

The Ambition

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Mutual Consultation

It is necessary for Muslims to discuss their matters

By Muhammad Basil Ahmad

Shura is an Arabic word that means to make decisions by mutual consultation and participation from members of the Muslim community. Islam prohibits despotism or tyranny, therefore community decisions should be made democratically. Allah urges us in the Qur'an to use consultation: "Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) the enjoyment of this life: But that which is with Allah is better and more lasting: (It is) for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord . . . Those who respond to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who (conduct) their affairs

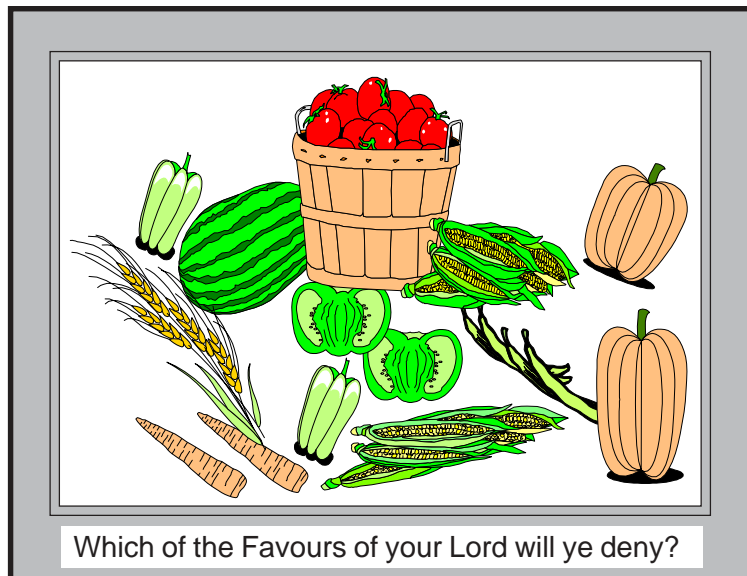
by mutual consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for sustenance" (42:36-38).

Muslim scholars have said that if mutual consultation was made necessary for the Prophet (pbuh) himself to follow, then it becomes incumbent upon his followers to resort to it in all their activities, whether they are individual, social, or political. The Prophet (pbuh) used to receive revelation from Allah, hence he was not in need of mutual consultation but still he was asked to use it through divine commandment.

Umar (ra) is known to have said that an Islamic state can never

function without mutual consultation. Once, a decision on the division of conquered land could not be reached. Umar (ra) addressed the Muslims with these words: "I have not just gathered you here and given you the trouble for nothing. The reason for inviting you is that you should also participate in the trust of the Caliphate which has been trusted upon me by you. Undoubtedly, I am an ordinary human being like you. I want that those who have opposed my point of view and those who have favoured it should declare it openly. I do not wish that you should follow my

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M.E.N.T.O.R.S.

Our very presence is an invitation

by Aneesa Lakhi
4th yr., U of T

The Muslim Education Network, Training and Outreach Services, (MENTORS) consists of a group of Muslims who in large part volunteer their time, energy, and expertise in an attempt to foster the emergence of a public education system which includes more than one point of view. Attempting to act as a "bridge" between the Scarborough Board of Education and the Islamic community, MENTORS works with policy makers, educators, parents, and students. The goal is to bring about awareness and understanding of Islam for those non-Muslims working within the education system, while at the same time encouraging Muslims to participate in and engage themselves with that system. This dialogue can then serve many purposes.

As Alimamy Bangura, the Chair of MENTORS, explains it, Muslims must show their presence within the larger community in order to demonstrate that negative stereotypes of Muslims are inaccurate. In this way a breakthrough can be brought about in the way that Muslims and an Islamic lifestyle are perceived and dealt with. Using the analogy of the fashion statement made by men wearing earrings, brother Alimamy points out that such a sight was looked down upon a decade ago, but now has been accepted by the mainstream. Similarly, part of the broader aim of MENTORS is to promote the acceptance of Muslim participation and visibility.

Noting that Muslim children are often pushed by their schools and peers to participate in Hallowe'en, Christmas and Easter celebrations, MENTORS informs teachers, principals and school

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Half or the Other Half?

Lack of Qur'anic knowledge suggests lower status for women

By Nosheen Khan

There is a big misconception among Muslims and Non-Muslims that Islam considers a woman equal to only half of a man. This thinking comes from those people who only look at bits and pieces of the Qur'an and use incomplete knowledge to attack Islam and mislead people about Islam.

Looking at the Qur'an, one can find many areas in which the quality of women is established. One of these areas concerns the testimony of a witness. It is in this area that most people feel there is inequality. This is due to the fact that the topic is not usually looked at as a whole but certain parts are taken out of the context to portray an Islam which shows women as inferior to men.

The Glorious Qur'an, through its magnificent verses, shows that a woman and her testimony is not considered half of a man's but is equal and **in some cases may be more worthy than a man's testimony.** The following eight citations from the Qur'an will show the equality of a woman's testimony.

The first issue concerns the **guardianship of orphans and their property.** In Surah 4:6 it is

said that when releasing guardianship or property to an orphan, the Qur'an encourages the trustee to have a witness confirm the transactions which take place. It does not establish the number or gender of witnesses required.

In regard to the subject of **bequests**, Surah 5:109 states that when a will is being written, or the division of property is taking place, two witnesses must be present. Once again, the witnesses can be either male, female or both.

If there is, in any situation where there is some **doubt about a witness, or if the witness is lying**, Surah 5:110 states that two witnesses must be produced (again no gender difference) against the doubtful witness to

establish his or her fraudulent behaviour.

As to witness **for slander**, according to Surah 24:4 the accuser must produce four witness of any one gender or a combination of both totaling four. If the person making the accusations fails to produce four witnesses, he/she will be punished with eighty (80) lashes and his/her testimony will no longer be accepted in an Islamic court.

The Qur'an sets out a method of protecting the honour of a woman. According to Surah 4, **if a woman is accused of indecent behaviour by someone**, four witnesses are required to prove the claim. Once again the witnesses

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Reflections On Life And Death

Whether we believe it or not, our fate is in the hands of Allah

By Huma Siddiqui

I stood there speechless, watching the pain in her eyes and listening to the mixture of defiance and fright in her voice. This news, which left me in shock for days, was given to me by a close friend telling me she has cancer. Her suf-

fering shook me up and made me realize how short life is. It made me think of death and all the different shapes and forms it comes in, holding only the pain of dealing with it and the loved ones left behind. It made me think of the time I take for granted on this Earth,

assuming that my friends and family will always be there. It made me think of all the burdens in my life that I had always thought so stressful, but at that moment seemed so trivial. I was almost thankful for them. These thoughts reinforced my own personal revelation that I can claim to truly believe in Allah while my actions reveal that in fact I blindly wander away from fearing Allah and putting my trust in Him. I can try to take my fate into my own hands, but whether I choose to remember Allah or not, it does not take away His power and in the end my destiny still lies in His hands.

This teaching has been engraved into our minds, but if we

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Editorial

Submit before it's too late!

Almighty God has sent death upon the greatest oppressors and the mightiest of men. He has broken the backs of the most powerful kings and has extinguished the dreams and aspirations of the wealthiest among us. Death was perhaps the last thing on the minds of these people. They were too busy enjoying the delights of food and drink or were too busy frolicking with those whom their right hands possessed.

Did these people build forts strong enough to battle against the onslaught of death? No, that would have been impossible as Allah has already declared: *"Wherever ye are, death will find you out, even if ye are in towers built up strong and high!"* (Qur'an 4:78).

They realized their mistake only when it was too late. Now they lie in the darkness of their graves, scavenged upon by worms and insects. They had forgotten that the life of this world would pass by like the blink of an eye compared to the Hereafter. They had not cared to follow His commandments. They worshipped the creations rather than the Creator. These people conceived of enormous plans. They entertained the thought of making provisions for years to come. Yet, death was hovering above their heads all the time.

Allay says: *"Every soul shall have a taste of death: and only on the Day of Judgement shall ye be paid your full recompense. Only he who is far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have succeeded: For the life of this world is only the enjoyment of deception"* (Qur'an 3:185).

If people actually kept the above verse in mind, then they would try to perform good deeds so that they too could be admitted to the immortal life in Paradise. Any sane person would opt for something which is ever-lasting. Unfortunately, on the other hand, we chase the transitory things in life. Our reason and understanding are blinded by the pomp and glitter of this material world.

Allah goes on to declare: *"O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. If anyone does that, surely they are the losers. And spend something (in charity) out of the substance which We have bestowed on you, before death should come to any of you and he should say, 'O my Lord! Why did you not give me respite for a little while? I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good.' But to no soul will Allah grant respite when the time appointed (for it) has come; and Allah is well acquainted with (all) that ye do"* (Qur'an 63:9-11).

We should learn from the above verse that no one can escape death, no matter who they may be. When the decreed time has come, death is inescapable! Can we not learn from the example of the Pharaoh who chased Moses into the sea and drowned? He declared his submission to God only when water was rushing in upon him from all sides. His death was sudden. His repentance came too late.

We can learn from the recent and tragic death of Princess Diana. This was a woman who lived in the spotlight and was still able to go out and show she cared for those who were less fortunate. Although she also had many failing qualities, the people of the world ignored them and came out in droves to pay their final respects. We can also learn from the manner in which she died. It was sudden. She had no chance. A similar tragedy could happen to any of us!

What if we never awake from our bed tomorrow morning? We would have no chance to even consider submitting to Allah at that fatal moment. All the things we had accumulated in this world would be of no use. They would be left behind and we would only take our deeds with us to the grave.

We should seriously consider the consequences of our actions. Every little thing we do is recorded and will one day be brought forth to testify against us on the Day of Judgement. It is not too late to change for those who realize they have gone astray. We simply have to ask for forgiveness on a continuous basis in our prayers and sincerely stop doing the things which would displease Allah.

May Allah grant us the gift of remaining aloof to the temptations of this world and may it be His Will that we act upon the teachings of Islam. However prolonged this worldly life may be, it is mortal and must end. However great may be the possessions of this world, one day they are bound to be left behind.

Muhammad Basil Ahmad

Letters to the Editors

Reader's criticism appreciated by the writer

I was pleased to read the letter to the editors by Dr. B. Akcikir Ynikomeroglu. Dr. Ynikomeroglu has many valid points which I agree with.

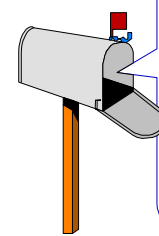
When I wrote The Scenario, it was my hope to continue with another article in a later issue with the same family group, but owing to other commitments on my time, I have not been able to follow through and was not positive at the time of writing that I could do so, and thus did not indicate that it would have a follow up article.

I agree with Dr. Ynikomeroglu that there is no excuse for violence on the part of any person, male or female. It is my personal belief that violence only compounds the problem. Having worked as a volunteer in an international shelter for assaulted women for a year and as a victim of violence myself, I have

seen first hand the results of violence perpetrated by men. However, I do not feel it right to judge all men by the actions of a few "bad apples."

My story was of an imaginary family whose life was reasonably stable and who had a happy family life until this "incident." I was writing strictly for a Muslim newspaper, not in any way implying that it was a Muslim-only problem. If I had been writing this story for the Toronto Star or the like, I would have used non-Muslim names and adapted the story line to a non-religious audience.

As for Dr. Ynikomeroglu's very valid point why Ahmad did not lose control with his boss, it could be that he knew that the employer had more power than he did, and that if he lost his "cool" he would be dismissed from his work, thus losing his ability to support his family and to have his



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.

self-esteem damaged when he could not obtain a new position since he certainly would not have received a letter of reference from his employer!

I also agree with Dr. Ynikomeroglu when she said that Ahmad's actions were definitely "bad" both from the stand point of his victims (his family members) and from the point of Islamic and Canadian law. She is completely right on this point.

Assault is never the "right way" in any society and can only cause anguish and grief, both to the perpetrator and the assaulted ones, and the action of assault is to be condemned whether it is done by male or female.

Sister Wilma

Muslim Support Services for the Sick and Elderly in the Toronto Area

Did you know that most hospitals now have Qur'ans, prayer mats, and a place for Salaat?

This is the result of efforts made by volunteers of the **Muslim Support Services for the Sick and Elderly**.

On any given day there are five to ten Muslims in the hospital in your neighbourhood.

The Prophet (pbuh) said: *"Feed the hungry, visit the sick, and free the captive."*

In another Hadith: *"A Muslim has five duties towards another Muslim: to return a salutation, visit the sick, attend funerals, accept an invitation, and say, God have mercy on you' when one sneezes."*

It is in trying to fulfil the duty of visiting the sick that a number of volunteers came together under the Muslim Support Services for the Sick and Elderly visiting hospitals across Metro Toronto.

Some hospitals our volunteers currently work with are: Scarborough General, Centenary Health Centre, Scarborough Grace, Sunnybrook Health Centre, Queensway General, York Central, Credit Valley, and Mississauga

General.

As more volunteers become available our hope Insha-Allah is to serve all hospitals and nursing homes in Metro Toronto.

What started out as a visiting program three years ago has now grown into a comprehensive service, providing the following:

1. Representation on hospitals Pastoral Care Committees.
2. Participation in Ethno-Cultural Wellness Fairs.
3. Presentations to pastors in training.
4. Presentations to hospital nurses and staff.
5. Providing Qur'ans and prayer mats for Worship Centres and Quiet Rooms.
6. Providing children's books to hospital libraries.
7. Information tables.
8. Displays.
9. Consultation services.
10. A support group for Muslims with cancer.

As the Muslim Support Services for the Sick and Elderly prepares for its upcoming information session and volunteer recruitment drive in October 1997 here are some ways you can help:

1. Let others know of our programs and services.

2. Become a volunteer. If your request is accepted, we will provide all training. However, we ask that you commit yourself for two hours a week (evenings or weekends) for a minimum of one year.

3. Invite us to share with your community how you can start a similar program, and be a part of the network.

4. Make a financial contribution towards our services. Donations can be sent to: Muslim Support Services for the Sick Elderly, 22 Grandhall Crt., Scarborough, Ontario, M1C 3N6.

Lastly, plan on attending our upcoming information and volunteer recruitment program. Please let others know of it as well.

It will be held at the TARIC Islamic Centre (99 Beverly Hill Dr., Toronto) on Saturday, October 18 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Questions in the meantime can be directed to our central telephone number: (416) 284-0131

Irfan Alli
Muslim Support Services
for the Sick and Elderly

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This Journal is dedicated to:
Prof. Ahmad Abdi, Former Principal, Govt. Education College, Multan, Pakistan

From the Qur'an

Then why do you not (intervene) when (the soul of the dying man) reaches the throat? And you at the moment are looking on, but We are nearer to him than you, but you see not. Then why do you not, if you are exempt from the reckoning and punishment, bring back the soul (to its body), if you are truthful?

(56:83-87)

From the Hadith

Narrated Abdullah ibn Umar (ra): Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said, "When anyone of you dies, he is shown his place both in the morning and in the afternoon. If he is one of the people of Paradise, he is shown his place in it, and if he is from the people of the Hell-fire, he is shown his place therein. Then it is said to him, 'This is your place until Allah resurrects you on the Day of Resurrection.'"

(Reported in Bukhari)

Muslim Role Models

Umm Aiman, the honoured nurse-maid of the Prophet (pbuh)

by Shazeeda Shakur

Many times Muslim youth complain of the lack of a proper role model to pattern themselves after. This is undoubtedly false, for one who holds this view is ignorant of the verse in the Qur'an where Allah says: "You have, indeed, in the Messenger of Allah the perfect example," (33:21), and of the statement of the Prophet (pbuh) when he said: "Verily, my companions are like the stars, whichever one of them you follow, you will be rightly guided."

There would be grave injustice done if our youth are not informed of the great companion of the Prophet (pbuh), Umm Aiman, who is also known as Barakah. She was a poor Abyssinian slave girl who was saved by the father of Muhammad (pbuh), Abdullah, and became the servant in his household when he married lady Aminah. Her piety and strength have enriched her life and her exemplary character has inspired and exhorted many who came after.

Soon after Abdullah and Aminah got married, Abdullah was instructed to go with a caravan to Syria. On this trip, Abdullah died leaving his widow in the company of Umm Aiman. During this time, Aminah was pregnant with baby Muhammad (pbuh) and Umm Aiman would lhrten tn her groans and comfort her during the days and nights of her pregnancy.

When Muhammad (pbuh) was six years old, Aminah took him to visit his father's grave in Yathrib. On their way back, she passed away after being severely ill and Muhammad (pbuh), now an orphan was left in the care of Umm Aiman for the rest of the trip. She wept bitterly and buried Aminah with her own hands. Then with a heavy heart filled with melancholy and pity, she comforted and brought Muhammad (pbuh) back to his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib,

who fostered him from then on.

Umm Aiman remained a very special and important person to the Messenger of Allah. He would speak very great of her; he used to say: "She is my mother after my natural mother." Umm Aiman also trusted, respected, and admired Muhammad (pbuh) very much. She was among the first set of people who answered the call of the Prophet (pbuh) and accepted the message of Allah. Her commitment and dedication to spreading the word of Allah and supporting the Prophet (pbuh) were outstanding.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "Should one of you desire to marry a woman from the people of Paradise, let him marry Umm Aiman." The fact that the Messenger associated this woman with paradise tells us that there are many virtues in her character from which our youths can learn.

One of the great companions, Zaid heard this beautiful statement about Umm Aiman and married her. This marriage produced a pious son, Usamah, whom the Prophet (pbuh) loved very much and considered his grandson.

In the battles of Uhud, Khaibar, and Hunain, Umm Aiman participated by nursing the wounded and caring for the Muslim soldiers. Along with her husband, Umm Aiman put her life on the line by risking the torment of the Quraish to acquire information on their plans. She risked her life as she tried to reach the house of al-Arqam to tell the Prophet (pbuh) that the enemies had blocked off all the roads leading to the house of al-Arqam.

When Muslims migrated to Madinah, Muhammad (pbuh) left Umm Aiman to take care of some things in Makkah. Later on, she made the long, rough journey to Madinah on foot where she suffered so much that when she arrived her feet were sore and she

was covered with dust. This was done because of the love she had for Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), his family, and her devotion to Allah. When the Prophet (pbuh) saw her in this condition, he said, "Ya Ummi, (O mother) indeed for you is a place in Paradise." Often, when she was asked how she was, she would reply, "I am well so long as Islam is well."

Her strength and piety were demonstrated when the Prophet (pbuh) died. When she wept, somebody asked her, "Do you cry, Umm Aiman?" She replied, "Yes, by Allah! I knew that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) would die, but I cry that the Revelation has stopped coming to us from Heaven."

As we ponder over the strong, yet humble lives of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh), we re-

alize that life is much more than accumulating material treasures. For example, if there is a death in our family, we weep and grieve because we have lost that person. We see that although Umm Aiman loved the Prophet (pbuh) like her own son, she only wept because the Revelation had stopped. The beauty of her life lies in every aspect especially the aspect of her which loved, honoured and served the family of the Messenger (pbuh) with humility and dedication.

When we reflect on these subtle acts, we can see the beauty and recognize the virtues they bring to life. Insha-Allah, we should all aspire to adopt some the great characteristics of the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions so that we can be successful in this life, but most importantly successful on the Day of Judgement.

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Your Questions

Answered by *Shabir Ally*

Q Muslims say they do not believe in the Bible. Yet, when it is convenient for them, they quote verses out of context to prove their claims. Isn't this a dishonest way of going about it?

A It is wrong and dishonest to quote anything or any book out of context, whether it be the Bible or the Qur'an. No Muslim should resort to such an approach. God wants us to spread the truth by honest means only.

Having said that, it should also be said that Muslims, Christians, and Jews do not believe in every single thing that the Bible says. No reasonable person can do that.

I Samuel chapter 17, verses 23 and 50 say that David killed Goliath. II Samuel 21:19 says that Elhanan killed Goliath. I Chronicles 20:5 says that Elhanan killed not Goliath but the brother of Goliath whose name is given as Lahmi. Obviously, no reasonable person should believe all three reports.

Knowing this, the editors of the King James Bible decided to fix this problem by making a slight correction to the Bible. They inserted three words in II Samuel 21:19 to make it say there also that Elhanan killed the brother of Goliath. You will notice that the three words *the brother of* appear there in italics to distinguish them from the rest of the Bible.

The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible calls this a "conflict of tradition about Goliath" (p. 179; see also p. 212). It says further that the author of Chronicles changed the story where it said that Elhanan killed Goliath to make it say that Elhanan killed Lahmi, the brother of Goliath. The same commentary says further that the statement in I Chronicles is "incorrect" (p. 180). So here we have a Bible commentary written by Christians, published by Christians, and sold in Christian bookstores yet it openly disagrees with a statement in the Bible. This was done not because Christians wanted to disbelieve in the Bible, but because they had to choose, among different statements in the Bible, which statement is more believable.

Now, this approach to the Bible does not mean that Christians can not refer to the Bible or quote from it or write commentaries on it. Likewise for Muslims.

Although Muslims, like their Christian and Jewish neighbours, do not believe in every single thing the Bible says, students of comparative religion should be allowed to study both the Qur'an and the Bible. Every honest student, however, will pay close attention to the context of what he or she reads, and apply scrupulous exactitude when quoting from either book.

May God help us and guide us all to understand His true message regardless in which book that truth is contained.

(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

Discovering Islam in Hell

Phil Barnett is a 53-year-old inmate in Wabash Valley Correctional Facility, in Indian, USA. A number of years ago, Phil accepted Islam in a penal institution. Through a series of correspondence with Mehran Banaei during this summer, he shares with us some of his thoughts and feelings, with respect to his past and future.

Would you tell our readers a bit about yourself, whatever you feel comfortable to share with us?

I am African-American, born in Indianapolis, Indiana and raised in the various states' institutions. I come from a religious Christian family. Most of my family thought ill of me, because I did not, or it appeared that I did not see things as they did. I think some of them are still struggling with this. They feel that I am headed towards hell! Not realizing that I am already in hell, at very this moment.

Is this really the case? You sound so bitter about the place you have been confined to, can you describe it to us, in what way it resembles hell?

I am kept under a system, where you can witness years of harsh criticism, false accusations, hatred, mean attitudes, the close calls concerning one's life that no one really cares or wants to hear, the mental abuse, evil plots, extortion in the most cruel ways, and disrespect of all kinds at all levels. The prevailing brutality and cruelty here altogether are unbearable. This is the institutional life that I have come to know for most of my life. Yes Mehran, I am a graduate from hell in Sick Criminology. The penal institutions here teach you a burning dislike and deep hatred towards your fellow human being. One comes out of here with more anger, hostility and hatred. There is no such thing as rehabilitation here. In fact, it makes it more difficult to fit into society, once one gets out. That is only if one can survive the ordeal. The system here, outcasts you, it creates a polaristic *me versus them* mentality. And, it is all brought on by the people who run the system. This is the real place that the Devil has his greatest chance of completely killing the human soul, particularly, the delinquent juvenile's soul. What happens here is a form of psychological genocide.

In your opinion, what happened and went wrong in your life? How did you end up being in this horrible place?

I really don't know where it all went wrong. I have always asked this question and cannot pin point any particular factor. It seemed

like, I woke up one day and everything changed. I can tell you this: I have always been in search of something better than what I already had. The fact is, I never had anything in life or been anywhere. However, this has never bothered me. The problem is I was confused and bewildered. I did not know how to focus on the right direction. It seemed, as though, I was so far down, in a deep dark pit. I was truly lost in my early years. Growing up was a very slow process for me. Years passed by in confusion and darkness. I ended up being convicted as a habitual criminal and got 35 years. I have almost spent 21 years in prison. I have never done any crime in which anyone was hurt, although I was aware that the possibility was there. I have been convicted for break-and-entry and stick-ups. I have not done any drugs. I have been in and out of many kinds of institutions since the early '50s and not understanding why! Even when I ask: "Why am I in here?" I cannot get a straight answer to satisfy my own curiosity. Having no answer to this simple question made me feel internally unwanted and resentful of myself for a long time. It is my understanding that Allah made things so clear, that even a child could understand between right and wrong. You only have to look deep within yourself to get the truth, and then it simply pops out. Having said that, when I reflect upon the past, I feel as if I was the biggest damn fool.

I have never been a person who lies all the time. I hate to lie, even when it would get me out of a bad situation. Lying is the only thing that would eat me from the inside. It makes me feel that God is punishing me, since He knows what goes on in the minds and hearts of His creatures.

How did you discover and learn more about Islam?

It was in the late 1960s that I came to know about Elijah Muhammad. I could not read very well those days in order to explore Islam deeper, but from what I heard of Islam, I was touched by it. I recognized it to be the right path, but did not get on it. It was sometime in early '70s that I came to have a much better understanding of Islam. Despite the fact that I was still confused and struggling with many things, it was then, that learning from a serious point of view began. During this time I was in a lock-up institution. Islam became my only true friend, something that I could trust. I always had a problem with trusting. I learned to rely on Allah. Islam saved me just like a human rescuer. I came to feel alive again. Islam helped me get my head on the right path with a proper understanding. It has

taught me that I am an important human being. I am important to my Creator and that He has something special planned for me. I know He cares and truly loves me. Knowing the fact that I am here to serve Allah makes me feel special. When I am disturbed by something or feel down, I start reading the Qur'an to give me a clear perspective. My deep belief is what sustains me in this hellish environment.

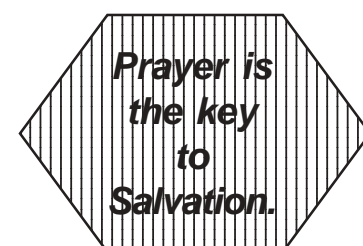
We often hear that Islam is rapidly growing in American penitentiaries. In your opinion, how true is this?

It is true. Islam is well and alive in all the places that I have been. I have seen Islam growing in the mid-70s when I was in the Michigan City State prison. I was there for over 11 years. I have been a witness to its growth in Westville where I was for 8 years. I have seen it growing in the Indian Youth Center, where I was for almost 2 years. Even in my present place, which is relatively new, there are many young brothers here, who are struggling to surrender.

Can you tell us how much longer you have to be here and what you plan for the future?

I shall be eligible for parole and released on a probationary basis at the end of September, 1997. The conditional release means that I have to act accordingly or I will be sent back for violation of parole. I intend to be a better Muslim. I need room to grow. I have never known the real freedom, simply because I lost it long ago. I want to stay free forever. I know for a while I would be dependent on some agencies in order to adjust to independent living. I shall take one step at a time and will always keep Allah in mind. I feel Allah has saved me for some special reason when I consider that I came through the Indiana prison system alive, particularly when the system was at its worst, and me being the biggest damn fool. When I think back, I thank Allah and give all credit to Him. My experiences in the last 21 years have taught me why I was born: in order to serve Allah.

Phil is at the moment in his home town of Indianapolis trying to adjust to a new life. We wish him all the best for a fresh start, and shall remember him in our prayers. We hope to hear from him in the near future.



Mutual Consultation

Continued from page 1

point of view because you all possess the Book of Allah from which you may derive guidance to resolve this issue."

Therefore, mutual consultation is one of the great practices that Muslims should develop within their family and community lives. With this in mind, consultation among Muslims is an important aspect of maintaining the beautiful and elaborate Islamic way of life. To do any collective work without prior mutual consultation is not only ignorant, but also a clear defiance of Allah's regulations. In this regard, the Qur'an strongly denounces those who do not follow Allah's laws: "Therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price. If any do fail to judge by what Allah hath revealed, they are unbelievers" (5:44). In another verse, they are described as "those who rebel" (5:47). The great importance given to mutual consultation in Islam is outlined by the following three reasons:

Firstly, it is unfair to decide alone upon a matter that concerns two or more people. In collective matters nobody has the right to do as they alone wish. All those concerned with the issue should be consulted. If it involves a large number of people, then their representatives should be consulted for their opinion.

Secondly, if anyone tries to act tyrannically or arbitrarily, either they wishes to usurp the right of others or they consider themselves superior to others whom they hold in contempt. From a moral standing, both of these attitudes are bad and reprehensible. As Muslims we should neither be selfish so as to take advantage of others, nor be proud and self-conceited so as to believe in ourselves as the most

intelligent or knowledgeable.

Thirdly, it is a great responsibility to make decisions on matters relating to the rights and interests of others. Anyone who is God-fearing and conscious of His inevitable Judgement, would not dare to bear the burden of such responsibility all alone. Such reckless acts are done by those who do not care about the hereafter. True Muslims will try to consult all the people or their trusted representatives concerned with a collective matter in coming to a decision or course of action so that a just decision is made and if ever a mistake is made, the burden of responsibility does not fall on one person alone.

The Islamic way of life requires that the principle of mutual consultation should be applied to every small or large collective affair. In household affairs, the husband and wife should consult each other before doing anything, and when the children reach the age of puberty their opinion should also be taken into account. If the affairs of the whole extended family are being dealt with, then counsel should be taken with every sane adult member of the family.

When participating in mutual consultation, those people whose rights and interests are involved should have full freedom of expression and should be kept informed on how their affairs are being handled. They should also have the full right to protest if they see any deficiency or negligence by those who handle their affairs. Still if they find no improvement in the performance of such duties, they should be able to change their leaders appropriately. Keeping people in the dark about how their

affairs are run is a clear-cut dishonesty that we should avoid.

Once the collective advice has been arrived at by an unanimous or majority decision, it should be accepted without reservation, because if someone is allowed to follow their own whims in spite of listening to the consultative assembly, then the process of mutual consultation becomes meaningless and void. Therefore, it is important that once a decision has been reached, we should put our trust in Allah and actually implement whatever has been decided upon. This has also been ordained by Allah in the Qur'an: "It is part of the Mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: So pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)" (3:159).

With the above brief explanation of mutual consultation (Shura), it should be kept in mind that Shura is not the last word, nor the absolute authority in running the affairs of Muslims. Shura is limited within the confines of Islam as revealed by Allah. In whatever matter there is a difference of opinion among Muslims, they should refer to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). According to this basic principle, Muslims can consult each other about their affairs, as long as they do not end up altering or replacing in any manner the ruling or decision of Allah and His Prophet (pbuh) by their own conclusions.

A SOLDIER'S DIARY

As I sit here on these river shores,
where the water is not safe to drink.
The river is red from the blood,
fighting is all I can think.

We march on that field,
and all day we fight.
We struggle through mud in trenches,
and we demand for our right.

What is our right any way,
to my country I'd wanna return.
See my family after so long,
and to live is what I'd like to learn.

I have to be ready for anything,
I can't let my team down.
This war is a bloody mess,
thinking about it makes me frown.

Tears pour down my face,
when I see a soldier die from being shot.
People say he's free from war,
but I say he just got caught.

Death haunts my mind,
I sleep not knowing where.
I hear gun shots and bombs,
which give me a very big scare.

I miss everybody back home,
everyday I tell my older brother.
We fight knowing one day we'll be free,
one way or the other...

By Saareen Qureshi

The Ambition

is distributed free of charge every two months at several mosques in and around Metro from as far as Kingston, Ajax and Oshwa in the east to Brampton, Burlington and Hamilton in the west. You can also pick up your copy at some Muslim grocery stores.

Reflections...

Continued from page 1

truly believed, our Muslim families would not be falling apart. Furthermore, Muslim youth would not be turning to drugs and alcohol, and Muslims who "know it all" would not be so eager to judge one another. We all go through hardship at one time or another, some everyday of our lives. Is it worth holding on to our suffering so that we can call ourselves the victim? It is easier to blame others than to take responsibility for our own actions. If someone hurts us, we want to hurt them ten times more, and if someone asks our forgiveness, we hold back because they deserve to be taught a lesson. It is ironic that the one responsibility that Allah did not give us is the one that we seize at every opportunity: the power to judge. All too naturally, many of us turn to everything and everyone instead of Allah first, if at all. No friend can

ever give the peace of mind that prayer does, regardless of how loyal they are.

Abu Huraira (ra) related that the Prophet (pbuh) said, "A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weak believer, and there is good in both." Be eager for what benefits you, seek Allah's help and do not be too weak to do so. If any misfortune befalls you, do not say, "If I had done this or that, something else would have happened." Instead say, "Allah decrees and what He wishes, He does." For saying, "If I had done this or that," opens the door for the acts of the Devil.

Each prayer gives me contentment. If I say five prayers, I have the strength to endure that day and the good or bad it may bring to me. For now, I can even accept the bad that has purpose and reason. I have gained self-confidence, self-respect, and an understanding that one does not need to justify their

actions to anyone else but Allah. He has given me patience and courage because I asked it of Him and I have asked for His forgiveness when I have sinned. I pray for guidance to keep me on the right path, and even when I go astray, I always find myself being led back. Instead of carrying anger and resentment with me; instead of letting the Devil harden my heart, I take refuge in Allah's words, "And those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out, and He provides for him from (sources) he never could expect" (Qur'an 65:2-3).

It is the sad truth that for most of us, it takes tragedy to open our eyes. Time is something that we can never get back. It is so easy to forget the important things in life: the little things that make life worth living. The way in which we live our life is based on our trust in Allah and our fear of Him. In his last sermon, the Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) said, "All those who hear me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again, and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listened to me directly."

I am beginning to understand a little bit more each day. Life will always be a continuous struggle against obstacles. Perhaps the obstacle is me, my falling and getting up, knowing in the end that it is peace I want. I no longer want to hold on to the regrets, instead I savour those moments that have opened my eyes and I am mindful of them. Those are the moments of reality. Those are the moments that really matter.

This article was published in the Spring 1997 issue of Voice of ISSRA and is re-printed with the permission of the author and the editor.

Half or other half...

Continued from page 1

can be either male or female, but must total four.

In regard to **Talaq or Divorce**, after the term of Iddat is over, and there are no witnesses, the **woman's word will be considered over the man's**. Surah 65:2 explains that two witnesses are required to confirm the divorce or remarriage. The Qur'an does not however, state that the witnesses must be male or female. The witnesses can be either two females, two males, or one male and one female.

In the case of **a charge of adultery by a spouse**, Surah 24:6-

9 clearly states that the accuser must present four witnesses. If by chance the accuser can not produce any witnesses, he/she may swear in an Islamic court that they are telling the truth. They may swear this three times and the fourth time swear to take the curse of Allah upon themselves if they are lying. The accused, in order to save himself/herself can also swear and take the curse of Allah. If both swear to their innocence than the marriage is annulled.

In the situation of Talaq, Allah shows that the testimony of a woman may be above that of a man, but in the case of a charge of adultery, Allah shows it to be equal to that of a man.

The last situation is that of **loan transactions**. Most of the misconceptions that people have about the inequality of women come from this area of witnessing.

In Surah 2:282 the Qur'an very clearly outlines that there must be two witnesses present at the time of any contract negotiations. The witness can be either two males, or one male and two females. The reason for that can be for moral support and for their own protection. In an Islamic society women are provided for by their male family members and are often unaware of economic ways. As a result they could easily be taken advantage of. It is only under this

one circumstance that a woman's testimony is considered to be half of a man's for her own protection.

It must be taken into consideration that the Qur'anic injunctions are always meant for the norm of an Islamic society. If any exceptions arise, it's up to the scholars of Islam to study and find a precedence through the Hadith, the Traditions of the Prophet (pbuh), and through Ijtehad (consultation).

By reading these explanations from the Qur'an, one can see that Islam is fair and just to both women and men. It can also be proven that a woman is not half of a man but ranks equally in the sight of Allah.

M.E.N.T.O.R.S.

Continued from page 1

board members about the difficulties posed by these sorts of events. Volunteers also go directly into schools and classrooms to teach the students -- Muslims and non-Muslims -- about occasions such as Ramadan and the two

Eids. In this way non-Muslims receive exposure to all that Islam celebrates and holds dear, while Muslims can feel a sense of pride in seeing their values being given representation.

MENTORS also works in more specific ways to help Muslim students. Prayer rooms have been set up in schools where there are a

fair number of Muslims; special circumstances during Ramadan and Eid are taken into account by teachers. Moreover volunteer tutors provide help to Muslim children from grade one through OAC.

In emphasizing that more Muslim teachers are needed within the school system in order to understand the needs of Muslim stu-

dents and also to serve as role models, brother Alimamy notes that these teachers must clearly identify themselves as Muslims in order to be of assistance to the Islamic community and to facilitate dialogue. The very presence of Muslims within the larger community, living an Islamic lifestyle serves not only the purpose of education. The visibility of Muslims will serve as an invitation to non-Muslims, for before people are willing to change their lives they must be presented with an attractive alternative. MENTORS is an opportunity to make Islam that alternative. For further information call (416) 396-4663.

Matrimonials

1. African Canadian Muslim, 37, 6'2" tall, is looking for sister Muslimah, 22-27, for marriage. Please forward info with picture to inquiry #66.

2. Gamal Abdelfattah, came to Canada in 1967, from Stuttgart Germany. Alhamdulillah, I am a practising Sunni Muslim, 37 years, 5'6", never married, Canadian citizen. High school and College graduate. I live in Etobicoke, Ontario. Alhamdulillah, I have a steady job. I am continuing my education through a home study computer course. Alhamdulillah, I live a simple life style, according to the Qur'an and Sunnah. I am an easy person to get along with and have a good sense of humour. Looking for a Canadian, Egyptian, or European practising Sunni Muslimah, 25-32 years. High school education, doesn't mind working. Inquiry # 67.

3. Thirty year old, handsome Muslim, educated in Islamic Law, 4 years at university, seeking very honest and loving to Allah Muslimah, age between 25-35. Inquiry #70.

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

5. 32 years old, practising Muslimah from Somalia seeks practising Muslim, age 30-45 for the purpose of matrimony. Inquiry #72.

Address your responses to **Matrimonials c/o The Ambition** and include the inquiry # on the outside of the envelope.

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Kids' Korner

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

By Amber Shaikh

Azad was starting high school. He was kind of scared that no one in his new school would like him. But he made lots of new friends. One of them was Umar. Azad liked Umar best.

After school Azad and Umar decided to go to the mall. At the mall they went into a clothing store to look around. Umar saw a jacket that he liked very much. He put it in his bag and started walking out of the store. Azad asked, "Aren't you going to pay for that?"

"Shhh! I don't have any money so I'm just going to take it," replied Umar.

"That's stealing," Azad said.

"Nobody will see me!" Umar whispered.

"Allah can see you!" Azad said.

"So what?" Umar asked.

"Well, on the Day of Judgement you'll have to admit that you stole that jacket in front of your parents, family, and everybody else. You'll also be punished in the next life!" said Azad.

"I don't believe in that kind of stuff," Umar replied.

"Do you believe in Allah?" asked Azad.

"Yes, of course," replied Umar.

"Have you read the Holy Qur'an?" Azad asked.

"Yes, I have," said Umar.

"If you've read the Holy Qur'an then you should know it says that about the Day of Judgement," said Azad.

"No, it doesn't. The Qur'an is all in Arabic," Umar said.

"If you read the English translation of the Qur'an then you'll see what I said."

"Really?" cried Umar.

"Really!" repeated Azad.

After putting the jacket back, Umar said, "But what about all the sins I did before, will I still be punished?"

"Not if you pray for forgiveness from Allah," Azad replied.

So that's what Umar did. Not only will Allah forgive Umar after he prays, but Allah will also reward Azad for helping Umar realize his mistake.

What happens to us if we are not good.

by Abdul-Kadir

Mohamoud, 12 years old.

We always try to be good and follow Islam, so that we will deserve the reward of Allah. That reward will be Heaven and it is the greatest gift to us from Allah.

If a man is bad and wants to be bad, and if he does not follow the teachings of Islam, then this is a man who deserves trouble. You see, this man is following the Shaitan and his own desires, and he is ignoring Allah and

His religion. If this man has hurt others and if he was cruel and a hypocrite, and if he did not care about his religion, then he deserves trouble.

Such a man will be shaking with fear on the Day of Judgement and he would wish so much to be able to come back to Earth to live again so that he could be good and do good. But it would be too late for him.

God will judge this man and He will give him what he deserves. This man will

About the Prophet

by Tufail Ali

In the year 628 CE Muhammad (pbuh) had just lost two people -- Abu Talib, his uncle and Khadijah, his wife -- who had been protecting him from the torture of Quraysh. For the first time, Islam had come under severe attack from the Makkans. Even the Prophet himself said, "By God, Quraysh never harmed me so much as after the death of Abu Talib." This loss would have been enough to break the most strong person and shake his faith. Many times Fatimah (ra), the Prophet's daughter, would be moved to tears due to the attacks on her father, but he (pbuh) would say to her, "Do not cry, O Fatimah! Your father has God as Protector." Muhammad (pbuh) stood steadfast and persistent.

In an effort to break new grounds and hoping to seek out others to tell about Islam, the Prophet (pbuh) secretly left Makkah for the city of Ta'if. Accompanying him on this journey was Zaid bin Haritha, the slave and adopted son of the Prophet (pbuh). At Ta'if, Muhammad (pbuh) approached the tribe of Thaqif, who were friends with Banu Hashim (the tribe Muhammad (pbuh) belonged to). Banu Thaqif rejected Islam. Not only that, they summoned their slaves and children to stone Muhammad (pbuh) until he goes out of their city. Zaid tried to protect the Prophet (pbuh) from their stones but the attack was from all sides. The Prophet (pbuh) was hit so hard and he bled so much that his shoes were soaked with blood! All

confess about all the bad things he had done during his life and he will get his punishment.

You see, such people will go to Hell, and they will be tortured there forever.

Muhammad (pbuh) visits Ta'if

this animosity because he called people towards one God!

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) got shelter in a vineyard owned by Utbah and Shaybah, sons of Rabiyyah. While standing there, his mind was not on his sufferings; his focus was on God. He (pbuh) knew that it did not matter what others thought of him. What mattered was obeying God. It was not important how many friends he had lost or how much peer pressure he suffered. Friendship with God was important! With this in mind, Muhammad (pbuh) raised his hands to Heaven with noticeable pain, saying, "O God, please consider my weakness, my shortage of means, and the little esteem that people have of me. O Most Merciful, to whom would you leave my fate? To a stranger who insults me? To an enemy who dominates me? Your pleasure alone is my objective. I pray that I may not become the object of Your wrath and anger. To You alone belongs the right to blame and to chastise until Your pleasure is met. There is neither power nor strength except in You."

Utbah and Shaybah stood listening and being moved to compassion and sympathy, immediately sent their Christian slave Addas to serve the Prophet grapes from their garden. Before eating, Muhammad (pbuh) said, "In the name of Allah."

Surprised, Addas said, "That is not what the natives of this country usually say." Muhammad (pbuh) then asked him about his religion and country of origin, and when learned that Addas was a Christian from

Nainavah, he said, "Are you then from the City of the Righteous Jonah, son of Matthew?" Addas asked, "What do you know about Jonah, son of Matthew?" Muhammad (pbuh) said, "That was my brother; he was a true prophet and so am I." Filled with emotion, Addas covered Muhammad's face with kisses. When Addas returned to Utbah and Shaybah, they counseled him saying, "O Addas, do not allow this man to convert you from your faith. Your faith is better for you than his."

It is also reported that nine Jinns accepted Islam on that journey. Muhammad (pbuh) was also visited by the archangel Jibreel who offered to destroy the people of Ta'if by uprooting the two mountains at either side of Ta'if but Muhammad's (pbuh) response was, "Maybe, one day, the children of Thaqif will become Muslim."

The events at Ta'if are very significant to Muslims. We should ask ourselves if we have a mission in our lives and if so, is this mission in accordance with Islam? When did we last call someone to Allah or at least teach a non-Muslim something about Islam? Is the life we live a testimony to our mission? How much sacrifices have we made for Islam compared to the sacrifices we make for our personal achievements? Is the pleasure of Allah the force behind our actions or pleasure of this world? Finally, are we moving closer to our Lord or further away from Him?

J O K E

TEACHER: What is the meaning of murderer?

STUDENT: Sir, I don't know.

TEACHER: If you killed your father, what would you be called?

STUDENT: Sir, I would be called an orphan!

Community in Action

Chaplaincy comes of age in the Muslim Community

by Abdur Rashid Taylor

From the very early days of Ontario Multi-faith Council for Spiritual and Religious Care (OMCSRC), the Islamic community has played varying roles in Chaplaincy services in Ontario. Muslims have been signatories on the Memorandum of Agreement with the Government of Ontario to provide spiritual and religious care in its institutions, Muslims have filled posts on committees and the executive of OMCSRC and so have demonstrated a commitment to interfaith dialogue and cooperation with of the Ontario Multi-faith Council.

In recent years, that commitment at an organizational level has evolved into a presence in the delivery of spiritual and religious care for institutionalized people (Muslims and non-Muslims alike). Visiting the sick is regarded as an obligation and duty of one Muslim to another, so visiting ill relatives and friends has always been part of the community experience. Nevertheless, there have been very few formally trained people in our community to do this kind of work.

In the more recent past, the Muslim community has been requested to respond to needs for care in institutions from a number of sectors: from conflict resolution in correctional facilities, to Muslims needing Halal meals, to doctors needing worship space in hospitals and other concerns. These types of requests would

normally go to area mosques who would respond to their best ability, but more and more the types of requests and their frequency exposed a greater need than a piecemeal approach could fix. So the idea of the need for an Islamic Chaplaincy has come of age in the Muslim community.

Our community stands at the dawn of its involvement in the delivery of pastoral care. We have the ability to create our future and plan a path for involvement in this field. This future could never be brighter for us as we join other faith groups who have long been involved in pastoral care, meeting needs of a growing Islamic community in our province and adding another dimension to spiritual and religious care.

This position allows us to build on established relationships, to develop better models of providing services as well as raise awareness of pastoral care within the Islamic community.

Abdur Rashid Taylor is Acting Co-ordinating Chaplain at Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital and Muslim Chaplain at Queen Street Mental Health Centre and more recently the Hospital for Sick Children. He is the first Muslim Chaplain endorsed for the Ontario Public Service. He can be contacted at these hospitals' Chaplaincy Departments or through Toronto's Jami Mosque.

Success Stories Around Us

Zahra Elmi: Confident and Upstanding

Aneesa Lakhi writes about a sister who makes a difference!

Zahra Elmi is not so different from many Canadian adults today. She is a mother raising two boys to be good sons and good citizens; she is working in a job which she finds enriches her life while in turn gives her the opportunity to enrich the lives of other. At the same time she aspires to return to school one day in order to complete the education which was cut short because of unforeseen difficulties. But Zahra Elmi is not simply these facts. She is also a strong and dedicated Muslim woman who has given her time to voluntary work within the Islamic community for quite a few years and is now working for MENTORS, the Muslim Education Network, Training and Outreach Service.

Although Zahra immigrated to Canada from Kenya in 1990, she has a wealth of experience about Canada which has brought about changes in how she views her personal identity, and as a consequence her Islamic identity. With a college diploma in Travel and Tourism from Kenya, Zahra spent her first three years in Canada focusing on her children. However, she soon returned to school, earning her high school diploma through adult education classes, and then completing one year of a two-year program in social and community work at a local college. When financial difficulties forced her to abandon her studies, Zahra, nevertheless, continued with the volunteer work she had been participating in at various mosques.

This volunteer work, she says, was her opportunity "to pick people's brains" and thereby increase her knowledge of Islam. At the same time she also wanted her sons to see the presence of an Islamic environment. While she

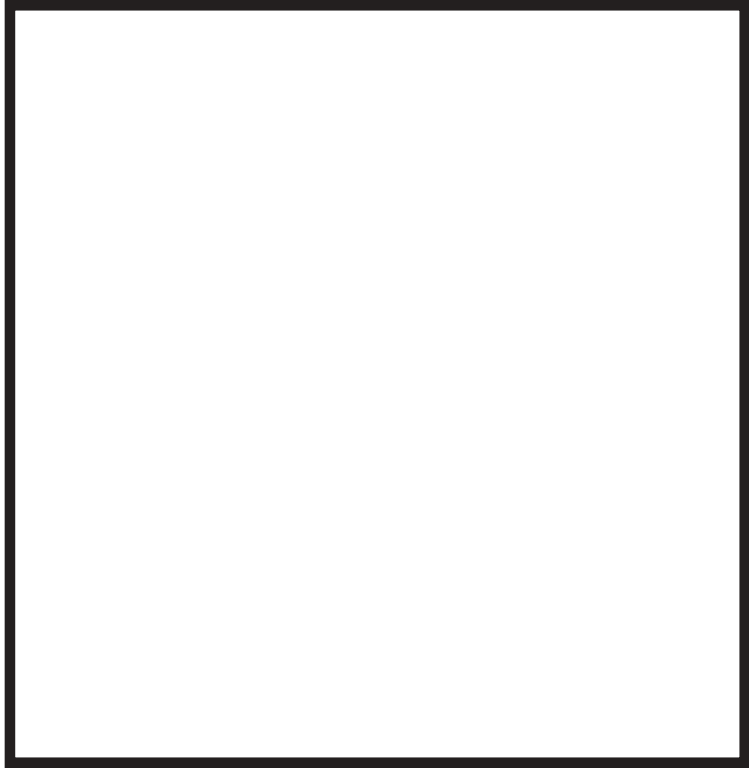
had attended an all-girls school in Kenya, here her sons were part of a public education system which did not take into account such distinctions of gender or culture and religion. This situation she says has led her to recognize that parents must take on much of the responsibility of producing good, respectful Muslim children: The way of Islam must be in evidence at home if not in school.

Zahra's involvement in the Muslim community led her to MENTORS, where she is currently working to ensure that an Islamic point of view is expressed in the public schools of the Scarborough Board of Education, and also within the wider community. Through this work she says she is hoping to encourage Muslims to be both aware of and proud of Islam in all of the different parts of their lives and in their exchanges with others.

Recalling Kenya, Zahra remembers a Muslim community which was not as "energetic and

pumped-up" as the one she is a part of here. Instead of going out to attract non-Muslims to Islam, she reveals, the community in Kenya displayed an attitude of "you have your religion, we have ours." This approach she feels is not enough. Instead, while maintaining her own hopes of one day returning to college to complete her diploma, and then going on to university to study World Religions, Zahra encourages all Muslims to increase their own knowledge of Islam in order to help themselves, and answer the questions of non-Muslims.

Acknowledging that there were times in the past when she felt embarrassed and self-conscious because of her modest clothing and Hijab, Zahra insists that she is now confident and proud of Islam and its values. And just as she gained some of this confidence and pride by seeing other Muslims displaying their identity openly, so she is now an example too.



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