslims to help Muslims by having Muslim businesses pay for ads in Muslim publications.

9. Get non-Muslims on Board

What is another way you can help clear away stereotypes about Islam amongst non-Muslims and support Muslim media while you're at it? By encouraging the Religious Studies departments of universities to subscribe, as well as institutions where interfaith dialogues take place. By encouraging their subscription to Muslim publications, you will add to their current literature on Islam, which is usually filled with Orientalist, mostly anti-Muslim material.

10. Write For Them

Want to help Muslim media but don't have the money? Then consider writing for them. There is still a lack of Muslims willing to write for the Muslim media, but the need for writers is still great. If you have got writing talent or are considering a career in journalism and communications, take advantage of this forum while benefiting a Muslim publication.

Compliments from Sound Vision
<http://www.soundvision.com/media/supportmuslimmedia.shtml>

Grief Expressed Over Indian Earthquake

Mr. Roy Cullen, M.P. (Etobicoke North) has expressed his deep sorrow in the aftermath of the terrible disaster in Gujrat. In a message to *The Ambition*, he expressed his profound condolences to all those who suffered during the tragic earthquake in Ahmadabad. "The value of human loss to the community is immeasurable, and it is incumbent upon all of us to share our resources to lend aid to those who are in need," he said.

"I was stunned to see the scale

of the destruction and deeply moved by the obvious grief and suffering of those who have lost friends and loved ones. In the struggle to deal with the magnitude of the disaster, our prayers are with them.

"The Government of Canada is actively involved financially and by other ways in the recovery and disaster relief effort in the area. The Minister of International Cooperation is reviewing the situation on a regular basis," he said.

Christian Seeks Common Understanding

Continued from page 2

made in the image of God. This, however, does not remove the Muslim concern that the Bible's depiction of God is gratuitously anthropomorphic. After saying that Adam was made in the image of God, the Bible says that Seth was begotten in the likeness and image of Adam (Genesis 5:3). While the statement that Adam was created in the image of God can be interpreted in a spiritual sense, Muslims find objectionable a confluence of many statements in the Bible that seem to indicate an anthropomorphic view of God: God walks and makes sounds in the garden in the breezy part of the day (Genesis 3:8) and whereas Adam is the image and glory of God, Eve is the glory of man (1 Corinthians 11:7). Hence, whereas the single statement in Saheeh al-Bukhari can be interpreted allegorically, the preponderance of anthropomorphic representations of God in the Bible does not so readily lend itself to a similar interpretation. This is not to deny that there are Bible verses clearly stating that God is neither a man nor the son of man. Nevertheless, Hahn deserves credit for his detailed knowledge of Saheeh al-Bukhari, and our thanks for his generous advice to us about its content.

Third, Hahn wants to know how the article intends to depict the intelligence of others who do not share our belief in God's oneness. Muslims have no doubt that some of the world's most intelligent people have not been guided to the right belief. Such persons are often referred to in the Qur'an as lacking in intelligence not because they fail to understand secular subjects at which they may be extremely proficient, but because they lack an essential insight. Surely, Hahn does not mean to object to this, since he is no doubt aware that the Bible depicts deniers of God's existence as fools (Psalm 14:1) and Jesus is said to have addressed some of the most learned men of his day as blind fools (Matthew 23:17). Rather than being a cause for objection, Sr. Reema was obviously appealing to the intelligence of her readers in her invitation to the truth.

Fourth, Hahn wants Muslims to think that the Qur'an does not object to the Christian Trinity but only to certain aberrations of that doctrine. His point here can only be a technical one. The teaching of the Qur'an for all practical purposes certainly denounces the Trinity. Hahn points out in agreement with Pickthall and against Yusuf Ali that the correct rendering of *thalathatun* (4:171) is "three" rather than "Trinity." The point should not be missed, however, that it is practically impossible to describe the Trinity without using the word "three." Even Hahn's "Tri-Unity" means "three in one." Hence, even though we should prefer Pickthall's rendering here, and we do not hesitate to correct Yusuf Ali, we should not be persuaded that the Qur'an is silent on the Christian Trinity. The Qur'an nowhere defines the Trinity, but by arguing against taking Mary and Jesus (peace be upon them) as gods along with God, as was done by some groups, the Qur'an indirectly argues against the more common belief in the Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit. For if one of the three is not God (Jesus in this case), then the Trinity is not a reality. Hence, while Pickthall's translation is preferable on this point, Yusuf Ali's is not misleading.

Fifth, Hahn appeals to Muslims to understand the Christian Trinity as really an assertion of monotheism, even as a "serious defence of the unity of God." However, I find some of Hahn's assertions about the Trinity difficult to understand. For example, he asserts that God is neither male nor female, whereas Jesus is clearly male (so too is the Father). Hahn also asserts that God does not procreate. The Funk and Wagnall's Canadian College Dictionary lists two meanings for the word "procreate." First, it means, "To engender or beget (offspring)" and second, it means, "To originate; produce." In which sense is Hahn using the word? Does he mean that God did not beget Jesus or did not produce Jesus? Either answer would seem to contradict Christian teaching, which I am sure Hahn does not intend to do. It is my experience that any attempt to explain the Trinity raises more questions.

Sixth, Hahn asks if we mean that the Jews wrote the Torah. Sr. Reema only asserted that the Jews wrote a particular statement in the Torah. Yet, it would not be wrong to assert that Jewish authors wrote the Torah in its present form after the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE and later. Some of the writing was based on earlier documents and oral tradition containing teaching believed to have been revealed by God to his prophet Moses, on whom be peace.

Seventh, Hahn alerts us to the difference it makes for a religion to be described from the inside rather than from without. Muslims are themselves all too aware of this difference, as we often are convinced that our faith is being seriously misrepresented. So, we know the feeling. We would want to make sure that we do not likewise misrepresent the faith of others. Listening carefully to how others describe their faith is essential if promotion of understanding is our goal, as it should be. Muslims and Christians need to continue listening to and speaking to each other with the hope in God that he will, through our discussions, manifest his truth to all.

Such dialogue must continue, and we appreciate Hahn's initiative. Other forums would of course be more conducive to the continuation of interfaith dialogue. This journal is meant for a Muslim readership, and will continue to address that aim although we appreciate others who may take the time and interest to read our articles. Moreover, we appreciate valuable feedback and correction such as Hahn has offered. Again, I apologise if the article or even this response to Hahn's letter should offend the religious sensibilities of anyone. My intent is only to clarify the points raised and promote mutual understanding.

Newsroom

Sunnis and Shi'ites Come Together

TEHRAN (2/2/2001) — Last month, Sunni and Shi'ite scholars gathered in Tehran to address contentious issues in their respective belief systems and move toward closing the gap that has divided them for so long.

A high-level delegation from Egypt's Al-Azhar University, Sunni Islam's most prestigious institution, represented the Sunni side at the conference, which paid tribute to two scholars, Shaikh Hussein Al-Barogudy, a Shi'ite, and Shaikh Mahmoud Shaltout, a Sunni, for their efforts in promoting rapprochement.

Shaikh Mahmoud Ashour, who headed the Al-Azhar delegation, described the bilateral event as "a major breakthrough" in the improving relations between Sunnis and Shi'ites. Noting that their real differences are in fact "minor and inconsequential," Ashour told the *Al-Ahram Weekly*: "The two are united in essential belief and there are no fundamental differences in jurisprudence."

Al-Azhar is no stranger to attempts at reconciliation between Shi'ites and Sunnis, having taken the first steps toward reconciliation back in the 1930's. In 1947, a committee was established to forge a rapprochement between the two schools of thought.

The culmination of these efforts was a 1961 *fatwa* (authoritative opinion) issued by Shaikh Mahmoud Shaltout, the Shaikh of Al-Azhar, declaring that Al-Azhar recognised Shi'ism as a valid branch of Islam.

Ashour was optimistic, saying he hoped that "what was corrupted by politics would be fixed by religion," and that the Shaikhs of Al-Azhar would play a role in reviving ties with Iran.

Source: *CIC's Friday Bulletin*

480 Afghan Refugees Freeze to Death

GENEVA (2/2/2001) — At least 480 Afghan refugees, including 220 children, have frozen to death this week, a United Nations agency said today. The victims were among 80,000 people fleeing hunger and war who were staying in temperatures as low as -25°C at UN camps outside the western Afghan city of Herat. Shelter, blankets and medical equipment to amputate frozen limbs are desperately needed, said the World

Opium Production Wiped Out in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (21/2/2001) — The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) on Tuesday welcomed a UN survey showing Afghanistan's Taliban militia has succeeded in wiping out massive opium crops in its territory.

INCB board member Dil Jan Khan said the survey, which showed the complete eradication of poppy fields in the main Afghan growing areas, was a "pleasant surprise."

The UN Drug Control Program (UNDCP) survey, which has not been officially released, covered 51 districts that produced 86 percent of last year's crop, but found only scattered opium plants and wheat instead of poppy fields.

Mulla Mohammad Omar, the Taliban's supreme leader, banned poppy growing before

Vandals Attack Cdn. Islamic Centre Animal feces smeared on Muslim house of worship

OTTAWA (21/2/2001) — The Council on American-Islamic Relations' Canadian office (CAIR-CAN) is calling on law enforcement officials to investigate vandalism at the Manitoba Islamic Centre in Winnipeg as a possible hate crime.

According to mosque officials, the vandalism occurred Sunday morning between the Muslim break-of-dawn and noon prayers. The vandal or vandals smeared the front of the mosque with animal feces, eggs and white paint. Garbage was also thrown in the area of the mosque.

The attack was the second incident of its type in the last few months. In December of last year, eggs were thrown at the mosque. Local law enforcement authorities are investigating Sunday's incident.

Food Program (WFP). Erick de Mul, coordinator for UN relief programs in Afghanistan, warned that many more would die this year because conditions are deteriorating rapidly. The ruling Taliban is trying to capture the estimated five percent of Afghanistan still under opposition control. WFP has received only \$200,000 from donor countries toward an appeal for \$3.5 million launched last month by the UN to help feed the refugees.

the November planting season and issued a decree banning the crop as un-Islamic. "I'm happy to know that Mulla Omar's decree has been implemented," Khan said after the release of the INCB's annual report for 2000, which was compiled before the UNDCP's latest survey.

Afghanistan has been the world's biggest opium producer in recent years, with a record crop of 4,581 tonnes in 1999 and 3,276 tonnes last year.

UNDCP officials said Wednesday the crop would only be a few hundred tonnes in 2001, including opium produced in areas under the control of anti-Taliban forces, which accounted for only about six percent of last year's crop.

Such a dramatic reduction in Afghanistan's opium crop would make Myanmar, which produces less than 2,000 tonnes a year from its part of the notorious Golden Triangle region, the world's biggest opium producer.

Opium is the raw ingredient of heroin, and border guards in Central Asia and Iran have frequent armed clashes with Afghan smugglers trying to reach markets in Europe and the Middle East.

The INCB report said that in Iran and Pakistan, Afghanistan's western neighbour, "opium and heroin addiction rates are among the highest in the world." The UN last year said Pakistan, where alcohol is illegal for most people, is one of the most drug-addicted countries in the world with some four million addicts. Khan said that of those, about 1.5 million were heroin

CAIR-CAN Denounces Iraq Bombing

OTTAWA (16/2/2001) — The Council on American-Islamic Relations—Canada (CAIR-CAN) joins its American counterpart, CAIR, on their denouncement of the bombing of Iraq by US and British forces.

"This kind of action does not serve the cause of peace and stability in the region. A new administration should have a new vision for foreign policy to replace one that is outdated and ineffective. Sledgehammer reactions, coming as they do at a time when Iraqi children are dying of malnutrition and disease caused by economic sanctions, will further damage America's reputation and credibility in the Muslim and Arab worlds," said Riad Saloojee, Executive Director of CAIR-CAN.

"Muslims in the US and Canada stand ready to play a constructive role in formulating a new Middle Eastern policy that is based on one standard of justice," he added.

iViews.com Attacked by Hackers

LOS ANGELES (13/2/2001) — *iViews.com*, an Islamic news website, was attacked today by hackers who took down the front page and replaced it with an Islamophobic message.

While it is not yet clear who may be behind this latest cyber crime against yet another Islamic website, the hacker made threats against such Islamic organisations as Hamas, Fatah, and Hezbollah.

"Soon I will be in amry [sic] and i will join to the war against the islamic eXtremism," wrote the hacker.

"This kind of attack is just part and parcel of the work we do at *iViews.com*. When you stand up for what's right and expose the injustices done to Muslims around the world, you can expect that others will try to silence you," said *iViews.com* editor Hebah Abdalla.

The website's technical support staff is currently working to restore the site and have alerted local and federal authorities. Meanwhile, they are urging all webmasters of other Islamic websites to take extra precautions to avoid similar attacks.

A discussion group for Muslims with technical experience and knowledge in this area has been established at the *IslamiCity* website at www.islam.org so that ideas can be shared on how to prevent this from happening to other websites.

ICNA Protests Museum Depicting Jesus as Naked Woman

NEW YORK (23/2/2001) — The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) has launched a campaign to protest the use of public funds for shows like the one being presented at the Brooklyn Museum of Arts in New York that depicts Jesus (pbuh) as a naked woman. ICNA's New York unit held a protest rally today in front of the museum. For more information, visit www.icna.org.

An Innovative Game That Brings Excitement to Islamic Education!

Mission: Survival is an educational adventure game for Muslim children living in Western societies. It is a breakthrough in Islamic multimedia software that every Muslim family should have. While traveling around the globe in a spaceship, the player has fun solving clues, and gaining Islamic knowledge and values along the way.

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For more information, please visit <http://www.missionsurvival.com/> or call 1-800-861-5217.

Are we sure about who we are?

Two Muslim youth speak out at TARIC's Da'wah Night

Remembering Our Identity As Muslims

by Hashi Mohamed
(OAC at Western Technical-Commercial School)

Many of us teens today have a serious problem that we face every day at school, when we watch the media, and when we are with our friends. We are constantly influenced by the actions, ideas, and ways of this society. Many of us have made our identity as Muslims invisible. We have lowered ourselves to the ways of this society by listening to [objectionable] music, watching television and films containing offensive language or sexual content, eating prohibited food from fast food stores, smoking cigarettes or abusing some type of drugs, drinking alcohol, and engaging in illegal relationships by having girlfriends/boyfriends.

The scary thing is that we have been convinced to perceive these things as being normal in life. Brothers have been convinced that it is okay to have relationships with women and do all that they can to get one. Sisters have been convinced that the only way to be accepted and to be popular is to wear small, tight-fitting clothing with their hair and other parts of the body uncovered. "It's the fashion," they say and they are convinced it will make them happy and bring them success. The preservation of a teenaged boy's or girl's virginity is not a virtue, but instead a disgrace. We have been taught that it is the right thing to lie and abuse our parents; obeying them is a downright lack of personality.

It sounds crazy, but whether we ignore this or not, all that has been stated has become for many brothers and sisters today a way of life. It is what our friends and even our teachers in schools demonstrate to us as very permissible.

It is what the media has marketed as a desirable and successful life. However, we have been completely deluded from the fact that is so crucial in following: As Muslims, the only way to perceive and act upon our lives is the way of our only exam-

ple, Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him). The only rules we follow are those that Allah has put forth on us. No media tactic, friend, or teacher is our example or rule-maker. How can a non-Muslim and his way of life be an example to a Muslim's way of life? How can a non-Muslim educate a Muslim on what is permissible (Halal) and prohibited (Haram)? It does not make any sense seeing that their faith and beliefs are very contrary to what our faith and beliefs are. We Muslims were taught to be different from non-Muslims. Yet, many of us have turned our lives into a duplicate of theirs. The sad thing is that we have the solution for all this, but we ignore it.

We do not have to feel that we are a group without identity. Nor should we allow anyone to stop us from following Allah's commandments. Legally, we have the right to practice our Islam in our schools. We have a right to pray during the specified times. Many schools now have prayers in a designated room. We also have the right to celebrate our holidays and wear our prescribed clothing without harassment.

Sisters should not feel shy or different from others when they wear Hijab and loose clothing. The Hijab should not be perceived as something that symbolises an outsider or someone uneducated or oppressed. It actually symbolises the opposite: It gains respect from others, it shows intelligence and wisdom, and gives self-confidence to an individual. It should be treated as a gift from Allah, not as some kind of punishment.

Brothers should not feel unmanly or immature by not having girlfriends or not smoking and drinking. A man is judged by his mind and character. The mind and character of a man should be judged in accordance with the example of the Prophet (pbuh).

The most perfect example of a man to ever walk this Earth is Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He was not a movie actor or music artist and not the most popular person in the

Our Identity Crisis

by Abdullah Bakhach

At a time where we are supposed to be the best nation as described in the Qur'an, at a time where our religion is complete and Allah has chosen what's best for us, at a time where Western culture has stooped to a level that cannot get much worse, as described Surat-al-Teen (Qur'an 95:4–5), we see our Ummah — here in North America and the rest of the Muslim World — facing a severe problem concerning our identity. It is a problem that we do not have the luxury to ignore.

Jeffery Lang said "every nine out of ten of the Muslim second generation turns to other religions." However, the rule of cause and effect applies to all humankind, including Muslims, for we are not the Chosen People; we are not what the Jews call themselves.

Allah tells us: "*The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the Signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people*" (Qur'an 62:5).

Here the donkey is carrying books that it does not understand. Allah is also alluding to us, that if we do not properly follow the Qur'an, we will not be better than the Jews. In fact, we would be as Allah described: donkeys carrying books.

What are the causes that produce the effects that we witness today? If you read *The Muslim Tribune* (December 2000), the first page has an article entitled "Measure Your Muslimness." It is a story about an incident that took place in one of the high schools in Toronto. 'Eid time corresponded with final exams at that time and one of the Muslim activists decided to lead a delegation to the principal to resolve the conflict. The

school. Yet, for some reason, many brothers and sisters in this society do not see these facts.

Other religious groups are permitted by their schools to refrain from certain school activities. The Sikhs wear their turbans wherever they go and the Jehovah Witnesses do not participate in standing up and singing the national anthem. We also have rights to do whatever is obligatory, and refrain from un-Islamic activities.

As Muslims, we should not disobey Allah for the will of anyone or anything at any cost — whether it will make us lose a few friends, upset our teachers, or make us look different from others. Because if these friends will not accept us with our Muslim identity, we will know they were not really our friends in the first place. Those teachers we upset should not be something to worry about too much. Those people that look down upon us are not people that will influence our life in any way. What will affect our lives is whether we choose Islam as our way of life or not. Nothing else! Indeed, Allah is watching of what we do and say!

principal proposed that the class teacher would conduct a survey to find out who is in favour of delaying the final exams.

When the teacher did so, he was amazed to find out that more than half of his class was Muslim, even though he had not expected half as much as a result of what he had observed from their conduct. He asked one of them, "You're a Muslim too?" The reply was, "Well, I am 51% Muslim!" and the student went on to explain that this was because his dad was Muslim and his mom was Hindu. Another one explained that his parents were the liberal type and decided to "open up" to the world once they immigrated to Canada.

If we look closely at this story, we see that all of the cases mentioned can hardly be blamed on the kids; rather, the parents must take the lead in handling responsibility. The way parents present Islam to their kids is that it is confined only to the mosque. The mosque is where they study Islam as an abstract ideology that only addresses what is above the clouds and beneath the Earth. These parents instil in them that Islam must be given more consideration only during special occasions and festivals, exactly like the Jews and Christians have done.

When these kids go to mosques and lectures, they find most speakers and lecturers putting Islam in the defensive position by advocating that Islam is compatible with modern lifestyle.

I have been to many lectures, seminars, and Da'wah programs. All too often, I sense that there are serious questions and issues that are not addressed. In my view, this explains most of the confusion in the minds of the Muslim youth today: The fact that they have lot of questions that go unanswered. They do not know what Islam is, what it stands for, or why they are Muslim.

When these ideas are indoctrinated to kids, the result is an unconfident and insecure personality: They find themselves desperately swimming against the current, which would eventually sweep them away.

We lack the vision and the focus; furthermore, we lack the ambition for our future and our kids in these countries. Just one example may illustrate the issue: The recent news from Nigeria, where a Muslim girl was sentenced by a Shari'ah court to flogging for committing fornication.

Suddenly the sky was lit with all kinds of media coverage, radio talk shows, interviews, letters to editors, Internet discussions, etc. However,

if one of us was approached by his/her classmate or teacher to give an opinion on the issue, we would be spellbound not knowing what to say: Should we condemn the Nigerian regime and implementation of Shari'ah? Can we just rely on what we read in the news? Did they convey true picture of the events? What does Islam say about that?

We did not know whether to open our mouth and if we did, what to say. When we walk away from the embarrassing scene, all sorts of questions flash in our heads . . . unanswered.

I am well aware that there are many different opinions within the community at large, but please keep one thing in mind: Let not this difference in opinion cause the loss of the youth and the future generations; Give us the facts.

We have to start teaching ourselves and our kids the true Islam — the Islam that makes us believe that this religion is the right religion, the religion that will prevail in this life. How do we do that?

I ask all the parents to rethink the way they teach their children. They have to cultivate in their children that Islam is a practical religion, by practising it, not only talking about it. When their kids have fun, they must have it Islamically; when they chose friends, it is because of Islam; when they work, they have to consider Islam; when the family discusses an issue about economics, about the father's job, about what the teacher said in class, about what the article in the newspaper is discussing, it has to be discussed relative to what Islam says. The idea that must be reiterated is that if the reality the kids or parents face contradicts Islam, then the reality must change, not Islam. Kids must believe that wherever they go, they must represent Islam in their behaviour — never to be shy — for a true Muslim has nothing to be ashamed of.

As for the lecturers and speakers, I propose the following: Do not put Islam on the defensive; do not always compare Islam to Western values and then try to link them together. Rather, you should state that Islam is the original and true solution, and that anything else is feeble. In your sincere attempt to show Islam as a modern, tolerate religion, do not pursue the method of endorsing the views of the disbelievers and proving that they do not contradict Islam, for this religion is complete. We do not have to look at others for supplementary ideas.

Da'wah Night at TARIC is on the 3rd Friday of each month.

Attributes of the Believers

continued from page 1

given by the Prophet (pbuh) they had struck a bargain which would lead them to true success and everlasting bliss in this world, as well as in the Hereafter. Whereas by rejecting the Message, the opponents had incurred loss and would meet with the evil consequences both in this world and in the next. This is the main theme of the Surah and the whole discourse, from beginning to end, is meant to emphasise the same point.

The noble characteristics of the believers pointed out in the next few verses are the arguments to prove the above assertion. It is these characteristics that depicts the Muslim character of the highest eminence, that of Muhammad (pbuh) the best of Allah's creation, whom Allah described in His Noble Qur'an: "And verily, you [O Muhammad] are on an exalted standard of character."

When 'Ai'sha (ra) was asked about the character of the Prophet (pbuh), she replied: "His character was the Qur'an." Then she recited: "Successful indeed are the believers" till "And those who strictly guard their [five compulsory congregational] Salat [at their fixed times]." Then she said: "That is how The Prophet (pbuh) was" (Related by Imam An-Nasaa'i).

"Those who offer their Salat (prayers) with all solemnity and full submissiveness." *Khashi'un* in the Arabic text is from *Khushu'* (to bow down, to express humility) which is a condition of the heart and the body.

Khushu' of the heart is to fear and stand in awe to Allah, and *Khushu'* of the body is to bow one's head and lower one's gaze and voice in Allah's Company. In Salat, one is required to show *Khushu'* both of the heart and of the body, and this is the essence of the prayer. One should neither turn to the right or left, shift about or incline side ways, but must fix the gaze on the place where the forehead would rest in prostration. Similarly, it is disrespectful that one should stand stiffly erect, recite the verses of the Qur'an in a loud resounding voice, or sing them, or belch and yawn repeatedly and nosily. One should also try the utmost to ensure that the mind and heart are wholly turned towards Allah in order to sense His Grace and to worship Him solely.

"And those who turn away from al-Laghw (dirty, false, evil vain talk, falsehood, and all that Allah has forbidden)." Literally, *Laghw* is anything nonsensical, meaningless and vain, which is no way conducive of achieving one's goal and purpose in life. The believers pay no heed to such useless things and show no inclination or interest in them. If by chance they see such things being indulged in, they keep away and avoid them scrupulously, and treat them with utmost indifference. This attitude has been described in Al-Furqan: "...if they pass by some evil play or evil talk, they pass by it with dignity" (25:72). This is indeed one of the outstanding characteristics of the believer. Even in matters of recreation and sport, he makes a choice of only those things which prepare him for higher ends in life and do not result in mere wastage of time. For him time is not something to be killed but used profitably and productively. The believer is a person who possesses a right thinking mind, pure nature and fine taste. He has no inclination to indecent things and can talk useful and healthy things but cannot indulge in idle talk. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak good or keep silent" (Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The believer has a fine taste of humour, but is not given to jesting, joking and ridicule, nor can he endure dirty jokes. For him a society in which the ears are never immune from abusive language, backbiting, slander lying, dirty songs, fortunetellers and indecent talk is a source of torture and agony. A characteristic of the promised Paradise is: "No *Laghw* (dirty, false, evil vain talk) will they hear therein, nor any sinful speech (like backbiting, etc.)" (56:25).

"And those who pay their Zakat." The word *Zakat* literally means purification and development without obstruction. As an Islamic term, it implies both the portion of wealth taken out for the purpose of purifying the rest of wealth and the act of purification itself. The words of the original text mean that the believer constantly practices purification. Thus the meaning is not confined to paying off of *Zakat* dues only, but it is extended to self-purifi-

The Rise in Natural Disasters

Continued from page 1

so there is no reason to turn away from it.)

Allah tells us in the Qur'an: "Alif, Lam, Ra. [This is] a Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that you might bring mankind out of darknesses into the light by permission of their Lord — to the path of the Exalted in Might,

cation, which includes purification of morals as well as wealth, property and life in general. This purification is thus, not limited to one's own self, but includes the purification of the lives of other people as well. So the verse means: "The believers are the people who purify themselves as well as others." This fact has been stated at other places in the Qur'an, for instance, "Successful is he who practised purification and remembered his Lord and prayed" (87:14–15).

But this verse is more comprehensive in meaning because it stresses the purification of both society and one's own person. This was also confirmed by the Prophet (pbuh) when he said: "To smile in the company of your brother is a charity. To command to do good deeds and to prevent others from doing evil is charity. To guide a person in a place where he can go astray is a charity. To remove troublesome things like thorns and bones from the road is a charity. To pour water from your jug for your brother is a charity. To guide a person who has defective vision is charity for you" (Related by al-Bukhari).

The second part of this article will be published in the next issue.

the Praiseworthy — Allah, to whom belongs whatever is in the Heavens and whatever is on the Earth. And woe (i.e., destruction) to the disbelievers from a severe punishment" (Qur'an 14:1–2).

From these verses, it is evident that the mission of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was to guide humanity and connect us with Allah, because in the second verse, it says that He owns and controls this universe and we are all dependent on Him for survival in this world.

In the past, whenever human beings became disconnected from Allah, He has exercised His most merciful quality for human existence by sending a Messenger to remind us and repair this connection with the Almighty. The Qur'an mentions that there has not been a nation to whom a Warner was not sent and that these Messengers spoke the language of their people so that the Message would be clear to them.

So the messengers came and delivered the Message, at different times and different communities, until the final Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad (pbuh) came and left a complete code of life by first living it himself, then training his noble Companions to live the same, and left the Qur'an and his teachings for future generations to follow.

The Qur'an speaks of the perfection of this religion: "And this is the path of your Lord, [leading] straight. We have detailed the verses for a people who remember" (6:126). "O you who have believed, upon you is [responsibility for] yourselves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you when you have been

guided. To Allah is your return all together; then He will inform you of what you used to do" (5:105).

Therefore, any deviation from this path is considered a disconnection: loss of favours and mercy from Allah. It is also translated as sins or transgression. History bears ample evidence of this. The rise in level of this transgression can only implore wrath, not mercy from Allah, which have resulted in minor punishments to total annihilation, depending on the severity of the offence. For example, communities during the time of Prophets Lut, Nuh, and Salih (may peace be upon them) were severely punished: "Cursed were those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed and [habitually] transgressed" (5:78).

It is not an instantaneous reaction, but after making enough allowances through various Signs of Allah, no inclination towards the Creator was forthcoming and as a result, these nations were doomed.

Take the example of Prophet Musa (pbuh), who after trying everything possible discovered that the Pharaoh's arrogance had not only distanced him from Tawheed, but his subjects as well, as long as he is made to enjoy Allah's bounties bestowed on him. The Qur'an tells us: "And Moses said, 'Our Lord, indeed You have given Pharaoh and his establishment splendour and wealth in the worldly life, our Lord, that they may lead [men] astray from Your way. Our Lord, obliterate their wealth and harden their hearts so that they will not believe until they

see the painful punishment" (10:88).

Prophet Musa's Du'a was answered and the Pharaoh and his troops were drowned.

Let us look at the state of our world today. We find that humanity has drifted away from the Creator and has given rise to unprecedented levels of arrogance, transgression, and rejection of the Allah's Power. Using knowledge and resources bestowed by Allah, humankind is not sparing any effort to challenge the supremacy of Allah in many ways. Technology has equipped them with enormous power, which instead of using it to improve the lives of people, it has captivated their minds with immoral and arrogant behaviour.

Muslims have a duty to reconnect others to their Creator. This way, we will not only save ourselves, but we will earn the title of "Khairul Ummam" — the Best of the Nation.

To be continued as Erosion of Justice. Read it in the next issue.

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My parents are precious
 My parents are priceless
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 It's the kind of love that could never decrease or cease to exist
 Unlike friends, I know to trust them all the time
 In times of joy and sadness
 In times of success and troubles
 They're always right by my side
 Find a friend that will love you and care for you like your parents will
 Find a friend who will feed you, clothe you, teach you, and stand by you like your parents did
 Always love and obey your parents
 And always take advantage of the fact that they are still with you today
 For Allah is the only One Knowing of when they will leave you and pass away . . .

Hashi Mohamed
 OAC and MSA President
 Western Technical-Commercial School

A Trip To The Country

One day a father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the firm purpose of showing his son how poor people can be.

They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family. Upon returning from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

"It was great, Dad."
 "Did you see how poor people can be?" the father asked.

"Oh yeah," said the son.
 "So what did you learn from the trip?" asked the father.

The son answered, "I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have

walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them."

With this, the boy's father was speechless.

Then his son added, "Thanks dad, for showing me how poor we are."

From Farhan Ali Khan

Work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls — family, health, friends and spirit — are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be forever scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life. How, you ask?

Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself

with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special. Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you. Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as you would your life, for without them, life is meaningless.

Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living in the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time, you live ALL the days of your life. Don't

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

Brotherhood Established!

One of the responsibilities of any Muslim, and especially that of a Muslim leader, is to look after and protect his other Muslim brothers and sisters. Soon after Masjid-al-Nabi was built in Madinah, the Prophet (pbuh) called together the Muhajirin (those Muslims who had migrated from Makkah to Madinah) and the Ansars (the Helpers of Islam). He gathered both groups together and said, "All Muslims are brothers to each other. Our Muhajir brothers have left their homes in Makkah. They have given up everything they owned for the sake of Allah. I want each Ansar to accept one Muhajir as his brother."

The Ansar, who were willing to do anything to please Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), each took one Muhajir as a brother-in-Islam. The

Ansar equally shared all their belongings with their Muhajir brothers. The Ansars knew that if they shared their wealth with another, Allah would bless them and their wealth. By sharing with another Muslim in need, their wealth would not decrease but would increase instead.

The brotherhood of the Ansar and Muhajirin is called *Mawakhat*. The Muhajirin were very happy to have such kind and sharing brothers. They accepted only as much as they needed and never took advantage of the Ansar's kindness. The Muhajirin learned from the Ansar and soon they were able to become self-sufficient; they learned about agriculture, became farmers and some even started their own businesses.

The Muslims of Madinah created their own government where the Prophet

Muhammad (pbuh) not only was their leader, but their guide, teacher and advisor as well. The Muslims learned about Islam from the Prophet (pbuh). If there were an argument between the people, the Prophet (pbuh) would settle it. In addition, the Prophet (pbuh) discussed various matters with his Sahaba (companions) and asked for their advice, showing us the importance of Shura, or making decisions by consulting with others.

The Muslims met together five times a day to pray to Allah. When a Wahi (revelation) came to Muhammad (pbuh), he would recite it to the Muslims of Madinah. Some of the Muslims would write down the Wahi, while others memorised it by heart. With each passing day the Muslims became closer to one another and stronger in their faith.

Lessons in Life

give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying. Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is this fragile thread that binds us to each other.

Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave. Don't shut love out of your life by say-

ing it's impossible to find. The quickest way to receive love is to give; the fastest way to lose love is to take it for granted; and the best way to keep love is to give it wings. Don't run through life so fast

that you forget not only where you've been, but also where you are going. Don't forget, a person's greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated. Don't be afraid to learn. Knowledge is weightless, a treasure you can always carry easily. Don't use time or words carelessly. Neither can be retrieved. Life is not a race, but a journey to be savoured each step of the way.

Hey Kids! WE WANT YOU!

The Kidz Korner is looking for young and talented writers, poets and artists! Don't let your talents go to waste . . . submit your work to be published in a future edition of *The Ambition*. Please submit entries by March 31, 2001 or contact Farheen at kidzkorner@theambition.com



Protect	Mawakhat
Masjid Al Nabi	Leader
Brothers	Government
Sisters	Shura
Shared	Wahi
Kindness	Revelation
Brotherhood	Faith

P R O T E C T H F R G V I M
 R E V E L A T Y F A M B B A
 O V O L N E E J H R A F R W
 P E S P A T R U K N W G O A
 H A O S R I D C L W A H T H
 E A N I L E R A I M K K S T
 F R W R I D R O O H U R L
 W U A A A I D A Z M A T E O
 A H H H J P A R E D T S H O
 H S I S H U Z A A L F G T C
 J M A I T A L A V E R T O M
 K M K I N D N E S S A H R A
 S I S T E R S H Y U G H B L
 R H T I A F A I T G D F F S
 E E R E V E L A T I O N G I

Muslim Investment 101

Investment Know-How: Educate Yourself



by Gemma Salamat, CFP, CHRP, CEB

In the last issue, I covered the very basics of cash flow and net worth calculations which form the blueprint for an effective investment program. In this issue I will cover the points you should consider before you can make the actual investment decision.

Are you a Do-It-Yourselfer or an Advice-Seeker?

The best advice I can give you is to become informed and educate yourself in the area of investments and the choices you will have as a Muslim looking for “Halal” investments; this is whether you choose to do it alone or get the help of an advisor. Investing is not an easy subject and it is a real test of endurance for Muslims in Canada to find investments that satisfy Shari’ah principles.

The problem we as Muslims face is to find consistent and practical advice for those who must live, work and prosper within this traditional, western, capitalistic culture with its interest-based banking system. Some scholars take a very narrow and strict approach while others accept that if we are to survive we must accept that what seems to be purer than pure is inextricably interwoven with varying degrees of impurity. The only advice I give you is to seek knowl-

edge and find your own comfort zone. Many of the mosques give lectures on this subject and you should contact one near you to see if there is an upcoming series or someone to whom they could refer you.

Whatever route you follow, remember that grasping the complexities of financial management and investments is not for those who want quick answers or who have little time, patience, knowledge, or inclination for research. If you fall into this category, then my next best advice is to find a trusted advisor to guide you to the right Islamic investment. However, be forewarned: Advice does come with a price tag!

What Should You Buy?

As Muslims we have the same choices for investments as others. These are to buy shares in a company whose business fits in the acceptable category, to invest in a small business either alone or in partnership with another investor, to buy real estate, or to invest in a mutual fund that satisfies all of the Shari’ah requirements.

What option you choose will be determined partly by how much you have to invest and whether you plan to use the services of an advisor.

Finding an Advisor

Finding the right advisor is not

easy. Those wanting Islamic investments must find an advisor who understands what is permitted and what is prohibited. As a reminder, interest or *riba*, as are businesses involved in pork, alcohol, tobacco, weapons, cinema, gambling, and entertainment are prohibited. Then you need to find an advisor who is qualified to undertake the type of services you want. If all you want is to buy a mutual fund such as *StrategicNova*’s SAMI, you can go directly to the company or find someone who has a mutual fund license. But, if you want advice and someone to buy stocks of “Islamically correct” companies you need someone who has the license to give advice and buy and sell securities.

Understanding Taxes

It is also important that you understand how you are affected by taxes. Invest first to defer, to minimize, and to the extent possible and legal, to avoid taxes all together. As an example, the highest tax rates apply to employment income and interest received, while earnings from investments in shares of companies called capital gains are taxed at 50%. Small businesses have a lower tax rate than individuals and you can deduct certain expenses too. Also, use your RRSP room to the limits if you can.

Understanding Fees

Fees abound in the investment world. Full service brokers, discount brokers, and online trading typically cost you per trade depending on the level of advice given. Also, mutual fund companies have many different types of fees. When you invest in a mutual fund you will get a prospectus (which is about an inch thick) that sets out all the fees, including what the managers are paid to manage the fund and what and how advisors are paid. Total fees are known as the Management Expense Ratio (MER) and could range between 2–3% of the assets for a Canadian equity (stock) mutual fund. As an example, if the fund earned is 10% and the MER is 3%, you will really get a net return of 7% on your investments.

Time for Action

You are now at the point where you must stop sitting on the fence and make decisions. You must decide whether you are going to do it yourself, or through an advisor. You set your goals and go to it.

You must choose whether you are buying the individual stocks such as *Nortel* and whether you will go through a full service broker such as *Nesbitt Burns* or a discount broker such as *TD* or *E-Trade*. If you are getting into a small business or a joint

venture remember to do things legally — get the agreements and charters in place now. Many family business and best friends end up in courts or in coffins because of “loosey goosey” promises and practices.

Ultimately, you make your pick and wait for the returns over time. But remember that the world and you do not stand still. Periodic review is necessary. You should monitor how you are doing against your goals and at least once a year you should fine-tune your plan for changing circumstances such as marriage, divorce, birth of child, death of spouse, etc. Review your portfolio, transaction reports, and your statements when received. If you have an advisor, you should also review their services periodically as your needs may change or you may want better and different services. Things can and do go wrong, but if you are prepared, there should be no unpleasant surprises.

Final Comments

Many people have the knowledge, time, patience, and discipline to handle their own investing and personal finances. However, this requires strong conviction and commitment to do it right. At the other end are those who use a full-service advisor. In between are those who run after yesterday’s hot buys and those who short-change themselves by investing on the run, on their own, and with little or no experience. Studies have shown that the informed and those using professional advice on average get better results. So, which type are you?

Only you can decide.

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