

The Ambition Toronto

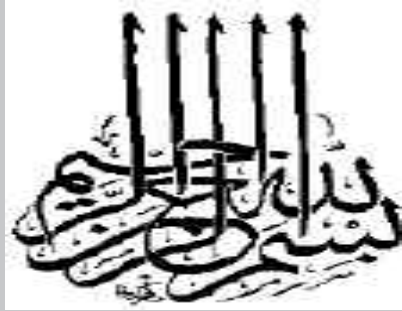
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The Fall Of The Khilafa And Its Impact

In the absence of the Khilafah, we Muslims have been taught to accept the rule of kufr as being normal.

by Usman Bakhsh

Those of you who have read the book *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* by Paul Kennedy may remember the cover of the book which depicts the Earth as a ball in

the hands of the competing major powers. This is very much the situation of the Muslim Ummah since the fall of the Khilafah (Caliphate).

The Muslim Ummah occupies a very strategic stretch of land that possesses all kind of natural resources and wealth. With the removal of the Khilafah, the floodgates were wide open. The Sykes-Pico treaty was conducted in the middle of the First World War, in 1916. Britain and France had their plans ready for partitioning the Muslim lands and they wasted no time in burying the Islamic way of life, once and for all. They speedily imposed their military occupation and at once proceeded with the division of the Muslim Ummah. Thus, what was known as Shaam, was overnight divided into four countries with four nations and four peoples, namely Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.

In 1920, when Lebanon was created by the French, the seed for the later events of the civil war in 1958 were sown, which, in turn, was a trial stage for the later one in 1975, ending only in 1990. The civil war is still going on under a different disguise.

People don't realise that Lebanon was the first Israel created. Whereas the British gave Palestine to the Jews, the French gave Lebanon to the Maronites who thought of themselves as being the chosen people. The French

and British worked hard to see to it that Islam become a thing of the past. They left no stone unturned in their campaign. They at once established corrupt regimes loyal to them, replaced entire political and economic structures of society, and imposed the teachings of their value system and lifestyle.

The Second World War had a drastic impact on the European grip. A new kid appeared on the block, demanding his fair share of the pie. The Americans decided that they are the legitimate inheritors of the European colonial powers. It was the US that gave fuel to the wave of "Liberation" and "Independence" movement, which swept the various corners of the European empires. This game went on and is still going on in various Muslim lands. The proxy wars in Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, and Iran, despite some local variations, served the strategic interests of the competing foreign powers. The second Gulf War finally gave the Gulf on a silver plate to the Americans. The list of tragedies and human sufferings is long.

The scene in Central Asia is another addition to the same game. The same story repeats itself all over (with the latest race for Azeri oil). While Britain may back a group of generals, America races against time to give its agents the upper hand, and Russia struggles to maintain its grip. All along it's the Muslims who pay

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1420 Years Ago

The white moon rose over us from the Valley of Wadaa, and we owe it to show thankfulness for the call is to Allah.

by Muhammad Yaseen

April 18th or the 1st of Muharram marks the date 1420 years ago when the beloved Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) embarked on the famous Hijrah (migration) with his faithful companion Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (ra). His detractors, the leaders of the Quraysh tribe in Makkah plotted to kill him by sending a squad of elite assassins, hand picked from nine clans. They knew they had to dispose of him before he gathered enough force that would eventually defeat them.

But Allah (swt) the Almighty had a plan for these evil schemers and the Prophet (pbuh) left his house with Ali (ra) who gallantly became the decoy in his bed. The Prophet (pbuh) went out unnoticed by the gang of assassins.

The Prophet (pbuh) and Abu Bakr (ra) proceeded in a southern direction instead of going directly towards Madinah. They sheltered in a cave. As is frequently recounted to children all over the world, webs were cast by spiders at the mouth of the cave providing camouflage and to become a symbol of the Hijrah celebrations. Abu Bakr's daughter brought food and water while another Companion provided reconnaissance and information.

Once however, a troop of the Quraysh came close to the mouth of the cave. There was concern felt by Abu Bakr (ra) as they were only two whereas there were many of

the Quraysh. Muhammad (pbuh) then said as is recorded in Surah Tawbah of the Qur'an: "Do not worry; for Allah is with us." This offered Abu Bakr (ra) words of console and comfort.

As the Mercy to Mankind and his faithful Companion reached the outskirts of Yathrib (now called Madinah), the children came out singing in joy and happiness of the arrival of the most beloved and noble creation of Allah (swt), Muhammad ibn Abdullah (pbuh); our Nabi, our Rasool.

"Ta`a laa al-badru `alayna, minthani yaa til-wadaa, wa jaa bash-shukru `alayna, maa da`alil laa hida," chanted the children. Their words meant: "Oh, the white moon rose over us from the Valley of Wadaa, and we owe it to show thankfulness for the call is to Allah." Bara' (ra) said that had never seen a more



Muslim Foster Homes: Community's Responsibility

Children need to be placed in a home that provides continuity and consistency with their religious and cultural selves.

by Wahida Valiante

A forum was held on the February 6, 1999 at the TARIC Islamic Centre to address the issue of safety, protection, and foster care

for Muslim children. The forum was attended by the Children's Aid Society, police, boards of education, health care workers, politi-

cians, ethno-specific agencies, and Muslim community leaders, including the writer.

One of the concerns expressed by the Muslim community was about the lack of Muslim foster homes, cooperation between parents and mainstream agencies, and the Muslim community, especially during the difficult period when the agencies such as Children's Aid Society (CAS) and police get



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Editorial

Cool or Cruel: It's Your Call!

Everyone is shocked by the senseless shooting at Columbine High School, in Denver, and then in Alberta by teen aged boys. These boys are just a little more than adolescents. Apparently, what shocks people is not the act of shooting and killing, but the AGE of the killers as if it is okay for a grown man to go on a shooting spree. This is the double standard that the society has been setting for everyone, and in every aspect of life. For example, it's okay to smoke at 19 but not before that. You are allowed to drink at 21 but not at a younger age. It's okay to have sex as early as you are able to distinguish the male and female anatomy but you can not get married until you are 18. It's acceptable to see movies and TV programs with profanity and vulgarity after a certain age; the list goes on and on. These double standards are creating confusion among children. Everything is in gray.

Kids try to imitate adults. They do what it takes to prove that they are not weenies anymore.

The society that we live in today thrives on change. Reject the old values; they are too restrictive. Throw away the old standards; they are too arduous. Discard the time-tested principals; they are too old-fashioned. Everything new is improved and superior. Nothing is permanent.

And among all these new standards is the craze of being tough. Being callous. Being invincible. People respect you if you are a bad guy. They talk about you. You get attention. No one cares about the gentle, meek fellow who doesn't harm anybody.

To make the matter worse, there are Hollywood images that propagate violence and deviant demeanor as the cool thing to do.

Violence is in the air. Everyone is angry about something. We are angry about our job, about our relationships, about our fellow workers, about the traffic jams, about that new car that we wanted but could not afford, about the neighbour's dog that howls at night, you name it. Everybody is under pressure and frustrated. This frustration is vented in the form of domestic violence, aggressive behaviour on streets, bullying in schools, and shooting sprees. Violence is on the rise and it is a sign of danger.

Maybe we need to calm down a bit. Slow down a bit. We are so busy trying to achieve our worldly goals that we don't even stop to think about our spirit, our soul. We don't look at the roots of the problem. We just blame each other.

Children need positive role models. They need to know what is wrong and what is right. And they need to know it in black and white. They need standards that do not change with time. They need divine guidance. They need spirituality. They need the calm and tranquility of prayer. What this means is that adults have to restrain themselves from destructive course of action and follow the True Guidance themselves. Only then can they expect any positive change among the young ones.

Actions speak louder than words. Lead them to the straight path and they will follow.

Muslims should not think that their children are immune to the violence or other deviations in the society because they are not. They are already catching up to their peers in many respects like dating, drinking, smoking, doing drugs, and so forth.

We have two options. We can bury our heads in sand and think we are secure, or we can do something about it. The choice is ours.

Asma Warsi

Our Mail

Recent development at the Toronto District School Board

This is to bring to your urgent attention the development of recent events of a profound and serious nature at the level of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) as it would impact our public school system and society at large.

The board initiated a process

A Christian friend's kind words

I receive every issue of *The Ambition* from a friend and read it from cover to cover. I thoroughly enjoy it and totally agree with many of the articles. I particularly enjoyed the article on Christmas and Eid (Jan.-Feb. 1999 issue). I look forward to getting the upcoming editions.

Connie Griffin

Reader finds The Ambition informative

Congratulations.

Al-Hamdulillah, you and your staff have done a great job in publishing such an interesting and informative paper, *The Ambition*, which is geared towards our younger Muslim generation.

To enlighten the hearts of those who read, I wish to share with you a riddle which you may desire publishing in your next edition. If you find it worthwhile, I have more thought-provoking riddles and poems of the kind to share with you.

May Allah (swt) bless you all for your efforts and may the readers derive a spiritual benefit from the knowledge gained therein. Ameen.

Zeenat Hathiyani

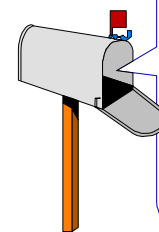
[Thanks for sharing the riddle with us. It's going into the Kids' Korner.]

in the spring of 1998 to study its equity policy and came up with recommendations that would rectify imbalances in the public school system in the areas of aboriginal, racial, ethno-cultural, and faith communities (religious denominations). A progressive draft policy entitled Anti-Racism and Ethno-Cultural Equity was proposed for adoption to the Board's standing committee on October 21, 1998.

The objective of this policy was to address systematic discriminatory practices and prejudices within the TDSB based on three instruments: the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Ontario Human Rights Code. The draft policy energetically addressed racial and ethno-cultural issues.

Despite perceived minor weaknesses in some areas of the draft policy, the Toronto District Muslim Education Assembly (TDMEA) wishes to fully support and endorse the Board's initiative, with the view that some clarifications are necessary and the mechanisms of policy implementation would have to be made transparent for scrutiny by the concerned communities.

However, adoption of the draft policy was quickly stalled by the Anti-Racist Multicultural Educators Network of Ontario (AMENO), calling for a new proposal of an anti-racism and equity policy for all, instead. This alternative policy aims to be as broad as it is dangerous. It addresses issues of disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, colour, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed (religion), age, marital status, family status, and socio-economic status. The sole concern that this new draft policy presents for us is the inclusion of



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.

sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, transsexual, bisexual, etc.) in the public school system of Toronto.

The new proposal is clearly skewed in favour of particular groups. For instance, the last article under the heading of Leadership was reluctant to specify the removal of bias against religion, although it specified the removal for homophobia. It simply relegated religious, moral, and ethical issues under other forms of bias.

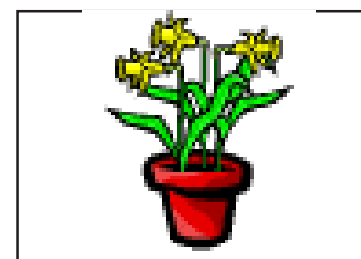
A similar pattern was consistently maintained for some other crucial articles under headings of Curriculum, Student Languages, and Employment Practices. Under the term Curriculum, our children would now have open institutionalised access and exposure to homosexual and lesbian materials, beliefs, and practices as part of their education.

We at the TDMEA join forces with all concerned groups and individuals to strongly oppose AMENO's alternative draft policy. Such a policy undermines a strong and sound public educational system and endangers the safety, moral, ethical, and religious values, beliefs, and practices of our children and society.

We believe that we can work together in helping the TDSB formulate progressive, comprehensive, and sound policies to deal with legitimate issues of equity, balance, and justice in society.

Dr. Mobarak Ali

General Secretary, TDMEA



Five Good Reasons to Advertise in *The Ambition*

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|--|--|--|--|---|
| 1. The Ambition goes to thousands of Muslims regardless of their ethnicity. | 2. Unlike most ethnic papers, it has fewer pages and your ad catches more attention. | 3. It has Islamic knowledge so people don't throw it away after reading it once. | 4. Your ad has a long life of two months, not just one week or so. | 5. With The Ambition , your money goes a long way. |
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This Journal is dedicated to:

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

What is the Qur'an? A View from Within

by Professor Mohamed Elmasry
(Second of a two-part series)

The Qur'an also provides guidelines regarding a variety of issues affecting human development such as personal hygiene, family values, the importance of seeking knowledge, behaviour in time of peace and war, and one's relation to others. The holistic approach to life is an important feature of the Qur'an. For example, no other religion makes it a duty for its adherents to tolerate and respect the faith of everyone else, whatever their belief.

The Qur'an also provides answers to many of life's outstanding questions in a concise and clear manner. Questions including: What is the meaning of life and death? Why we are here? Why it is necessary to have One Absolute God? Who is God? Why and how can we worship Him? Is there life after death? What about natural laws regarding rewards and punishments in this life and in the Hereafter? The Qur'an states that it is merely re-affirming God's eternal invitation to His religion of a universal and pure monotheistic faith and that God will protect the Qur'an from politically motivated human editing.

Historically, whenever Muslims were connected to the real teachings of the Qur'an and practised its guidance, they and the rest of the world prospered at all levels, spiritual and economical. And whenever Muslims were disconnected from the Qur'an, they and the rest of the world suffered. For example, it is due to Qur'anic teachings that Muslims built a civilization and contributed to its advancement of medicine, mathematics, sciences, engineering, and all social sciences. This is diametrically converse to our current civilization which had its roots in a largely anti-religious movement.

Early Muslim scholars were careful to separate the Qur'an from the recording of the actions and

sayings of the Prophet and his companions. This was done in a textual material called Hadith. In the process they introduced to the religious sciences of Islam: the Isnad, how each Hadith is backed by a chain of narrators, and the Rejal, the biographies of these narrators. This was the first time in the history of world religions that these two sciences were introduced and the first time in which the sayings and the actions of a "founder" of a world religion and that of his companions were carefully separated from the revealed Divine Word of God given to that "founder."

The Qur'an was not revealed in one piece, but in parts during a span of 23 years. There is agreement among scholars that the Prophet (pbuh) himself did not

write down the revelation, but it was written by several companions. Al-Suyuti (1445-1505) in his classic Al-Itqan, a text on Qur'anic sciences, reported that when a revelation came, the Prophet (pbuh) used to call one of his Qur'anic writers and dictate to him. Upon the Prophet's instruction, the Qur'anic chapters were also arranged and verses were put into a given order. Recitation of the Qur'an from memory was practised by the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions, both men and women. Al-Suyuti mentions more than twenty well-known people. The tradition of memorising the Qur'an has continued after the Prophet's death until today. Thus the Qur'an was available in both oral (memorised) and written forms during the Prophet's life. He recited the entire book several times with his companions in the year before his death. Because the available written text of the Qur'an was not bounded and in some cases did not include the whole book, the name given to it was Suhuf, meaning a collection of pages. Whenever the collection was complete, a related noun was given, Mus-

haf. There were several Mushaf and each was given the name of the person who possessed it. For example there were the Mushaf of Ibn Mas'ud, that of Ibn Abbas and that of Hafsa.

8. Less than twenty years after the Prophet's death (632) and during Uthman's Caliphate (644-56), the Qur'an was compiled, upon the instruction of the Prophet's companions and Caliph Uthman, into one bounded standard book (Mushaf), hence the name Uthman's Mushaf. Uthman's Mushaf was reproduced into master copies and distributed to major cities. (One copy is at the Islamic Museum of Tashkent, Uzbekistan.) Uthman ordered that all other versions of the Qur'an in

part or in full, be burnt. Burning was the common method used to dispose of holy writings. However, it is possible that some of these early versions of the Qur'an survive till the present.

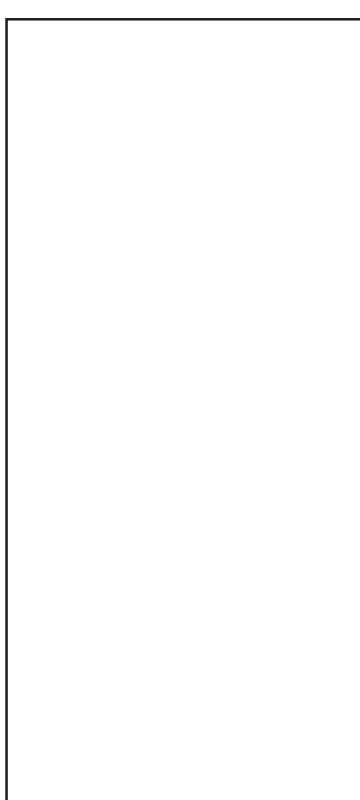
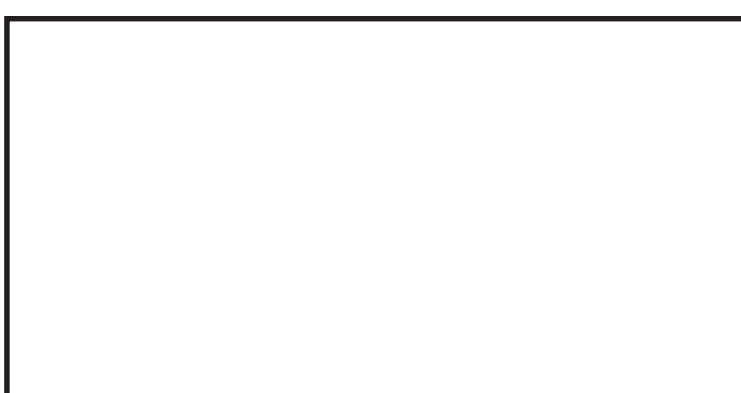
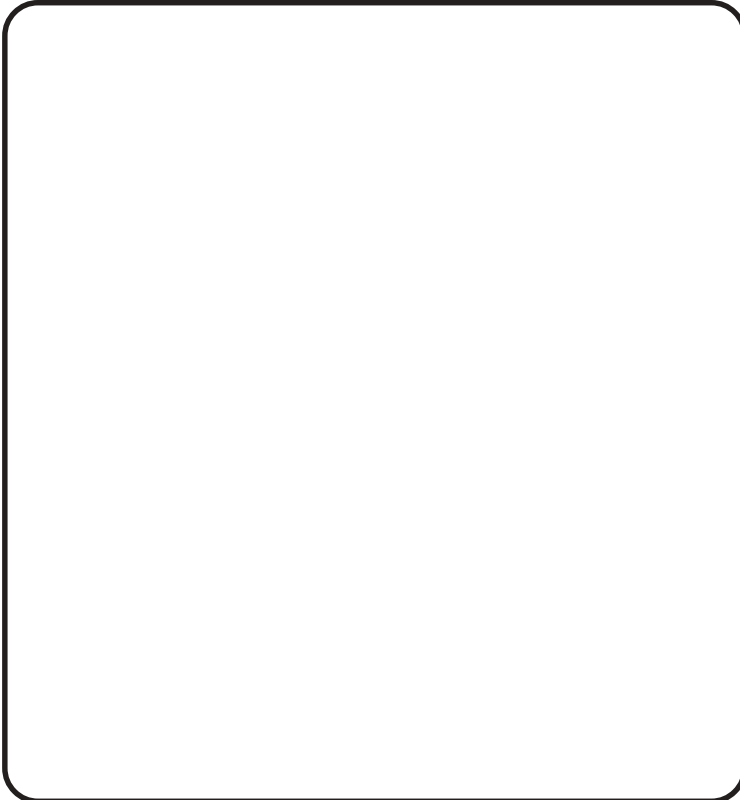
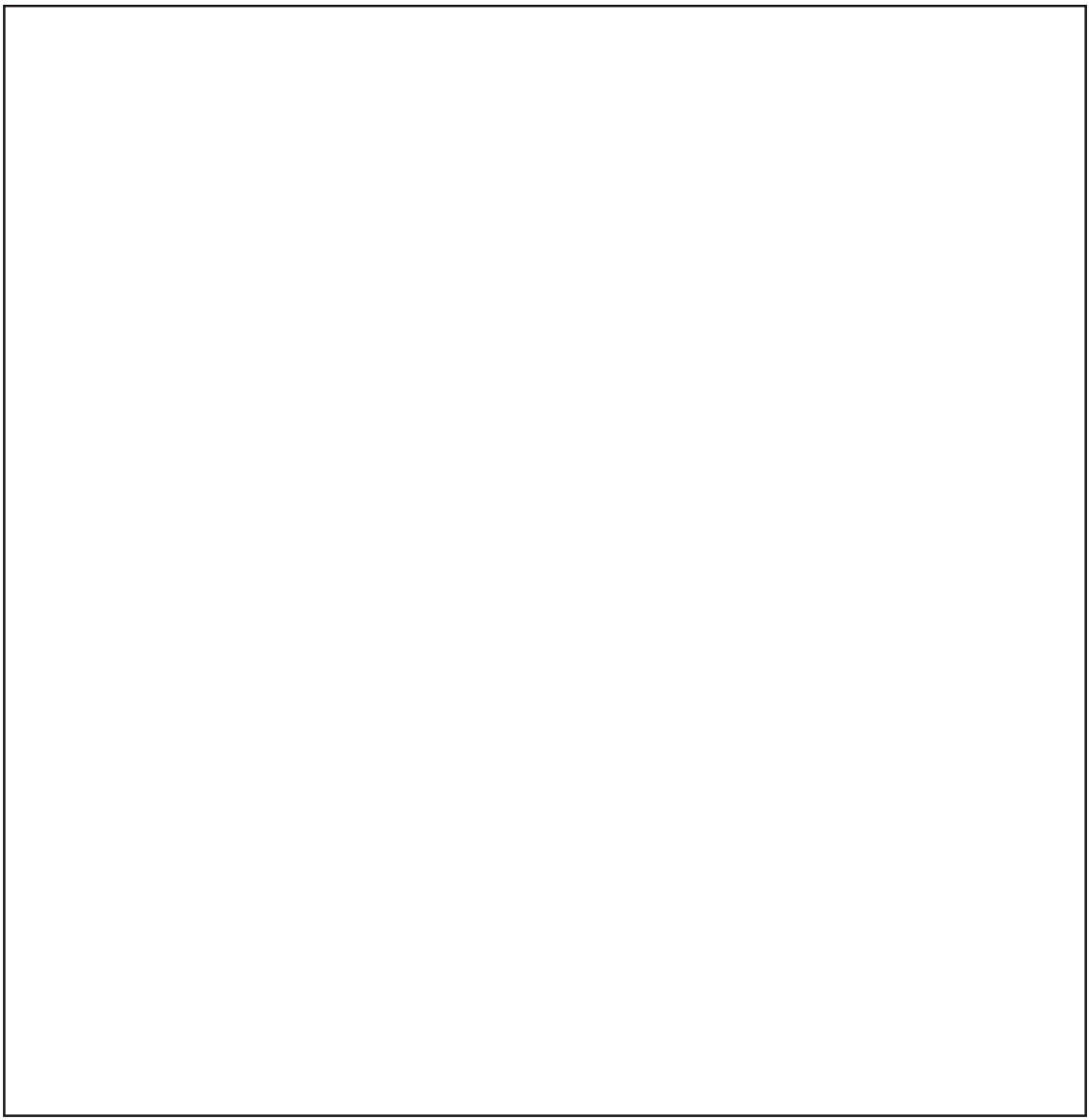
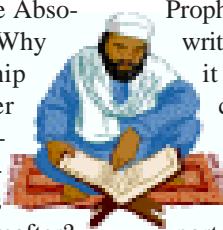
The collection methodology used to compile Uthman's Mushaf was to confirm the words of each verse by at least two people who were trustworthy, of great knowledge of the religion, and were ear and eye witnesses to the Prophet (pbuh) himself. When variants appeared for some verses, in wording, spelling, and/or pronunciation, the different versions were reported. These variants are still available today, and are called different readings, or Kera'at. No other existing religious book,

which is still available in the mother tongue of its founder, went through such scrutiny during its collection and preservation.

The discovery of the seventh century manuscript of Yemen in 1972 (The Atlantic Monthly, January 1999) does not add a new dimension, and reveals nothing new, as it has already been identified by Muslim scholars as falling within the well-known standard variants of the Qur'anic readings (Kera'at). The significance of the discovery is more historical than religious.

There is no Muslim researcher, who is a recognised scholar in both Arabic and Islamic studies, that has questioned that the

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Is He a Muslim?

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the reflection of his own writings

by Dr. Syed Rashid Ali

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote 80 books during his life that provide an excellent insight into the mind of the man and how, with the passage of time, his faith had evolved from Islam to apostasy and infidelity. Roohani Khazain is the title for the collection of all the books by Mirza Ghulam, printed by the Ahmadiyya Movement Headquarters in London.

Mirza was born in a Muslim family. His early books therefore contained the same beliefs as those of any other Sunni Muslim. But his beliefs had gradually undergone a dramatic change and his writings became more and more heretical and un-Islamic.

However, in an attempt to prove that Mirza Ghulam and Ahmadis are also Sunni Muslims, the Ahmadiyya Movement's propaganda literature usually gives quotations from his earlier books. Ahmadis will mostly talk of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith, keeping Mirza Ghulam well in the background and usually presenting him as a reformer or mujaddid or mahdi or messiah, depending on which type of people they are preaching to. Mirza Ghulam's claims to prophethood are not discussed.

The following are some extracts from the books of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that provided the basis for Islamic scholars to declare him and his followers kaafir (apostate) and out of the fold of Islam:

I. In *Izala-e-Auham (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 3, pp. 114-472)*, Mirza Ghulam writes:

1. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) did not understand the meaning of Surah Al-Zilzal.

2. Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya is referred to as the Book of God in various other books written by Mirza Ghulam, e.g., Roohani Khazain, Vol. 22, p.502.

3. "Inna anzalnaahu qareeban min al-Qadian wa bil haq anzalnaahu" (No doubt we have sent him [Mirza] near Qadian and with truth we have sent him). This revelation which has been published in Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya as well, is clearly and loudly revealing that the name of Qadian is definitely mentioned in the Qur'an or Hadith as a prophecy.

4. Names of Makkah, Madinah, and Qadian are mentioned with respect in the Qur'an.

5. The Holy Qur'an is full of obscene words.

II. Mirza Ghulam claimed that:

1. He was the second advent of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and better and superior than the first coming (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 16, p. 272).

2. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has come again in this world as Mirza Ghulam to propagate Islam. (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 17, p. 249).

3. Ahmadis should not differentiate between Mirza Ghulam and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) because "anyone who differentiates between me and Mustafa (pbuh) has not seen me and not recognised me" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 16, p. 171).

4. Mirza's so-called Wahi or revelation told him: "Muhammad-ur-rasoolullah wallazeena ma'ahoo ashiddahoo `ala al-kuffaar rohamao bainahum." In this wahi, "God has named me Muhammad and Rasoolullah" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 18, p. 207).

5. Those who join Mirza's Jama'at become a sahabi (companion) of Rasoolullah (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 16, pp. 258-259).

6. Since Mirza Ghulam is none other than the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself, therefore when an Ahmadi recites Kalima Tayyibah, by "Muhammad-ur-rasoolullah" he means Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of

Qadian (Kalimat-al-Fasl by Mirza Basheer Ahmad, son of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad).

III. From Mirza son of Chiragh Bibi to Jesus son of Mary:

1. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the son of Chiragh Bibi but he claimed that he is 'Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus). He said that at first God converted him into Maryam for two years. After two years, God made him pregnant by blowing the soul of Jesus into him. He remained pregnant for 10 months, after which God converted him into Jesus. This is how he became Maryam as well as Jesus (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 19, pp. 87-89).

IV. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed that:

1. He was Maseel Maseeh, that is, he has certain qualities which resembled Jesus (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 1, p. 593).

2. Jesus (pbuh) is dead and he will not come again (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 3, p. 402).

3. Jesus (pbuh) was a habitual liar, had a habit of uttering obscenities, was an alcoholic, gluttonous, and a wicked person, neither a pious man nor a seeker of truth. He was a proud man and a self-conceited person who claimed divinity (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 9, p. 387 and Vol. 11, p. 289).

4. "The fact is that Hazrat `Isa did not perform any miracles" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 11, pp. 290-291).

5. "Three grandmothers of Hazrat `Isa were fornicators and prostitutes, from whose blood the body of Jesus came into being" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 11, p. 291).

6. "Hazrat `Isa had become insane due to epilepsy" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 9, p. 417).

7. "I wish Hazrat `Isa had not come in this world" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 9, p. 417).

8. "I am better than `Isa ibn Maryam" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 1, p. 593).

9. "I have certain qualities resembling Jesus . . . my nature and

the nature of Jesus resemble so much, as two pieces of the same atom or like two seeds of the same tree" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 1, p. 593).

V. Mirza boasted that:

1. "Qur'an is God's Book and the words of my mouth" (advertisement dated March 15, 1897 in Roohani Khazain, Vol. 22, p. 87).

2. "I believe in my wahi as I believe in the Qur'an and Torah" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 17, p. 454).

3. "Glory to [Allah] Who did take His Servant for Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque" (Qur'an 17:1). This verse's real and literal application is the mosque built by the father of Mirza Ghulam, not Masjid al-Aqsa (collection of advertisements in Roohani Khazain, Vol. 3, p. 286).

VI. Mirza announced:

1. "I am Adam, I am Noah, I am Abraham, I am Isaac, I am Jacob, I am Ishmael, I am Moses, I am Jesus son of Mary, I am Muhammad (pbuh) . . ." (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 22, p. 521).

2. "True God is the one who has sent His Messenger in Qadian" (Roohani Khazain, Vol. 18, p. 231).

VII. Mirza declared that:

1. "Except for the children of prostitutes, whose hearts have been sealed by God, everyone else has accepted me and believes in my prophethood" (Aina-e-Kamalate Islam, Roohani Khazain, Vol. 5, p. 547).

2. "He who does not believe in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, is disobedient to God and the Prophet and will go to Hell" (advertisement dated May 25, 1900).

These are the real beliefs of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian and his Ahmadiyya Jama'at, but their propaganda literature will only try to prove that they are Sunni Muslims. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have lost their faith at the hands of Ahmadis because they had no proper knowledge about Mirza Ghulam or his Ahmadiyya Movement.

What is The Qur'an?

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Qur'an is the Word of God, at least in public. However, some challenged the traditional interpretation of some verses, but failed to gain the support of their peers. Whenever such failures became politicised, as in the case of Abu Zaid of Egypt, the challengers paid a heavy price. But others fought the battle and won. The late Sheikh Sha'raway of Egypt was strongly criticised by his peers for explaining the Qur'an in colloquial Egyptian dialect rather than classical Arabic, but today more than 600 hours of his lectures are available on CD-ROM, audio cassettes, and video tapes.

Non-Muslim Western researchers, who are recognised scholars in both Arabic and Islamic studies are few and the numbers are dwindling because of the lack of funds. The history of such scholarship shows that the Church at first was violently opposed to it, even to the translation of the Qur'an into modern European languages. Later the Imperial powers of Europe encouraged research by Orientalists, with the political motivation and sole aim of being able to control their colonies. Many writings of this period are mostly irrelevant today; Muslims in North America and Europe are Westernised contributors to a Western civilisation.

The translation of the Qur'an into English is relatively new and difficult. Many factors contribute

further to the difficulty of its translation. These include the fact that the Qur'an is not a textbook, divided into chapters by topics. It uses Arabic and Islamic terminology throughout, the rhythm of the Qur'anic language, the varieties of topics in one chapter, and even one verse. Early Qur'anic translations by Orientalists were politically motivated and contain introductions where the authors assure the readers that there is nothing to fear, reading the Qur'an does not contaminate their pure Christian belief.

An early translation of the Qur'an into English directly from Arabic (rather than Latin) was by George Sale. Sale started his translation with a piece entitled TO THE READER: "I imagine it almost needless either to make an apology for publishing the following translation, or to go about to prove it a work of use as well as curiosity. They must have a mean opinion of the Christian religion, or be but ill grounded therein, who can apprehend any danger from so manifest a forgery: and if the religious and civil institutions of foreign nations are worth our knowledge, those of Mohammed, the lawgiver of the Arabians, and founder of an empire which in less than a century spread itself over a great part of the world than the Romans were ever masters of, must needs be so; whether we consider their extensive obtaining,

or our frequent intercourse with those who are governed thereby. I shall not here inquire into the reasons why the law of Mohammed has met with so unexampled reception in the world (for they are greatly deceived who imagine it to have been propagated by the sword alone), or by what means it came to be embraced by nations which never felt the force of Mohammedan arms, and even by those which stripped the Arabians of their conquests, and put an end to the sovereignty and very being of their Khalifs: yet it seems as if there was something more than what is vulgarly imagined in a religion which has made so surprising a progress."

Whenever Orientalists praised the Qur'an, which was not often, they had to qualify such praise. Sale remarks: "The Qur'an gives necessary laws and directions, in frequent admonitions to moral and divine virtues, and above all to the worshipping and reverencing of the only true God and resignation to His will; among which are many excellent things intermixed not unworthy even a Christian's perusal." No wonder, with the spirit of such Orientalists as Sale it was difficult for English-speaking Muslims and non-Muslims to understand the Qur'an. Today this is changing. New translations of the Qur'an in American-English are emerging to promote understanding of the book. A notable one is that by Professor T. Irving, a Canadian-born American.

Spirit Possession and Faith healing. Real or imagined!

Reported by Sr. Wilma Staff Reporter

A huge crowd filled the auditorium of The Islamic Foundation on May 1st.

Ticket sales had to be stopped as there was no more room for those eager to hear the message brought by Dr. Bilal Phillips.

In his address, he stated that Christians, Buddhists and Hindus all believe in evil spirits and that they too, practice exorcism. From the Islamic point of view, when they do this exorcism, the reality is that the jinn will leave the person.

This leads the exorcist and the possessed to believe that their way is correct, but in actuality, they are committing shirk. Shirk may be defined as one who worships others along with God.

Research has proven that healings and exorcism have been done by using the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, (p.b.u.h.) Both Prophets Jesus and Mohammad, (p.b.u.h.) used the same methods of ridding people of evil spirits and of illness.

Dr. Bilal Phillips stressed that

Continued on page 5

Muslims in Correctional Institutes

By F. Jabaney

A few weeks ago, Muslims around the globe celebrated the festival of Eid ulAdha or "festival of the sacrifice." During the Eid celebration most of us went for communal prayers, visited relatives and friends and generally had a good 'Islamic' celebration. But how many of us think about our brothers and sisters who do not have the option of going out for communal prayers, who cannot meet other Muslims on this auspicious occasion and for whom Eid is just another day. These are our Muslim brothers and sisters who are incarcerated in institutes around the globe. For them, this simple act of worshipping Allah on this occasion is not something that is given lightly to them. In fact Muslims in institutions are constantly being tried and tested for their belief in Allah.

There are numerous prisons with Muslims and the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women is one of them. Located in Clinton, NJ it is the only women's prison in the state of New Jersey. It has separate buildings for maximum and minimum-security offenders. There are approximately 250 inmates in Edna Mahan who claim Islam as their religion. I am told by sister Wasifah Abdul Wasi, who is the prison's Islamic administrator, that there are around 50 sisters who practice Islam. According to sister Wasifah, the overwhelming majority of the sisters at Edna Mahan came to prison as Muslims. Many of the sisters came from Muslim families, and many of them were co-defendants with their husbands, believe it or not.

Wasifah Abdul Wasi works at the prison as the Islamic administrator. She has been at Edna Mahan for 7 years. She started out as a volunteer and wanted to do prison outreach to Muslim women because she felt that there were programs for brothers who were incarcerated, but no one was reaching out to Muslim women

behind bars. Right now, the sisters in some parts of the prison have jumu'ah every Friday, and some of them are able to attend a weekly ta'aleem. Currently, sister Wasifah is trying to get the prison administration to pay for more services for Muslims, namely more class time and a counseling program. She is only a part time employee, with seven hours per week, and the only Muslim employed at the prison.

Some sisters from the Muslim community in New Brunswick, NJ have started an outreach program for the sisters in Clinton. Thus far these sisters have raised funds in order to purchase Islamic books for the incarcerated Muslim sisters, and have received both money and book donations for the facility. Their efforts are on going. In addition, a "pen pal" program has been initiated, connecting sisters on the inside with sisters on the outside.

Future aspects of the program insha'allah, will include visits to the prison by sisters from the outside community, and setting up aid for the inmates to help ease their transition into the Muslim community once they are released. All this has been by the Grace of Allah (swt).

Every Muslim is responsible for his actions towards society and will be questioned by Allah (swt) on the day of judgement. Islam emphasizes righteousness in actions and in thought. However, we cannot simply pretend that there are no 'good' Muslims in prisons and ignore the ones who are incarcerated.

It is time for us to take responsibility for our Muslim Ummah, including members in prisons. We have to guide inmates in the excellence of good deeds, forbearance and responsibility for their actions in Islam. All praise is for Allah, Lord of all the worlds, and may He extol and send peace upon our Prophet Muhammad (saw), upon his family, true followers and all his Companions.

Spirit Possession and Faith healing

Continued from page 4

Allah is the healer and a person should have total trust in God. Methods used should be the same as Prophet Mohammad, (p.b.u.h) used.

It has been observed that non-spiritual persons tend to be overcome by evil, rather than the person who follows God.

So called "Mediums" are individuals who, for the sake of profit in this world, allow themselves to be used by jinns or evil spirits to speak to their clients. If a person has died, then the evil jinn of that person will continue to live. It is this evil jinn who is speaking to the vulnerable grieving person, not the dead loved one. Islam teaches that once we leave this world, we cannot communicate

with the living ones.

Through a medium, the evil jinn may give knowledge of a very personal nature about the dead person or even about the client which nobody else could know. This draws the person into committing shirk.

Jinns also may take possession of objects or animals. A recent occurrence in 1997 showed the Hindu god Gannish drinking milk. The Islamic explanation of this is that jinns inhabited the statue to convince Hindus that their belief is right, thus encouraging them to commit shirk.

He also stated that we should not go to people who practice magic or to mediums, as they are

Continued on page 11

Abusive Behaviour: Is It Gender Related?

Reported by Sister Wilma

The word "abuse" brings to the human mind pictures of a parent beating a defenceless child, a marriage partner using force against his or her mate, or even possibly a grown-up child beating an elderly parent. The dictionary uses the words "maltreat," "revile," or "wrong a person" among other words to define this type of behaviour.

These words do not portray the fear, the self-doubt, the agony of the human spirit as it endures the insulting words, the belittling of its efforts, or the intentional cruelty inflicted on it. Each harsh word, each blow to the body destroys the humanity of both the victim and the abuser.

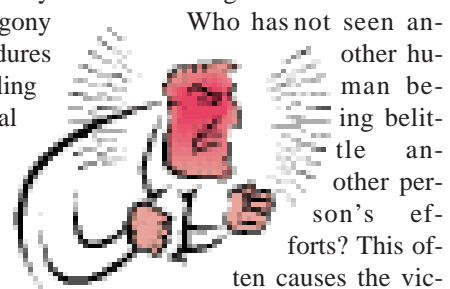
Abuse affects all levels of society, all religions, and all ethnic groups. It is not gender related, nor is it related to social status. It affects small children, young people, the middle-aged, and the elderly. Even animals have been abused by human beings.

Although physical abuse can be seen and understood quicker than the more difficult to discern emotional abuse, abuse of any kind cannot be tolerated.

Broken bones and cuts will heal eventually, but the fear that

is generated by violence, whether it be harsh words or physical actions, may never leave the victim.

Controlling, manipulative behaviour, whether it is done by males or females, has destructive results. An example of such conduct could be a divorced parent turning the children against the other parent, nurturing the fear of loss of affection or even perhaps loss of property if the other partner marries again.



Who has not seen another human being belittle another person's efforts? This often causes the victim to feel rejected and upset

and to eventually stop trying to please others. Many victims retreat into themselves in order not to be vulnerable. Some people even use emotional means to control others by turning off their love and acceptance at will.

Human beings, no matter what religion or race, can easily fall into this cycle of violence and neglect, and may find themselves unable to stop their abusive behaviour without assistance.

It's sad to say, but there are

even those who use religion to control other people, taking bits and pieces of religious teachings and twisting them to keep another person subject to them.

As Muslims, tolerance of abuse by any person, even a family member should be condemned and the abuser and the victim should receive individual counselling in order to endeavour to find out the reason why such actions are done.

Abuse was never tolerated by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and it might be good for us all to remember that he said: "The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are immune and safe" (Bukhari and Muslim).

Another Hadith as reported by Abu Hurairah says: "The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: 'The most perfect believers are those best among them in conduct; and the best among you are the best to their women'" (At-Tirmidhi).

To close this short article, it might be well for all of us to reflect on what the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) has said as reported in this Hadith by Abu Sa'id: "The Prophet of Allah (pbuh) said: 'Whoever shows no mercy will be shown no mercy.'"

A rather sobering thought for us to ponder on.

Politically Active

Many people gripe about government and politics in Canada. A few seek elected office themselves, but very few amongst these have realistic opportunities to be elected. It can be a long and difficult road to put oneself in the right position and even then there are no guarantees.

It is not well-known among the Muslim community that several politicians with Muslim

backgrounds have in fact been elected to offices in the past and continue in the present, including some in governing parties.

Part of the reason for their obscurity is that many of these candidates have not identified strongly with Islam, either because they are not very religious or because it was not in their political advantage to do so. However, now there are encouraging signs that members of our community who do publicly identify and associate with Muslims and Islam are finally coming forward to give it a try.

The Ambition, as an independent, objective, and community-based newspaper is in a unique position to profile these candidates in a manner that will not only introduce them to you, but to seek to find relevance for you in their efforts.

As none of these candidates are running for positions of religious leadership, their evaluations must be made having in mind the broader context of the balancing of the interests with other communities.

Insha Allah, there will be a series of interviews towards these objectives.

Councillor Khalid Usman

Mr. Usman has raised the awareness of issues relevant to Muslims as well as other South Asian communities.

by Naseer Syed

In the rapidly growing city of Markham, Ontario, on the north-east border of Toronto, Khalid Usman has been making his mark. As the Councillor for Ward 7 on the Markham City Council, Mr. Usman along with the Mayor, seven other Councillors and four Regional Councillors is responsible for managing the municipal affairs of Markham. Although elected on March 2, 1998, for the job, his first political office, Mr. Usman has been a long-time activist.

Since 1967, during his days as a student at the University of Peshawar, in Pakistan, where he was studying for his Honours Bachelor of Commerce degree, Mr. Usman was active in politics and envisioned eventually running for an office as a Member of Parliament. However, soon after graduation in 1970 he emigrated to Canada at the age of 20, found a job and began working towards his designation as a Chartered Accountant. Receiving his designation in 1975, he rose quickly to become a partner in a relatively short time by 1979 with the firm of Laventhol & Horwath (which eventually merged into Price Waterhouse in 1986). However, in 1984 Mr. Usman decided to go into his own private practice where he felt he could do a better job

Mr. Usman has been a long-standing member of the Liberal Party and in 1988, he was the

President of the Markham federal Liberal Association. After a few years in that position, he realized that because of his young family he wasn't ready to run for office that would force him to go to Ottawa. However, he did run for the last Provincial election 4 years ago. Although he lost at that time, he was still committed and decided to start again from the basics. His experience had already allowed him to make many contacts and he built upon this network encompassing not only Muslims but also members of many other communities. Opportunity knocked his door when a Municipal By-Election was called in early 1998 in Ward 7, which runs North of Steeles Avenue, East of Brimley to Markham Road and South of 14th.

There were 8 other candidates (as these elections are run on a non-party basis), but Mr. Usman triumphed by a margin of 600 votes, gathering strong support from the Chinese and South Asian communities. He gives credit for his success to his political team describing them as fantastic and devoted workers and friends who not only got the votes out on Election Day, but also for

the Advance Polls.

Advising others, Mr. Usman says that being elected is not enough. Once in such a position, a person has to contribute, know the day-to-day business of City Council and "earn your respect". He says that if person seeks to get elected, but then can't perform in the job, the community he comes from looks bad. He describes the political process as a two-edged sword. It's difficult to get elected and it's difficult to do the job once in office. If you don't feel up to the tasks that will be required, he says, "Don't run".

Mr. Usman also advises that getting involved at an early age helps as there is a necessary grooming process. There are lots of people involved, he says, but not in a mainstream way. Many are still playing politics from their "home" countries, which creates division among the community. He says that when you are representing a particular community, such as South Asians, you have to be careful not to degrade other religions or force your views on other peo-

ple. You can represent Muslims, but you must also represent other South Asian communities. Furthermore, the best way to prepare for your own candidacy is to get involved with other people who are running, or have already been elected. They will know the "ins and outs" of the process.

Mr. Usman is willing to guide and help others who are willing to run. He says he has opened the doors for the youth, showing them how to get elected and asking them how they can make a difference. He has the resources and expertise to help others run, but those who want to run will need to have commitment. They will also need to be very organized and have the ability to attract sufficient numbers of good people as volunteers, who, in turn, need to be properly trained as well. A good team and good support, financial and otherwise, is crucial.

At Markham City Council, Mr. Usman has raised the awareness of issues relevant to Muslims as well as other South Asian communities. For example, Eid days have been declared holidays for Council business. Messages and well-wishes are now forwarded from other politicians to Muslims on these days and the local police avoid issuing unnecessary parking tickets at the prayer gatherings. Similarly, various constituencies now have better lines of communication and access to various city services and facilities.

Due to the awareness, the local police avoid issuing unnecessary parking tickets at the prayer gatherings.

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

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From the Qur'an

Whosoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoso saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind ... (5:32)

From the Hadith

Abdullah bin 'Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "He who kills one with whom covenant has been made will not sense even the smell of Paradise, and no doubt, its smell can be sensed from the distance covered in forty years."

(Sahih Bukhari)

Journey to Islam

Highlighting the experiences of new Muslims

In the Quest for God

"It was basically the good behaviour of some Muslims that attracted my attention to Islam."

Jannah Abdul-Jabber embraced Islam in 1994, she is currently working as a secretary at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. In an interview with Mehran Banaei, she talks about her journey to Islam.

Can you inform our readers about your background?

I come from Guyana and was raised as a Catholic. I never considered myself a Christian, and that is because I could not grasp certain Christian doctrines. My family migrated to Canada when I was young. I am married and have two children.

How did you come to know about Islam?

My first experience was during my childhood, that is, when I was 9 years old. Our next-door neighbours in Guyana were Muslims. It was very noticeable that their way of life was different from others in our community. Even at that age, I was able to recognise that these people were very peaceful, humble, and a God-loving family. I found their dress code to be very modest. Turning to my father for explanation was not very adequate. All he explained was the cultural background of our neighbours and that they were following a good man named Muhammad (pbuh). I wanted to know what they worshipped. Later on in school, I learned about fasting, Eid, and Hajj. The more I learned the more I wanted to know, but there were no sources available.

As I grew up, I found the topic of Islam very interesting; I particularly wanted to know more about American Muslims. In 1982, I was once at my friend's place and for the first time saw a copy of the Qur'an. I picked up the

book right away to check it out. I was very disappointed to see that it was in Arabic, a language that I did not know.

Later on, my younger sister hired a live-in baby-sitter who was Muslim. Every time I went to her house, her baby-sitter's good behaviour inspired me to investigate more about this religion. I would say that it was basically the good behaviour of Muslims that attracted my attention to Islam and created a zest to know the underlying reasons behind such behaviour.

When did you embrace Islam?

Every Ramadan, knowing what it means to Muslims, I developed such a strong urge to worship God. During the Ramadan of 1994, I was not yet Muslim, but decided to fast and dress like a Muslim woman, including wearing the hijab. Somehow it occurred to me, that this would make me feel closer to God. I wanted to determine if I am, in fact, capable of fasting and living like a Muslim. I hoped that God would show me the true path. During this period of time, I was invited to many iftars and my contact with the Muslim community increased. I also started reading the Qur'an for the first time. I did not at all expect it to be in the form it is; reading parts of it made me cry. I managed to fast for the entire month and shortly after Ramadan, I said my shahadah. Subsequently, I started going to the mosque and attended seminars for new Muslims.

How did your friends and family react to this change?

I expressed my decision to my family and it was okay with them. I told them that from now on I will not be consuming pork and I shall observe the Islamic dress code for women. This did not create any difficulties, since pork was not on the

menu at home and I never dressed in Western fashion anyway. In fact, I lived very much like a Muslim before becoming one. I did not believe in drinking alcohol, taking other drugs, or saying dirty jokes.

How did you become certain that Islam is indeed the pristine message from God?

I carefully read the Qur'an several times and it made sense to me. It clarified many of the problems I had with Christianity. For instance, the centrality of Jesus (pbuh) in Christianity bothered me greatly; you do not find this problem in Islam. Muhammad (pbuh) does not play this role in Islam. I was bothered by the fact that Catholics do not pray directly to God, they pray to their saints, you do not find this dilemma in Islam.

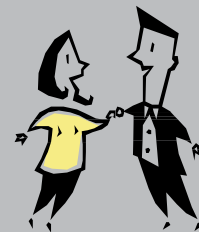
Unlike other religions, you find no idols in Islam. There are no concepts in Islam that I cannot comprehend, contrary to the

Christian notion of being born in sin and needing someone to pay for my sins. I have always been turned off by the attitude of many pushy, intolerant Christian preachers. However, when I read the Qur'anic verse which states there should be no compulsion in matters of religion, I was very much touched and impressed with such a verse.

Unlike some other religions, in Islam you do not find any signs of racism or racial segregation. The Islamic notion of God is not like there is an angry God up there, who is going to get you for your mistakes. Allah (swt) is said to be the Most Compassionate and Merciful. The message of the Qur'an is very simple: Have discipline and worship only one God, the Creator. This is exactly what our society today needs. I have no doubts about Islam as the True Message of God nor have any regrets for becoming a Muslim.

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Newsroom

Muslims and Arabs Commemorate Qana Massacre by Israel

Reported by Abubakar N. Kasim

On the evening of Sunday, April 18, 1999, the Al-Huda Lebanese Muslim Society and the Canadian Arab Federation commemorated the massacre of 105 civilians, including scores of women and children who took refuge at a United Nations compound in the Lebanese village of Qana, 90 km south of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, by Israeli bombshells.

Hundreds of people listened to different speakers who strongly condemned Israel's role in the Qana massacre of April 1996. They demanded the Israeli government to fully implement and respect the United Nation's resolutions. They also emphasised the necessity for unity to fight injustice and establish peace, justice, and stability, not just in the Middle East, but also around the globe.

Khalid Kafel was the moderator of the event. Among the guest speakers were John Cannis, MP; Dr. Atef Kubrsi of the Canadian Arab Federation and a professor of Economics at McMaster University; Jose Lebart of Amnesty International and also a journal-

ist; Raja Khouri of the Canadian Arab Federation; Sarkis Assadourian, MP; and Howard Hampton, provincial NDP leader. Asem Jaber, the Lebanese Ambassador, couldn't attend the event and a letter from him was read by Dr. Yusuf Mrove.

The state of Israel maintained its claim that the incident was an accident but as one of the speakers indicated, all the evidence showed that it was a deliberate action. The White House stood behind Israel for calling it an accident.

A very emotional poem was read by Sister Ruba Haidar which touched many people. After visiting South Lebanon and witnessing the devastated lives in that region, she wrote it expressing her grief and sorrow surrounding the people of south Lebanon.

The event was wrapped up with refreshments and by an entertainment session of a Lebanese band from Ottawa who entertained people with their enjoyable Arabic songs and with lovely music pertaining to the event of the Qana massacre.

HCI invites Michael Coren at the fundraising dinner

HCI had a fundraising dinner for people of Kosova on May 1st, 1999 at the IMO building on Rexdale and Islington.

The President of IMO, Omar Farouk welcomed everybody and gave the mike to the MC of the event, Brother Nowshad Ali from HCI. The program started with the melodious recitation of the Qur'an by Abdulvehab Hoxha, the Imam of the Albanian Mosque, followed by the English translation by Sister Sara Baksh of the HCI.

Mumtaz Akhtar, the Chairman of the HCI who had come to join us from Ottawa, introduced the Human Concern International to the gathering of Muslim and non-Muslim audience. In his short but emotional talk he told about the sufferings and miseries of people around the world and how HCI is making a difference in their lives. He specially emphasized on the efforts made to help our brothers and sisters of Kosova. They have collected and send over \$7.5 million since June 1998 to help the needy. He welcomed the decision of Canadian government to airlift the refugees of Kosova.

The keynote speaker for the evening was Mr. Michael Coren, a well-known journalist, TV host, and author. Expressing his ideas about the "Family Values in To-

day's Society" he put the audience at ease with his witty remarks. His speech was both delighting and enlightening. He respects the values and morality that Muslims also hold very dearly. "We agree and disagree on our faith, but my dream is to see Muslims, Christians and Jews walking hand in hand," he said. He talked about deterioration of family in today's society. He mentioned with disgust the personal freedom that leads to toplessness, gay pride, euthanasia, abortion or the like. "We are creatures not the Creator. We are not to decide who to live and who to die." He also pointed out that Muslims and Vatican have similar feelings to save the family structure that is under siege and have joined hands for the sake of God. Amidst a thunder of applause he suggested that we should stand up together as Muslims and Christians and fight the onslaught of secularism.

Shaikh Faisal Abdur-Razak, Imam of TARIC Centre, focused on the Islamic viewpoint about a family. Quoting from the Qur'an, "O you who believe in God, save yourself and save your family from Hell fire," he emphasized that each member of family must have this goal in life, which is prescribed by the Creator. When mother is re-

ISSRA Youth Group Getting Ready to Host Summer Camp

Reported by Sister Wilma

The atmosphere was friendly, the food was delicious, and the environment was Islamic. What more could one want? On April 10th, the scene was set, one of welcome and hospitality at Talimul-Islam on Rivalda Road.

The occasion? The ISSRA Youth Group was hosting a get-together to share the benefits of belonging to the Youth Group and to talk about camping from their own experiences. It was a mixed group. Young and old blending together and uniting with each other in a common cause, a cause dear to the hearts of those who attended. Young people, our future, our hope. The Youth Group offers opportunities for socialising, spiritual growth, learning, sports, seminars, dinners, and camping.

Br. Shabir Ally of the Da'wah Centre, was the keynote speaker at this event. Among the many excellent points he brought up was that God has made the world

an attractive place for us in order to test us. Satan uses deception to get people where he wants them, but God sends guidance. Those who take this guidance, shall have no fear. He pointed out that society offers people of all ages many temptations, and that we need to give of our personal resources in order to protect our youth.

Br. Shazam Asgarali, the president of the Islamic Social Services and Resources Association (ISSRA), gave an overview of what ISSRA had been doing for the past 11 years. He emphasised that ISSRA could not function without the support of the Muslim community and was dependent upon volunteers and donations. The donations that would be raised at this function would assist not only in providing the camp experience for young people but would also give assistance to the current Kosovar

refugees.

Several enthusiastic young people gave their personal experiences as campers. Camping, according to these young people, has offered them an opportunity to live in a totally Islamic atmosphere, to develop their spirituality, to share good times with fellow Muslims and in general to have an exciting and fun adventure.

While participants enjoyed a delicious dessert, a slide presentation of the camping experience was shown and an auction was held to raise money. All in all, it was a very interesting and informative evening well spent by all those who attended.

The Youth Group, members of which range between the ages of 12-18, meet every second Saturday at ISSRA. For more information about this group, please contact ISSRA at (416) 767-1531.



Edmonton's Muslims Commemorate 100 years in Canada

from CIC News Bulletin

Edmonton's Muslims in Western Canada are commemorating a 100 years of progress and achievement during a two-day event beginning May 1, 1999. They are also marking the 60th anniversary of the first mosque built in North America, the Al-Rashid Mosque.

"The original Al-Rashid Mosque has been preserved and restored in Fort Edmonton Park. It stands as a reminder of the faith of the early Muslim immigrants and their commitment to build a new life in Canada," said Khalid Tarabain, president of Edmonton's Canadian Islamic Centre.

"The events will begin with the

opening of Al-Ilmu Noorun, an exhibition depicting the history of Muslim settlement in Alberta," said Larry Shaben, chairman of the organising committee.

"We are proud of the pioneering spirit of the early Muslim Canadians and we pray that Edmonton's Muslims continue in their footsteps. I had first-hand experience of the warmth of the Edmonton Muslim community, the aspiration of its youth, and the deduction of its leadership," said Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, national president of the Canadian Islamic Congress. "I pray to Allah (swt) to bless Edmonton's Muslim community for being a role model to the rest of us."

Unto Him we shall return

Br. Saeed Ahmed Shaikh passed away in Montreal, P.Q. on Sunday, April 18th at 7 a.m. May God bless his soul. He left behind him his beloved wife Naseem, daughter Naheed and his four sons, Aktar, Athar, Naved and Afsar. He was the brother of Muhammad Saleem Shaikh of Scarborough, a very active member of *The Ambition* and IEIE. He will be sadly missed by his seven brothers and four sisters and his many nieces and nephews.

duced to a secretary, a cleaning lady, a worker of any sort, and the children are sent to baby sitter or daycare, that goal is faded. "Family is under attack in North America," he said. What degeneration we see in today's society are the symptoms, not the roots. Islam tells us about the roots and gives us the remedy. "The only way is to return to the Qur'an. My message to Muslims is 'Practice Islam' and to Christians is 'Practice Christianity.' Together we'll win the battle," he concluded.

After the speeches, fundraising was done, followed by a delicious meal. Finally, Brother Genghiz Khan, the HCI coordinator for GTA, thanked everybody and this very pleasant night came to an end.

ICNA Relief appeals to all Muslims for support. Please contact the Islamic Circle of North America at (905) 257-9997 or visit their website at <http://www.icna.org/relief/>.

The practical approach

Continued from page 9 suggestions into our practice. May Allah (swt) bless us with the sweetness of Imaan and may Allah (swt) save us all from the poisoned arrows of the Shaitan and bless us with an honour in Paradise. Ameen.

These speeches are available on the Young Muslims website at <http://youngmuslimscanada.org>. A very beneficial article called The Great Virtue of Lowering the Gaze by Imam ibn al-Qayyim (ra) is also posted at <http://youngmuslimscanada.org/articles/the%20gaze.htm>

The Practical Approach To Controlling Our Desires

Reported by Taha Ghayyur,
Young Muslims Canada

On Friday, April 9th, 1999, a lecture entitled The Practical Approach to Controlling Our Desires was hosted by Young Muslims Canada. They would like to thank all volunteers who helped out and have provided us with a fine summary of the evening.

Al-Hamdulillah, it was a very enlightening event, in which brothers from all over Toronto participated. Young Muslims had strongly felt the need for a seminar or discussion on the practical approach to controlling our nafs (desires of the lower-self), especially considering the fact that we are living in a society where the hearts of Mu'mins (believers) are constantly being bombarded with poisonous Shaitanic arrows, that corrupt our Imaan (faith) and kill the heart.

We were blessed with the presence of Shaikh Ibrahim Dremali (from Florida) and Br. Ahmad Shehab at this event. Shaikh Ibrahim is Professor of Geology at Atlantic University, Florida. He is also the Imam of the Masjid of Boca Raton, Florida. He has, Masha-Allah, studied under various prominent shuyookh (scholars) at Al-Azhar University, Egypt and has mastered in the science of Hadith and Fiqh. In addition, he is also a mujaahid by nature, as he has spent most of his youth in Israeli prisons. As most of us already know, Br. Ahmad Shehab is a well-known speaker in the Toronto area.

The program began with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an from Surah Al-Hadeed (57: 19-21). Let us share with you Verse 20, which is directly related to the theme of the program: "Know that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children, as the likeness of vegetation after rain, thereof the growth is pleasing to the tiller; afterwards it dries up and you see it turning yellow; then it becomes straw. But in the Hereafter (there is) a severe torment (for the disbelievers, evildoers), and (there is) Forgiveness from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure (for the believers, good-doers), whereas the life of this world is only a deceiving enjoyment."

This was followed by a very motivating and eloquent talk by Br. Ahmad Shehab. Masha-Allah, he specialises in these topics and did a prolific job. Since both of the speakers discussed this topic in great depth, it is very difficult to summarise their speeches in such a short article. One of the best things about their speeches was the fact that they addressed the issue using examples related to contemporary issues faced by the youth in Canada and the West. They illustrated their views with various practical examples from the life of the Prophets Adam and

Yusuf (pbuh), the life of the best uswah (example), Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and his beloved companions. Sayings of the great pious scholars on this issue were also mentioned.

Br. Shehab often referred to "controlling desires" as "CD." He talked about the various organs of our body that Shaitan uses to get us involved in sin. He reminded us of the Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh), collected by al-Bukhari (ra), in which he told us that zina (adultery) of the eyes is an evil lustful sight (e.g., staring at a member of opposite gender or reading filthy literature); zina of the ears is listening to evil talk (e.g., music or anything of that inclination); zina of the tongue is getting involved in filthy and harmful discussions; zina of the legs is to walk towards Haraam; and zina of the heart is to think about these base-desires (Hubb ash-Shahaawaat).

He also told us that Shaitan never attacks us directly in one go, but he takes us to prohibited things, step by step, without letting us know the evil consequences! At the end, Br. Shehab warned us that "we should think about how we use our hands, ears, eyes, brain, and legs. We shall be held responsible for each and everyone of these blessings, on the Day of Judgement."

Both speakers explained to us with many eye-opening examples on how the wrong use of desires corrupts our hearts and affects our daily life's work. One of the main points that Br. Shehab really emphasised was that "the heart is like an empty bottle. If you fill it with nothing, it will be occupied by air or vacuum. Therefore, if we don't occupy our hearts with Qur'an, then it will be occupied by Shaitan (e.g. music and other harmful desires)." It's no wonder why a Companion of the Prophet (pbuh), Ibn Mas'ud (ra) used to say: "These hearts are vessels. Fill them up with the Qur'an and occupy them with nothing else. I hate to see a man who is hollow. He is neither successful in managing the business of this world, nor that of the Hereafter."

Shaikh Ibrahim Dremali began by reminding us about death. He narrated to us the story of one of his university students who had just recently passed away at the age of 20, in a car accident. He told us how many dreams he had for his future and how much he wanted to accomplish in this world and in the Hereafter. However, the Angel of Death does not inform us before he comes. Therefore, we must use our time in a Halaal and useful way.

He said that in his view, the best way to avoid sin, thereby suppressing our desires, is by keeping ourselves busy with anything Halaal (permissible) or some sort of worship, for example, reading the Qur'an, doing the dhikr or tasbeeh (remembrance of Allah)

while in public and secret, keeping ourselves busy in acquiring Islamic knowledge, and sticking together with good Muslim friends. There is a famous saying: "Occupy yourself with Halaal before the Haraam occupies you!"

Shaikh Dremali emphasised the fact that we will be held accountable for this precious time. He also said: "You should learn how to suppress your desires and nafs because otherwise your desires will ride over you!" Therefore, we should be the obedient slaves of Allah's commands, instead of being slaves to our own desires. He clarified the fact that desires are natural and having desires itself is not prohibited, but it is "how we fulfil these desires," that makes them Halaal or Haraam. In addition, he described the horrible consequences of fulfilling our desires in a Haraam way, including, the various diseases that spread through prohibited relationships, loss of brain memory and thinking ability, degradation and disintegration of family values and systems, etc., which were supported by many astonishing studies and statistics. He constantly emphasised the fact that thinking about Haraam and watching filth lead to the loss of memory and intellectual skills, which is why, he said, so many Muslim youth do bad in their studies. This fact has also been proven by scientific studies, Subhan-Allah!

At the end, Shaikh Dremali described to us the wonders of Jannah (Paradise) and the horrible scenes of Jahannam (Hell), and then asked us: "What do you want?" His points were very clear and shook us all. His talk was intellectual as well as informative and eye-opening.

Both of the respected guest speakers warned us especially against the sins caused by our eyes. Let us ponder upon the beautiful Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh): "The furtive glance (a secret evil look) is one of the poisoned arrows of Satan, on whom be God's curse. Whoever forsakes it (i.e., avoids looking at Haraam) for the fear of Allah, will receive from Him, Great and Glorious is He, a faith (Imaan), the sweetness of which, he will find within his heart" (related by al-Haakim and saheeh). This was quoted from Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship by Imam al-Ghazali (ra), p. 76.

The Hadith shows us that the failure to lower our gaze will result in the corruption of our hearts and the development of an evil character and personality. However, whoever abandons it (i.e., quits enjoying Haraam) will receive from Allah (swt) a gift, called Imaan (faith) the sweetness of which could be sensed by that person only! How beautiful it is, Subhan-Allah!

May Allah (swt) give us the ability to put all these practical

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1420 years ago

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joyous day in the land of Yathrib.

The first of Muharram marks the day when the community of the Prophet (pbuh) was welcomed and shown kindness by their Generous Lord, Al-Kareem. Many ulamaa (scholars) hold the view that this is a month that we too, should show extra care, generosity, and love to our families. It is also the first of the four sacred months of the Islamic year.

This month contains one of the most virtuous days of the year, the day of 'Ashura, the 10th of Muharram. This is the day when Prophet Musa (pbuh) parted the Red Sea by the qudra (power) of Allah (swt), which the Jews at one point also observed as a sacred day. When the Prophet (pbuh) became aware of the Jews celebrating this day, he instructed the Muslims to also fast this day and the day before or after to distinguish ourselves from the Jews.

The first of Muharram also signifies the Prophet (pbuh) building a famous city. It is there that he taught us how a society should function and where he outlined the principles and foundations of behaviour morally, economically, psychologically, and spiritually. The city that he established was Al-Madinah al-Munawwarah (the Blessed City of Madinah).

A final thought to conclude:

A man once came to the house of Imam Malik ibn Anas (ra) who lived in Madinah. As he was entering the house, he noticed that Imam Malik had two riding beasts at the side of his house. The man said: "Masha-Allah, you have two very nice riding beasts," whereupon Imam Malik (ra) told him to take them. The man humbly refused. After his business was finished and he was leaving the house of Imam Malik (ra), he looked over to the riding beasts and made a similar remark about their pleasing state. At this point Imam Malik (ra) insisted that the man take the camels. The man agreed, but asked why the great Imam had no use for them. At this point, the Imam replied: "This is the city of Madinah. This is the city where the Prophet of Allah (pbuh) walked up and down the streets in his bare-feet. Who am I to travel these streets on a riding beast trampling the blessed ground of this city?"

May Allah (swt) cause us to give life to the blessed Sunnah of our beloved Prophet (pbuh) as we send praise in abundance his name, his message, his community, his family, and his legacy. The following words once fell from his lips: "He who gives life to my Sunnah, has given life to me." Wa maa tawfiqi illaa billah (and there is no success except from Allah).

Leaving Our Legacy

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ground, language, skin colour, etc.

Next, he gave us an insight into how Western society's corporations make billions while people in Muslim countries do not even have enough money to sustain themselves! Because they know that the more they spend on "fixing the image of their products into our minds," the more revenue they are going to earn. That is why Muslims must leave a good image behind which will be our legacy for this Ummah.

Imam Siraj reminded us "that each and everyone of you present here, has the potential to contribute to the Muslim community! One day someone of

you will be writing articles on Islam, others will be interviewed on TV, others will author books on Islam, and yet others will be organising Jumu'ah at their schools and delivering khutbahs, Insha-Allah." He also mentioned how Allah (swt) has preserved the contribution of the great Muslims in the books of history so the Muslims and non-Muslims may remember them after their deaths; and how Allah (swt) has disgraced Bill Clinton, a man who is so powerful that one command of his can destroy Sudan or Afghanistan in a matter of seconds and whose one

statement can kill thousands of innocent babies in Iraq, how humiliating it is that people living even in the deep valleys of the Third World are talking about him disgracefully.

Imam Siraj's main emphasis was: "In order for you to leave a legacy, you must do it by contributing to the Muslim community, so that people after us may look

up to our examples and only then will we be able to remove the negative images embedded in the minds of non-Muslims."

These transcribed statements from the lecture may not sound as motivating as they were supposed to be.

You just had to be there to get the real meaning. Imam Siraj, in his extremely eloquent style of speech, conveyed his message which was full of enthusiasm and humour, to the youth especially. May Allah (swt) reward the organisers and all the volunteers who helped to make it a successful and motivational event. All ultimate success is from Allah (swt). Ameen.

For more information on Young Muslims Canada, visit them at their website <http://youngmuslimscanada.org/> or send e-mail to info@youngmuslimscanada.org.

"What are we going to leave behind for our future generations after our death?"

Foster homes

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involved in apprehending the children or charging the parents for negligence.

Children are the most valuable resource of any community. They deserve our dedication to preserve them physically and psychologically, guide them, nurture them, love them, and discipline them when they need to be contained.

Children need discipline to develop responsible behaviour so that they do not harm themselves or others and do not transgress the bounds of Islamic principals, beliefs, and values.

Unfortunately, sometimes parents through emotional and financial neglect and ignorance tend to apply excessive physical and verbal discipline that is counter-productive, and in a few cases results in harm to the child with serious consequences for the family. In anger, we as parents, forget the examples set by our own Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the Qur'anic teachings on how to guide other members of the family and society through patience, compassion, and perseverance, even during difficult and trying times. The reality is that children can at times become difficult to handle, and they also know how to test the limits of their parent's patience. But as adults, it is the

responsibility of the parents to guide them without harming them.

As a front-line family counselor, I invariably come across the difficult task of finding a safe and familiar environment for Muslim children whose parents for whatever reasons can not meet the financial, physical, psychological, and emotional needs of the child.

Under certain conditions that are considered unsafe for the child such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, etc., the children are removed from their own home to be placed in a home that can provide a safe environment, either on a short-term or long-term basis.

In an ideal situation such problems will not arise, but we do not live in an ideal world. Therefore, at times, we need solutions and the support of the community to deal with this problem. This does not mean that we should not be working towards making this world an ideal place as we are told to do so by our Creator, Allah.

When an outsider steps in to take the children away from their parents, it creates a very difficult situation, both for the parents and the children. Children experience trauma, anxiety, anger, and an in-

tense sense of loss and abandonment that reflects the feelings of the parents as well. Therefore, children need to be placed in a home that provides continuity and consistency with their religious and cultural selves. It is also very important for the parents to know that the children are receiving the same religious environment as in their own home, and that the parents are not denied their right to stay in touch with their children as often as it is convenient.

Thus, there are two main problems that the Muslim community so far has not responded to. One is the issue of parenting skills that should include support to the families who are experiencing financial or emotional problems from within the Muslim community. The second is the lack of awareness of the need to provide healthy homes and foster parents for the children who, through no fault of their own, are removed from their homes by the Children's Aid Society.

We can become polemics in our approach to this problem by either identifying the parents or the Children's Aid Society as the villain. The bottom line is that these problems need practical solutions.



Fall of the Khilafa and its Impact

Continued from page 1

the price for the game of nations as is manifested by the latest episode in Kosovo.

The Prophet (pbuh) has been reported as saying: "The ties of Islam will be broken one at a time and each time a tie is broken the people will cling on to the next one. The first of these is the political system and the last of which is prayer." This Hadith sums up the consequences of the fall of the Khilafah on the internal front. Once the political system is demolished and replaced by a system of kufr (disbelief), little else is immune to eventual destruction. For this to be evident we need to reflect a bit on the philosophy of the political system in Islam.

The political system in Islam rests upon the foundation that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad (pbuh) is His Messenger. Thus, the Islamic State is governed by the Islamic Aqeeda (belief) in all aspects. Nothing can be borrowed from outside the Aqeeda. Whether we are talking about the educational system, social system, or international relations, all must be derived from and be based solely on the Islamic Aqeeda.

In the absence of the Khilafah, we Muslims have been taught to accept the rule of kufr as being normal. Our Aqeeda was corrupted. Unlike the Sahabah and the generations after them, we were taught that if you make the prayer, wear the Hijab, or have a beard, you are almost a perfect Muslim. Masha-Allah. We are content to

limit Islam to a corner in our homes or perhaps, occasionally, to the mosque. Now our role as the Ummah is to follow blindly and happily the system of kufr. We are content to submit to the claim of the end of our glorious history and bow to the finality of capitalist ideology.

It is very sad and very disturbing to see that most Islamic movements, as well as the general population of Muslims, lack a concrete vision and action plan on how to counter the system of kufr and restore the glory and pride of the Muslim Ummah. At least three generations of Muslims have been lost under the system of kufr. They have not lived under Islam. It's no wonder they don't understand the need to restore the Islamic way of life. All they are taught about Islam is to pray and fast.

Muslims have been transformed from being leaders of mankind to slaves of the kufr system in their own homeland. The West succeeded in erasing Islam as a system, both physically by the imposition of national and regional states, and ideologically by restructuring the Muslim mentality to adopt the Western system to govern their affairs and abandon Islam as the source of its culture and constitution.

It goes without saying that all

these events have direct impact on the daily life of Muslims. Millions of Muslims were direct victims of the slaughter and massacres in India, Palestine, Lebanon, Somalia, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and currently in Kosovo. Those who survived the murder of their family members carry the psychological scars throughout their lives.

As for the others who may have considered themselves to be lucky, they are the direct victims of the kufr regimes. What this means is that a merchant has to run his transactions according to the system set up by colonial powers, whether in the past or by their agents in the present. It means the spread of Western culture as the way of

life, even inside the Haram in Makkah; it means the change in the value system from being Islam-based to kufr-based.

It also means a total distortion in the self-esteem of the Muslim who finds him/herself torn between what Islam asks him to do and what the kufr system forces him to do. All of this is the worst kind of fitnah. When a Muslim dies on "Laa-ilaaha ill-Allah" he dies a Muslim but when he lives being enslaved by a kufr system then this is a true fitnah.

Yet, there are circumstances when one may indeed be helpless,

Therefore, the community must take responsibility for providing this important service. Failing to address this issue will have serious consequences both for Muslim families and the community.

However, not every family can become a foster parent, since being a foster parent requires a great many skills and resources such as parenting skills, communication skills, patience, and above all, the desire to help someone other than your own family member.

Who can become a foster parent? The following are some points to highlight the important aspects of becoming a foster parent.

* Family must be stable and have healthy relationships between the couple and their children. Good communication skills and the ability to establish good working relationships between the social worker, CAS, children, and the parents are important.

* Intending foster parents need to have a clean police record, as there is a criminal records check. They should be of consistent religious practices that are reflected in behaviour and social values.

* There should be no drug or alcohol problems, no physical, verbal, or psychological abuse of any family member, or any other socially deviant behaviour.

* This is not a business venture, so do not look for financial gains or look for children as tenants for your extra empty room. It is hard work, so make sure you can make the psychological and emotional commitment. Above all, as a foster parent you should be providing a child a shelter, a home for the sake of Allah, not money, not glory, and not personal gain.

The CAS will provide daily room and board payment, medical, dental, and other costs of caring for the child, and training, support, and relief for the foster parents.

For more information call Hamida Chishti at the Hidayet Muslim Family and Child Centre, on Wednesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The telephone number is (416) 638-1866.

Wahida Valiant is the president of Hidayet Muslim Family and Child Centre.

in which case he has to be patient in enduring the hardship while seeking to liberate himself from the slavery of kufr. The eternal slavery and final defeat only occur when the flame for liberation dies in his heart. When he, one way or another, convinces himself that slavery (which is obviously sweet-coated by slogans such as democracy and the like) is not really slavery, then he's still a Muslim, as he can still pray and make du'a.

What all this amounts to is a systematic, consistent campaign to undermine Islam from within. Although I'm confident that this campaign will not succeed, for this is the Deen of Allah (swt) and Allah promised that His Deen will prevail, it's a question of where we

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stand as Muslims in this battle between haq (truth) and batil (falsehood).

Allah wants us to lead humanity out of the darkness of kufr and into the light of Islam (Qur'an 2:143). On the other hand, America and the West claim they have a better system, better aqeeda and a better way of life. They want us to submit to their system even if it is meant for us to kill each other and to flee our homes. So the question is which call should we answer? The Call of Allah or that of the West? Shall we choose to be slaves to none but our Creator? Or is it okay to choose to be slaves to other men?

A Riddle

By Zeenat Hathiyani

Question: From all the creations of Allah which one is the most mysterious and has the longest life span on this earth but has no share in the hereafter?

Answer: DEATH

As Allah created life, he created death also. Allah is the Supreme Creator of all that in the heavens and the earth and whatever encompasses in between. Surprisingly, death has remained a mystery ever since life began.

Very little is known about what a person experiences at the time of death, or what the soul experiences after it. However, as Muslims we are aware that "every-one shall taste death" (Qur'an, 3:185), and there is definitely a life after. That life will be eternal involving no death.

From the trials and tribulations of this life, Allah enables us to escape by death, but from the firing inferno of hell there is no such escape.

Slowly Living On Garbage

At dawn the lake is very calm,
Still beside the golden beach.
Beneath the red autumn sky
I heard the sea gull screech.

But day by day as years went by
There were no birds, no golden leach.
But, instead a dump for man's trash
Full of chemical waste and a sewer ditch.

No more is the lake a place to play,
A place to hide, a place to be free.
But, the foundation for our growing pollution
Which is the new technology's fee.

Narjia Sharfudding

Are you a Muslim woman who likes to swim?

Then read on.

by Sr. Wilma - Staff Reporter

For the past twelve years, Muslim women, some with their small children, and some alone, have participated in a womens' only free swimming programme at Carlton Village North Building, (blue door at the back of the school). The address is 15 Osler Street, (Old Weston Rd. and St. Clair).

This location is easy to get to, as it is accessible by TTC for those who live in the west end of the city. The dates and times which remain the same for all programmes are as follows:

Swimming lessons

7 p.m. - 8 p.m. (10 to a class)

Recreational swimming

8 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Spring Programme:

April 26 - June 24

Monday and Thursday

7-8 Learn to swim

8-9 Recreational swim

Summer Programme:

July 5 - August 26th

Monday and Thursday

7-8 Learn to swim

8-9 Recreational swim

Fall Programme:

September 13 - Nov. 25

Monday & Thursday

7-8 Learn to swim

8-9 Recreational swim

Ten persons per class, on a first come first served basis.

Islamic swimming attire required.

For further information, call Sr. Parveen at 533-1352.

Spirit Possession ...

Continued from page 5

in grave sin and we must not deal with them.

When people dabble in the black arts, evil jinns will take partial or even full possession of them. Much of the possession tends to reinforce the idea of shirk and it happens even among Muslim people. Magic is also the result of jinns. The evil eye is a reality.

Charms should be destroyed while reciting the Qur'an. If a person is possessed, one must rebuke the evil spirit in him in the name of God and order it to leave. One also may call upon God to curse the evil jinn.

As Muslims, we have a variety of prayers and Qur'anic verses to protect ourselves. When we say our prayers, we must say them with reverence and reflect on each word.

Following Br. Bilal's talk, Br. Shabir Ali gave a talk on dawa work and how it is our duty as Muslims to share Islam in order to save our friends, co-workers and loved ones from the hellfire. An excellent talk was also given by a young revert to Islam who shared his experiences with us and how our actions influenced him towards Islam.

Success Stories Around Us

MAARIYAH'S DIARY

Masha-Allah, the Muslim community has a new children's writer



Shaila Kibria was born in Toronto and raised in Brampton. Her father had originally come from East Pakistan (Bangladesh today) and eventually met Shaila's mother in Toronto where they married and had four children (2 girls and 2 boys) with Shaila being the eldest. Both English and Bangla were spoken at home.

Shaila married relatively young at the age of 17 to Mikhail Ali who was then in third-year of the Engineering program at McMaster University. After finishing North Park Secondary School by fast tracking (which she does not recommend), Shaila came to the University of Windsor.

While still at university, Shaila's first child, a daughter, Maariyah was born. It was then that Shaila first realised that while she had many picture books to read to her baby, there were really

none with pictures of girls that Maariyah could identify with as she grew older.

"This really worried me," says Shaila. "So I started off just drawing and colouring pictures into a story, and showing them to my then one-month old daughter. Basically, Maariyah was my inspiration. As the months went by, it was obvious that she loved the pictures and the story line I made up. My friends, non-Muslim and Muslim alike, started noticing my home-made book and wanted me to read the story to their children."

Shaila started integrating this book at the school where she taught Grade 3 and found that the children were thrilled by it. That was when she started searching for a publisher.

"I made sure that none of the libraries, stores, and schools had this story line or idea. I found

books on Ramadan, Palestine, etc., but none with a simple story about a girl who wears hijab. After over a year of mailing my manuscript to various publishers, and after many rejections, Transcom International accepted my manuscript."

Now, three years and a second child later, her book is being published. It was hard work to bring the book up to a professional standard. "I had to leave my children at my mother's just so that I could work on the book. Every time the publisher's editor sent it back to me with corrections, it would take me at least two weeks to fix, whether it be the illustrations or text. Finally I had to walk over to my old high school in Brampton, and find my Grade 10 Art teacher R. Dale Flannigan to modify my illustrations. Then, using my illustrations, he had to do new ones."

Eventually this succeeded.

The publisher's art director liked it, and final word was sent that it was almost ready to print. It took an additional year and \$20,000, but the book made its debut on the December 12th, 1998 weekend.

As Muslims can appreciate, the book's theme is in high demand, although the books on the market right now wouldn't suggest it. Shaila's book is entitled Maariyah's Day. In Shaila's words, it's a children's book about a little brown girl and her friends from different cultures. It is a little Canadian girl's minority experience against a Canadian setting. She wears a head scarf and faces questions like "Are you bald under there?" or "Are you a ninja?" Very relevant and important issues are handled in a humorous yet sensitive way.

"I looked for this [kind of] book as a child, but did not find it in my school library, public library, or the mall book store," says Shaila. "It

boosts young readers' confidence about themselves, especially those who wear 'apparel,' items that are highly visible, for example the head scarf, turban, or topee, without diminishing the fact that they are born here. I really wish this book had been there for me as a child, and I know many of my peers do as well. A whole generation of youth of different cultures meet at ISNA and ICNA conferences just to discuss these very issues."

Motherpickle Distributor will be the Canadian distributor dealing with Chapters, Indigo, and other small bookstores, depending on the demand in the area. The distributor has a website on which they advertise the books that they handle.

What advice does Shaila have for aspiring authors? "Just keep at it," she says. "The topic I wrote about is basically an untapped market. The more books the better. Anyone can contact me at my e-mail address. I would love to set up a writers' group, Muslim or non-Muslim."

Community in Action

The Footsteps of Islam: Leaving Our Legacy

Reported by Taha Ghayyur,
Young Muslims Canada

On March 20, 1999, there was a very beneficial community symposium organised by the Istiqamah Islamic Centre of Ontario, in which Imam Siraj Wahaj and Shaikh Kais Istephan were the guest speakers. Imam Siraj is the Imam of Masjid at-Taqwa, Brooklyn, New York, and vice-president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Shaikh Kais is the Imam of the Istiqamah Islamic Centre, Mississauga, Ontario.

This program was held at the University of Toronto's OISE Building and it was co-hosted by the MSA there. More than 550 brothers and sisters participated in this program. The symposium was entitled The Footprint of Islam: Leaving our Legacy. The following is a summary of the event.

The first speaker, Shaikh Kais Istephan began by highlighting the virtues of doing extra meritorious acts during the first ten days of the holy month of Dhul-Hijjah, based on the famous Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh), in which he stated that there are no days more beloved to Allah (swt) than the first ten days. After this, he emphasised the importance of taking the Sahabah (companions of the Prophet) and the beloved Prophet (pbuh) as our best examples, if we want to leave a memorable legacy

and example behind for our future generations.

The fact that the Prophet (pbuh) dealt every matter with wisdom and mercy was mentioned. He said that if we want to purify our deeds and hearts then we have to constantly repent and return to Allah (swt) like our great S a h a b a h (may Allah be pleased with them all) did.

Br. Kais then moved on to mention the beautiful Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh): "In-Allaha at-Tabeeb" (Verily Allah is the Doctor). He emphasised the fact that for any problem, the cure is with Allah (swt) and in His Deen (the complete way of life) alone.

He expressed, with some humour, the fact that Islam has been merely reduced to being known as the religion of those who do not eat "pig meat." Is that the only legacy and impression we are going to leave behind for this society? There is much more to Islam than just the prohibition of consuming pork. We must follow Islam in every aspect of our life. The God who has ordered us to stay away from these Haraam things and asked us to pray Eid prayer, is the same God who ordered us to Pray five times a day! There are so many Muslims who constantly

miss Jumu`ah as well. Resistance of desire in the heart will produce a Muslim with Iman (true faith).

The second speaker, Imam Siraj Wahaj, as usual, received undivided attention from the audience; there was pin-drop silence in the hall. He began by reminding us of death, which can hit us any time. He then posed a question: "What are we going to leave behind for our future generations after our death? What is our contribution to this Muslim Ummah?" He talked about how Islam had changed his life, and the life of other reverted scholars, like Shaikh Hamza Yusuf, Dr. Abdullah Hakim Quick, Shaikh Bilal Philips, and Shaikh Kais Istephan.

For almost half an hour, he talked about the image and impression of Muslims in the sight of non-Muslims. For every Da'ee (propagator of Islam) it is incumbent upon him to understand the psychology of non-Muslims: "We have to understand how they think and how they form impressions about us Muslims."

In addition, he mentioned how materialistic the nature of these non-Muslims was, who judge us on the basis of our looks only, because our actions are not good and prominent enough to be seen by them. This was followed by the Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh): "Verily, Allah (swt) does not look at your bodies, nor at your outward looks, but He scans your hearts and your deeds." Therefore, we must never judge people by their wealth, social status, back-

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There is much more to Islam than just the prohibition of consuming pork.



The Ambition Annual Picnic

Sunday, July 4th, 1999
12:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Join us again
For a fun-filled day and Bar-B-Q

At Rowentree Mills Park, North York
(Islington and Finch, north west corner)

Enjoy all you can eat, delicious B.B.Q.
with other side items

Food will be served between 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.
(Come with Wudu for Zuhr prayer at 1:20)

Ticket: \$7.00 per person
Children 2 and under: free

Other attractions include door prizes,
games for children and adults, and more

Please buy tickets in advance

For more info, call
The Ambition at (416) 740-1491
Or e-mail: awarsi@hotmail.com

