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Utopia! Fact or Fiction?!

Despite the mistake that man made by taking the Trust of Allah, utopia is still achievable.

by Safoora Ahmad
Gr. 11, Western Tech.

Utopia. Is it fact or is it fiction? People may wonder if it is achievable. What is utopia? It is a place in which people live under perfect conditions. Everything is flawless and according to their wishes.

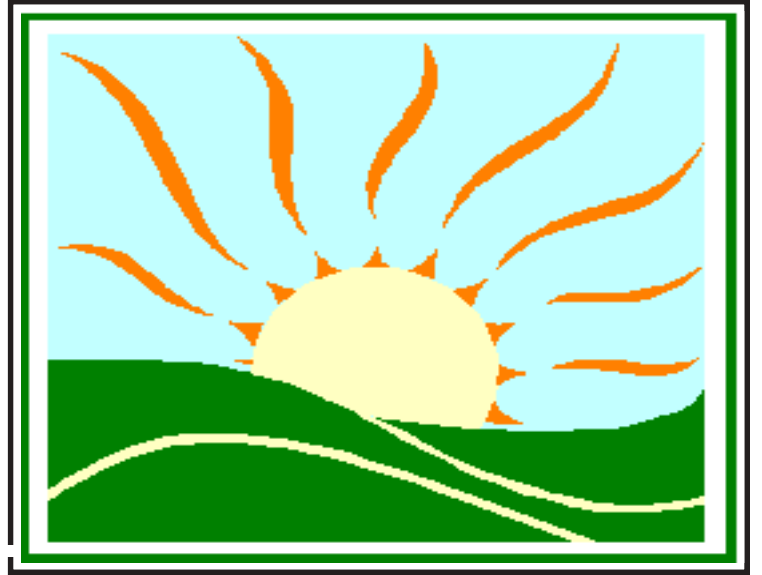
In my opinion, utopia (on Earth) is fiction. It is impossible for man to create such a place. Not one place on Earth can match the description of utopia. Man, because of his nature, cannot live a perfect life on Earth. He could have lived a perfect life if he had

not taken the Trust offered by Allah. In the Qur'an, Allah says: "We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof. But man undertook it. He was indeed unjust and foolish, (with the result) that Allah has to punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the unbelievers, men and women, and Allah turns in Mercy to the believers, men and women; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (33:72-73).

The heavens, the Earth, and the

mountains, among other creations of Allah, refused to take the Trust or responsibility. So we can imagine that they are happy without the choice of good and evil. They put all their trust in Allah, and submitted their will entirely to Allah's Will, which is wise and perfect, and which would give them more pleasure than a choice made by their own imperfect knowledge. Man did not realize this because he was too proud and ignorant. He thought he could handle the Trust of Allah, but as a result, man as a race has been co-

Continued on page 6



State of Islam at U of T Islam is alive and well among our youth!

by Ahmed Mian
1st year, U of T
(St. George Campus)

The days prior to the start of the 1997-98 school year were ones of anxiety for me. I was about to embark upon my post-secondary education at the University of Toronto. Like a lot of first-year students, I was worried for many of the obvious reasons, but, being a Muslim, I was also concerned about prayers (Salah), about Juma'h, about what the spiritual condition of fellow Muslim students would be like and what would be the state of the Islamic atmosphere in such a large, predominantly impersonal and slightly intimidating environment. Coming from a very strong and close-knit Muslim Ummah at my high school, I pondered on the degree of how personal my new Muslim community might be.

Al-Hamdu-Lillah, all of these worries were resolved quite swiftly and with a resounding effect which I will remember for a long time to come. Within the first few days I met many Muslims in my classes and right away, all of us got along nicely due to meeting at the jam-packed Friday prayers and during Salah which takes place in a room designated for Muslims to go and pray five times a day, in congregation or solitary worship. On this huge campus, while rushing to class, Muslims always take the time to say "Assalam-u-Alaikum" and ask "how are you?" Within the crowds of students you can always see a handful of brothers and sisters with strong Islamic identities, which makes you even more proud. The Muslim Students' Association is also very strong and hardworking, always setting up info-booths and holding social gatherings such as the Welcome

Continued on page 6

Elderly Abuse: Crime of the 90's

Abuse of the elderly is the hidden face of family violence in North America. Muslims must be vigilant about this abhorring crime that has no place in Islam.

by Mir Farhan Ali Khan

With good health and a sizable pension, 76-year-old Mary T. should have been enjoying a comfortable retirement. But in fact, her life was miserable by a seemingly endless barrage of threats, insults, and indignities from her live-in adult son. A habitual gambler and drug user, the son was merciless: he spat at Mary, brandished a knife in her face, stole her money, and sold her possessions. His physical abuse caused her to be hospitalized twice.

Although it would be comfortable to believe that situations as disgusting as this are rare, unfortunately it isn't so. News of the 1990's: Mistreatment of the elderly is occurring every day in homes across the globe. The aged are victimized in some way by family members, most often their own adult children. Some are physically battered, but many more are psychologically tormented or verbally abused. They're

A study by the National Center on Elderly Abuse (NCEA) of elderly mistreatment cases in 39 states in the United States in 1994

financially exploited, stolen from outright or legally manipulated. They're subjected to neglect that's

often deliberate—not fed properly, not bathed, not talked to, kept isolated from the outside world. In most cases, the abused elder is a woman.

Family members—usually adult children—are the most frequent abusers of older people living in the community. In cases where there is a history of family conflict, past resentments readily flare up. Social workers have heard the justification time and again that "she's only getting back what she gave out to me."

They also routinely see the

Continued on page 6

Sports and Recreation

A healthy body and a healthy mind go hand-in-hand

by Mohammad Ishaque Bhimla

Physical activity helps to maintain a sound body. A sound body has a sound mind. We all know that very well. It is now accepted by the medical profession that physical activity and regular

exercise prolongs a healthy life even if they may not expand our lifespan.

Muslims are encouraged by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to participate and take part in many kinds of games and sports. It is

reported by Ahmad and Abu Daoud on the authority of Aisha that she said, "I raced with the Prophet (pbuh) and beat him in the race. Later, when I had put on some weight, we raced again and he won. Then he said, 'This cancels that.'" The Prophet (pbuh) was over fifty years of age when he raced with Aisha.

The sports activities at the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) included foot racing, wrestling, archery, spear-play, horseback riding, swimming, and hunting. Some of these sports had conditions attached to them. These conditions were, as the Prophet (pbuh) has said in this context and it is reported by Muslim on the

Continued on page 6

Inside This Issue

Muslim Role Models: Khabbab ibn al-Aratt	3
Why do we exist	4
Holidays	4
Fear Allah	4

Backbiting	5
Who's to say?	5

Departments

Editorial	2
Letters	2
Your Questions	4
Kids' Korner	7

Editorial

Christmas: Pageantry or Paganry?

It's that time of year again. The snow has not yet fallen, but the lights are being put up. Green and red dominate the cityscape. Amidst all the consumerism and demands for Disney-endorsed products, nobody ponders over the true meaning of Christmas.

The allusions to Christ's birth would have you think that Christmas has something to do with Christianity, in its origins or as a moral creed. The festive atmosphere would also have you think that Christmas has to do with peace on Earth and good-will towards others.

Not so. The Christmas date bears no relation to Jesus (pbuh), the true season of whose birth seems to be late summer or early fall. December 25th became the date of Christ's birth in the fourth century because it was already celebrated as the birth of the Sun—*natalis invicti solis*.

Since the earliest times, the inhabitants of northern Europe have observed the winter solstice, the turning point when winter having reached its zenith has also reached the point when it must decline towards spring. According to the Julian calendar, the winter solstice fell on December 25. The Eastern calendar placed the solstice on January 6, accordingly, that day was also Christmas. The two traditions were finally reconciled by the invention of the Feast of Epiphany.

Initially, there was a lot of resistance; many denounced the new celebration as thinly disguised Sun-worship. Surprisingly, as late as 1647, Christmas was banned by Britain's Puritan Parliament as being pagan.

The solstice was celebrated vigorously in northern Europe, where the darkness and cold of winter are most noticeable. On the British Isles, gifts were exchanged on December 25, well before Christianity washed ashore. Oddly, in ancient Japan, the winter solstice was marked by dragging home an evergreen.

And what about Santa Claus—that mysterious figure who dominates the holiday festivities as Jesus (pbuh) never has? We know that *Santa Claus* is a contraction of *Saint Nicholas*. However, we know nothing about this Nicholas, except that he was a bishop of a town in fourth century Asia Minor. It seems that early on, a confusion developed between him and a northern European with a similar title. He is known in common folklore and early literature as Nick, sometimes Nickel, and at other times Nikker. He is said to be a demon or the evil spirit of the north. Illustrations show him as an aged creature with a flowing, white beard.

Ironically, the leading figure in most of the pagan festivals was an old man with a large, white beard. In the Bacchanalia, the chief god was not actually the young Bacchus, but rather the aged Silenus, god of the drunkards (the face of Father Christmas was ruddy more from alcohol than from the cold). In the Saturnalia, it was Saturn, the god of time; and in the Germanic pagan feast of Twelve Nights (surprisingly, held from December 25 to January 6), it was Thor, a patriarchal warrior. These figures are only a few of the many others who play a role in the development of the Christmas aberration.

In Biblical times, the devil's throne was considered to be "in the uttermost recesses of the north" (Isaiah 14:13). Thus, Satan was thought to preside over the winter dark. Some writers have even envisioned Hell to be in the north. They claim that the devil drives a team of reindeer and is often covered in red fur, as is Santa Claus. If Satan is often black with soot, it is from sliding down chimneys, pursuing the flames below; if he carries a sack, it isn't for gifts, but for kidnapping bad little boys and girls (Dutch kids still fear such abductions). If Santa leaves a piece of coal in a child's stocking, it ultimately came from that hot, infernal place known as Hell. If milk and cookies are left out, they are for Lucifer's delight, as a bribe to leave the home in peace. Finally, isn't it ironic that the letters of the word *Santa* can be rearranged to form the word *Satan*? Sometimes the truth hurts, but it's plain and simple: Christmas is a pagan festival honouring the birth of the Sun and Santa Claus is actually the devil himself!

That's only a glimpse at the horrendous amount of distortion and paganism that has been incorporated into the Christmas celebration and spread across the globe in the names of love, giving, and mercy. As followers of the Last Messenger of Allah (pbuh) and bearers of the only surviving pure Scripture, it is our duty to educate our families, friends, and acquaintances. We must stand firmly for the truth despite the pagan onslaught around us. May Allah give us the strength to succeed in this noble task and may He hasten the return of the Prophet Jesus (pbuh) through whom all falsehood shall be cleft asunder.

Muhammad Basil Ahmad

Letters to the Editors

The Ambition appreciated by reader

Dear Sister Asma,

Salaam Alaikum. It was a great pleasure to meet with you and sit next to you at the HCI (Human Concerns International) dinner. It was only when I came home and read through your publication, *The Ambition*, that I found what an excellent publication it is and I must applaud your efforts in producing a well rounded and well researched document. As a matter

of fact, it will please you to know that I am making photocopies of some parts of your publication (with your permission of course) to distribute at two youth lectures I am giving this weekend.

I wish you much more success and Insha-Allah will be happy to publicise your paper wherever possible.

Jazak Allah Khairan
Raheel Raza

Another Fundraising Dinner!?

It has become a new trend to hold fundraising dinners for all of our causes but do we really need them? A ticket to one of these dinners usually costs approximately \$20.00 and up. Many times there is no youth, child, or family ticket. Recently, a fundraising dinner was planned by one of our religious organizations with a ticket of \$20.00 per person. The ticket included a banquet hall dinner and a lecture about some very important topic for our community. Although our family wanted to go, it was unfortunate that we could not attend. The reason we were unable to attend was that we could not afford it!

As a large family, there are many important lectures and workshops that are too costly for us. If we wanted to attend that lecture, it would have cost us \$140.00 for tickets plus any donation given on top of that. In the economic situation of today, not every family has extra money lying around for a dinner. Many times, people are pressed for money and it becomes more important not to spend this money than to go and get this important knowledge. When living on a budget, most families are unable to spend money on extravagances even though it may be something of interest to them. When it comes down to it, many of us choose to accept that although the topics being discussed are important, interesting, and useful to us as Muslims, we must choose *not* to go!

If our Muslim organizations want to do some fundraising, why not arrange workshops with good guest speakers and a small cost. Forget about the dinner and provide snacks or have the participants bring their own lunch or snacks or even have snacks on sale! By doing this everyone will save money on the ticket, have more to donate, and learn something in the process.

The important thing is that the information is being passed on and is accessible to everyone, not only the rich! The youth, seniors, and families have the right to learn about Islam and they also have the obligation to donate money in the way of Allah. But after paying for a costly ticket, how much can we donate? The answer is: Very little, if any at all.

There are many other ways to raise funds. Instead of dinner,

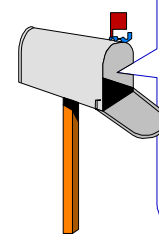
Beware if it is too good to be true

There are some organizations that work hard and around the clock in order to steal money from people by deceiving them with modern, devilish tactics. I would like to write some true stories and I would like to warn everyone to be extremely careful and alert of such dangerous criminals.

They send you a letter saying that you have a chance of winning such and such amount if you fulfil the requirements. These requirements usually involve spending money!

A person recently called me at home asking me whether I would be interested in being a part of their growing company and get more than thousand dollars a week. After I accepted the offer, they warmly congratulated me and provided me with a phone number to call in order to register my name to the company and start the "imaginary" job immediately. They said that there was absolutely no charge for making that call. After investigating that number I was shocked to realize that the charge for dialing that unusual number was over \$100.00!!

Recently, after sitting at a donut store and thinking for a better way of how to get a job, I grabbed a free newspaper called the *Employment News* and I was extremely happy to see some ads indicating that just for stuffing



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

Thank you for the kind words. We are grateful to Allah and thankful to our team for their efforts and dedication in putting this journal together. May Allah bless all of us. (Asma Warsi)

fundraising committees should look into things like garage sales, craft sales (where people can donate things to sell), and Muslim businesses can be approached for donating goods which can be auctioned off. The amount of planning for a different type of fundraiser may mean a little more work but it would certainly be a much needed change. Who knows, it might even become a new trend!

Nosheen Khan

envelopes at your home, you could get more than a thousand dollars a week. So, even before finishing my coffee, I ran outside and sent the company a stamped envelope as they required, to grab the opportunity. I also told my friends about it.

Approximately after a week, I was contacted by the company by mail. They warmly welcomed me and congratulated me for making such a "wise" decision and they asked me to send a "very small amount of \$50 for the acceptance and registration fee!" Some of my friends sent their money also and we are still waiting to be registered at that "imaginary" company. Such ads are still found in newspapers and I don't know why those people have got the freedom to practise these criminal acts.

The other tactics the crooks use is by advertising what is called the "Psychic Network." They urge people to call a 1-900 number in order to know about their future! These calls may cost a lot of money. No one knows about the future except Almighty God.

I would like to warn all people to be extremely careful and alert of such organizations. We should spend our money wisely, carefully, and Islamically.

Abubakar Nurain Kasim

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This Journal is dedicated to:

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Muslim Role Models

Khabbab ibn al-Aratt

by Shazeela Ali

This is the story of a little slave boy named Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, who was taken away from his hometown by Arabs and brought to Makkah. There, he was sold at a slave market to a woman named Umm Anmaar. Umm Anmaar made him an apprentice to a blacksmith in Makkah so he could learn the art of making swords. Just months after, Khabbab became an expert amongst the Makkan people for his integrity and honesty.

Even with this instant fame, Khabbab still was very unhappy for he was disgusted by the Makkan way of life and felt their society was one of corruption. Khabbab became an outsider to the lifestyle of the Makkans and soon began searching for a light to lead him to a better way of life. As it happened that light was not too far away.

At that time, there was a man by the name of Muhammad ibn Abdullah who claimed to be the Messenger of Allah (pbuh). He spoke to the Makkans of a life free of oppression and injustice, a life of compassion and care for those less fortunate, a life that denounced the privileges of those with wealth, but even more importantly a life based on worshipping one God—Allah. Muhammad (pbuh) called this life style Islam.

Khabbab felt very happy as he found the light that he yearned for, the light of Islam. As soon as he heard about its wonderful beliefs, he became a follower.

Seeing that he chose to practise Islam openly, the news spread fast. Umm Anmaar was very upset when she heard about it. One day, her brother Siba'a ibn Abd al-Uzza and a gang of youths confronted Khabbab. They asked if he had given up his religion and chosen a new one. He replied, "I have not given up my religion. I only believe in One God who has no partners. I reject your idols and I

believe that Muhammad (pbuh) is the Messenger of God." Siba'a and the youths got so angry that they started to beat Khabbab with their fists and iron bars. This continued until Khabbab fell to the ground unconscious with blood streaming from the wounds he received.

Everyone in Makkah was surprised with Khabbab's brazenness and boldness. No one could believe that he would actually go against the authority of Umm Anmaar and denounce the religion of her forefathers. Fellow Muslims, on the other hand, were encouraged to practise Islam openly as Khabbab, instead of behind closed doors.

But life was not easy for them, especially for Khabbab who was still being tortured by Siba'a and his people. Each day they took Khabbab to an open area in the city when the sun was at its zenith and the ground burning hot. Here, they took off Khabbab's clothes and dressed him in armor and laid him on the ground. Then they would repeatedly ask him about Muhammad (pbuh) and he would reply, "He is the servant of God and His Messenger. He has come with the religion of guidance and truth, to lead us from darkness into light." Becoming furious they would ask him about al-Laat and al-Uzza and Khabbab would reply, "Two idols, deaf and dumb that can not cause harm nor benefit to anyone." Khabbab's reply enraged them more and they took a big hot stone and placed it on his back.

One day, Umm Anmaar saw Khabbab talking to the Prophet (pbuh) and flew into a blind rage. For this Khabbab was punished by having a red hot iron placed on his head. He had to go through this every day. Often the agony was so unbearable that it caused him to faint.

When Prophet Muhammad

(pbuh) gave his companions the permission to migrate to Madinah, Umm Anmaar could not do anything to prevent Khabbab from going because she herself became inflicted with a terrible illness. She suffered severe headaches and her only cure was to have a red hot iron placed on her head. How ironic it is that her punishment to Khabbab would be the only cure for her headaches.

In Madinah, Khabbab was very happy. Years after the Battle of Uhud, in the last phase of his life, he was blessed with incredible wealth. With this wealth, Khabbab was very generous. He openly left his money for needy people to use without any question being asked.

For some reason, though, he was often seen crying. When asked why he cried, he replied, "I cry because my companions have passed away and did not obtain any such reward in this world. I have lived on and have acquired

this wealth. I fear that this will be the only reward for my deeds."

After his death, Ali (ra) who was the Caliph at the time, said, "May God has mercy on Khabbab. He accepted Islam whole-heartedly. He performed Hijra willingly. He lived as a Mujahid and Allah shall not withhold the reward of one who has done good."

As Khabbab placed all his trust in Allah so should we, for as Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "If you put your whole trust in Allah as you ought, He most certainly will satisfy your needs, as He satisfies those of the birds. They come out hungry in the morning, but return full to their nests" (related by Tirmidhi).

Keep your eyes peeled for our next issue in two colours.

From the Qur'an

"Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with you unless you follow their form of religion. Say: "The guidance of Allah, that is the (only) guidance." Were you to follow their desires after the knowledge which has reached you then would you find neither protector nor helper against Allah."

(Qur'an 2:120)

From the Hadith

Abu Said al-Khudri narrated: "The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'You will follow the wrong ways of your predecessors so completely and literally, that if they should go into the hole of a mastigure (lizard), you too will go there.' We said, 'O Allah's Apostle! Do you mean the Jews and the Christians?' He replied, 'Whom else?' (Meaning, of course, the Jews and the Christians.)" (Sahih Al-Bukhari)

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Your Questions

Answered by *Shabir Ally*

Q *Muhammad is dead but Jesus is alive. Doesn't that mean that Jesus is superior to Muhammad?*

A Muslims believe that Jesus and Muhammad were both prophets and messengers of Allah. Peace be upon both of them.

Muslims will not belittle any of God's prophets or reject their message. The Qur'an tells us to declare our faith in all of the prophets including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and that we should make no distinction among them (Qur'an 2:136, 3:84, 2:285). This means that since each of them preached the true message of God, it would be wrong to say we believe in some but not in others.

The prophets themselves were humble servants of God. They did not try to prove themselves superior to others. It would be wrong for their followers to argue over who is superior.

Once a Muslim and a Jew were arguing. The Muslim said that Muhammad is superior over all the people. The Jew said that Moses is superior over all the people. When this was related to the Prophet Muhammad, on whom be peace, he said, "Do not give me superiority over Moses" (Bukhari).

He also said, "None should say that I am better than Jonah, son of Matta" (Bukhari).

He also instructed, "Do not give superiority to any prophet among Allah's prophets" (Bukhari). Once he (pbuh) was asked, "Who is the most honourable among the people?" He replied, "The most God-fearing." When he was asked to name a specific individual, he replied, "The most honourable person is Joseph (the son of Jacob)" (Bukhari).

This humility was shared by other prophets too. The Prophet Jesus, on whom be peace, is reported to have said, "I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11).

But John the Baptist was also humble. He did not claim that greatness for himself. He spoke of a greater one who was to come after him. He is quoted as saying, "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie" (Mark 1:7).

When God sent the Angel Gabriel to take the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to the Aqsa Mosque at night, the Prophet (pbuh) led the prayers there, and the other prophets followed his lead. He also related the truth that on the Day of Judgement he will lead the banner of Praise under which will be all the other prophets. But the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not boast about this.

He instructed Muslims that they should not praise him as the people praised Jesus, son of Mary. He said, "Call me a slave of Allah and His Messenger" (Bukhari).

What is important is not to try and prove one prophet superior over another, but to believe in both of them. The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "If a man believes in Jesus and then believes in me, he will get a double reward" (Bukhari).

(Do you have questions? Please write to Shabir Ally c/o The Ambition)

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Journey to Islam

Highlighting the experiences of new Muslims

Journey to Islam will return.

Why do we exist?

by *Ferdawsa Mahde Musa*
Gr. 9, ISNA Islamic School

I know that the purpose of creation is a topic that puzzles every human being at some point in their life. Every one at some time or another asks themselves the question, "Why do I exist?" or "Why am I here on Earth?" I know this because I myself ask that, but, thanks to Allah and my parents, I have understood it well.

A design indicates a designer. Creation in the true sense is unique to God alone. Allah is free from all needs. It is us, the creation, that needs Him.

Allah says in the Qur'an: "Allah is the Creator of all things and He is the Guardian over all things" (39:62). We need to realize that nothing takes place in this universe without the permission of Allah. He created human beings, good and pure, with a natural awareness of good and evil. He also created desires in us, and gave us the ability to control them according to the divine law of Allah, or to turn them loose, following them blindly. Allah created mankind knowing that they would disobey Him. Thus, He taught humans, starting from Adam (pbuh), how to repent to Allah. Before creating us He knew what choices we would make in this life, what provision and opportunities He would give us, and in what state of belief we would die. In a Hadith, Aisha (ra) heard the Prophet (pbuh) saying, "Don't you know that Allah created Paradise and Hell, and He created inhabitants for each of them?" (Muslim).

If we follow Allah and his Messenger (pbuh), Allah will forgive us. In His final revelation (the Qur'an) Allah says that He loves those who do good (5:13), those who are just, those who are patient and those who put their trust in Him (3:159). In Surah Al-i-Imran, Allah instructed or told the Prophet (pbuh) to say the following to the believers: "If you really love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you and forgive your sins" (3:31). No matter how big human sins may become, the door for sincere repentance remains open until the last moment of a person's life. (The only unforgiveable sin is Shirk: making partners with Allah.)

The purpose of creation in this world is to test our conduct. This world of life and death, wealth and poverty, sickness and health, all were created to sift out the righteous souls from the evil souls. Our conduct in this world is the measure of our faith. Although these tests are not to inform Allah

Continued on page 7

Making Holidays Interesting is a Challenge

by *Nosheen Khan*

As the holidays approach, many parents will once again find themselves with bored and restless children. Hearing, "Mommy I'm bored" or asking your children "Are you going to watch TV all day?" one more time will probably drive you crazy! Here are some ideas for parents to try with their children. Many of these activities can be turned into an Islamic learning experience for the children as well as fun for the family.

1. Design a Board Game:

Either a few siblings or you and the children can try to make up a new board game.

The game can incorporate different questions from a range of topics including Sports, History, Foods and many more. Islamic concepts and questions can be included in all of these topics. To make this task more challenging, each person can be responsible for making



up one or two questions from each topic. The children can also come up with a name, rules, and a design for their game. When they are satisfied with the end result, play the game! Who knows, it may become the next Monopoly!

2. Family Tree:

Have your children write up a

family tree.

Provide your children with family pictures, paper, glue, markers, etc., and ask them to interview different family members and write a report on them. After they collect the reports, interviews, and the pictures, have the children compile it into a book for the whole family to enjoy.

Variations on this project may be to have a project on a famous Islamic personality, a story telling contest, or research on a country of their choice. To make these projects more fun, prizes can be given to the best or all projects.

3. Party Planning for Four:

For older children, have them plan a party for four.

Start by helping the children plan a menu (something they can handle by themselves) with some fun foods like fruit salad,

English muffins, pizza, juice, etc. Then get the

children to make up a guest list and

design invitation cards. On

the day of the

party,

hats and place-mats can be designed by the hostess or individually by all the guests (a prize can be given to the best design).

During menu planning, topics such as Halal foods and proper Islamic table manners can be discussed with the children.

Fear Allah, Love Allah

by *Munawar Merchant*

All religions without exception prescribe good and warn against evil. Under the teachings of the three religions of The Book which includes Islam, the reward of good deeds is Paradise while the wages of sin is Hell Fire in the Hereafter.

In the Glorious Qur'an, the very first chapter makes mention of leading a straight life and deliverance from the path of those who go astray. Throughout the Qur'an, Allah reveals that those who follow His commandments will be rewarded with Heaven while a grievous punishment awaits those who sin. What this means is that Allah is to be revered and worshipped as well as feared. Muslims, therefore, fear the wrath of Allah and lead a good life in order to escape the fire of Hell. But let us now look at the FEAR of Allah in the context of love rather than that of fear.

When we come into this world by the Will of Allah, we are cared and nurtured by our parents who love us as much as they love their own lives. Yet when we are growing up, we are afraid of displeasing them because of the punishment we can receive for not obeying them. As we mature, however, we soon realize the wisdom of our parents' guidance through discipline and grow to love and respect them for it. We are afraid of displeasing them more out of love than out of the fear of their punishment.

As Muslims, we are taught that the love of Allah far exceeds those of our parents. Take for example the blessings Allah bestows upon us out of His sheer love for us. A lifetime of prostrations in His worship would not equal the gift of sight bestowed by Him. So how can we not love Him for all his mercy. And like our parents, Allah through His Qur'anic

Continued on page 6

Backbiting Cuts Relations Like a Knife

by Zafar Warsi
Gr. 11, North Albion C.I.

Backbiting means saying something behind a person's back that he or she would not like to hear even if it's true. Backbiting takes place everywhere. It happens at school, it happens at home, and it happens during sports. It is true. Most people like to gossip and listen to rumours, but Allah says in the Qur'an, "*Cursed is every backbiting slanderer!*" (104:1). This verse shows us how much Allah dislikes backbiters.

Backbiting is one of the worst sins people commit without even knowing the consequences.

In a Hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) said: "*A mischief-maker will not enter Paradise*" (Bukhari and Muslim).

Gossip and backbiting create tension in families, cause arguments between spouses, and bring bad feelings towards friends.

In families, gossip could turn siblings against each other. How? Well at school, someone could tell a brother that his sister is saying bad things about his friends or even about him. The brother might believe it and start fighting with his sister. You might be thinking that it is only a scenario from soap operas but it does indeed happen in real life.

Many divorces happen because of rumours. Let us take an example. Suppose someone says something about a wife that wasn't true. Her husband hears this and fights with her. On the other side, the wife also hears something about him and believes it to be true. Now they are in a situation of constant fighting and distrust. Hated takes the place of love and they finally want to break the

marriage. A family is sacrificed due to backbiting.

At work and school, gossip is the favourite pastime. It's true. You can't go through a lunch hour without hearing something negative about a person. If the person being talked about is there, fine. He can stick up for himself. But if he is not there, how can he defend his rights? It's not fair to say things about people if they're not around!

Abu Hurairah (ra) reported: "*The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: 'Do you know what backbiting is?' The companions said, 'Allah and his Messenger know best.' The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'Your talking about your brother (in his absence) what he abhors (dislikes).' One of the companions said, 'O Messenger of Allah, if there is really (short-coming) in my brother what should I say?' The Prophet (pbuh) said, 'If there really exists in his life what you say then you backbite him and if no such thing exists in him then you brought a false accusation towards him'*" (Muslim).

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said that backbiting is like eating the flesh of your dead brother.

There are ways to stop backbiting. If someone at school is talking badly about somebody, all you have to do is say: "Listen, I don't want to talk or hear about it." Simple as that. Nobody is going to beat you up or kill you if you don't want to talk about someone. You don't have to listen to a bunch of garbage just to be amused for a

couple of minutes.

Most of the time, if people do not like something about a person, they tell everybody else but not the person in question. It does not solve any problem. Actually, it **creates** a lot of problems. The better way is to let the person know how you feel to his face. It is nicer than telling the whole world. Try to be polite and to-the-point. The purpose should be to rectify the situation rather than taking out your anger. The other person may agree with you or disagree, that's his/her choice but at least you would let the person know what's bothering you.

There is something that our parents have told us a number of times: "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."

We should always remember that backbiting is not amusing, but wrong, and it shouldn't happen. Yet, we are all human and make mistakes. We should ask Allah to forgive us for our mistakes.

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Who's to Say?

by Amina Bhimla

"Have you noticed how fat Nasreen is?" says Maryam.

"You know what I have heard?" whispers Kareema.

Nasreen comes into the room and sits beside her friends Maryam and Kareema.

"Assalaam-u-Alaikum, how is everything?" she asks and smiles.

They both smile and answer, "Wa-alaikum-Assalaam. We are just fine and how are you?"

The three laugh and talk. As soon as Nasreen leaves, Maryam and Kareema continue with their former conversation. They say things both true and untrue. Then there are the times they say to others what they have heard from someone else.

What the girls are doing is causing tension among themselves. It will worsen their relationship and bad feelings will build up. The problem is Nasreen does not know what has been going on. If she did find out, how would she react? She might discuss the problem, stay away from them, or take drastic measures such as doing the same to them.

Backbiting is speaking badly about someone when they are not around to defend themselves. It is a sin that is graphically described in the Qur'an: "*O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible), for suspicion in some cases is a sin. And spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would*

abhor it. But fear Allah, for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful" (49:12).

The Prophet (pbuh) also taught us not to backbite and in one Hadith he is reported to have said, "*If anybody pledges to me that he will keep his tongue under control, guard his chastity, will not speak ill of others nor indulge in slander and back-biting and refrain from adultery and similar sins, I shall assure him Paradise*" (Bukhari).

Many people backbite without even realizing it. We can pass these people as we walk in the streets. We may talk to them on the phone. We wave at them down the hall. They could be a friend, family member, or neighbour.

We should not listen to them because they can not be trusted, but unfortunately we do. The Qur'an says: "*Obey not every mean swearer, a slanderer, going about with defamations, (habitually) hindering (all) good, transgressing beyond bounds, deep in sin*" (68:10-12).

Revenge is not a smart choice. We should either discuss our problems or avoid the people who cause them.

In the end, no matter what is said, Allah will know who did wrong. The Qur'an says: "*...Allah doth declare that they are certainly liars*" (9:107). The Qur'an continues: "*Whether ye reveal anything or conceal it, verily Allah has full knowledge of all things*" (33:54).

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the message of Islam
to others.

Islam at U of T

Continued from page 1

Back Dinner (Marhaba Dinner) where you got to know many brothers and sisters (depending on your gender) over dinner, while listening to lectures on Islam.

Within the first few days, all of this has left me in total awe and made me grateful to Allah who has blessed this youthful Ummah.

In an environment where many un-Islamic activities are going on, Islam, through its sheer simplicity, beauty, and human appeal, has manifested itself very clearly and strongly through the youth who practice this Deen at all times and places in this university. Love for Islam is illustrated by the Islamic pride these students portray in their mannerism and actions.

I have realized that all of the

Muslims here are pursuing their dreams and goals by working hard in their education, maintaining Islam, and balancing both with the aid of Allah's mercy. This has culminated in easing my transition into university and I am sure that many other Muslim students at other institutions have encountered the same sentiments, primarily due to a strong MSA. All of this has further strengthened my Islam and shed light on how vital it is to communicate with fellow Muslims.

On behalf of the students who have started their first year at U of T and other institutions, I ask Allah to bless us all in this life and the next, May Allah help us achieve our goals and continue to give strength to those who are running the MSA and to all Muslims. Ameen.

Elderly Abuse

Continued from page 1

ignorance about aging, which they say is an epidemic:

"She's old, she doesn't care if she's not washed ... never goes out ... sees no one, month in, month out."

She does.

"An utter lack of respect for the elderly causes a large share of abuse," says Sandra Campbell, manager of seniors and caregivers' support services at the Family Service Association. "What you see is a gradual rolling-over of their rights. It's so easy to discount them."

One day grandma isn't feeling well; so she gives a family member money to go to the store for her. The next day, the person just goes into her purse without asking and keeps the change. The abuse takes off from there.

"Same goes with decision-making," says Campbell. "The senior stops being included. They seem less able, they're moving too slow, and the family member wants things expedited."

The next generation has to realize what is happening in their society. Elderly abuse is an issue that cannot be tolerated. Many children today might have their grandparents residing with them. They have to understand that filching money from their grandparents, not talking to them, and leaving them isolated is wrong. As the magnitude of domestic violence now plays itself out, and as those victims and perpetrators become older, the next generation, particularly those elderly people who are still living in the same house, will become greater victims of violence simply

because violence has been so ingrained in their children that they will ultimately take it out on those who are most defenseless and that is those who are most aged.

This is the picture today of the most civilized and technologically advanced part of the world. Does it also reflect the condition in Muslim families? We do not know, but it is something we should look out for and be prepared to stop at the first sight of it.

How can we do it? Simply by instilling Islamic morals and values into our children's minds and also giving them our own role model to follow.

Personally, I cannot understand why offspring turn on their frail, aged parents. Their heartless and cruel ways inflict pain, erode family relationships, and rob people of joy and grace in their later years. How can one live with the fact that they are abusing a person who brought them into this world or worked a lifetime to provide food and a better education for them? How much longer can this injustice and cruelty continue?

The love for parents is so important that the Qur'an links it with believing in the Oneness of God: "Your Lord has commanded that you worship no one but him and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them reach old age in your lifetime, do not say a single word of hurt to them, nor push them away. Rather speak to them with honourable words" (17:23).

Even if a Muslim's parents have not embraced Islam, he must fulfil his duties towards them. We can disobey them only if they force us to disobey Allah.

Sports and Recreation

Continued from page 1

authority of Hanzlah Al-Usaidi, "There is a time for this and a time for that."

This could be interpreted to mean that the time one spends in sports and recreational activities should be limited and hence it could also be said that some scholars of Islam prohibit professional sports since the player spends most of his time playing and earns his living from it. At that stage of the game it is not recreational and as we may say it, "not amateur."

We should also make clear distinction in the way we participate in our sports and recreational activities. There are

general Islamic guidelines for day to day living and these guidelines must always be adhered to.

Gambling is not allowed in Islam and therefore our sports and recreational activities should not include gambling. In addition, we should make sure it does not lead to an activity which is Haram, such as drinking, drug abuse, Zina (sex outside of marriage), violation of Islamic dress-code, etc.

In North America we also have natural limitations due to weather and short summers which limit our sports and recreational activities, unless we do some winter sports such as skating, skiing, playing hockey, or some other indoor sports.

Utopia!

Continued from page 1

corrupted. The evil ones betrayed the Trust and as a result, brought punishment onto themselves, whereas the good ones have kept the Trust (as best they could) and as a result, risen above other creations, bringing themselves closer to Allah.

Allah had planned a very high fortune for man, and put him in his perfect, uncorrupted state, even higher than the angels. But because man took the Trust and could not keep it, he made himself even lower than the animals.

Despite the mistake that man made by taking the Trust, utopia is still achievable, but not on Earth. This utopia is not man-made. It is Heaven, created by Allah, and can only be achieved by leading an Islamic lifestyle. In order to reach this destination, man must meet all the requirements of Islam.

Our present life is nothing compared to the life of the righteous in the hereafter. The Qur'an tells us: "And this life of the world is only amusement and play. Verily, the home of the Hereafter, that is the life indeed, if they only knew" (29:64).

Fear and love Allah

Continued from page 4
message guides us to choose a path which in the end will be for our benefit alone.

And once we achieve this concept of Allah and His Mercy, we should be afraid of displeasing Him out of sheer love and respect for Him, rather than the fear of His punishment in the Hereafter.

Brothers and sisters in Islam, is that not a more positive and refreshing approach to take?

Matrimonials

1. *Sunni, practising Muslimah, age 39 (looks like 34), with one child, 11 years old, enjoys reading, travelling and volunteer work, seeks practising Muslim, age 39 to 50 for the purpose of matrimony. Inquiry #71.*

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Kids' Korner

About the Prophet

The Makkans had tried to stop the Prophet (pbuh) from preaching Islam by all means. They tormented him and his followers, tortured them and even killed some, but nothing stopped him (pbuh) from working on his mission of calling people to One God.

Now, the Kuffaar (disbelievers) decided to boycott him, his entire family (Banu Hashim), and friends. Many of them were not even Muslims but their only crime was to be protective of the Prophet (pbuh). They were forced to leave Makkah and stay in the valley of Abu Talib outside Makkah. The kuffaar decided to have nothing to do with the Prophet, his family and his supporters. No one was allowed to sell or give the Muslims anything or even visit them. They were left without food or water.

The Year of Sorrow

The Prophet's Family is Besieged and Two Great Supporters Die

The siege was so strong that the Banu Hashim (the besieged) were reduced to eating leaves from trees and the boiled leather of their shoes. The children cried for milk and food. Their cries echoed all over the hills of Makkah.

It was a very difficult time for the Prophet (pbuh) and his family and followers but they remained patient and their faith grew stronger. During the sacred months, when Muhammad (pbuh) used to go out in Makkah and try to preach Islam to others, Abu Lahab used to go behind him yelling, "Don't listen to him. He is a liar." Muhammad (pbuh), weak, hungry, and thirsty, would bear all this abuse and persecution. However, he was hopeful that one day these people will accept the Word of God.

There were some kind-hearted people among the Quraish who used to

smuggle some food and water to the Banu Hashim, but the conditions were still unbearable. After three years, people started realising what they were doing to their own kin. Some of them took a brave step and challenged the chiefs of the Quraish to lift up the siege. Eventually, the Banu Hashim were allowed to come back to their homes.

The Muslims and the Prophet's (pbuh) family had suffered greatly. The adverse conditions had affected the health of Abu Talib and Khadijah. Soon both of them died. That year the Prophet (pbuh) lost two of his great supporters. It is called the Year of Sorrow. After their death, the Quraish stepped up the practice of persecuting Muslims a great deal.

A Little Bit of X-Mas Science

(This interesting article has been sent via e-mail. The author is unknown.)

1. No known species of reindeer can fly. However, there are 300,000 species of living organisms yet to be classified, and while most of these are insects and germs, this does not completely rule out flying-reindeer which only Santa has ever seen.

2. There are two billion children (persons under 18) in the world. However, since Santa doesn't appear to handle the Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Buddhist children, that reduces the workload down to 15 % of the total—378 million according to the Population Reference Bureau. At an average (census) rate of 3.5 children per household, that's 91.8 million homes. One presumes there's at least one good child in each.

3. Santa has 31 hours of Christmas to work with, thanks to the different time zones and the rotation of the Earth, assuming he travels east to west (which seems logical). This works out to 822.6 visits per second. This means that for each household with good children, Santa has one thousandth of a second to park, hop out of the sleigh, jump down the chimney, fill the stockings, distribute the remaining presents under the tree, eat whatever snacks have been left, get back up the chimney, get back into the sleigh, and move on to the next house. Assuming that each of these 91.8 million stops are evenly distributed around the earth (which, of course, we know to be false but for the purposes of our calculations we will accept), we are now talking about 0.78 miles per household—a total trip of 75.5 million miles, not counting stops to do what most of us must do at least once every 31 hours, plus feeding, etc. This means that Santa's sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second—3000 times the speed of sound. For purposes of comparison, the fastest man-made vehicle on earth, the Ulysses space probe, moves at a poky 27.4 miles per second; a conventional reindeer can run, at tops, 35 miles per hour.

4. The payload on the sleigh adds another interesting element. Assuming that each child gets nothing more than a medium-sized Lego set (two pounds), the sleigh is carrying 321,300 tons, not counting Santa, who is invariably described as overweight. On land, conventional reindeer can pull no more than 1000 pounds. Even granting that "flying-

reindeer" (see point #1) could pull ten times the normal amount, we cannot do the job with eight, or even nine. We need 71,420 reindeer! This increases the payload—not even counting the weight of the sleigh—to 353,430 tons. Again, for comparison, this is four times the weight of the Queen Elizabeth (ship).

5. Enormous air resistance is created by 353,000 tons travelling at 650 miles per second—enough to heat the reindeer up in the same fashion as a spacecraft re-entering the Earth's atmosphere. The lead pair of reindeer will absorb 14.3 quintillion joules of energy. Per second. Each. In short, they will burst into flames almost instantaneously, exposing the reindeer behind them, and create deafening sonic booms in their wake. The entire reindeer team will be vaporized within 4.26 thousandths of a second. Santa, meanwhile, will be subjected to centrifugal forces that are 17,500.06 times greater than gravity. A 250-pound Santa (which seems ludicrously slim) would be pinned to the back of his sleigh by 4,315,015 pounds of force.

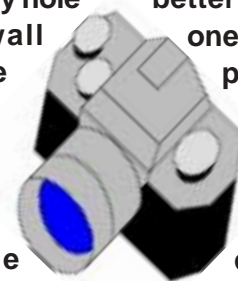
In conclusion, if Santa ever did deliver presents on Christmas Eve, he's dead now.

Cameras

by Mir Zeeshan Ali Khan, Gr. 8, Dolphin Senior P.S.

Click. Click. Click!! Do you know what machine makes that sound? It is a camera. I am going to write about the history of cameras, the present cameras, and my predictions for the future of the camera.

The first camera ever known is the *camera obscura*. This camera is a darkroom with a tiny hole in the roof or wall through which the view outside was projected upside down on an opposite wall. In the



nineteenth century, the *camera obscura* was used in photography. It was then known as the *photographic camera*. Later on, different cameras like Daguerreo-type cameras, cameras for colloidal plates, and cameras for the Calotype came to be. Daguerreo type cameras are the ones that follow the process of preparing, sensitizing, exposing, developing, and fixing. Cameras for colloidal plates follow the colloidal process in which the plate for the camera is coated with colloid. Cameras for the Calotype follow the process of making paper negatives in the camera. The camera that revolutionized photography in the 1890's was the Kodak. The Kodak was

Why are we here?

Continued from page 4

about us because He knew everything before creating us, they purify the moral character of the believers and help the believers to choose their higher spiritual qualities over their lower desires. Greed and stinginess are corrupt forms of the natural human desire to possess. The believers are informed by revelation that wealth is a trust given to people by Allah. If it is used according to divine guidance it benefits those who have it, in both worlds. But if it is misused, it becomes a curse in this life and a cause for punishment in the next. Allah says in the Qur'an, "Know that your wealth and children are a test" (8:28).

Let us all try to become better Muslims. We are here to worship Allah and not to follow our desires.

the first roll-film and snapshot camera.

The new way of taking pictures now is known as the Advanced Photo System (APS). This system allows you to do many things like a fumble-free, foolproof film loading method which eliminates blank shots and fingerprints on negatives. This system also provides more portable cameras, better prints, choice of one of three different print formats at each exposure, and compatibility with televisions and computers.

Another way of taking pictures is by using *digital cameras* that use memory cards and not film to take its pictures. They have LCD screens that allow you to see the picture instantly. You can edit the pictures from *digital cameras* on a computer.

I think in the future the camera won't be used as much. I think that it will be replaced by the *video camera*. It would be just like the way computers replaced the typewriter.

The future camera that I have designed is going to be known as the "Contact DPSB." This camera consists of two parts, a Digital Photo System Band and lenses that would be fitted in your eyes.

This camera has many features like taking pictures by using invisible lasers and also taking 3D pictures. I think that this camera would exist in the future because as technology keeps on advancing, anything is possible.

Congratulations!

Winners of the Writing Contest, 1997

Mir Farhan Ali Khan
1st Prize (Elderly Abuse)

Ferdowsa Mehde Musa
2nd Prize (Why are we here?)

Amber Shaikh
3rd Prize

(The Day of Judgement,
published in Sept.-Oct. issue)

Community in Action

M.E.N.T.O.R.S. helps educators understand Islam

by Aneesa Lakhi

On Saturday, September 27, 1997, at Woburn Collegiate Institute in Scarborough, the Muslim Education Network, Training and Outreach Service (MENTORS), in cooperation with the Scarborough Board of Education, hosted a conference designed to further the dialogue between the public education system and the Muslim community. The theme of the conference—*Cross-Cultural Understanding: The Muslim Community and the Public School System*—was designed to acknowledge the reality which exists within our schools, as children of all races, religions, and colours attempt to learn and grow together.

Beginning with a Qur'anic recitation, the conference began at 11:00 a.m. with approximately sixty parents, students and educators in attendance. The day was put into perspective by the superintendent of the Scarborough Board of Education, Paul Addie, who gave a heartfelt talk highlighting the nature of his experience with MENTORS during the past few years. As the architect of the policy guiding how to deal with time allocation for prayer during school hours, Mr. Addie had to become quite familiar with Islamic beliefs and practices. His commitment to providing a learning environment in which the focus can be on all of the different facets of a student's life has been demonstrated during his association with MENTORS and the Muslim community, and he assured those present that his efforts would continue.

The keynote address delivered by Sr. Zubeda Vahed, the Multicultural Coordinator at the Peel Board of Education, discussed a variety of issues. Sr. Zubeda began by outlining Islam's contributions to add emphasis on

the acquisition of knowledge. Pointing out the extraordinary and original efforts of Muslim scholars in the realms of algebra, geometry, and others, Sr. Zubeda also informed her audience of the central role that Islamic scholarship played in the European Renaissance. Many of the ancient texts which formed the source from which that renaissance took much of its inspiration were available to European scholars and educators only because they had been preserved by the Arabs.

Moreover, Sr. Zubeda stressed the need to become involved in the education system not simply as Muslims but as human beings. The need for activism can begin with, but need not be restricted to only Islamic goals and concerns. As an example of the type of activism she was suggesting, Sr. Zubeda gave the example of running a food drive during the month of Ramadan in order to help those Muslims who are facing economic hardships. The focus in this example does not shift away from Islam as its centre, but at the same time the goal broadens to take into account a social problem which is not restricted to the Islamic community.

Sr. Zubeda's passionate and stimulating words were followed by a student panel which attempted to give voice to some of the concerns of those most closely connected with the school system. The panel consisting of Muslim high-school students was led by Sr. Yasmin Zine, a Ph.D. student at the University of Toronto. It discussed the goals, allies, barriers, and strategies the students recognized as part of their educational experience. Amidst the concerns about the difficulties of beginning and continuing a dialogue with their teachers and peers, the problems of identity and self-esteem, the students also displayed an overwhelmingly optimistic

attitude combined with an ambitious desire to succeed both as Muslims and as students.

The panel discussion led into an informal session in which participants enjoyed lunch, performed Zuhr prayer, and got an opportunity to become acquainted with one another and share different points of view. The presence of two students from Teacher's College was particularly satisfying because it demonstrated the affect that conferences of this sort can have on the future of the education system. The curiosity, enthusiasm, and concern of the educators present was also a source of encouragement.

The final phase of the conference consisted of discussions by the participants about specific experiences, both positive and negative, that they had in dealing with the education system and what guidelines could be formulated based on these experiences to help teachers and parents. Suggested guidelines that emerged included: Encouraging teachers to use parents as resources within the classroom, encouraging parents to have regular meetings with their child's teachers, making Islam part of the "visual culture" of schools by putting up posters and other information in order to educate non-Muslims while providing a source of pride for Muslim students. All of the suggestions made by parents, students, and educators will be presented by MENTORS to the Scarborough Board of Education as part of the official report on the effects and outcomes of the conference. Insha-Allah with more efforts of this sort on the part of the Muslim community and public education system, students from all backgrounds and beliefs will be given an opportunity to learn in the best environment possible.

Local Muslims discuss how to help alleviate human suffering

by Gibran Ali

Shocking world poverty and the role Human Concern International (HCI) is playing in helping to alleviate human suffering was the theme of an information session presented to leaders representing a wide cross-section of the Muslim community in the Greater Toronto Area. The event was sponsored by the GTA volunteers of HCI. The objectives of the evening's discussion were to further develop and enhance the Muslim community's efforts to help in eradicating poverty and providing relief to those most affected.

It was noted that there is a prevalence of Muslims among the impoverished and those forced from their homes. Of the 1.4 billion Muslims in the world today, it is estimated that more than 700 million are challenged by conditions of poverty and a further 28 million have been forced from their homes through natural or man-made disasters.

According to the 1997 UNDP Human Development Report, "The costs of eradicating poverty are less than people imagine—about 1% of global income and no more

than 2-3% on national income in all but the poorest countries." Participants were reminded that God has mandated Muslims to pay 2.5% of their wealth to assist the poverty stricken and those in need of relief. This is the right of the needy over those who can afford to pay.

The session explored ways in which the community can assist HCI in its mission. These included financial support mainly through the channelling of Zakat and charity through HCI, sponsoring children, supporting projects, giving moral support by introducing HCI's services to associates, and by volunteering time and expertise.

Br. Abdullah Idris, principal of the Islamic School in Mississauga, advised the participants that it is the collective responsibility of the Muslim community to respond to the needs of the poverty-stricken and the displaced in an efficient and effective manner. He endorsed the work done by HCI over the past 17 years and called upon the leaders of the Muslim community to strengthen and support Human Concern International.