

The Ambition

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The First Journal for Young Muslims in Canada

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Nature Declares God's Praises

The evergreen trees mingle with the different shades of green, brown, yellow, and red. It is a glorious and vibrant sight!

by Mrs. Anwari Ali Khan

I live near the lake where I often go for walks in the beautiful park in the vicinity. I love to look at the sky, the clouds, the twinkling stars, and the natural beauty to observe the manifestation of God in all these phenomena.

In my home country, I was so much absorbed in my work and the busy city life that I did not have a lot of time to stop and think. In Canada, luckily, I get more opportunity to marvel at the beauty of nature and to praise its creator, Allah.

In the Glorious Qur'an, there are many verses which declare Allah's handiwork in nature: "Yes, to Allah belongs the dominion of the Heaven and the Earth" (24:42). In the same chapter, the Qur'an further declares: "All beings in the Heaven and Earth celebrate Allah's praises."

When I look at the seagulls flying overhead, I am always reminded of the verse which mentions the birds of the air which fly with their wings outspread as this is also their method of prayer. Each one knows its own method

of prayer. The clouds, too, follow this principle. They move gently, then join together in a heap and rain comes from their midst. Mention is made of hail, lightning, and how Allah alternates the night and the day. In all these natural phenomena is an instructive example for those who have vision and insight.

In Surah Qaf (50), verses 6-11, mention is also made of the sky above that has no flaws, the earth, the mountains, and every kind of growth—all in beautiful pairs. When I look at the tall and stately

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Have a Blessed Ramadhan and Eid Mubarak

I.S.S.R.A. AN INSIDER'S VIEW

by Sister Wilma

The stillness of the small front office at St. Clair and Runnymede was broken by the insistent ring of the telephone.

"ISSRA, Asslamu-Alaikum."

"Sister, I need to speak urgently to a counsellor," the agitated voice of the distressed woman said. "She knows my case. The Children's Aid have taken away my children and put them in non-Muslim homes. I can't live without my children. We have to get them back."

The sister in the office soothed her as much as was possible and then connected her to the senior counsellor. The counsellor had spent many hours on this case already, counselling the mother and the father and intervening between them and the Children's Aid Society. Once again, intervention was necessary.

The telephone shrilled again,

insistently and loudly, demanding attention. The sad voice on the other end explained that her friend was being assaulted verbally and also had been repeatedly sodomized by her husband. She was a new bride and had no family of her own here. She had tried to escape to a shelter but had been turned away due to government cutbacks. There was no space for her and she was forced to return to her home. Arrangements were made to have the friend take her in to protect her until a connection could be made with the Muslim shelter in Whitby, which did have space. Al-hamdu-lillah, we do have a shelter now for sisters who are being treated in an un-Islamic way.

"Sister, I'm very sick. I have cancer. I have no papers. I need help," said the young man in a tired voice. An appointment was quickly made for him to come in

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Racism: The never-ending predicament

Muslims must be aware of this offensive crime that has no place in Islam

by Farhan Ali Khan

I've always believed that racism exists in this world. It's not as if I want racism to be here, but it's just here. I don't hear racial remarks every day, but every now and then I feel it way down in my guts that it's there.

I migrated to Canada in 1993 from my native country, Pakistan. When I heard that my family and I were moving here, I had mixed feelings. A part of me was very excited because my family and I were migrating to a country where our lives would be much better than before because there were more opportunities available in Canada than in Pakistan. But deep down inside I was scared. I did not know whether I would be "accepted" there. I had heard that "Pakis" were given a hard time in Canada. My first cousin had already been treated harshly when he moved to Canada the previous year. In school, students pushed him around, made fun of him, and called him names like "Paki" and "Turban Head." I never did understand why he was called "Turban Head." He did not even wear a turban!

Fortunately, I was not treated as badly as he was. I even

made a few friends on my first day of school in Grade 7. Sure, there were some of those looks and whisperings when I walked in the halls. But why was I treated much more differently than my cousin? Was it because my skin was lighter than his? Was it because I lived in Mississauga and he lived in Brampton? Even four years later, I don't have the answer to that question.

I don't understand why racism still exists today. Great civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X spent their entire lives trying to build a world of racial equity for today's youth, the leaders of tomorrow. In Islam, racism is totally unacceptable.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said in his last sermon that "mankind cannot be distinguished on the basis of race, colour, or wealth."

Even in our school, one can feel a hint of racism in the halls and cafeteria. The students in our school are divided up among various ethnic groups. Sometimes, a few racial comments can be heard in the school and there are times when racial slurs occur in the cafeteria.

I don't understand why we all say racial slurs. Is it because of the way we were brought up and told to counter-attack all racial comments made towards us? I know that's not true in my case

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Human Rights in Islam

by Safoora Ahmad, Gr. 11,
Western Tech.

Islam allows people to live in peace and harmony. Allah does not like corruption, nor does He like those who are proud and arrogant. Allah says in Surah al-Qasas, verse 77: "Do not seek to work corruption on earth. God does not like the corrupters." He also says

in Surah Luqman, vers 18: "Walk not exultantly on the Earth. God does not like any arrogant boaster."

People should react in an appropriate way when their rights are violated. They should not start an unnecessary war; but they should not allow their rights to be violated either. The first time their rights are

violated, the people should stand up and try to stop it. If this does not work, then they should speak out against it. If this does not have any effect either, then they should get together and demand justice from the government or the establishment in rule.

Fear prevents people from defending their rights. People are afraid of being thrown out of their homes, being oppressed, and being deprived of basic human rights by tyrannical governments. These people are afraid of war, unemployment, and crime.

The majority of mankind suffers from exploitation, oppression, and injustice of different forms. For example, the people in Pakistan cannot live a

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Editorial

Zakat: The Purifier and Augmenter of Wealth

The concept of worship in Islam is divided into two main parts: worship with our body and worship with our wealth. Whereas Salat is the representative of the first one, Zakat represents the second.

Salat prepares us for sacrificing our bodily comforts for the sake of Allah. Zakat prepares us for sacrificing our worldly belongings in the name of Allah. Just as daily Salat cleanses our heart, Zakat cleanses the wealth we possess. Zakat is the third pillar of Islam. In the Qur'an, paying Zakat is often ordered along with establishing Salat. The same is also clear from the Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh): "In order to enter Paradise you should worship Allah (alone and none else) and do not ascribe any partners to Him, offer Iqamat-as-Salat, pay the Zakat and keep good relations with your kith and kin" (Bukhari).

In the Islamic Shariah, it is a fixed amount (2.5%) that a Muslim pays in the name of Allah over the amount of wealth, *Nasab*, that is beyond his needs and remains unused over a period of one year. The Shariah has also guided us about where it can be spent. It is not the same as paying the yearly taxes that are levied upon citizens by the government with money thus collected to be used by the people in power as they wish. Also, the tax-rate changes with the financial situation of the government. The criteria for Zakat can not be changed by anybody. Paying Zakat cultivates the love of and submission to God in our heart and brings the blessings from Allah that nothing else does. Islam promotes social and economic harmony among different segments of society. It also promotes that the self-respect of the not-so-fortunate people be also upheld. Whereas it is incumbent upon the rich to pay the Zakat, it is also emphasized to do it in such a way to show the humility of the giver and not to humiliate the receiver. It is advised to give without telling the receiver that you are giving Zakat-money.

The purpose of establishing a system of Zakat is not only to improve and establish a balance in the distribution of wealth in society but also to cleanse the heart from the love of material things. When a Muslim gives for the sake of Allah in total humility and then prays for the acceptance, his heart becomes full of gratitude and submission towards Him. He gets the feeling that everything belongs to Allah. He also understands that it is Allah who gave him enough to give to others, because the situation could have been reversed. This feeling brings him even closer to Allah and His creations.

Zakat has been an obligation upon the people of other prophets as well. There has been a difference in the *Nasab* and/or the percentage but it has been an important factor of other prophets' Shariah. In the Qur'an, the covenant that the Bani Israel had with Allah about establishing Salat and Zakat has been stated in several verses.

Salat and Zakat constitute the Muslim identity. When the *Mushrikeen* repent from *Kufr* and *Shirk*, establish Salat and Zakat, then they have the same rights as any other Muslim in Islamic society: "But if they repent, establish regular prayers, and Zakat, then they are your brethren in Faith: Thus do We explain the Signs in detail, for those who understand" (Qur'an 9:11).

People who do not pay Zakat are considered to be apostates and out of the fold of Islam. During the time of Abu Bakr (ra) when some people denied paying Zakat, he (ra) said: "By God! People who separate between Salat and Zakat, I will fight against them."

Spending in the way of Allah is an important aspect of Islam. One should not stop at Zakat but try to give as much as possible because it is highly emphasized. The Qur'an states: "Who establish regular prayers and spend (freely) out of the gifts We have given them for sustenance: Such in truth are the Believers. They have grades of dignity with their Lord, and forgiveness, and generous sustenance" (8:3-4). Allah has warned us against being miserly and stingy and not spending our wealth: "... And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God: announce unto them a most grievous penalty" (9:34). He has also given us glad tidings about the benefits of spending: "The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it grows seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to whom He pleases, and Allah cares for all and He knows all things" (2:261).

Asma Warsi

Letters to the Editors

THE CHANGING TRENDS IN MARRIAGES AND MATRIMONIALS

Traditionally, most Muslim marriages are between relatives, including first cousins. They could approximate more than 50% of all Muslim marriages. We may be surprised that the changing statistics of North America do not seem to agree with our tradition. Almost 40% of Canadian-born Muslim families consist of a Muslim wife and a non-Muslim husband, says Hassan Hamadani, who studies Muslim demographics at Statistics Canada in Ottawa, as reported by the *Toronto Star*.

In other words, we are losing 4 out of 10 daughters to non-Muslim boys. How many boys are we losing to non-Muslim girls? Could the figure be higher because the Muslim boys are not restricted to marry non-Muslim girls? Could that aggregate percentage be 50% or higher?

Some of us might say we are looking at this issue negatively. We should look at how many non-Muslims are reverting to Islam this way, therefore we are not losing our sons and daughters but we are getting sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. Masha-Allah we are growing, if we look at the increasing number of our religious organizations, mosques, cultural centres, schools, social services, conventions, matrimonial services, youth organizations, professional organizations, etc. Al-hamdu-lillah, we are statistically the fastest growing religion on the continent.

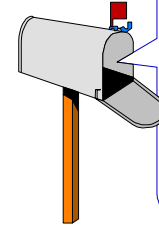
Hamadani further reports that "roughly 77% of Canadian children raised by a Muslim mother and non-Muslim father do not count themselves as Muslim. The percentage is slightly lower in cases where the father is Muslim and the mother is non-Muslim. Whatever the reasons are, can we afford to ignore the alarming issue here? With all due respect, let us assume these figures are not absolutely incorrect. What will the percentages be tomorrow? Where is this going to take us? Now remember that we are talking about first-generation Canadian-born Muslims only. What about the second generation and generations after that?

We came to North America to improve our already high standard and quality of life, which most of us achieved well. While doing so, we worked very hard by studying and working at the same time,

working overtime with part-time jobs, leaving our families, friends, and loved ones back home, sacrificing social and recreational activities, etc.

While we were doing all that, our children went to Canadian schools, watched North American television programmes, made non-Muslim friends, played Canadian sports, assimilated into Canadian society in some ways, celebrated Hallowe'en, Christmas, etc. Some went back home for a week or two to make up for 50 weeks of the culture they missed, and these children, compared it to their Canadian friends who enjoyed summer camps playing games and sports instead of being uncomfortable in extremely hot and humid climates. The final question is, did we provide them with what was expected from us? The answer to this question will vary from father to father, mother to mother, parent to parent, and child to child. The common answer is that "we did the best we could."

Then where are we going wrong? When we ask the parents, they do not know. They are normally shocked when they hear the news the first time that their son or daughter is getting married to a non-Muslim. The children's points of view are different from ours, therefore we may not understand at times because they grew up in different environments. But this



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cannot be the only reason. What are the other issues here? We must explore, investigate, discover, analyze, consult, implement, get feedback, make adjustments, and make it an on-going process to bring change within our community.

The initial recommendation would be to start consultations as commanded by Allah (swt): "Those . . . who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation . . . we bestow on them for sustenance" (Qur'an 42:38).

If you are interested in helping us identify the problems, particularly Muslims contemplating marriage to non-Muslims and their affected parents, please send us your comments and indicate that you are prepared to discuss these issues further. We need volunteers to do some work in this field, please help.

Mohammad Ishaque Bhimla

NOTE: The Ambition invites the youth as well as parents to express their views, in confidence, regarding this matter.

I Do!

Just two words. Yet, they are so significant because they tie a man and a woman into holy matrimony almost universally.

In the essentially Christian West, the minister performing the marriage asks both the would-be- bride and the groom whether they agree to enter into wedlock, having earlier asked the other attendees to speak clearly if any of them feel that the couple should not be united. If no one speaks up, the marriage is solemnized when both the man and the woman utter the words: "I do." Among Muslims, a similar procedure is followed with the Imam asking the couple whether they are in agreement with the union without the audience being given the option of voicing disagreement.

Two similar procedures practiced in two different religions, and yet, these practices

have vastly different implications. In the West, when Christian couples for instance, say the words "I do," you can safely assume that without exceptions, they are entering into marriage of their own free will. However, in the case of Muslims where the marriage is an *arranged* one, this may not always be so. With some Muslims in Canada and more so in countries like India and Pakistan, the choice has been made by the parents.

There is, in fact, nothing wrong with the parents getting involved in the process of their children's marriage. It is an excellent system where the parents—using their knowledgeable experience and contacts—help their sons and daughters in making a wise choice. They introduce the eligible couple and let them make up their own

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Asma Warsi

This Journal is dedicated to:

Professor Syed Aley Ahmad Abdi, Former Principal, Government Education College, Multan, Pakistan

Tips on Parenting

Question: I am enrolling my child in a daycare and am concerned about the centre giving my child food which may contain pork or food that is not Halal. How can I avoid this situation?

Answer: Your question is very important and there are many ways to avoid this situation. If you are in a daycare where you have to provide your own food, it will be easier to avoid Haram food in your child's diet. If you are choosing a daycare that provides food for your children, talk to the supervisor about their policies and your concerns. The option of providing your child with a special meal is available in most, if not all centres. Most daycares have a form that is filled out by the parents at the time of registration that includes a column for any food allergies or dietary restrictions. Speaking to the dietician or the cook on staff can

also be helpful. Some activities such as making *Rice Krispies Squares* or *Jell-Play* can also use products that contain gelatin in them. Many times there are Haram products used in the classroom without the knowledge that it can be a matter of concern for Muslims. Offering Halal *Jell-O*, marshmallows, or other Halal products can be an option. If there are any concerns, you should always discuss them with your child's teacher and the centre supervisor who are usually very helpful.

Question: I have a two-year-old who is always throwing tantrums in public. It seems that she doesn't usually act this way in the daycare but only when she is with me! I am getting frustrated and am not sure how to handle her behaviour.

Answer: The first question I would ask is, are you giving into her tantrums? If so, stop! By giving

into her tantrums you are enforcing the negative behaviour that you are trying to stop. Since you say that her temperament is different at the daycare, asking the teacher how she handles tantrums can be helpful. Sometimes children feel they can get away with more with their parents because their parents are usually not as strict and eventually give in to avoid confrontation. Children also use tantrums as a way of getting attention. If you've told your child "NO" then stick to it, even if she cries. By yelling and screaming at the child, you are giving the child the attention she wants. Give positive attention to your child by praising her and rewarding her when she has done something well. If you know that you are going to eventually give in to your child, then say "YES" the first time.

Nosheen Khan is an experienced Early Childhood Educator. She answers your questions.

I Do!

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minds to decide whether they are compatible enough to spend a lifetime together. But some parents do more than that; in those cases of **arranged marriages**, that very important decision is made by the parents.

The decision of those parents is often based on family and community ties, business connections, the wealth of the parents, and even the colour of the skin. The would-be-groom has some say, but the bride-to-be has little or no say in this matter. The parents use religion as a justification for such actions. They say that in Islam it is the duty of the parents to see to it that their children get married because celibacy is not allowed. They also say that Islam prevents unmarried men and women from meeting and seeing each other. According to them, the marriage is never against the wishes of the couple because the Nikah is solemnized only if the couple give their consent.

It is true that celibacy is not recommended in Islam. However, there is no support for the rest of their thinking and actions. Allah says in the Qur'an that Muslim women should be married to the believers (2:221). Muslim men are asked to see that their sisters and daughters do not marry disbelievers. Nowhere is there anything in that Glorious Book which commands the Muslim parents to marry their daughters to even a Muslim without their (daughter's) permission. To say that the girl has agreed to the marriage at the time of Nikah is sheer hypocrisy. She has had no say in the selection process and is in no position to say "no" at the time when the guests are waiting anxiously for the ceremonies to end and the festivities to begin. A "no" at this time would ruin her parents' reputation in the community and her own prospects forever.

Why does that happen? The answer is obvious. We have mixed up religion with the culture of the

environment in which we live. Betrothing a woman without her will may stem from some child-marriage customs, or from other pagan cultures where women were sold as slaves and concubines. Islam, the religion of Allah, bestows utmost respect and dignity to women. It could not possibly take away the right of the woman to make a free choice when selecting the person with whom she is to enter into the most intimate relationship of marriage. It will indeed be hard for anyone to find support in denying this.

The solution to this dilemma is not easy as things stand now. Parents should not abdicate their responsibility in seeing that their children find appropriate mates. Their involvement should, however, be limited to ensuring that their children are introduced

by *Nosheen Mian, Weston C. I.*

These days, whether you open a magazine, the phonebook, or turn on the television, there is always something astrological mentioned.

Magazines say they can predict how your month will go, just based on what part of the year you were born in. The *Talking Yellow Pages* can give you your **daily** astrological forecast. So not only does everyone (of the same zodiacal sign) have the same sort of month, but also the same kind of day! That makes the world kind of dull, doesn't it? Not to mention what they say is kind of unbelievable.

When you turn on the television, the psychics are there again. Many psychic networks promote themselves in commercials. As for us skeptics, we see these commercials and know right away that they are

to the right prospect. The children should then be given the opportunity to meet in a proper Islamic environment to allow them to make up their minds. And if the children have received proper Islamic teachings on the concepts of a Muslim marriage, they will not find it hard to make the right decision.

Will things change? It is not easy to give up centuries-old traditions even though they may be totally unrelated to the spirit of our beautiful religion. But somehow, the change is absolutely necessary if we want our children to have a truly happy marriage. Otherwise, we risk losing our children to non-believers, which is not what any parent wants. And when you think of it, it is all so easily avoidable.

One way is to find someone to introduce to our children and then allow them to make up their minds—free of parental

propaganda aimed at those in desperate need of answers because the world seems to have collapsed all around them. They are lowered in with promises of answers to everything! For those out there trying to resist the temptation to call, they're pulled in by an offer of a free ten minutes. So in desperation, they call and a month later are slapped with a huge phone bill for the psychic services they used. These services are also clearly endorsed in movies and television shows.

When in need, everyone needs and wants to depend on someone. When you're little and get sick or hurt, you go to your mother or father for comfort, right? However, as you grow up you can't always run to your parents. Now, this is where people have to make the decision of taking one of three paths: (1) Believe in Kismat (destiny) and pray to Allah, your Creator. (2) Turn to family and friends for help and support. (3)

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Answers to the Brain Teasers

1. In 1835, the First of January was also the First of Ramadhan. The next Ramadhan was in December, of the same year.
2. Ramadhan will be in January and again in December.
3. 81 feet.
4. The ball in bucket B will sink first. Water in bucket A is frozen and it will take longer for the ball to sink.

interference and coercion. The other is to create an environment where Muslims of marriageable age can meet in an Islamic setting. If in such situations the son or the daughter meet someone they would like to marry, the parents should review the match carefully in light of compatibility and their child's ultimate happiness, without being influenced by tradition and pagan customs.

Then, when our children, especially our girls, say "yes" at the time of the Nikah, they will really mean it. Wouldn't that be nice? Brothers and sisters in Islam, please think seriously about this issue.

Munawar Merchant

Have a blessed Ramadhan
Eid Mubarak to all our readers
and supporters

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

Your Questions

Answered by Shabir Ally

Q You said that every child of Adam is a sinner. Does that mean we are born in sin?

A No. Muslims believe that every child is born in a pure, natural state. Left to their own, children will grow up instinctively seeking the one true God, Allah. However, environmental influences and parents turn a child away from the pure, natural state. A saying of the Prophet, on whom be peace and the blessings of God, confirms this. It says that "each child is born in a natural state just as, for example, a baby animal is born without any brand on its body; then the owner brands it with his own mark. Similarly, parents too would give a newborn their own religious identity" (Bukhari).

The saying, "every child of Adam is a sinner," means that every human being is a sinner, sin being an inevitable outcome of a fallible human nature. No matter how righteous a person is, he or she may at times disobey God through ignorance or forgetfulness. The Prophet (pbuh) meant to emphasize that the best person is the one who seeks forgiveness for his or her sins. Furthermore, he said that one who repents from sin is like one without sin. God says in the Qur'an that He will replace the evil deeds with good for those who repent, believe, and do righteous deeds (Qur'an 25:70).

Another saying of the Prophet indicates that God actually intended for humans to be a species that commits sin so that they can turn to Him and He would forgive them (Muslim). This is a much better explanation than the popular conception according to which God at first sees that humans are good, then God discovers that they are wicked and so, being sorry that He made them in the first place, God eventually decides to wipe them off the face of the Earth; but then he changes His mind again and lets them eventually procreate and fill the Earth, although they are still sinful as ever. The better explanation is that God knew in advance that we would sin, and we turned out just the way God planned. God does not discover new things—He knows everything, always.

So, simply put, the Islamic belief is that people are not born in sin but they will eventually commit sins for which they should sincerely repent, and God will wipe out their sins.

People do not inherit sins. Sin is something you do wrong. You couldn't have done anything before you were born, therefore you were born without sin.

The Qur'an teaches that God does not hold us responsible for what others did before we were born, and no innocent person would carry the guilt of another (Qur'an 4:111, 6:164). This coincides with our own sense of justice.

No one considers it right to blame children for the sins of their ancestors, or to punish the innocent so that the guilty may go free.

(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

Young U of T Student Comes to Islam

"I cannot comprehend how anyone could not see the beauty of Islam"

Amanda Throop is a 4th-year student at the University of Toronto, majoring in French Literature. She is 22 years old and accepted Islam on November 1st, 1997. Two weeks after embracing a new religion she agreed to this interview. Through a discussion with Mehran Banaei, she informs our readers about her journey to Islam.

Could you tell us a few things about your background?

I come from a small town in Ontario and was raised in a Christian family. I was baptized at the age of twelve and attended Catholic school. However, I was allowed to choose my own faith. I have one younger sister and an older brother. My parents are divorced and both have remarried. Up to a few years ago, I was training to be a figure skater.

Why did you leave Christianity?

I always had a problem with Christianity to the extent that I could not even step into a church. I find Christianity and the Church, as the institution which portrays it, to be very hypocritical and materialistic. I find Sunday services to be a show. I read many books on the Bible and Christianity. I discovered numerous dilemmas and contradictions. I could never understand the divinity of Jesus or the notion of him being the Son of God. One particular book that influenced me most was The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail. This book gives historical proofs to establish that the Resurrection was a hoax and that Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God. These two notions are the very backbone of Christianity and

rejecting both of them means rejecting Christianity. I find Christianity to be a religion for Sundays only, a "once-a-week" faith. Christians have the tendency to do what pleases them, regardless of what their book requires them to do. For example, the Bible says not to eat pork, but Christians do not pay any attention to this decree.

After rejecting Christianity, why did you not turn to secularism like most other former Christians, which is in fact a very popular trend in the West?

Because I believed in God and the initial message of Christianity. Besides, rejection of Christianity does not justify acceptance of secularism.

If not Christianity, why Islam and not other religions such as Judaism?

I started taking courses in school on world religions. I studied many of them. I also discovered that there are some fundamental problems with the Hebrew Bible and Judaism, basically because they go to the opposite extreme and completely reject Jesus. Then I started looking into Islam. Initially I thought that since it was similar to Christianity and Judaism, I would have a problem with it too. However, when I started reading the Qur'an, it quickly reinforced some of my own personal beliefs. I was taken by it and became convinced that it is a true message from God. I did not waste any time and accepted Islam right away. I learned how to pray and have attended Jumu'ah prayers. I found Islam to be a practical religion and I cannot comprehend how anyone could not see the beauty of its message.

What really convinced you that the Qur'an is truly a revelation from God?

Its purity, consistency, and lack of any contradictions. Since I embraced Islam I started having the feeling of God all around me. I feel confident to put my trust in Him. I did not accept Islam as the result of someone's influence. My decision was the outcome of my own research and the zest for the truth.

What kind of reaction have you received from people around you since embracing Islam?

A mixture of support and criticism. Some have cautioned me not to rush it, others have thought I was crazy, a few have condemned me and warned me that I had made the biggest mistake of my life. Someone told me that I had ruined my life and that my future husband would treat me badly. One individual even tried to change my mind by insisting that I go see a movie called *Not Without My Daughter*. She expected me to generalize an entire nation and a religion based on this movie. I do not believe what is portrayed in that film as the social practice of the entire Muslim community. The fact is, I did not make my decision out of whimsical emotion, but reason. It may seem to be a quick decision, but once the truth becomes clear to you, I do not see any point in waiting. My family is not yet aware of my decision and that is because we live far from each other. This is something which I want to tell them in person, not on the phone, or in a letter. I am sure that my mother and brother would be very supportive.

What do you think is the reason for so much apprehension about Islam?

Definitely the media, what else?

How do you think we can overcome this barrier and make it easier for non-Muslims to learn about Islam?

We can counter the image presented by the media, for instance, by setting a proper example of who a Muslim really is and how a Muslim should behave. This would have an impact on non-Muslims and others who would observe us. The fact is that many choose to ignore reality. There is a verse in the Qur'an which says that even if so many angels came down to Earth, people would still refuse to believe. Ultimately, it is up to God to guide non-Muslims to Islam.

You are invited!

The Ambition Committee is considering starting a group in order to facilitate an informative and supportive atmosphere. The objective of this group is to provide support, interaction, and a brotherly/sisterly atmosphere especially for newcomers to Islam.

The meetings are to be informal, yet in an Islamic environment. We would like your input whether you think there is a need for such a group. Please call at (416) 740-1491 and leave your response with your name and telephone number.

Muslim Role Models

Fatimah bint Muhammad (ra)

From the Qur'an

Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgement (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if any one is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.

(Qur'an, 2:185)

From the Hadith

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "Whoever does not give up lying and acting on those lies and evil actions, etc., Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink (i.e., Allah will not accept his fasting).

(Bukhari)

by Shazeela Ali

In the year 605 CE, in the city of Makkah, a baby girl was born. She was named Fatimah bint Muhammad (ra). Her parents were Muhammad (pbuh) and Khadijah (ra). She was a sibling to Zaynab, Ruqqayyah, and Umm Kulthum. Two boys were also born into this family: Al-Qasim and Abdullah, but they both died as babies. Considering who Fatimah's parents were, one can guess that not only was Fatimah (ra) a special baby, but she also grew up to be a woman with outstanding qualities.

As a child growing up, Fatimah's life was very different from the other children who were her age. While other children used to live a carefree life with no worries, Fatimah was often a witness to the ill treatment that her father used to receive at the hands of the Qureysh. Once at the age of 10, when she accompanied her father to Masjid Al-Haram, Muhammad (pbuh) prayed while a group of Qureysh men gathered around him and threw the entrails of a slaughtered animal upon him. Fatimah (ra), who was standing beside the Prophet (pbuh), unsure of what to do, took the slaughtered animal off her father and then stood firmly and angrily before the group of Qureysh, lashing out against them.

When Fatimah (ra) was a young lady, her mother passed away. Although Fatimah (ra) was very grief stricken, she was very supportive to her father. So concerned was she over her father's welfare that Fatimah (ra) became known as Umm Abeeha—the mother of her father.

The Prophet (pbuh) had a special love for Fatimah (ra). He once said: "Whosoever pleases Fatimah has indeed pleased Allah and whosoever has caused her to be angry has indeed angered Allah. Fatimah is a part of me.

Whatever pleases me pleases her and whatever angers her angers me. He also said: "The best women in all the world are four: the Virgin Mary, Asiyah—the wife of Pharaoh, Khadijah—the mother of the Believers and Fatimah—the daughter of Muhammad."

Fatimah (ra) was known amongst the Muslims for her fine qualities. She was very kind to the poor and she would often give all the food she had to those in need even if it meant that she herself remained hungry. She had no interest in acquiring the possessions of this world and therefore led a very simple life. Fatimah (ra) was said to have a beaming face and was given the title "Az-Zahra," which means "the Resplendent One." Most of Fatimah's time was said to be spent in prayers and reciting the Qur'an.

Fatimah (ra) had many similarities with her father. As with the Prophet (pbuh), Fatimah (ra) was an eloquent speaker. When speaking to others, she would often move them to tears. Fatimah (ra) also had a very strong resemblance to the Prophet (pbuh). Aisha (ra) said about Fatimah (ra): "I have not seen any one of Allah's creation who resembled the Messenger of Allah more in speech, conversation, and manner of sitting than Fatimah. When the Prophet (pbuh) saw her approaching, he would welcome her, stand up to kiss her, take her by the hand and sit her down in the place where he was sitting."

At the age of 19, Fatimah (ra) married Ali (ra) who was 21. Fatimah (ra) was the only one of her sisters who did not marry a wealthy man, as Ali was poor. In terms of material comforts, their life was filled with many hardships. Once Fatimah (ra) went to the Prophet (pbuh) and asked for a servant but he told her of

something better and more beneficial than a servant. He said: "Say Subhan-Allah, Al-hamdu-lillah, and Allahu-Akbar ten times after every prayer and thirty times when going to bed."

Fatimah (ra) had four children: two sons named Al-Hasan (the Beautiful One) and Al-Hussain (the Little Beautiful One), and two daughters named Zaynab and Umm Kulthum who were named after her sisters.

Even with little children, Fatimah (ra) took an active role in the Muslim community. For example, after the Battle of Uhud, she went to the battlefield and dressed her father's wounds; at the Battle of the Ditch, she took on the responsibility of preparing food for those in battle; in the camps, she led the women in prayers; and she was also among the Muslims who took part with the Prophet (pbuh) in the liberation of Makkah.

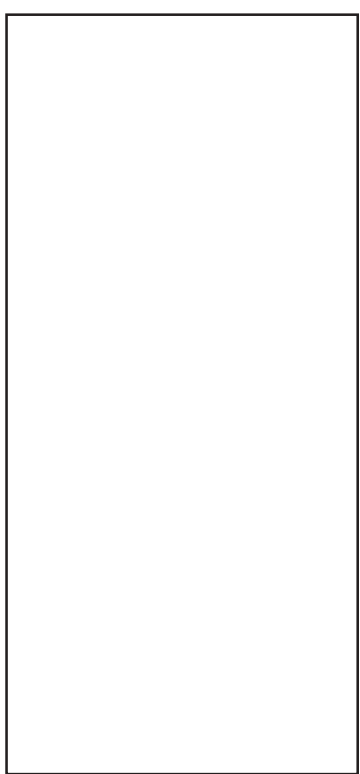
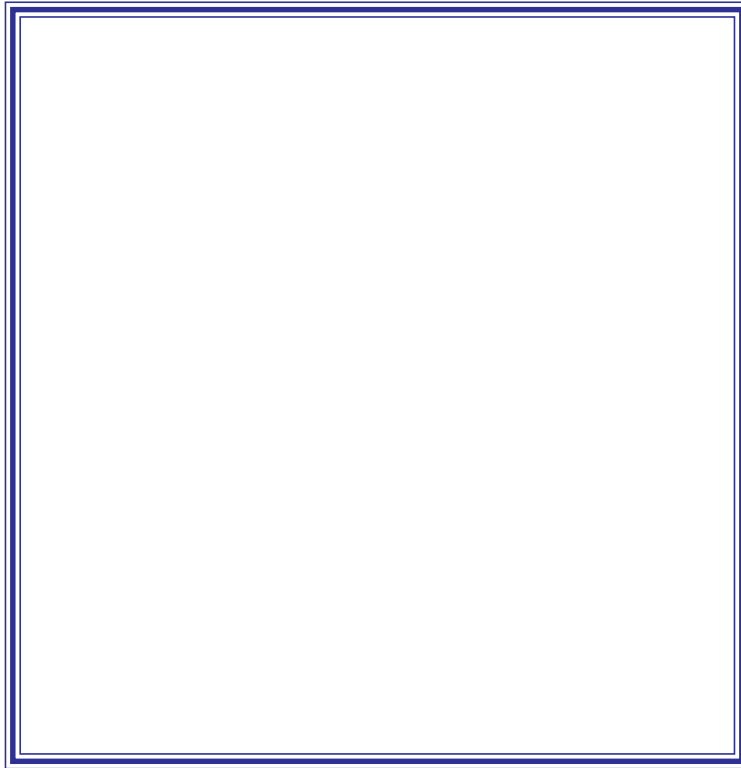
During the time when the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) became very ill, he once told

Fatimah (ra) that he would soon meet his Lord. When Fatimah (ra) cried, he said: "Don't cry, for you will be the first of my household to join me." Hearing this, Fatimah (ra) smiled.

In less than five months after her father's death, Fatimah (ra) died. Before she died, Fatimah (ra) told Ali (ra): "I have an appointment today with the Messenger of Allah." After consoling Ali (ra), she then closed her eyes forever.

Fatimah bint Muhammad (ra) was indeed among one of the blessed women who we should look up to as our role models. She is an example of an ideal daughter, youth, wife, mother, and one who dedicated her life to the struggle of Allah. When we reflect upon our own lives, would it bring a smile to our face if we knew that we would die in a matter of months?

Through Fatimah's life story, it is indeed clear to see why she is amongst the four women who were promised Paradise.



ISSRA ...

Continued from page 1

to talk. A Muslim doctor was contacted who gave him his time free of charge. His immediate financial needs were met within our limited budget.

The beige multi-line telephone once again shrilled in the office. . . "Sister, I'm having trouble with my son. He's on drugs and his girlfriend has just had his baby. My wife and I are devastated. We tried our best to bring him up properly. We did our best with this boy. What shall we do now?"

The machine on the desk shrilled once again. A new Muslim from out of town was calling. Her husband had once again assaulted her until she was bleeding and bruised. The owners of the house where they were living were devout Christians and tried to point

out to her that this was how Muslim men behaved with their wives. They suggested that she would be better treated by Christian men.

"Sister, I need to speak to the Sheikh right away. It's urgent!"

"Sister, my husband has left me and I'm alone with three children and I have no food."

"Sister, I need a Muslim babysitter right away."

The requests go on and on, each one urgent in their own way and important to the caller and to the workers at ISSRA.

We deal with mainstream agencies such as the Children's Aid Society, school boards, women's organizations, and other Muslim organizations, to name a few.

The above cases are only a few that have come across the phone lines in the last few weeks. Close to 6000 calls come in over our

lines each year, many of them brothers and sisters in crisis situations requiring immediate assistance.

We are not funded by the government nor by any Masjid, although the Masjids refer people to us.

There is only one full-time staff worker and four part-time workers. The pressure on these people to handle the high volume of work is intense, especially since ISSRA operates on a very limited budget.

ISSRA's work is vital to our community. If ISSRA disappears due to a lack of donations, what will happen to the men and women, boys and girls, who call on us for support?

It's up to each of us to throw our financial support behind this worthwhile association and to do our part to keep it running so that

hurting people—both Muslim and non-Muslim—can call on us for help.

Your help is needed now! Every dollar counts, and yes, every penny counts. One sister I know in my building asked if she could give me her small change that she had saved up. I accepted this with gratitude on behalf of the brothers and sisters in need.

You never know, you or someone you know might one day need help. Ensure that there will be an association there to help. Contribute whatever amount you can afford. Mail your contribution today. It will be put to good use. Cheques or money orders should be addressed to ISSRA:

Attn: Sister Wilma, ISSRA
2375 St. Clair Ave. W.
Toronto, ON M6N 1K9
(416) 767-9358

Matrimonials

1. *Sunni Muslima, 23 years old, Canadian-born, from a well-settled practising family. Prefers sincere, honest, ambitious Sunni Muslim. Inquiry #74.*

2. *Employed, 28 years old Shia Muslim seeks Muslima, Sunni or Shia, 18 to 29 years of age, for the purpose of matrimony. I enjoy soccer, volleyball, basketball, watching movies and family life. Please reply in confidence. Inquiry #75.*

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

The Ambition accepts Matrimonial ads at \$15 for 3 lines per single insert. They must be pre-paid by cheque or money order. To place an ad call Sister Wilma at (416) 247-0948.

The Ambition

6452 Finch Ave. West
Unit 148, Toronto, ON
M9V 1T4

living. In Islam, all humans submit to the One God alone and have mutual rights and expectations respected. A society or state governed by Islam encourages and guarantees the natural values of truth, goodness, and justice for all.

An oppressor is not a Muslim. Nor is the person who helps an oppressor. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Let there be no harm and no reciprocating of harm." He also said: "Make things easy for people and not difficult." Another time he (pbuh) said: "If anyone walks with an oppressor to strengthen him knowing that he is an oppressor he has gone forth from Islam."

Racism ...

Continued from page 1

because my parents always taught me to walk away if I heard something that I did not like. Do we say racial insults because the media has implanted these thoughts unknowingly in our minds about racial cases that we build up a desire to hate a certain race because a person from their race did or said something to a person from our race?

There is no one answer to this unwanted problem. Nevertheless, we have to stop all of this. We are the leaders of tomorrow and if these so-called "joking remarks" don't stop, all the hard work by Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, June Jordan, and other civil rights activists will be destroyed and our children will live in a racially divided world where they will be judged by the colour of their skin rather than by the content of their character.

The message of the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) says all men are brothers of one another. To warn mankind of the consequences of racism, God has sent verses in the Qur'an: "We

Committee

Continued from page 8

the monopoly; it rather stresses the need for a collective effort by all concerned Muslims. Therefore, the committee's activities are open to every Muslim who shares our concern for our children.

For further info, please feel free to contact the members of this committee at Salaheddin Islamic Center, (416) 264-3900 or fax (416) 264-3343.

have not sent thee but as a (Messenger) to all mankind, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men know not" (34:28) and "The believers are but a single brotherhood" (49:10).

As quoted by the Prophet (pbuh), Allah says in the Qur'an: "Verily, this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah and I am your Lord and Cherisher. Therefore, serve Me (and no other)" (21:92). The enforcement of the Muslim brotherhood is the greatest social ideal of Islam. The Prophet's sermon on his last pilgrimage was based on the fact that Islam cannot be completely realized until this ideal is achieved.

Cosmic or Kismat?

Continued from page 3

Turn to scam artists who come in all forms: psychics, palm readers, owners of crystal balls, and even friends or family members with a double agenda.

Ultimately, as you can see, there is only one path you can turn to. That is, turning to your Creator who you will one day meet again and have to answer to. Those who turn to and believe in Allah (swt) will have the spiritual strength to carry on and take action to make their lives better. We must never give up our faith in Allah (swt) and in that Kismat (destiny) that he has already laid out for us.

Those who turn to family and friends may get good moral support. But no matter how much they love you, they can't solve your problems for you. If they make all

Nature Declares ...

Continued from page 1

trees, and at the lovely and varying hues of the trees in autumn, I always remember this verse. The evergreen trees mingle with the different shades of green, brown, yellow, and red. It is a glorious and vibrant sight! Praise be to Allah! It is a sight to be observed and commemorated by every devotee turning to Allah, The Almighty.

The Power, the Goodness, and the Justice of Allah reveal themselves throughout nature. Verses pertaining to this are all found in Surah An-Nabaa (78), verses 6-16. Allah's loving care is illustrated in a fine message. The

your decisions for you, not only will all their decisions not make you happy, but will also make you dependent upon them (which will also annoy them!). Also, some people pretend they are your friends and that they're on your side when in reality they are just like the people that turn to psychics and palm readers.

Finally, those poor souls who unsuspectingly turn to scam artists are just robbed of their money, dignity, self-esteem, and whatever self-worth they had.

So what I am saying to you, my brothers and sisters in Islam, is that whenever we're in need of help, we must turn only to Allah (swt) by praying and reading the guidance that He has revealed to us in the Glorious Qur'an and by also reading the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). So as you can by now hopefully see, the answer to the title of my article is Kismat, **not** Cosmic!

Sun, the rain, the luxurious gardens, the corn and different vegetables which are provided for us, are all proof of the Power, the Justice and the Goodness of Allah. In this technologically-oriented society, people are ever-busy with their computers and other mechanical devices, but I urge them to look and admire the beauty around them whenever they are outside. Whenever they have a chance to go to a park, playground, or go on a ride, they should look around and remember and praise their Creator, Allah, in their own humble way and offer their gratitude and thanks to him for having created them in this wonderful and marvellous world.

Human Rights

Continued from page 1

simple life without giving or taking bribes. Those who do not get involved in bribes have hardly enough money to support themselves, let alone a family.

Another example is Palestine. The Palestinians have been stripped of their rights to property in their very own country. The country that once belonged to them, now belongs to their oppressors, i.e., The Jews.

Therefore, everyone should turn to Islam, the natural way of

The Ambition welcomes new writers

We invite writers, interviewers, community news reporters, story writers for children, etc.

Our next deadline is: Jan. 31st, 1998

Call Asma Warsi at (416) 740-1491

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

Kids' Korner

The Blessed Month of Ramadhan

by Sufyan Zafar

As we all know, we are embarking towards a month of great importance, the blessed month of Ramadhan. Allah has given us a means of purification and a means to attain His Mercy in this month. Our fasting and submission to Allah is based not only on our practice, but also on our knowledge. This is a month where we abstain from material things, food, drink, and marital relations, from dawn till dusk, restraining ourselves by knowing the limits of our fast. Fasting is a part of every Muslim's life and is compelled on every adult. It is obligatory, just as Salat, on a child who reaches the age of puberty.

There are those who fast for the people or to be seen by others. We should not fast for show, but for ourselves and for the Mercy of Allah. This is a month of patience and striving and surely we will be rewarded by Allah, for he is the most Merciful. Even though we will make mistakes, He will forgive us over and over again. If we come to Him crawling, He will come running towards us, so to say. If we strive in any little way with sincerity, he will open to us in a big way. It is not the quantity of our deeds, but the quality, the true intention of the believer following the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). The Qur'an states clearly: "*Whosoever brings a good deed will receive tenfold the like thereof*" (6:160). In Ramadhan, a good deed is rewarded ten times more than in any other month in the whole year.

If we take a look at nature, most plants and trees cannot survive the bitter cold of winter and they lose all their leaves and flowers and in a way, go to sleep. After a few months of "fasting" they are revitalized with bright new leaves, blossoming with colour. Just as the plants need their rest in the winter, the human digestive system also needs to repose, and what better way to do it than fasting.

In the great month of Ramadhan, we are also blessed with the Night of Power, the Night of Destiny, *Lailatul-Qadr*. In the Qur'an, this night is said to be better than a thousand months. Since no one is exactly sure which of the last ten odd nights of Ramadhan is this precious night, it is best to pray on all the odd nights seeking Allah's Mercy and submitting to His Will. From an authentic Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh), it is reported that whosoever stands in prayer on the Night of Power with sincerity, Allah will forgive all his sins.

So, may Allah give us the power to make the best of our intentions and to forgive us for those things we have done wrong. Thus, we should take it upon ourselves to take full advantage of the benefits of the blessed month of Ramadhan, and let us not be deprived of its infinite blessings.

Brain Teasers

1. The month of Ramadhan comes only once in a year, right? And there can be only 29 or 30 days of fasting. In the year 1835, Muslims observed 42 days of fasting in Ramadhan. Can you tell why?

2. In the year 1998, we will observe the month of Ramadhan twice. Why?

3. A traveller in India stopped by a well to drink some water. The well was 36 feet deep and it needed a 45 feet long rope to get some water. How long a rope will be required for a well 72 feet deep?

4. You have two buckets of water. Bucket A is at temp. of 32F and bucket B is at 90F. You drop an iron ball in each bucket. Which one will sink first? Remember, both balls have the same weight.

Find the answers in the paper on another page.

About the Prophet

al-Isra wal-Mi'raj

In the tenth year of the Prophethood, the Prophet (pbuh) had a very unique experience. He was called to visit the Heavens and he physically travelled to the ultimate height by the grant of Allah.

One night when he was sleeping in his bed, he was awakened by the Angel Jibreel and told that Allah had invited him to visit the Heavens to show him some of His signs. Muhammad (pbuh) was first taken to the Ka'aba where he was given Buraq, a white horse with the speed of light. Buraq took the Prophet to Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. All the prophets had gathered there and offered Salat behind Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This journey to Jerusalem is called al-Isra.

Next, the Prophet started his journey to Heaven, called Mi'raj or

the Ascension (going up). In Heaven he met all the prophets and he saw the beauty of the gardens of Paradise, which Allah has promised to those who obey Him. He also saw the sufferings in Hell where evil people will go after death and suffer.

It was in Heaven that Allah spoke to Muhammad (pbuh) and bestowed his Ummah with the five daily prayers. Before that Muslims used to pray only in the morning and night. Allah raised Muhammad (pbuh) to such spiritual height that no one else has ever been raised to. When we prostrate ourselves before Allah in Salat we are very close to Him. The Prophet said: "Salat is the Mi'raj of a Muslim."

When the Prophet (pbuh) returned to this world, his bed was still warm. Mi'raj was a miracle of Allah because He has all the power and can do anything that He wills.

When the Prophet (pbuh) related his experience of ascension to the Makkans the Kuffar laughed at him but the Muslims believed him. Abu Bakr (ra) said: "Muhammad (pbuh) always speaks the truth. If angels can come to him from Heaven each day, he can also visit Heaven. Allah has power over everything."

In the Qur'an, Allah speaks about this great incident in Surah al-Isra in the following words: "*Glorified be Allah who carried His servant Muhammad at night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa.*"

The details of Mi'raj are given in another chapter of the Qur'an, Surah an-Najm and Allah tells us that His Prophet (pbuh) was in the highest horizon and he saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord and people should not dispute or doubt about it.

Some Teachings of Islam

by Muska Bashir, Weston C. I.

Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the words of God, revealed to Muhammad (pbuh) through the Archangel Jibreel. The word *Qur'an* in Arabic means *recitation*.

The companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) preserved the revelations that came to him by memorizing them or writing them down. Later, the materials were arranged to preserve the holy book of all Muslims. The third Caliph, Uthman, who ruled from 644 to 656, ordered this official copy to be sent to the mosques in each of the capital cities of the Muslim provinces.

The Qur'an teaches the absolute unity and power of God, the Creator of the whole universe. It also teaches that God is just and wishes for people to repent and purify themselves so that they can enter paradise after death. Therefore, God sent prophets with sacred books to teach people their duty to Him and humanity. The Muslims believe Muhammad (pbuh) was the last of all the prophets. Jesus and the Old Testament prophets were his predecessors.

The Qur'an forbids usury, games of chance, and the consumption of pork and alcohol. The Qur'an, like the Bible, forbids lying, stealing, adultery, and murder. Punishment for some offenses, such as

theft or adultery, can be severe. But the Qur'an softened the ancient law of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" by permitting the payment of "blood money" and by urging forgiveness.

Although the Qur'an permits slavery under certain conditions, it urges us to free slaves and ranks this as an act of worship.

It also limits a man not to have more than four wives as opposed to pre-Islamic custom of having several wives.

Islam prohibits all extra-marital relationships and stresses that the man must take a woman with honour and full responsibility of marriage rather than use her and then dump her for another one!

The Qur'an teaches honour for parents, kindness to servants, protection of orphans and widows, and charity to the poor while saving their dignity. It teaches the virtues of faith in God, kindness, honesty, honour, courage, and generosity.

Islam condemns mistrust, impatience, and cruelty. Heads of families must treat the members of their household kindly and fairly. A wife has rights over her husband and vice versa. It teaches that a person should not refuse requests for help even if they seem unnecessary.

God will judge the dishonest petitioner and reward the giver in this world and in the next.

Success Stories Around Us

Jasmine Zine has a lot to offer

by *Aneesa Lakhi*

The provincial government's Bill 160 and the consequent debate which has arisen about teachers, students, school boards, and education in general, is not news to Jasmine Zine. Sister Jasmine is a mother of two boys, a volunteer and activist in the Muslim community, and a doctoral student at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).

This life of balancing family and career, personal and professional, religious and secular, was probably not what Sister Jasmine's teachers would have predicted for her when she dropped out of high school in grade nine. Immigrating to Canada with her family at the age of two, settling in Hamilton and then Burlington by the time she began elementary school as the only visible minority student in her school, has provided Sister Jasmine with a keen capacity to recognize just how alienating the education system can be without adequate support and understanding.

This alienation and frustration caused by the racism she experienced before dropping out, and the recognition that the curriculum often held little relevance for a minority student, informs the work which Sister Jasmine devotes her time and energies to now. After qualifying for entrance to the University of

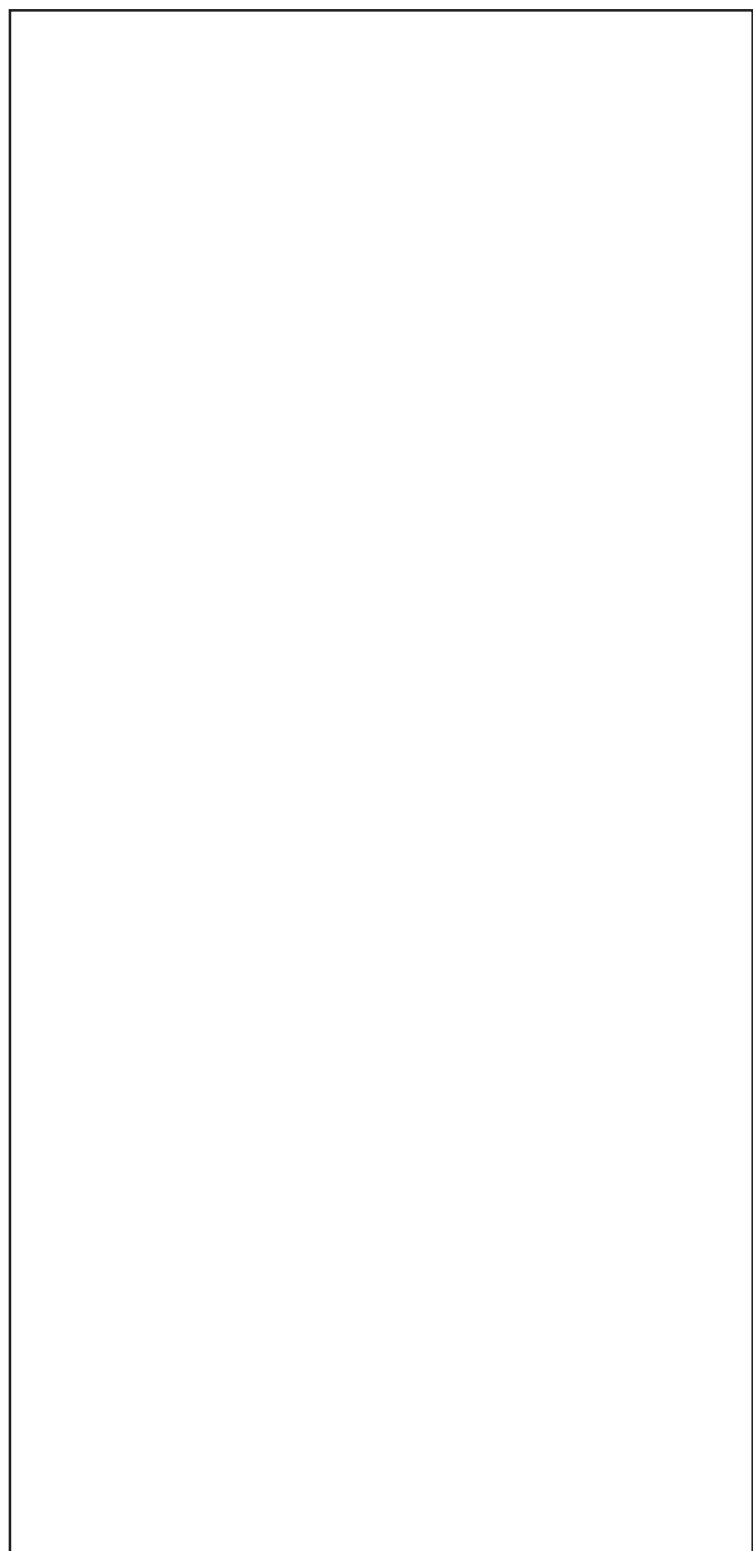
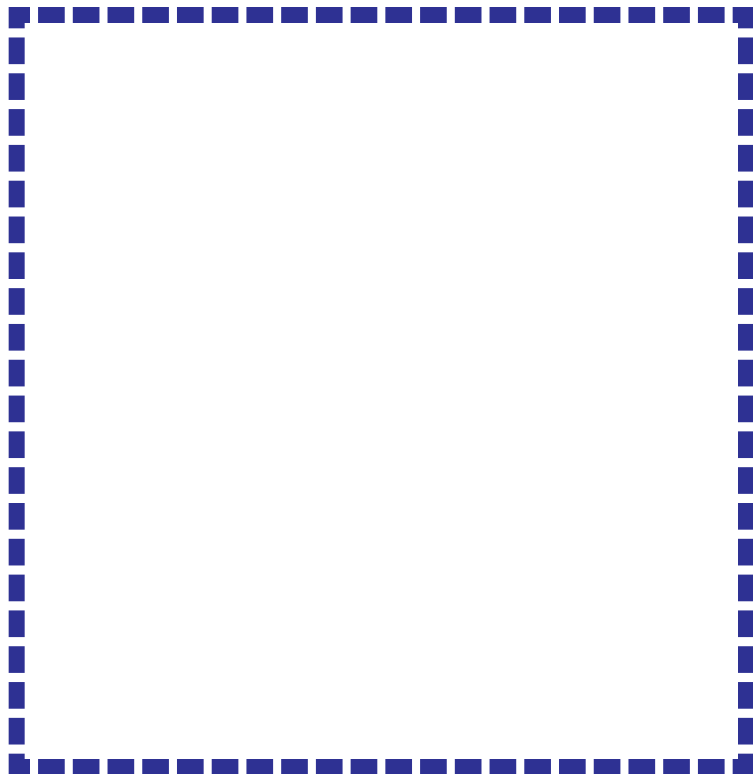
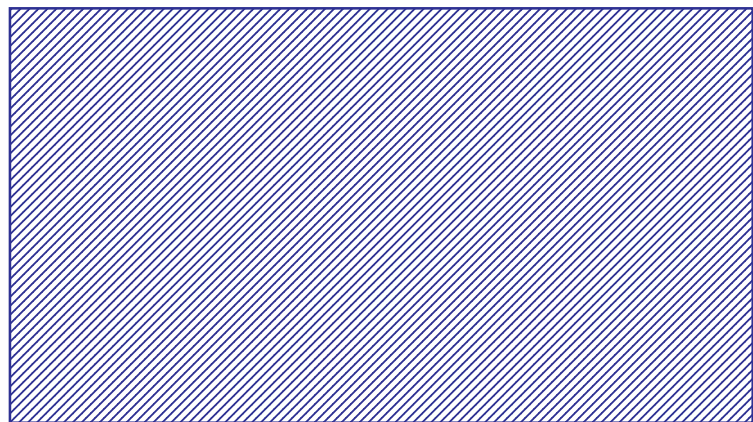
Toronto through a pre-university program, Sister Jasmine obtained an undergraduate degree, majoring in anthropology and sociology. These subjects allowed her to explore her interest in other cultures while allowing her to gain the knowledge necessary to pursue her exploration of the politics of race and education.

An MA in Sociology and Education followed. Sister Jasmine's thesis, "Education and the Politics of Religious Identity," focused on the stereotypes associated with religious identity and the often negative effect these misguided preconceptions can have on the educational experiences of young people. For example, Sister Jasmine documented instances of educators guiding Muslim girls who wore Hijab into the lower streams of the system (Basic and General level classes), assuming that Islam did not value education. This problem of "colour-coded streaming," which is very common among black students in the United States, often leaves young people unqualified for entry into university, and so, with fewer options for their future.

As Sister Jasmine emphasizes with her volunteer work, in which she attempts to provide an Islamic perspective on issues being addressed by educators, and through her doctoral work, the key to ensuring an equitable education system lies with activism. It is

necessary, argues Sister Jasmine, to make those in charge of and those who work within the education system aware of the needs and concerns of Muslim students and parents. The eurocentrism of the education system must be changed in order to acknowledge the validity of different forms of knowledge and different experiences. The presentation of various cultures within schools must not be exoticized, regarded as interesting but ultimately foreign, and so, not terribly relevant.

The demographic changes within schools are forcing changes in the pedagogy, according to Sister Jasmine, but we must take up the initiative in order to develop an inclusive curriculum. Ironically enough, a student who once felt that very little was positive about the education system has just completed a study along with three peers in which that system is closely scrutinized. *Reconstructing Dropouts: A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement from School*, is based on student narratives and addresses not just those students who drop out of school, but also those who are "pushed out" by the forces of racial and social difference. In the end, if these negative forces are to be countered effectively, then these students must be allowed to tell their stories, and we must take up their cause.



Community in Action

The Islamic Educational Committee

by *Usman Bakhsh*

Realizing the difficulties we face in order to save our Islamic identity, the Islamic Educational Committee has been established at Salaheddin Islamic Center. The objectives of the committee are as follows:

- To seek and develop alternative educational means to public schooling, such as home schooling. The committee aims to help parents who opt for this choice. Contact person: Br. Khalid Fahmi (416-391-5719) and Br. Sallal Silim (416-750-9704).
- To help build and preserve the Muslim students' Islamic personality. In order to offer supportive Islamic material to the parents and the students, the

committee has established an Islamic audio-video library. Though in its infancy, this library already hosts over 170 tapes of valuable audio and video material from prominent Muslim scholars. Contact person: Br. Sallal Silim (416-750-9704) and Br. Farooq Zaidi (416-266-9203).

- To provide support for Muslim students attending public schools trying to establish a Musalla for regular or Friday prayers, by acting as a liaison between them and the school authorities. Toward this end we request the support and assistance of every Muslim parent. In particular we need to hear from the Muslim students attending public schools.

We need to get the following information: a) approximate size of the Muslim students body at the school and, b) whether a place for performing the daily and/or Jum'a prayers is available. Contact person: Br. Mohamad Mominul Islam (416-265-6733) and Br. Usman Bakhsh (416-441-6100)

- To act as a medium in helping Muslim parents networking with each other in the GTA region.
- To act as a think-tank dealing with all issues pertaining the schooling of Muslim students.

The committee stresses that it aims at furthering the public interest of the Muslim community in the GTA region. In doing so, the committee does not claim to have

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