



ELECTRONIC ISLAAMIC MAGAZINE

Preach & Run!
Top Secrets of Life
Make A Panorama!
"East is East"
The Social 'Hijaab



Kholood Habiballa's
Promising
Rhythmical Future

Inside:
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for
I-MAG
Readers

The Befitting Miracle of the Last Prophet
Mu'hammad: Mercy upon Mankind

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**"Wa Al'hamdu Lilaah"
"And Thanks to Allaah"
in thuluth script by Davud Bektaş**



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How the Issues of

CLASS and ETHNICITY

Qualify the Presentations of GENDERED POWER in the Film:

By Marwah El-Azhary

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Gender implies the physical attributes reflected in an individual, whether it is male or female. Gender, however, is a complex issue. The biological explanation to it is just touching the surface of understanding what really constitutes "gender".

Surely it is the biological term "sex" that labels us "male" or "female". Whereas the term "gender" clearly implies the way in which male and female roles are socially conditioned by society. Below the surface, as one comes to explore the issues surrounding gender, it is most obvious that there are profound differences between gender and sex. However, it is the choice of the society, living in a certain period of time, which decides on whether to perceive this difference.

East is East, written by Ayub Khan-Din, presents a family of eight, where readers soon come to acknowledge the difference of appearance between the "Man of the House" George, and the "Housewife" Ella. It is evident it is a mixed marriage. George is a proud Pakistani Muslim, whereas Ella is English, born and raised.

Set in 1970 in Salford, United Kingdom, it is clear that the Khans are from a working-class background, "The set is made up of a fish and chip shop, a parlour, living room..." The reader also realises the fact that George is a man of tradition, which is reflected in the "set dressing, wallpaper, oil cloth, Islaamic prayer stickers..."

Every society's norms and values differ. However, the stereotypical assumption of who holds the gender power is almost



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always apparent in every individual's contemplations. It is as though these individuals have been socially conditioned to accept the fact that it is the male who is the leader in this world, while the women submissively follow behind. Furthermore, in families with different ethnic backgrounds to the society they live in, there tends to be a strong morale of tradition, which is either imposed on the children, or they are given the choice on whether they would rather wish to follow the society's modern norms.

This can be said about the Khan family. Although the mother is English and clearly not following her husband's culture and religion, she has tried to raise the children into her husband's culture and religion. The question lies in whether she is raising them into her husband's culture because George imposes his traditional values on her, or simply because she wants what is best for the children. Perhaps she is doing both.

The first cultural issue is raised when George discovered that his younger son, Sanjit, has "got bloody...tickle tackle". In other words, he has not been circumcised. George expresses his anger towards the mother, clearly blaming her for the incident, "You see, it's your bloody fault". Regardless, it is clear to the readers that George is more concerned about the Pakistani-Muslim community's judgment, "Very embarrassing you see...I have important arrangement to make, and now I can't...because of this" rather than being concerned about his son's health, as tradition implies that males must have circumcision for health reasons. Instead he is more preoccupied with, "All men think I bad my son having this thing."

Due to the family's status quo, the frustration buried deep within George is expressed by disrespecting his wife, and his children's own values and beliefs. The frustration of his financial failure has caused him to subconsciously choose religion and tradition as a source of control, which he can use over his wife and children. This is evidently shown as George is hypocritically forcing his children to follow his traditions strictly while he did not follow these traditions. Saleem, angry at his father's hypocriticalness, bursts out, "If Pakistani women are so great, why did you marry me mam?"

Although George's actions are seen to be hypocritical, perhaps there are justifications. Certainly George feels that he has failed in financial terms. Perhaps

George feels that because he did not follow his traditions when he



was younger, leaving his first wife in Pakistan and coming to live in England, he may feel that God is punishing him. Therefore, he may be trying to bring his children up into the culture that he had rejected so long ago. Perhaps if they are good Muslims, their God will bless them and the discipline he tries to impose on them will teach them to work hard and become successful and financially stable. An illustration of this can be seen when George arranges a marriage for his two older sons, Abdul and Tariq. Readers learn that the family George wants his sons to marry into are financially stable with, "Four butcher shops, two cars and a semi-detached house in Trafford Park...with double extension." The Shah family have held strongly onto their culture and religion, and perhaps George's motive was to save his sons from what he had gone through.

Alternatively, perhaps George wants to gain prestige in his community by marrying his sons into a middle class family. Surely he has a chance to succeed after all.

Interestingly, there is a great difference between George's spoken English language opposed to Mr Shah's, although they come from the same ethnic background. Surely their class difference is a factor determining the extreme variations of their characters.

George is a working class man who is impolite, rude and uses obscene language, especially in front of the children. In addition, he uses physical force on his own wife and is not educated in evidence of his spoken English language. Therefore, his mentality has raised him to become a narrow-minded patriarchal character. Moreover, his environment is also a factor,

which may suggest that he came from a low social background.

In Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, she argues that, "The enormous importance to a patriarch who has to conquer, who has to rule, feeling that great numbers of people...are by nature inferior to himself". George's clear actions imply that he is superior to his wife and children.

Alternatively, Mr Shah is an upper middle-class man who is polite, well educated in light of his well spoken English, and has disciplined his daughters. Furthermore, his wife is also educated and a "Strict Headmistress". Clearly, his wife and Mr. Shah share the gender power, and Mr Shah shows respect towards his wife, from a minor issue that it was his "wife's idea [who chose to have] attached bathrooms with the same carpet".

It is apparent that their social class and the way in which each George and Mr Shah were socially conditioned determined their mentality. Both men strongly believe in their traditions. However George has failed to socialise the children into his religion and culture, except for Maneer who is a practising Muslim, "He was only trying to show us our culture". Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean he agrees with his father's culture, which is different to religion.

Alternatively, Mr Shah has achieved to socialise his valued daughters into his culture and religion. This could mean that Mr Shah did not impose his beliefs on his daughters the way George has done with his children, leaving Ella to pick up the pieces. Instead Mr Shah and his wife may have taken their time to educate their daughters between right and wrong. However, it could be argued that these daughters are obviously women, who have been taught to submissively obey the male figure, leaving them with no choice but to adhere to their father's culture.

In Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, it is interesting to perceive that men who may have not been educated "choose the weakest or the most ignorant". Surely, George had chosen Ella because she was ignorant to his culture, therefore he could impose his beliefs without the fear that Ella would

intervene. Whereas an educated man may have another perspective, "Women are extreme: they are better or worse than men". Mr Shah may indeed believe in this philosophy, which had given him the ability to choose a wife who is better than him in many ways, and has helped him bring up their daughters respectfully and modestly.

Indeed the female's weakness is her beauty. If she is beautiful, the family can marry her into the family with the same social class as theirs, or a higher one. If she is not beautiful, then the family will try to marry her into a lower social class, perhaps as a last resort.

Surely this ideological assumption implies to Mr Shah's daughters. The readers gather that the daughters are not attractive from Tariq and Meenah's reaction, "The one in red looked like she had a hair-line that started from her eyebrows".

It is evident that their culture wishes for girls to marry when they are young, so that they would not be left on the shelf.

Consequently, the play illustrates the clash of two cultures, and the gender roles readers perceive in the families presented. Readers feel sympathy for Ella, who is forced to make a choice between her love for George, and her children's right to live the way they choose, with the beliefs they wish to live by. Although George has imposed his morals and values on his wife and children it may be argued that he has the gender power. However, the children are rebelling from their father's demands, and in the end demand a change. Therefore it can be argued that Ella has the gender power, it hardly seems visible to the readers, however her children respect her. The children believe that it is their "Dad that's gonna have to change... he's got no right to tell us what our culture should be, he lost it when he settled here and married me mam". The readers are expecting a change in the patriarchal family the Khans live in, and hopefully, in time the gender roles will become equal, "things are gonna be different around here".

References:

1. East is East, written by Ayub Khan-Din
2. Virginia Woolf, *Room of One's Own*

DO YOU
WONDER
WHY WE
SPELL

ARABIC
WORDS

DIFFERENT

THAN

OTHERS?

I-MAG

Allaah
Islaam
Mu'hammad
'Hijaab
Fi'qh
'Qura~n
Madeenah
Makkah
In Shaa- Allaah
Oummah
Hadeeth
Mu's'haf
'Haraam
'Halaal
'abaa-ah
Imaam

OTHERS

Allah
Islam
Mohamad
Hijab
Fihq
Qur'an
Madinah
Mecca
Insha'Allah
Ummah
Hadith
Moshaf
Haram
Halal
Abaya
Imam

Check our Arabic phonemes transcription guide to learn how we transcribe Arabic sounds in to the English writing system:

www.i-mag.org/arabic.pdf

FEATURES OF THE NEW ISLAAMIC DISCOURSE (Part 4 of 4)

12. Reviving Islaamic Relativism:

The new Islaamic discourse is aware of the basic philosophical question in the modern world, that is, the question of epistemological relativism that leads to nihilism. It replaces it with what may be termed "Islaamic relativism", which asserts that there is only one absolute, the Almighty. But His absoluteness implies the relativism of everything else. However, by virtue of the presence of the absolute God outside relative time, He becomes the centre of the universe, bestowing on it purpose and meaning. This means that while the world is itself relative, it does not fall into relativism, nor does it become meaningless. Islaamic relativism is a "relative relativism", not an absolute one. Thus, there is a simultaneous awareness of the irreducibility of truth to matter and of the relativity and impermanence of some of its aspects. In other words, there is an awareness of a certain interrelatedness between the absolute and the relative that does not necessarily result in a nihilistic negation of the absolute. Any human discourse, the discourse of the Muslims included, is primarily and ultimately a set of endeavours, assiduously exerted by human beings, living within time and place, to comprehend the world of man and nature, and for each to interpret his sacred text. But human hermeneutics, the bearers of the new Islaamic discourse would argue, is different from the sacred text.

13. Recognising the Dynamism of the World:

All this leads to a belief in the idea of *tadaafu'* (gentle conflict-interplay)



By Dr. Abdelwahab Elmessiri*

and *tadaawul* (succession or alteration), and to a recognition of the dynamism of the world. *Tadaafu'* does not necessarily mean conflict, even if it occasionally takes that form. *Tadaawul* implies that permanence is one of God's traits and that everything else changes. It also implies that the world is not exclusively ours. On the concrete human level, this means accepting to coexist with "the other" and to search for a common ground. Hence, the emergence of the modern *fiq'h* of minorities, whether pertaining to the non-Muslim minorities in Islaamic societies or the Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies. This *fiq'h* stems from the Islaamic concepts of justice and equality.

14. Recognising the Problems of Postmodernism:

The bearers of the new Islaamic discourse are aware of the danger of postmodernism, which manifests itself in an onslaught on all human

and sacred texts. The 'Qura-n, for instance, is seen as a historical text, that can be interpreted in its entirety with reference to some temporal circumstances and events. I believe that Judge Taaiq' Albishry has made a major contribution in this field. Through his work, he has attempted to assert the stability of the sacred text. He has explained that the disagreement among religious jurists, in most cases, does not stem from their interpretation of the text, but rather from their disagreement regarding the nature of the human incident for which they were asked to issue a *fatwa* (legal judgment). This is a very important matter, because postmodernism involves an attack on any stability or normativeness and involves a denial of any ultimate foundation.

15. Discovering Middle Analytical Categories:

I believe that there is a concerted

effort made by the bearers of the new Islaamic discourse to discover new middle analytical categories that distinguish the Islaamic discourse from the discourse of Western modernity, characterised as it is by a feverish oscillation between two conflicting poles. The discourse of Western modernity demands either absolute certainty or absolute doubt, either a reason fully dominating the world, or a reason completely dominated by it (reduced to fluctuating matter and perpetual experimentation), and, finally, either a full presence (to use post-modernist idiom) or full absence. It is a discourse that shifts from rigidly materialistic rationality to an equally rigidly materialistic irrationality. The new Islaamic discourse, on the other hand, tries to create a human space that goes beyond the materialistic extremes of Western modernity. In human matters, evidence does not have to be decisive and comprehensive, covering all possibilities and filling all gaps, and the chain of causality does not have to be organically or strictly linked. It is sufficient to marshal an adequate number of pieces of evidence, and cause and effect need not be linked in a rigidly scientific materialistic manner. This is what can be called in Arabic "sababiyah fa'dfaa'dah." The closest equivalent to the word fa'dfaa'dah in English is the word "loose" or the word "wide", neither of which truly expresses the meaning of the Arabic word, which connotes a level of tolerance and a loosening of rigid organic unity which permit a degree of freedom without necessarily leading to incoherence and fragmentation. This causality, in my view, is the essence of the Islaamic world view; it asserts that A does not uniformly and absolutely lead to B, but that it does so by the will of God. "God willing" expresses the distance that separates the creator from the created, a distance which is actually a human space where man can exercise his freedom and use his reason, becoming thereby a responsible trust-bearing creature. It is an affirmation of what is called in Islaamic jurisprudence bayniyyah, from the preposition bayn, which means "between".

16. Resolving the Duality of the Idiom:

Dr. Basheer Naafi' has pointed to a rather important thing when he said that the Islaamic discourse in traditional Islaamic societies is shari'ah (religious law). Shari'ah is indeed the very basis of both the old and new Islaamic discourses. However, the new discourse attempts to resolve the problem of what I call the "duality of idiom". Shari'ah, the Muslims believe, is open and has been capable of generating answers to the collective and ultimate questions that have faced both the Muslim community and the Muslim individual throughout history. But the idiom of the shari'ah, due to the historical and cultural discontinuity caused by the colonial invasion, has become inaccessible to many people. What the bearers of the new Islaamic discourse are trying to do is to decode this idiom, so that it would be possible to extract the wisdom inherent therein and apply it to modern realities. This is exactly what one Muslim scholar has done when he described "enjoining good and forbidding evil" as the Islaamic idiom for expressing the problem of power-sharing. This does not mean that the Western and Islaamic idioms are synonymous. All that the said scholar has tried to explain is that this modern issue, expressed in a modern idiom, is the self same issue that was addressed by the Islaamic tradition through its own idiom. Such an ijtihaad would undoubtedly help in increasing the generative power of the traditional religious world view and help the Muslims to stand firmly on their own doctrinal ground.

17. Building an Islaamic Epistemological Paradigm:

Due to the isolation of shari'ah from our political and social realities, many Muslims have come to view it as if it were a set of disjointed verdicts and opinions. However, the process of generating new answers to new challenges requires an awareness of the interrelatedness and integrity of the components that make up the shari'ah, as well as of the fact that it expresses a world view. This is what the new discourse is trying to accomplish. Undoubtedly, the traditional discipline of ma'qaa'sid

(purposes) deals with this issue. It is through this discipline that it is possible to distinguish between the whole and the part, the final and the temporary, the essential and the contingent, the permanent and the impermanent, and the absolute and the relative. What is needed is to develop this traditional discipline so as to attain an Islaamic epistemological paradigm emanating from the 'Qura~n (the Muslim's sacred text) and the sunnah (the Prophet's traditions). Such a paradigm would be hierarchical, its crown is the testimony that there is no god but Allaah, then this is succeeded by the prime Islaamic values such as justice and equality, and then by the various lateral precepts. The scope of ijtihaad can then be expanded without much apprehension of going astray. After all, ijtihaad would take place within the framework of the hierarchical epistemological paradigm extracted (through a continuous process of ijtihaad) from the 'Qura~n and the sunnah. That paradigm would be the only norm on the basis of which judgements are made and new interpretations are formulated.

18. Setting Bounds to the State:

One of the main traits of the new Islaamic discourse is that its bearers realise the complex dimensions of the question of power, its various intricate mechanisms, and the relationship between local reality and international relations. The bearers of the new discourse also realise the complexity of the modern state as well as its power and ability to dominate and interfere in man's private life. They know it has become an octopus that has its own quantifying logic, which goes well beyond the will of those who are supposed to be running it, be they Islaamists, Marxists or liberals. The role of bureaucracy in decision making, and in manipulating the ruler according to its whims and purposes, is quite clear to them. They realise too that the state has a variety of "security" apparati (information, education, etc.) that maintain a tight grip over the masses through the pleasure industry, the bombardment of the public with information and songs, and the rewriting of history. Thus,

taking over the state does not solve the problems of the Muslims, as some of the bearers of the old discourse used to imagine. The heart of the matter is the necessity of setting bounds to the state and trimming its nails so as for the ummah to restore its role as vicegerent. Hence their interest in the notion of the ummah and the increasing attention to civil society and to the role of the aw'qaaf (religious endowment), and their growing interest in the new theories of the state and administration.

19. Developing a Comprehensive Vision of Islaamic Arts:

The new Islaamic discourse, by virtue of its universality and interest in the cultural dimension of human phenomena and on the basis of its awareness of itself as a comprehensive world view, pays great attention to the aesthetic and artistic aspects. It is not content with a 'halaal/'haraam categorisation of things. In fact, the bearers of the new Islaamic discourse endeavour to develop a comprehensive vision of Islaamic arts based on the Islaamic world view. Hence the new theoretical formulations, and hence too the many attempts at application in the field of architecture and in the different arts. This aspect of the new Islaamic discourse is an expression of its creative critical approach to Western modernity and its generative approach to tradition. Many Islaamic artists in the modern age, studying either in the West or in the East, have been exposed only to Western artistic views and methodology. Nevertheless, many of them seek to break away from the modern Western world view. While directing their critique to it and benefiting from the knowledge they acquired thus far, they attempt to generate artistic criteria and norms from within the tradition that translate themselves into Islaamic art works and buildings that follow an Islaamic style, yet respond to the needs of the modern age. It is noticeable that these artists study the Islaamic heritage from new angles; they rediscover it and its theoretical bases, using the analytical tools they learned in the West. They have also started showing interest in the

classical Islaamic writings in this field.

20. Rejecting Unilinear History:

One of the important aspects of the new Islaamic discourse is the way its bearers read history. There is a rejection of the idea of unilinear concepts that presume the existence of a single terminal point and a final telos toward which the entire history of mankind is moving. This makes it inevitable to view the histories of all men through a single viewpoint and to judge them through one and the same standard. But this single viewpoint and standard are not in reality universal as claimed, it is actually the viewpoint of modern Western man and the standard used is also his. I believe that Dr. Basheer Naafi' has given us a concrete example of this rejection of unilinear history by presenting a reading of Islaamic history from within, without importing analytical categories from outside the system. The reading process here is at once explanatory, empathetic and critical. Dr. Basheer has read the documents that Western historians have not read, or probably have read but marginalised for they deemed them unimportant. Thus, he has succeeded in offering a new view. This includes his emphasis on the role of Sufism and Sufi 'taree'qah (guild) which other historians, trained within the secularist tradition, usually unconsciously overlook or consciously disregard. They view Sufism as mere superstition, whereas Dr. Basheer Naafi' finds the study of Sufism and Sufi schools an essential prologue to understanding Islaamic history. In some of his studies, Justice Taariq' Albishry, also explains the importance of studying the Sufi 'taree'qahs in order to comprehend the history of modern Egypt.

One can say that there are scores of the bearers and promoters of the new Islaamic discourse including Malik Bin Naby, Na'qeeb Alattas, Fahmy Huwaydy, Raashid Alghannoushy, Muneer Shafee'q, 'Adil Husayn, Taariq' Albishry, Dr. 'Abd Al'haleem Ibraheem 'Abd Al'haleem, Dr. Raasim Badraan, Dr. Saleem Al'awwa, Dr. Basheer Naafi', the I.I.I.T. group including Dr. Ismaa'eel Raji Alfaroo'qy,

Dr. 'Taaha Jaabir Al'ulwaany, Dr. 'Abd Al'hameed Aboo Sulaymaan, Dr. Hishaam Al'taalib and Dr. Jamal Albaarzinjy, who are the founders of the Institute. Of those associated with I.I.I.T., one can also mention Dr. Muna Aboo Alfa'dl, Dr. Dr. Sayf Yoosuf, Dr. Na'sr 'Arif, Dr. Ousaamah Al'qaffaash, Ms. Hibah Ra-oof, Dr. Albayoomy Ghaanim, Fu-aad Sa'eed, Hishaam Ja'far, Dr. Aly Jumu'ah and Dr. Lu-ay Assaafy. The bearers and promoters of this discourse also include: Dr. Jamaal 'A'tiyah (and the contributors to AIMuslim Almu'aa'sir), 'Azzaam Tameemy, (and Liberty for the Muslim World group), and Al'habeeb Almkny (and Al-Insan group).

There are, undoubtedly scores of others inside and outside the Arab world who are contributing to the crystallisation of the new discourse. It is also noticeable that many intellectuals within the Islaamic minorities in the West have started to contribute quite creatively to this new Islaamic discourse. One may count in this category Sayyid 'Husayn Na'sr, 'Diyaa- Addeen Sardar, Ali Mazroo'y, and Parviz Manzur. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list. Such a list would be compiled by a research institute that can assign the task to a group of researchers. Perhaps what is required now is to deepen our understanding and knowledge of the central premise of this discourse, and to initiate a process of epistemological condensation by listing the names and publications of those who bear or promote this discourse.

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ISLAAM

The Most **Rapidly Expanding Religion** in **Europe**

By **Harun Yahya**

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During the last 20 years, the number of Muslims in the world has been increasing steadily. Statistics for the year 1973 indicate that the world population of Muslims was 500 million; now, it has reached 1.5 billion. Today, every fourth person is a Muslim. It is probable that the Muslim population will continue to increase and that Islaam will become the world's largest religion. The reason for this steady rise is not only the increasing population in Muslim countries, but also the growing numbers of people who are turning to Islaam, a phenomenon that has gained momentum, especially after the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001 (hereinafter referred to as 9/11). This attack, deplored by everyone, especially Muslims, has suddenly turned people's attention (especially Americans) to Islaam. People in the West are talking a lot about what kind of a religion Islaam is, what the 'Qura~n says,

what obligations come with being a Muslim, and how Muslims are required to conduct their affairs. This interest has naturally brought about a rise in the number of people worldwide turning to Islaam. So, the commonly heard prediction after 9/11 that "this attack will change the course of world history" has, in a sense, started to come true. The process of returning to religious and spiritual values, which the world has been experiencing for a long time, has become a turning to Islaam. The extraordinary nature of what is taking place can be seen when one sets out these developments regarding this trend, which we have started to read about in newspapers or hear of in television reports. These developments, generally reported as just one element of the day's agenda, are actually very important indications that Islaamic moral values have begun to spread very rapidly across the whole world. As in the rest of the world, Islaam is in the midst of a rapid growth in Europe. This development has been attracting more attention in recent years, as evidenced by the

many theses, reports, and articles published on "the place of Muslims in Europe" and "dialogue between European society and Muslims." Along with these academic reports, the media has carried frequent reports about Islaam and Muslims. The root of this interest lies in the continual growth of Muslim population figures in Europe, and that this increase cannot be ascribed solely to immigration. While immigration certainly has had a significant effect on the Muslim population's growth, so many researchers have addressed this matter for quite another reason: high conversion rates. A June 20 2004 story on N.T.V. News, headed "Islaam is the most rapidly expanding religion in Europe," dealt with a report drawn up by the French domestic intelligence agency. The report stated that the number of those converting to Islaam in Western countries had risen still further, particularly in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. For example, the number of converts to Islaam in France increased by between 30 and 40,000 last year alone.



The Catholic Church and the Rise of Islaam

The Roman Catholic Church, headquartered in Vatican City, is one of the institutions that follows conversion trends. One of the main topics during the October 1999 meeting of the European synod, which was attended by almost all of the Catholic clergy, was the Church's position in the new millennium. The conference's main theme was the rapid growth of Islaam in Europe. The National Catholic Reporter reported that some radical individuals stated that the only way to prevent Muslims' gaining power in Europe was to stop tolerating Muslims and Islaam; other more objective and rational individuals underscored the fact that since the two religions believe in one God, there should be no room for any conflict or struggle between them. In one session, Archbishop Karl Lehmann of Germany stressed that there is more internal pluralism within Islaam than many Christians perceive, and that the radicals' claims about Islaam had no basis in truth. (1)

Considering the position of Muslims when elucidating the Church's

position in the new millennium was quite proper, for a 1999 United Nations' survey showed that between 1989 and 1998, Europe's Muslim population grew by more than 100 percent. It is reported that there are some 13 million Muslims living in Europe today: 3.2 million in Germany, 2 million in Great Britain, 45- million in France, and the rest dispersed over Europe as a whole, especially in the Balkans. This figure represents more than 2% of the total population of Europe. (2)

Muslims' Religious Awareness Is Rising in Europe

Relevant research also has revealed that while the number of Muslims in Europe continues to grow, there is a deepening of religious awareness among Muslims. According to a survey conducted by the French newspaper *Le Monde* in October 2001, compared to data collected in 1994, many Muslims continue to perform their prayers, go to the mosque, and fast. This awareness is seen much more among university students. (3)

In a report based upon the foreign press in 1999, the Turkish *Aktuel* magazine stated that Western researchers estimate that in another

50 years Europe will become one of Islaam's main centres of expansion.

Islaam Is an Inseparable Part of Europe

Along with this sociological and demographic research, we also must not forget that Europe has not become acquainted with Islaam only recently, but that Islaam is actually an inseparable part of Europe. Europe and the realm of Islaam have had close relations with each other for centuries. First, the state of Andalusia (756-1492) on the Iberian Peninsula, and later the Crusades (1095-1291) and the Ottoman capture of the Balkans (1389), brought about a constant interrelation between the two societies. Many historians and sociologists assert today that Islaam was the leading cause of Europe's movement from the darkness of its Middle Ages to the brilliance of its Renaissance. At a time when Europe was backward in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and many other fields, Muslims possessed a vast treasure of knowledge and great possibilities of development.

Uniting on a Common Ground: "Monotheism"

The growth of Islaam is also reflected in the recent growth of interfaith dialogue. These dialogues start by stating that the three monotheistic religions have a common beginning and can come together at a common point. Such dialogues have been quite successful and have engendered an important rapprochement, especially between Christians and Muslims. In the 'Qura~n, God informs us that Muslims invite the People of the Book (Christians and Jews) to unite on a common ground: Say: "O People of the Book, come to a proposition that is the same for us and you-that we should worship none but God, and not associate any partners with Him, and not take one another as lords besides God." If they turn away, say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims." (The Holy

'Qura~n [T.M.Q.], chapter of A~l 'Imraan, verse 64)

The three monotheistic religions have common beliefs and the same moral values. Belief in God's Existence and Unity, angels, Prophets, the Last Day, Heaven and Hell are their basic tenets of faith. Furthermore, self-sacrifice, humility, love, tolerance, respect, mercy, honesty, avoiding wrongdoing and injustice, and acting according to conscience are all commonly accepted moral qualities. Therefore, since these three religions are on the same level, they must work together to eradicate the strife, conflict, and pain caused by irreligious ideologies. When considered from this point of view, interfaith dialogue assumes far more importance. The seminars and conferences that bring representatives of these religions together, and the messages of peace and brotherhood that come out of them, have continued regularly since the mid-1990s.

The Glad Tidings of a Holy Age

When all the facts are brought together, they reveal that there is a strong movement toward Islaam in many countries, and that Islaam is increasingly becoming the most important topic of world interest. These developments indicate that the world is moving toward a totally new era, one in which, God willing, Islaam will gain in importance and the 'Qura~n's moral teachings will spread like a rising tide. It is important to realise that this highly significant development was announced in the 'Qura~n 14 centuries ago: They desire to extinguish God's Light with their mouths. But God refuses to do other than perfect His Light, even though the unbelievers detest it. It is He Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the True Religion to exalt it over every other religion, even though the idolaters detest it. (The Holy

'Qura~n, chapter Attawbah, verses 32- 33)

The spread of Islaamic morality is one of God's promises to believers. In addition to these verses, many sayings of our Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, assert that the 'Qura~n's moral teachings will prevail. In the last days before the end of the world, humanity will experience a period in which wrongdoing, injustice, deceit, fraud, wars, strife, conflict, and moral degeneration is wide-spread. Then will come the Golden Age, in which these moral teachings will begin to spread among people like a rising tide and finally prevail throughout the world. Some of these sayings, as well learned commentaries upon them, are given below:

During this [period], my ouummah [people] would lead such a comfortable and carefree life which they never led like that. [The land] would bring forth its yield and would not hold back anything and the property at that time would be a stack. (Sunan Ibn Maajah)

... The dwellers of the heavens and the earth will be pleased. The earth will bring forth all that grows, and the heavens will pour down rains in abundance. From all the good that God will bestow on the inhabitants of the earth, the living will wish that the dead would come to life again. (Muhkhtasar Tazkirah Qurtubi, p. 437)

The earth would turn like the silver tray growing vegetation... (Sunan Ibn Maajah)

The earth will be filled with equity and justice as it was previously filled with oppression and tyranny. (Abu Dawud)

Justice will prevail to such an extent that every possession taken by force will be returned to his owner; furthermore, some other person's thing, even if it rests within one's teeth, will be given back to its owner... Security will permeate all over Earth and even a few ladies will be able to fulfil their 'haj without the company of men. (Ibn 'Hajar Alhaythamy, Al'qawl

Almukhta'sar, p. 23)

Based upon these statements, the Golden Age will be an era in which justice, plenty, abundance, well-being, security, peace, and brotherhood will prevail among humanity, and one in which people will experience love, self-sacrifice, tolerance, compassion, mercy, and loyalty. In his sayings, our Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, says that this blessed period will be experienced through the mediation of the Mahdy, who will come in the end times to save the world from chaos, injustice, and moral collapse. He will eradicate godless ideologies and bring an end to the prevailing injustice. Moreover, he will make religion like it was in the days of our Prophet (peace be upon him), cause the 'Qura~n's moral teachings to prevail among humanity, and establish peace and well-being throughout the world.

The rise of Islaam being experienced in the world today, as well as Turkey's role in the new era are important signs that the period announced in the 'Qura~n and in our Prophet's sayings is very close. It is our heartfelt desire that God will let us witness this blessed time.

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The author, under the pen-name Harun Yahya, has written more than 200 books which are published in 37 languages all over the world. Harun Yahya's books appeal to all people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, regardless of their age, race and nationality, as they centre around one goal: to open the readers' mind by presenting the signs of God's eternal existence to them.

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'Hijaab Scrutinised

(Part 2 of 4)

The Social 'Hijaab: THE SLAVES OF ALLAAH & THE SLAVES OF THE SOCIETY

By Hayat Alyaqout

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In this series, Hayat Alyaqout scrutinises the 'hijaab and touches upon several themes such as the religious authenticity of the 'hijaab, the overlap between the 'hijaab as a religious practice and the 'hijaab as a social practice, how men have their own 'hijaab too, and the philosophy of the 'hijaab in relation to the social notion of beauty.

In the first part, she talks about the four main challenges raised against the authenticity of 'hijaab in Islam and refutes them.

Noticing the Dichotomy

Many Muslims and non-Muslims always bring up examples of women who wear the 'hijaab and in the same time lack a lot ethically and intellectually. The immediate and usual answer most of us usually if not always use is that “mixing between the idea (religion) and the practice (believers' actions) is not healthy”, that “there is a gap between what is present and what should be”, and that “generalisation leads to intellectual immobilisation.” These are all defensive

and justificatory clichés, and if we really want to think soundly, we should not then deny that the 'hijaab is blemished or find justification for that, but we rather need an honest and objective quest to know why was it blemished and how it can be remedied.

Decoding the Dichotomy

The 'hijaab, just like many aspects of Islaam, can have a “social version”; there could be social prayer in which the performer prays not for Allaah's sake but for the sake of society and the same can be extended to fasting and charity giving. In the case of the 'hijaab another dimension can be added; some society see the 'hijaab is a tradition that women should wear not because it has a deep philosophy, but because a woman is a devilish creature because of whom Adam (peace be upon him) was kicked out of the heaven and thus should be concealed, excluded, curbed and curtailed. This mindset apparently cannot convince women with its twisted philosophy of the

'hijaab and it thus imposes it on them. In this case, donning the 'hijaab become an act of submission to not Allah, but to the oppressive backward societal expectations.

It's a psychological axiom that when a person is forced to do something he/she is not willing or convinced to do and he/ she cannot untether himself/ herself of it, then the person – on a subconscious level most of the time – seeks to destroy and tarnish the reputation of that imposed practise. And that what explains why some 'hijaabi women code of ethics is cacophonous to Islaam's regulations. That's how the dichotomy builds up and comes to life.

The 'hijaab has two intertwined sides: a way of dressing, and an understanding to why this way of dressing is practised. In the social 'hijaab the first side only is present and the mayhem begins here for “seeing Is believing” and with the proliferation of the social 'hijaab people start building stereotypes and impressions

about the 'hijaab, and when it comes to impressions, we do not have a second chance to make a first impression.

Might is not always right, and the 'hijaab that is imposed by the some ironclad social traditions should not be differentiated from the 'hijaab that is imposed by the power of the law; both of them lead to the same dire consequences. Allaah in the Holy 'Qura~n says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error" (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] chapter of Alba'qarah, verse 256). It is thus not acceptable that any religious practise on the individual level is imposed; imagine that people are forced to pray or fast against their wills, this would be the easiest way to create grudgeful hypocrites who would eventually spare not effort to revenge for their confiscated will. The philosophy of the otherworldly reward in the heaven is that we human beings had a relative will in this life, and if we employ it in the right way, we are then rewarded in the heaven by grating us a greater level of will by which we can wish for



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anything we want and it comes true, "We are your protectors in this life and in the Hereafter: therein you shall have all that your souls shall desire; therein you shall have all that ye ask for." (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] chapter of Fu'sillat, verse 31). So, it's people's right to choose for they are the ones who will either be rewarded or punished for their actions which should be voluntary.

Why Survive While You Can Thrive?

Nothing dispels the awful stereotypes that encircles the 'hijaab better than leadership by example. Those women who wear the 'hijaab and are convinced with what they do should get out of their shells and market the 'hijaab! The 'hijaab is the path of emancipation that enables women not only survive in a materialistic world, but also to thrive. 'Hijaabi women can be independent, successful and active not in spite of their 'hijaab but by the virtue of it.

In the Next Issues:

- Part 3: Men's 'Hijaab: Justice Not Equality
- Part 4: The Beauty of 'Hijaab in Concealing "Beauty"

We all know how the du'aa- (supplication) can be powerful. The writer thus kindly asks the readers to pray for her mother who has been ill. May Allaah reward you all.



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ILLUSIONS OF Superiority



By Robert Jensen*
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I stepped onto the speakers' platform at the Virginia Festival of Books in Charlottesville with Newsday editor Les Payne to discuss our chapters in his book *When Race Becomes Real*. Bernestine Singley, the other panelist, had edited the book.

As I walked to my seat, I was well aware of Payne's impressive record. I had read his work, and I know he is a more experienced journalist than I am. He's won more prizes and written more important books than me. Payne has travelled more widely and reported on more complex subjects. He is older than me, and has done more in his life than I have. I also have heard Payne speak before, and know that he is a more commanding and more forceful speaker than I am.

So, as I sat down at my seat, I did what came naturally; I felt superior to Les Payne. If it seems odd that I would feel superior to someone I knew to be more talented and accomplished than I am, then here

is another relevant fact: Les Payne is African American, and I am white.

I didn't recognise that feeling of superiority as I sat down, or as I made my remarks on the panel. It wasn't until Payne started reading from a chapter in his book and explaining how he came to write his essays that my feeling became so painfully clear to me.

Payne talked about how, as a teenager born in the segregated South who attended high school in the North, he had struggled to overcome the internalised sense of inferiority which grew from the environment in which he had been raised. He talked with a quiet passion and power, about how deep that sense of inherent inferiority can appear in African Americans.

At some point, I made the obvious connection. Part of the reason that the struggle Payne described is so hard for African Americans is because white behaviour is a constant expression of that feeling

of superiority, expressed in a fashion both subtle and overt. My mind raced immediately to that feeling of superiority I felt as we had taken our seats. I had assumed, despite all that I knew about Les Payne, his record, and his speaking ability, that I would be the highlight of the panel. Why? It might be because I'm an egotistical white boy. Maybe I'm a white boy with delusions of grandeur. The former is almost certainly true. The latter may be an exaggeration. But whatever my own personal weaknesses are, one factor is obvious: I am white and Payne is African American, and that was the basis of my feeling.

The moment that particular feeling hit me, I was literally left speechless, fighting back tears, with a profound sense of sadness. I struggled to keep focused on Payne's words, but it was difficult to do as my mind raced to cope with what I was feeling. Payne finished, and Ms. Singley started her reading. When the speaking period ended, I was forced to engage in the ending, and

I did my best to answer a question asked of me. But I remained shaken.

One of the "Good" White People

Why all of this drama? It was because I fancied myself one of the "good" white people, one of the anti-racist white people. I am politically active, and have worked hard to incorporate an honest account of race and racism into my school's teaching.

But in that moment, I had to confront that which I had not yet relinquished: the basic psychological features of racism. As Payne talked honestly of struggling with a sense of inferiority, I had to face that I had never really shaken a sense of my superiority. As I write these words, the feeling of that moment of sadness returns. Do not mistake this for superficial shame or guilt. Do not describe me as a self-indulgent white liberal. The sadness I feel is not for me. It is sadness about how deeply embedded in me is that fundamental reality of racism; the assumption that white people are superior.

That doesn't mean I'm a racist. It doesn't mean my political work or efforts in the classroom don't matter. Instead, it means that what I say to my students about race -- that the dynamics of domination and subordination run deep, affecting us in ways we don't always see clearly -- is true not only in theory. It is also true in my psyche.

I have long known that. On the platform with Payne that day, his words forced me to feel it. That wasn't his intention; he was speaking to the audience -- which was primarily African American -- not to me. Whatever the intent, he did me that service. But I am most grateful to Payne not for that, but for something that happened later. After the event, I was planning to drive to Washington, D.C. When I mentioned that to Payne, he asked if he could

ride with me and catch a flight from D.C. back to New York. I jumped at the chance, in part because I wanted to hear more about his research for his forthcoming book on Malcolm X, but also because I wanted to talk to him about what had happened to me on stage.

In the few we drove together, I took advantage of Payne's experience in journalism and asked his opinion about a range of issues, in addition to pumping him for insights into Malcolm X's life. And, finally, I asked if I could tell him about what had happened on stage.

It turned out, not surprisingly, that Les Payne is a gracious man. He listened to my story, nodding throughout. Nothing I said seemed to shock him. He is, after all an African American in the United States; I didn't expect that I would shock him.

It was after I had finished that Payne did something for which I will always be grateful: He didn't forgive me. That is, he made no attempt to make me feel better. He didn't reassure me that I was, in fact, one of the "good" white people. He simply acknowledged what I had told him, said he understood, and continued our discussion about the politics of race in the United States.

Part of me probably wanted him to forgive me. Part of me probably wanted the approval of African American person at that moment, to help eliminate the discomfort, which I was still feeling. But what would that have accomplished for him, for me, or for the world? Without knowing it, Payne during the panel had given me the gift of feeling uncomfortable. In the car at this time, perhaps with full knowledge of what he was doing, he gave me the gift of not letting me off the hook.

When I dropped him at the airport, I had no illusions. The day had meant much more to me than to

him. He had been willing to teach me something, and then he went on to other things. His personal struggle with internalised inferiority was largely over; his chapter in the book made that clear, as did his interaction with me. It was easy to tell by the way he spoke and carried himself that Payne doesn't spend a lot of time worrying about whether white people are better than him. But I was left with the unfinished project of dealing with my internalised sense of superiority. And it was clear to both of us that such a project was my responsibility, not his.

The Gender Question

The story of that day in Charlottesville can't end there, of course. On the platform with us was Bernestine Singley, who is every bit as black as Les Payne, and every bit as accomplished a lawyer and writer. Why am I focusing on him and not her? Why did he spark this realisation in me and not her?

In part it was because of what Payne talked about on stage; his remarks and his chapter had pushed my buttons. Also, I have known Singley longer and have a more established relationship with her. We live in different cities and are not friends in a conventional sense, but I consider her (and I hope she considers me) a trustworthy ally and comrade in the struggle, and a friend in that context. Singley and I also have very different styles, and when we appear on panels together we clearly are not competing.

With all that said, it's also difficult to miss the fact that Singley is a woman and Payne is a man. There was not only a race dynamic on stage, but a gender dynamic. It's likely that I was, in classic male fashion, focusing on the struggle for dominance with the other man on the panel. This perception of myself also is hard to face; in addition to being a good white person, you see, I'm also

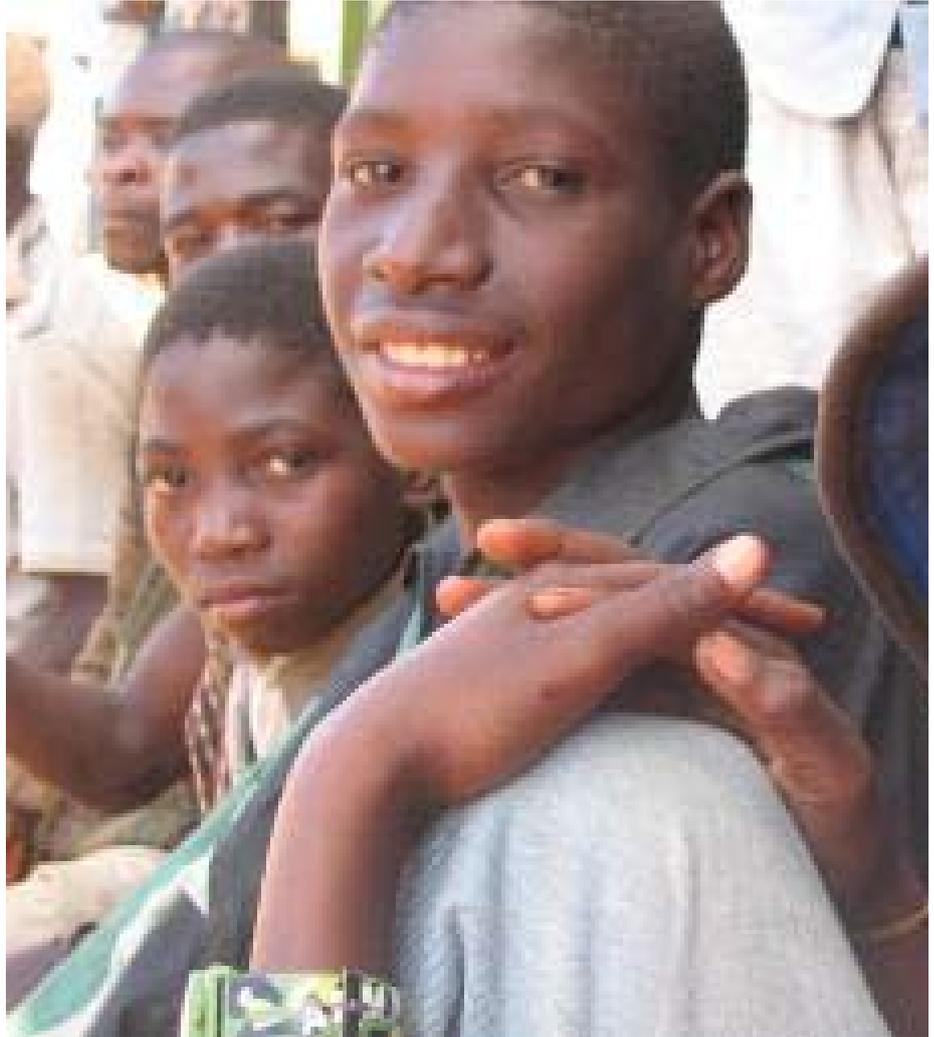
a good man. I'm one of the men who is on the right side. But I also am one of the men who, whatever side he is on, constantly struggles with the reality of living in a male-supremacist society that has taught me lessons about how to vie for dominance.

Introspection on these matters is difficult; people in privileged positions often are not in the best position to evaluate our own behaviour. But looking back on that day, it appears to me I walked onto that platform with an assumption of my inherent superiority -- so deeply woven into me that I could not in the moment see it -- that had something to do with race and gender.

From those assumptions, it is hard to reach a conclusion other than: I was a fool.

I use that term consciously, because throughout history white people have often cast blacks as the fool to shore up our sense of superiority. But in that game, it is white people who are the fools, and it is difficult and painful to confront that. Somehow, I had allowed myself to believe the story that a racist and sexist society still tells. Yes, I know that Jim Crow segregation is gone and the overt ideology that supported it is mostly gone. But in the struggle to change the world, what matters is not only what law is, or what polite people say in public. What matters just as much, if not more, is what we really are, deep down.

All this matters not just because white people should learn to be better or nicer, but because as long as we whites believe we are better, deep down in places most of us have learned to hide, we will not feel compelled to change a society in which black unemployment is twice the white rate. And in which, as a recent study has found, a white man with a criminal record is more likely to be called back for a job interview



than a black man with no record.

In the United States, the typical black family has 58 percent as much income as a typical white family. And at the slow rate the black-white poverty gap has been narrowing since 1968, it will take 150 years to close. At the current rate, blacks and whites won't reach high school graduation parity until 2013, nearly 60 years after the Brown v. Board of Education decision. That is an ugly society.

The first step for white people is to face that ugliness, to tell the truth about the system we live in and tell the truth about ourselves. But that means nothing if we do not commit to change, not just to change

ourselves, but to change the system. We have to face the ways in which white supremacy makes white people foolish but forces others to pay a much greater price.

We have to stop playing the fool and start playing for keeps.

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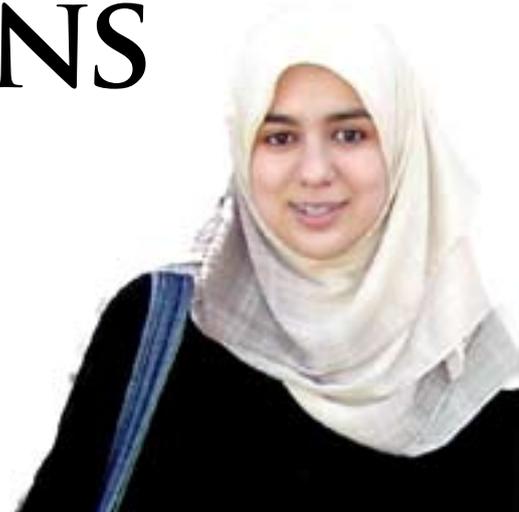
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POETIC AMBITIONS

Kholood Habiballa's Promising Rhythmical Future

Interviewed By Marwah El-Azhary

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17 Year old Kholood Habiballa's poetic skills were discovered early, with teachers and family members encouraging her to develop this talent further. With that, she won a poetry contest in America, gaining recognition and publicity as a young talented poet, setting a bright, promising future for Kholood in both her educational and poetical life.

In this exclusive, extended interview, Marwah El-Azhary aims to reveal how the seeds of Kholood's success were sown and how others can follow this fine example of a young Muslim girl's achievements.

The interview is split into two halves; the first half is an interview with Kholood, expressing her articulate thoughts and feelings, while the second half of the interview is with her father, Abdulgader Habiballa, where readers can appreciate an alternative perspective on Kholood's success.

Marwah El-Azhary: How old were you when you first discovered your poetic talent? Looking back, do you see how it all came into place?

Kholood Habiballa: I can't really

say when I discovered my poetic talents. I have always been fond of many forms of writing, and I have always incorporated some sort of poetic elements in my writing. But I started to truly care about my poetry and try to develop what many of my teachers called my "eloquence in writing" when I was in junior high. When I was 14 years old, I took a creative writing class for fun, and I ended up finding a hobby and a passion that I am still pursuing today. Poetry to me is an art form. It is almost as if I do not write anything, but instead the words just expressively spill onto the page. The ink seems to sense what I am describing and it writes away while I delve in my emotions. Sometimes I wrote poetry so quickly that I do not think anything of it until a few days, or even weeks later, when I look back at it and discover that what I wrote had some profound meaning. I also love to read, and every time I read, the thing that I love to notice most is how the story is described, what words the author uses to convey his depictions, and how the author sometimes can bury the deepest of meanings in what might seem the simplest pile of words.

My poetry seems to have come into

place without me knowing it, and I am still surprised sometimes at what I write.

M.E: What steps have you taken to develop your talent?

K.H: The most important step that I have taken when it comes to developing my poetry is just to keep on writing. I write whenever I can, wherever I am, on whatever I can find. Sometimes I will sit in class and write or be waiting in line and will write on a piece of gum wrapper (true story). But it is important to note that when I write, I really must feel like writing. I can not write when people tell me to, I only write when my heart tells me to spin tales of its joys, burdens, miseries, or whatever it may be.

Another way that I strengthen my poetry is by reading. I don't necessarily read just poetry books, but all books. I note the poetic techniques used and try to learn from it. I always try to make my poetry unique or different, I play with the words and try to use different phrases to convey my meaning or message.

M.E: Tell us how you won the poetry

contest and how you felt when you won. Who encouraged you to enter it and how did you prepare for it?

K.H: I have to admit I did not want to go to the poetry convention in the first place because it was so expensive just to attend. But my father, who has always encouraged me to seize productive opportunities, would not hear of it. Money is not an issue to my father when it comes to the happiness and well being of his children. Once I arrived at the convention, everyone who was registered as a poet was also registered in the contest. I did not really think of what poem I was going to enter into the contest until a day before I was to leave for Florida.

I was sitting in the library at C.S.U. and I kept thinking of Saudi Arabia. During this time of the year, after the winter season has just ended and spring has just begun to bloom, I really begin to miss my country. As I thought in the library a couple of words popped into my head, such as 'hennah, ku'hl, Arabic coffee, swords, Arabian horses, the ka'bah; and so I started incorporating these words into a poem that blossomed out of nowhere like buds that blossom in the spring. The last day I was in Florida was the day I won my award. I was so shocked to hear my name being called from among the thousands who were seated. I almost didn't get up from nervousness. And once I was up I had to read my poem to a very quiet and eagerly anticipating audience. I actually enjoyed reading my poetry to the audience, but it was really embarrassing to me. Afterwards people began to clap and then stood up and clapped some more. I think people really liked my poem and I was happy for that. I was anxious and really shy but I was glad that I could share something that had to do with my culture and my country with the world.

M.E: What kind of opportunities has winning this prize opened for you?

K.H: Since winning I was nominated for the International Who's Who in Poetry. They are going to publish my poem for free and give me an extra page to include my personal information in their anthology, which is a good deal. Also, right after I read my poem in the poetry convention, a publisher came up to me and asked if she could publish my poem in her magazine. At the same time, a newspaper in Canada requested my picture and published my poem in their newspaper. When I came back from the convention, I was interviewed by my school's newspaper. Soon afterwards, the Dar-Al-Hayat newspaper asked for an interview. Then I did another interview from a French radio program in Riyadh. Also another radio in Riyadh called me just yesterday and requested an interview. Then hedayah.net and Alyamaamah magazine both requested interviews. I am honoured that so many newspapers, magazine, and radios want to interview me. I think the biggest opportunity that the winning has opened for me though is a chance to talk about things that are important, such as the condition of our Muslim youth and our ummah (nation).

M.E: Tell us more about your family and education and how you chose your educational route.

K.H: I live with a wonderful (and not to mention a big family). I am the oldest of five kids (and there's one on the way in shaa- Allaah (God willing)). Being a Muslim girl living in a Western society, my family was, and still is, one of the most important and fundamental aspects of raising and shaping me. Since I was young my parents always raised us children according to the 'Qura~n and sunnah, al'hamdu lilaah (thanks to Allaah). I received an Islaamic education at home and a public education in the American school system. Ever since

I was very young, my parents also encouraged me to wear 'hijaab. I remember wearing it for the first time in the third grade; I used to keep putting it on and then taking it off, it took some time getting used to. Afterwards, I started to gradually keep it on all through elementary school and then wore it once and for all starting the seventh grade of junior high. I am grateful that my family instilled in me the values of modesty and pride of being a Muslim girl at such an early and critical age.

Along with my parents' dedication to keeping us on the Islaamic path, it was also very important that I receive a quality education. My father always taught us to challenge ourselves in whatever we do. All throughout my junior high education I took higher level classes, and when I was 16 years old I joined the International Baccalaureate (I.B.) program at my high school. I believe that this was the best course I have ever taken. Being in I.B. was extremely challenging. The method of teaching to me was rather intriguing because it inspired me to "think outside the box," as my I.B. teachers always stressed. Sadly, I had to move to a school that did not have an I.B. program, so I further pursued my education by taking Advanced Placement classes. These classes were similar to I.B. and challenged me greatly and I really enjoyed them, more than my regular classes. I did not stay in high school too long though because I decided to graduate early. So a few months after turning 17 I graduated from high school with a high G.P.A. al'hamdu lilaah. Currently, I am working on my path into optometric medicine. I really love to help people and I have always dreamed of helping the poor. I hope by gaining an optometry degree I can help my Muslim ummah. At the same time I chose this path because of its rewarding benefits. I can only imagine the joy I will see on people's faces when I help them gain back their eyesight in shaa- Allaah. I also

think that in shaa- Allaah it will keep me close to Allaah in all that I do, for it will be a daily reminder to thank him for something precious that we usually don't think about, our ability to see. I hope that Allaah helps me in my path, and that all that I do is for His sake and His sake alone.

M.E: Do you maintain a balance in areas of your study alongside writing poetry, or do you find yourself neglecting important subjects?

K.H: Actually, although I love to write poetry, I never let it take over my schooling no matter what. I think that it is good and helpful to have a hobby or a passion that you can use to express yourself or just feel inner satisfaction, but to me, school always comes first. I think that school is my number one priority right now and poetry only fits in whenever I have time or feel like writing about something. Also, my poetry does not make me neglect other more important subjects, because even if I do write it usually takes me very little time to write a poem. For example, when I wrote my poem about women in Islaam, it only took about five minutes. I know that some people take a very long time to write their poetry, but for me it comes very easily and very suddenly.

M.E: How do your father and other family members play a role in your poetic success?

K.H: I think my poetic interest is genetic. My father is an avid poetry reader and ever since I was a little girl he would recite Arabic poetry to my brother and me. Although as a younger child I never really grasped the meaning of the poetry, it did have a large impact on me because just the way it sounded was captivating. My family in general has been a strong force when it comes to my poetry. Even my extended family, including my aunts and uncles,

always encouraged me in my pursuit of writing poetry and I am grateful for their support. My uncle Mohammad is the one who took me to the poetry convention in Florida and ensured my safety and enjoyment. He was a big support to me and I gained confidence in reading my poetry to others from his encouragement and understanding.

M.E: What do your friends and family think about your poetic success?

K.H: I am so glad that both my family and my friends support me and encourage me to write poetry. They have been a huge part of my success in achieving my goals in life. Without my best friend, Isra'a Belgasem, I would have never had the courage to share my poetry this year. I am glad that she pushed me beyond my comfort zone to challenge myself and excel in my passion. My father has also been a great influence. I remember when I was younger I would come up to him and read him my poetry that I wrote for class; he would always applaud my efforts and encourage me to write even more. My father has a poetic spirit about him and he still recites poetry to us while we are in the car. I don't think I would have been able to write poetry if it was not for his inspiration. If I have had any success at all it is because of Allaah and the people that I love, not from myself.

M.E: Do you only focus on reading poetry or reading literature in general?

K.H: I have never really focused on just reading poetry because there are so many poetic aspects in various sorts of literary works. I enjoy reading all sorts of things from history, to politics, to fiction, to autobiographies. In all of them you can find something interesting and inspiring. Even though reading a political article about Palestine may not be the most artistic form of writing, I believe that it is just

as important to read. When I write poetry I take in all of the works I read and write about what I have learned or what I may feel about an issue. For instance, I have written a couple of poems about Palestine, or my country Saudi Arabia, or my oummah in an effort to describe what I feel about these certain places or things and their current situations. Poetry can be more than just literary, it can be a strong and wise weapon if used properly.

M.E: What poetry do you read, what issues do they consist of and in which languages are they?

K.H: The best thing about poetry is that people from all around the world write it. I have many friends who are poets and they send me their works from time to time. My friend from Belize for example writes poetry with a social/political twist. Reading her work has been very beneficial in trying to understand her point of view about her life and what occurs in it. I enjoy reading poetry about many issues in various languages including Arabic, French, and some translated versions of Persian, Spanish, and Indian poetry. There are also many different types of poetry just in the English language, such as: African American poetry, Native American poetry, and old works such as that of Shakespeare that I enjoy reading. I try to read all sorts of poetry to gain a broader perspective on different people's thinking and ways of life. I do not limit myself to reading some sort of poetry because there are too many topics that can be written about in poetry and they can all be expressed beautifully if articulated in an interesting manner or from a unique point of view. For example, I once read a poem about something as dull as a wooden table that was twisted in such a beautiful array of descriptive words that the poem was exquisite.

M.E: What kind of books do you read? Do you have a favourite writer or poet? What are their nationalities?



Why are they particularly your favourite?

K.H: I read all sorts of books, when I was 14 I had a different book in my hand everyday, literally. So it would be hard to tell who my favourite authors are and what kind of books I read. But, if I had to limit myself I would most likely read historical fiction. I have a couple of favourite books, such as *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden, *In the Name of Salome* by Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez, *Black Boy* by Richard Wright, and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. All of these books shed some light on issues that I was unaware of. Or in some instances, it shed light on perspectives and voices that I have never imagined possible; such as the tremendous psychological stress that slavery brings even after it is abolished, as is depicted in the novel *Beloved*. I enjoyed reading these books in particular because they urged me to think. They told of issues that happened in real life, even though the plot of the novel itself might be fictitious; and they begged me to analyse the messages and themes buried in the earth of their powerful stories. My favourite poets include the Arab poets Farazdaq, Zain Al'abideen, Ahmad Showki, and Alkhansaa-. I also like some international poets such as the works of Rabindranath

Tagore, Salomé Ureña de Henríquez, and Paul Laurence Dunbar. I can not limit myself to having only one favourite poet or writer, because all of them have something unique and intriguing about the way they write.

M.E: The 'Qura~n is a beautiful poetic source of literature. Does reading it influence and strengthen your poetic talents?

K.H: I agree that the 'Qura~n is not only a beautiful poetic source of literature, but The Most beautiful source of literature on this earth. Just listening to the 'Qura~n, in all its magnificence and grace, has such a tremendous effect on the soul, even to those who may not understand the full meaning of the words. The poetic aspects of the 'Qura~n are embedded in each verse with such fluidity and eloquence that even memorising it can be done with ease. There is no way whatsoever that my poetic talents can be strengthened by reading the 'Qura~n, because nothing can compare to it. Instead, I am humbled by my poetry's unworthy comparison. But, due to the 'Qura~n's thought provoking language, I do draw ideas about issues that I can write about. Sometimes, while I am reading the 'Qura~n a phrase or word will pop into my mind, and I take a moment to write the word down and ponder over it later. I draw inspiration from the 'Qura~n, it not only helps shapes my faith but also my poetry. I think also just from reading the 'Qura~n my poetic interest increased. The 'Qura~n captures so much meaning in words and is especially enthralling because of its rhythm.

M.E: How often do you write? Where do you publish your poems? How important is writing poetry for you and how and where do you get your inspiration?

K.H: I am constantly writing. Everyday there is something new that springs my inspiration to write poetry.

My poems have been published in a three anthologies by the International Library of Poets and I have received a couple of offers from other poetry publications. Also, my winning poem "My Exhaustion" has been in several newspapers in the states, Canada, and the Arab world.

Writing poetry is really important to me. My inspiration comes from a lot of different ideas, people, and happenings. The fun thing about poetry is that you can write about almost anything. Once I was walking home from school and looked up at the sky during Maghrib time and noticed that the clouds looked like akoya pearls, which are pearls that sometimes come in shades of pink and cream, and from that I wrote a poem. Poetry to me is a way to capture the meaning of things in a few words.

M.E: Do you plan to limit your writing skills to poetry, or do you wish to write short stories, novels, prose, and other forms of writing?

K.H: I do not plan to limit my writing skills to poetry because I am interested in writing in general. I have written a few short stories and some other creative writing pieces, but my main objective is to write articles, essays, and things of that sort that are about societal, political, and Islaamic issues. I do not know how far my writing will go or where it will take me, so I am unsure of how much I would write, but I do plan to write.

M.E: What main themes do you employ in your poetry? What messages do you try to convey to the audience?

K.H: One of the main themes that I discover most prevalent in my poetry is my emphasis on the importance of sustaining ones soul. I try to show people through my poetry that this world is unworthy of our slavish devotion to its materialistic possessions. I try to show people that the only truth about this world



is that it will one day end, and that if you leave a trail of corruption and greed, you will never ever be content or find that happiness that such few people find. My poetry is very personal, and it is not easy for me to share it with people. I hope though that it may benefit those who read it. I also hope that my poetry will make people think about their current states. I also write poetry inspired by political issues, such as Palestine or the 'hijab ban that is going on in Europe. Some of my poetry pertains personally to my life and my strife and it may be hard for my audience to understand. Also, another important theme that I employ is about my country and my Arabic heritage. I may have lived in the states for 13 years, but my heart is buried in the desert sands of my country.

M.E: What are your main concerns?

Do you plan to propagate these concerns via your poetry? If so, how do you plan to do that effectively?

K.H: When it comes to my main concerns in life, it is mostly about my country, my ummah, and women's role in Islaam. I want to do something as a Muslim woman, instead of passively sitting at home and only be involved with myself. I am not implying that women should not be wives and mothers, for I believe, as Islaam tells us, that that's absolutely a Muslim woman's first and foremost role.

The responsibility of a Muslim woman, by raising her children right in the way of Islaam and taking care of her husband, is a tremendous power within itself. By doing this, she is raising and shaping the future generations and ensuring the happiness and stability of her family.

Yet still, as a Muslim woman, I would like to contribute what I can to help my ummah. Sometimes there are things greater than ourselves, and if we can help, while not destroying our family lives, then why not do something? I see many women in Saudi nowadays who were educated in the West and are trying to "help" Saudi. I want to do this as well, but the only difference between how I want to help my country and how they want to help their country is that I do not want to "westernise"

the nation. I see many Saudi women nowadays who show half of their hair, have a lot of make up on, and dress in flashy 'abaa-ahs (abayas) claiming that Saudi needs to be westernised and that the West gives women rights that Saudi women should have too. I do not want to do any of this. I want to help my country while proudly portraying myself as a Muslim woman. I have lived in the West for 13 years, I grew up here and I know how people here think. This notion of "freedom" that many people think westerners have, especially concerning women, is but a mirage. Women will not be more liberated by taking off what Allaah has decreed for them to wear, instead they will only strip their honour and modesty with their own hands and reduce themselves to displayable shallow minded objects. I hope instead that Allaah gives me the wisdom to take the good from the West and leave the bad and un-Islaamic aspects of it behind. In this way I hope to improve my country's disposition with the education that I obtain in the West, while still presenting myself as a proud Muslim woman who tries to maintain and instil Islaamic values within herself and in her society.

I do intend to use my poetry as an important tool in propagating my messages, concerns, and hopes for the future generation of my country and Islaam as a whole in shaa- Allaah. I think that poetry appeals to many people, and I can use its emotional aspect as an effective tool. I only hope that Allaah lets me use my poetry wisely and that I may be able to represent Islaam with it always. Any diversion from that I have committed, either in the past or future, comes from my flaws and weakness as a human being.

M.E: What kind of an audience do you hope to attract?

K.H: I hope that all kinds of people are attracted to my poetry. I think

my poetry can relate to people from all ages, at least to some degree. I also hope to attract educated and concerned individuals about the many serious issues that are occurring in the Arab or even Muslim world. I am planning to write poetry on further issues concerning the unrest of our youth, the lack of productivity and concern of many Saudis (and other Arab peoples) for the future, the westernisation of Arab countries, the weakening of our ummah in this secular and individualistic world. I hope I can help my self and help my audience think further about these issues in order to address them and be aware of them.

M.E: What feedback and constructive criticism have you received regarding your writing? How have you felt about such feedback?

K.H: For the past few years, I have received a lot of feedback and criticism to my poetry. I usually ask my English teachers for their opinions because they have the most insight when it comes to wording, grammar, and fluidity. I learn a lot from talking about poetry and its structure, but since I mostly write in free verse, I don't usually follow any kind of structure. Also, although I warmly welcome criticism, I don't always listen to people's suggestions because the way I write poetry is just the way I write. For example, when I wrote my winning poem "My Exhaustion" I wrote it only in a short time and afterwards I was done. I went to a couple of teachers at my school and asked them for any feedback or criticism. All of the teachers liked my poem al'hamdu lilaah and they did offer some little suggestions concerning grammar, which I did change. But other than that, I can't really change my poetry. I might change a few words that have the same meaning, but I always leave it to the way it was written. Al'hamdu lilaah everyone I know likes my poetry and if they don't that's okay too, but I am not going to change it for them.

M.E: When writing poetry, what do you think about? The audience and their expectations, your family's

reaction and feedback, how to make it an amazing piece of poetry, or something else?

K.H: When I write poetry I don't think of anything other than what I am writing about. What is it that I want to express? What message do I want to convey? Once I figure that out I kind of go back and change some words if I need to so that the poem will be more powerful. Sometimes I use more complex words and sometimes I keep it really simple, as long as my message is getting across to my audience. Also an important component that I keep in mind while I am writing is to make my poetry unique. When I say this I don't mean I try to find topics that are unusual to write about, but instead to think of new ways to talk about normal things. For example in my poem "Flag of Freedom," I tried to show people that Muslim woman are not oppressed, instead they are the ones who wave the flag of freedom by wearing their 'hijaab. Muslim woman are the flag of freedom for Islaam, and we should be proud representing our religion.

M.E: Do you think it is important for a poem to rhyme? Do you try to employ rhyming schemes in all of your poems? Or do you employ a more modern approach to poetry?

K.H: I don't think that it is important for a poem to rhyme, but I am not against it. If rhyming will enhance your poem then use it, but if not then that's fine too. I think that the most important thing when writing a poem is to be able to convey the message, concept, or whatever you are writing about in an eloquent and creative manner. Personally, I like to use free verse more because it gives me the flexibility to just write the way I like to.

M.E: What is more important to you, writing a simple poem that everyone understands, or a complex poem with hidden meanings that intellectual individuals would understand, or both?

K.H: I like to write both complex and simple poems. I like complex poems because they make you think. They're

really fun to analyse and talk about, because everyone has a different interpretation of what they think the poet is writing about or why. As for simple poems, sometimes it best just to tell people what you are trying to say so that everyone can understand your poem. Simple poems can get your message communicated very clearly, especially to people who are not as poetic and who may not understand or be able to analyse the hidden meanings in a more complex poem.

M.E: Poetry is a personal process. How do you feel about sharing your personal thoughts and experiences with the audience?

K.H: When it comes to sharing my poetry, this has actually been the first year that I have shared my poetry to anyone. To tell the truth, I did not want to share my poetry with anyone at all. My best friend, Isra'a Belgasem, is actually the one who "revealed" my poetry to others. She has always told me that my poetry is good and went and showed some of my poems (without my consent!) to the members of our Muslim Student Association here at C.S.U. I was so mad at her and I thought that everyone would probably not like my poetry, but instead they loved it. Afterwards I got the courage to post some of my poetry on the International Library of Poetry website and very soon afterwards I got two of them published. I soon became a member of the International Library of Poets and I got a personal invitation from them asking me to attend their annual poetry convention. In the convention around 2,000 people from all around the world competed in the poetry contest. If I would have known I was going to win and have to read my poetry in front of 2,000 people I would have not entered the contest in the first place! What made matters worse was that my poem was pretty long and there were two big screens on either side of me displaying my face because I was being recorded on video. I was really shy and really shocked. All I was thinking was that I hope people appreciate my poetry. Before I started reading my poem I had to mention where I was from, and when I did the

whole audience clapped which made me even more anxious. I read my poem rather calmly and when I was done I was looking at the audience with a worried face because they were all silent for a moment afterwards. Then, all of a sudden people started clapping really hard for what seemed like forever. I just wanted to go back to my seat, I felt so embarrassed, but then people started standing up and clapping. It was a memorable yet nerve wrecking moment. It is still not that easy for me to share my work and I have many poems that I have not shown anyone. I don't care about the attention that comes with people knowing about my poetry, I just hope that I can use my poetry to help my ummah, that is why I don't always share everything I write.

M.E: What are your future goals and objectives? How do you plan to reach such goals?

K.H: My most important goal in this life is to be a good and knowledgeable Muslim woman when it comes to Islaam. I hope to always continue my Islaamic education, even when there is no one there to help me. My family has helped me extremely when it comes to learning about Islaam, but my most worthy tribute must go to my aunt Hajar. My aunt has always pushed me to be better, to strive, to go against un-Islaamic teachings and to always remember Allaah. When I do something wrong she never speaks to me harshly, instead she explains why it is wrong. I even admire that she covers her face out of her faith and love for Allaah, and I hope to do the same. She is a constant inspiration in my heart that pushes me to do the right thing when sometimes I almost do not. I hope to learn from her and surround myself by good Muslim women throughout my life in order to be a better Muslimah.

Another important goal that is deeply intertwined with my previous goal is

to be a good Muslim wife and mother in the future. I know many Muslim women nowadays who waste a lot of money buying things, neglect their husbands, and neglect their kids by keeping them with a maid. This is a common problem that I notice occurs in my country. I really hope that Allaah gives me the wisdom to learn from other people's mistakes and be better. Although I want to work and help my country and ummah, I always keep my main objective in mind for the future, which is to be a good wife and mother in shaa- Allaah. I see a lot of my sisters in Islaam here in the states wired in the Western way of thinking, which is to make the man and wife have "same and equal" roles. I think this is the wrong way of thinking because although men and women are equal in Islaam, we have different roles that we naturally perform. I hope to incorporate my continually growing Islaamic knowledge when it comes to dealing with a husband and children.

Another one of my goals is to strive in school and get exceptional grades. I hope to graduate from college in shaa- Allaah with honours. I also hope that the knowledge I gain from my schooling, especially concerning the optometric path that I am taking, will help me in being a better doctor and person. Doing well in school is a daily continual struggle, and I hope that Allaah always helps me in this. I also hope to improve my writing skills further and be educated on many subjects and issues so that I can write and effectively address issues that concern me. I have many future goals and objectives in general, especially when it comes to helping myself, the Muslims, and our future Muslim generations, but my biggest hope and wish is that whatever I do in this life, I do only for the sake of Allaah and that He keeps me strong so that I may never ever stray from His path.

M.E: What are your future hopes and dreams as a poet? How far do you

want to reach?

K.H: My future hopes and dreams, when it comes to poetry, is to keep writing and maybe even get a book published. I hope that I can learn to write more effectively and that I make people think "outside the box." I hope that when people read my poetry they will try to see things from my perspective and learn more about Islaamic and Arabic culture. I write my poetry as much for non Muslims as for Muslims, and I hope that both benefit. I hope to reach into people's hearts as much as I can with my poetry.

M.E: Do you think living in the U.S. has given you the opportunity to flourish your talents?

K.H: Living in the U.S. has its pros and cons; there are always good and bad aspects of every society. In the states I have had an opportunity to see my country's state from "outside of the box." I notice many of the flaws that sometimes people in my country are not aware of or ignore because they are so used to living there. I think that if it was not for my family and the way they raised me, I would not have been able to develop my talents no matter where I was. It is not about where you live, but about seizing the opportunities that you have and trust in Allaah no matter how few or how restricted you may be. And as always, it is important to keep in mind that what Allaah decrees will be and also that you do things for the right intention.

M.E: Do you think if you were living in Saudia Arabia you would have had the same opportunities and recognition?

K.H: I think that this is a hard question to hard to answer. If I lived in my country I might have become a different person with a different point of view, because the society around me is different.



M.E: Will you write poetry as a hobby or a profession? Do you think being a poet is a realistically financially stable career, or do you plan to take on another career and simultaneously write poetry?

K.H: I write poetry more as a hobby. I don't intend to use my poetry a career option because first it is financially unstable and second because it is not my primary and preferred career choice. I do intend on using it though to my advantage by continuing to write and share my opinions and ideas with people through my poetry.

M.E: You are part of the Muslim Association at your college. What are your responsibilities there and how have they encouraged you with your ambitions?

K.H: I became a member of the Muslim Student Association because I wanted to help the Muslim cause by making people more aware about what Islaam is really all about. It has been really fun, challenging, and I have learned a lot about Islaam and myself and how to strengthen myself a Muslim woman. We have had huge and successful programs this year al'hamdu lilaah. Our biggest accomplishments include the Ramadan Awareness Dinner, Hajj Awareness Dinner, and the Islaamic

Culture Awareness Week. In the Rama'daan Awareness Dinner we had a wonderful program with lots of food. We also had tremendous success in the Hajj awareness dinner. More than 500 people showed up to our program and we had the Muslim comedian Azhar Usman come from Chicago. For the Islaamic Cultural Awareness Dinner we brought Sheikh Yusuf Estes and had a great lecture not only in the city where I live but in three other cities as well. We are the only M.S.A. in M.S.A. history to connect with other cities to have an event that took place all through out Colorado.

M.E: How do you attain a balance as a practising Muslim and a successful member of society in a non-Muslim country?

K.H: The most important thing to me when it comes to being successful as a Muslim in a non Muslim society is to make sure to surround yourself by good Muslims. It is hard, no matter how strong your faith is, to always remember Allaah if you are not surrounded by people who are striving with you and can help you out. Also, it is equally important to stay away from the negative aspects of this society, such as hanging out with non-Muslims, doing 'haraam activities with them, or talking to the opposite sex.

As the Prophet Mu'hammad (peace be upon him) said, "The example of a good companion in comparison with a bad one, is like that of a musk seller and the blacksmith's bellow; from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell from it." The way I look at it, you should try to stay close with the righteous Muslims, while at the same time be nice to non Muslims but don't mix too much with them. Most importantly, always be proud that you are Muslim, represent Islaam in the best manner, and be yourself, don't try to assimilate yourself in an immoral and misleading society.

M.E: How important is it for you to integrate into your society and defy the common stereotype that Muslim girls are oppressed and uneducated? What steps do you take to achieve a positive image?

K.H: I always try to represent Islaam to the best of my current ability in all that I do. More specifically for me, I always try to show people that Muslim women are not oppressed or uneducated. I do this everyday when I wear my 'abaa-ah and 'hijaab and go to school. The best thing about covering Islaamically is that people notice that something about you is different and their curiosity begs them

to question why? This is my best opportunity to explain to people why we Muslim women cover. It proves to them that we are intelligent and honourable because we force people who are so used to shallowly judging women by their looks, to judge us by our intellect. I try to further achieve this positive image about Muslim women by just being simply nice and smiling kindly as I walk by. I have also written a couple of poems about Muslim woman and I am going to get my "Flag of Freedom" poem published soon in the International Who's Who in Poetry.

M.E: What are your other hobbies and activities?

K.H: Some other stuff I like to do other than writing are hiking, camping, travelling, and taking pictures. Actually my whole family loves to hike, camp, and travel, so it is kind of a family tradition. My family and I have travelled to almost half of the states in U.S. and it has always been a lot of fun. Many times when we travel we camp in beautiful national parks across the states. As for taking pictures, it has always been something I love to do because you can express so much from just one picture. I am not too good at photographing though, but I hope to learn to take professional pictures in the future.

Another important activity that I enjoy is talking to non Muslims about Islaam. I really love telling people about my religion and why I cover, since so many people here have a lot of misconceptions about Islaam and Muslims. Being a Muslim woman who wears 'hijaab and 'abaa-ah all the time has made this very easy since many people are curious as to why I cover. It has been a lot of fun talking about Islaam, especially in a college environment where many students are interested.

M.E: If you have the chance to encourage Muslim girls worldwide

to follow their goals and dreams, what would you advise them to do to become successful?

K.H: I am glad to get this opportunity to talk to other Muslim girls. I encourage girls to follow their dreams if it is okay Islaamically. Try to find something that you are good at and excel in it. I know a lot of girls who become very bored because they think there is nothing to do. So many girls waste their time on foolish activities such as excessive shopping or listening to music. I encourage girls to build themselves into strong Muslim woman first. We are the women who will bear the weight of raising the future generations of Muslims. We are the ones who will shape the future. As that saying goes, "Behind every great man is a woman." We should also always strive in our religion and our education. I know personally for myself, I have made a lot of mistakes this year, but I really am trying to be a better Muslim. Striving in life is the most important thing. Also, don't make excuses for yourself not to be better.

Sub'haana Allaah, this world goes by really fast and sooner than you think you will be older and you will have kids of your own. Being young is an advantage, so use it. This is the best time you can help yourselves become better Muslims. When you are young it is easier to break away from bad habits and develop good ones, so try to mould yourself into what you ideally want to be. This is also the best time to help others. We have the energy and the time to help our Muslim community, be it by writing poetry or by helping clean the mosque. And most importantly, remember that your success is with Allaah, don't let the superficial "success" of this world deviate you from the doctrines of our religion. (Most of this goes for the brothers too.)

The next part of the interview focuses on Kholood's father, Abdulgader Habiballa, where more on Kholood's foundations of success are revealed.

M.E: What values did you instil in Kholood for her to be able to eloquently express herself via poetry?

Abdulgader Habiballa: Being in the West has concerned me much about the kind of people my kids would be. I tried hard to connect them to what we are and what we Muslims stand for. That might have been the seed that made my daughter the person she is. The main thing that I always try to have in my kids is not to be a self centered person. A person has much to give and much to change if we look at the big picture and try to think untraditionally.

M.E: What are the most important elements in raising your daughter into a successful young girl?

A.H: The most important element, in my opinion, was that I always demanded the best of her. Excellence is a goal and the way to it is encouragement by raising the standard along the way. Our history is a magnificent land mark in the history of mankind and there is an abundance of examples how Muslims excelled in what they did, so every parent should use such examples to direct their kids' energy to betterment of the Muslim society, not just the person himself.

M.E: How did you first learn of your daughter's poetic talent?

A.H: It was by mere coincidence. Three or four years ago, she had a number pages prepared for a school assignment and as me being the person who always want to know how my kids are doing in school, I went through her assignment and I was much impressed and proud of what was written. At the time, I have recognised how eloquently she can

manage her words and convey her inner thoughts to others.

M.E: How did you encourage her to develop and strengthen her talent?

A.H: I have always asked my daughter to not to pass and opportunity in learning what makes her a better person, particularly when it comes to what she has a passion for. All I did was to connect her to the Muslims all over the world and making her feel that we need positive and hardworking elements in our society that really and sincerely try to make us better. These feelings and the sense of connectedness might have sharpened the poetic talent in her and gave her a personal message to convey.

M.E: Do you believe you have been a good role model for your daughter to become successful at such an early stage in her life?

A.H: I believe I tried but it is the grace of Allaah what made my daughter so good and successful in what she does in this early age. The other factor of her success comes from the fact that her mother being a pious lady. She has always been a tremendous support for Kholood and been an example of a Muslim lady living in the west. I think Kholood and I owe much of our success and accomplishments to her support and determination in making us a better family.

M.E: Were her mother's encouragement, support and upbringing equally important to yours in raising her to become a successful young girl? How did you both contribute in bringing her up with ambitious and successful values?

A.H: As I mentioned earlier that her mother was an important factor in making us the people we are now. I can tell you that her mother has had a bigger role in shaping Kholood's path to success. The values she instilled into her kids and the unlimited selflessness she showed in bringing up our kids made much difference in our lives and gave our children the opportunity to excel.

Also, her devotion and devoutness to our religion are instrumental in maintaining our family.

M.E: Do you believe your daughter's environment at home and school led her to become successful? How did you and your family build such a successful home environment? What are the key values that your family believes in?

A.H: I think the family warm environment my wife created at home has been the corner stone that gave all of kids the edge in school. All of our kids are doing fine in school and are distinguished in their studies. My wife and I tried to our kids understand our expectations and helped them in attaining the tools for success. The key value that my family believes in is that we as Muslims should be more involved and proactive instead of being passive. We should be proud of who we are and never forget that we gave the world the edge in almost every science there is. We should not forget that we are to be role models to other nations based on our Islamic values and principles. These are the core values my wife and I tried to build our family around.

M.E: How did you come to make a decision to live in the U.S. particularly?

A.H: I got a governmental scholarship to earn a degree in Electrical Engineering in May 1993. Since then, I have been working to attain more knowledge, so I can back and make a difference.

M.E: Tell us about your educational background.

A.H: I have an undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering. I also have a Master degree in Computer Engineering and another Master degree in Engineering Management. Now, I am few months away from completing my Ph.D. degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering (Optical Communication Networks). I also have a graduate certificate in International Finance. I have a number of publications in these areas

of study.

M.E: Do you think Kholood inherits her talents from her ancestors?

A.H: I believe that Kholood inherited a rich history that is exemplary in every human aspect. Accordingly, she inherited the responsibility to present Islaam and its elegance in a way that tells the world of what we have to offer. The inheritance of such talent and her understanding of the responsibility she has towards her religion shaped her talent.

M.E: Do you have poetry sources at home which were the seeds of your daughter's talents? What type of your books do you have?

A.H: I have a passion for Arabic poetry. I always recited verses of poems to my kids and tried to explain them in details, so they can feel the art of making analogies in our language. As far as books go, I used to have a huge personal library at home when I was in Saudi and I still have a relatively large collection of books here in the state. I donated most of my books to university libraries in Iraq after it came to my knowledge that most of their libraries been looted during the invasion. My reading interest spans a variety of areas including the philosophy, science, and religion.

M.E: America is often seen as the land of opportunity, where parents can raise their children to have a successful future. What steps did you take to teach your daughter the importance of success in education and daily life?

A.H: I agree that America is the land of opportunity if the goal is seeking knowledge. We have much to learn and much to accomplish and the U.S. is the perfect place to gain such exposure. I always encourage my kids to learn what benefits our society. I always remind them that we are in need of them to build a brighter future for our nations. I keep raising the standard and expectation so they excel accordingly and from time to time, I try to connect them to our reality

and make them feel how much we are in need of people who can help us lead not led.

M.E: What are your hopes for Kholood?

A.H: My hopes for all of kids are limitless. I hope they can serve Islaam and Muslims by gaining good knowledge and give a good example of Muslim kids who lived and got raised in the West. As far as Kholood, I wish she can do better than what her mother and I tried to do for her with her children. I want her to be a mother that originates better and stronger society. I want her to never give up on herself and work hard to help whom close to her and others. I want her to remember that we have a great message and that we are to pass such message and responsibility to future generations.

M.E: What do you think of your daughter's success? What do you wish her to become in the future?

A.H: I am so proud of my daughter especially when we go back to Saudi Arabia to visit. In fact I am very proud of all of my kids. Many expect that a girl who is raised in America is much more like Americans. Sadly, I see boys and girls back home who are much more westernised than the westerners themselves even though they do not speak a single English word for example. I am very proud that I have exposed my kids into the real west and that my wife and I were successful in building the identity of

our kids as Muslims. Kholood and my oldest son Abdulrazzaq, who will be in college next year, want to be medical doctors and I feel that they can offer much by leaning such science and profession.

M.E: What are Kholood's next steps to success and how do you plan to help her achieve them?

A.H: I think the main thing for Kholood and my oldest son Abdulrazzaq is to concentrate on their schooling and have the intention to help Islaam and Muslims in their heart all the time. I want them, both,



to use their talent in what benefits our country and Muslims else where. Sometime as in Kholood's case, a passion and a talent for something especial can also be used to accomplish many great things if properly used and channelled. My wife and I will always support what ever routs our kids take as long as they are in accordance of our obligations to our religion and beneficial to both themselves and

others.

M.E: If you could speak to every Muslim parent in the West and elsewhere, what would you advise them concerning the successful upbringing of their children and its importance?

A.H: I would not speak to Muslim parents in the west for I know for sure that there very bright examples who built their families according to the principle of Islaam even in these turbulent times. I tried to learn from such people that I got to know during the time we lived her and I am much obliged to them for what I learned. I will direct my words to parent back in our Muslim countries. I tell them that we are not more that means for our kids to make them identify themselves with the Islaamic context. Do we really want to let our boys and girls loose their identity? Our religion has given much to humanity and our culture is unique and rich. We should assume our responsibilities and be instrumental the upbringing of the future generation. If there is one action that does such a thing, it will be getting close to your kids and taking the time to talk to them and explain to them what seems to be confusing. Our time is so puzzling and our kids need us more to explain and direct their energies into positive and beneficial deeds.

It is evident that these hard-working Muslims will sow the seeds of success for future generations to come. It is hoped that this in depth interview inspires and encourages youth and parents worldwide to succeed in their practical and spiritual life as Muslims, in order to reform the earth and better mankind.

■ Reflections on

“My Exhaustion”

Poem. Winning poem of the poetry contest

This poem has an Arabian theme, based on true love between a wife and her husband. In the poem, an Arab woman is talking about her husband and how she waits for him to return and how she feels when she is with him. The message that Kholood wanted people to understand is that true love is something that keeps a person content, challenged, inspired, and always growing as an intellectual human being. Kholood also wanted to show people the beauty of the Arabian culture, which is why she incorporated everything with an Arab twist. Her intent when writing the poem was to share the pride she feels in being Saudi Arabian and the poem is in fact dedicated to her country.



My Exhaustion

“ You are like whispers in my ear,
A faint Arabian lute strumming in the night,

Playing softly to the forlorn stars and my heart

Under our camel hair weaved tent.

Every word that you have uttered
Hangs in the abyss of my soul,

Like the seven Hanged Poems suspended on the ka'bah's ancient
walls;

A dedication of infatuated lovers' agonies to their beloveds.

Your voice, one that I impatiently wait to hear,
Like the Arabian horses' hoofs bringing our warriors home,
Wounding me with memories of days richly seasoned with
contentment.

I pray to Allah that I see you,
I hide behind my obsidian silk veil,
So that you may not see my cheeks dye themselves in blood.

Yet my kohl tainted eyes glance at you pouting, my lashes longing,
Waiting for you to come my way.

So mesmerized, my soul has ignited itself on fire.

Bringing me vigorously to life.

My eyes, overtaken by drought, have no more tears to shed.

I am parched with happiness in this desert land.

The only drink I wish to pour is the Arabic coffee that awaits you when
you wake.

I have suffocated in the desert storms of your enrapturing soul,
And soared off the cliffs of your dignified heart like a saker falcon.

My scarlett henna stained hands have held a scimitar sword,
Challenging you in countless battles of intellect.

My body bruised, my feet pricked with thorns, I am exhausted.

You are my exhaustion,
An exhaustion that keeps me truly alive ”

Kholood Abdulgader Habiballa

SEARCHING for the Truth

By Debbie Miller*

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It all began when I was nine years old. I went to Church, as always, but I felt like I was missing something, although I was not sure what exactly that was.

At that time I had been to Christian private schools. I was northern baptise. I left that and went to the southern baptise Church for around a year, which wasn't benefiting me since I felt they weren't really saying anything; all I had heard was history.

So I went to an Assembly of God Church. These people were all into understanding the spirit. It was a nice feeling to have about me, but it was still only part of the story. I felt that I needed to look farther.

So I looked yet again to see what I could find. I found the Catholic Church. That was a shock to what I have learned so far. At this point I knew well about God and Jesus, and about this Holy Spirit they speak of and only one place knew about it.

At the Catholic Church I attended one of their classes weekly and at home I talked to some Jehovah witnesses. I would sit down with both religions and compare the three bibles to each other.

I learned why the bibles were different and why they were understood wrong, but it raised a new question in my mind: where did it all start?

I prayed that God would give me the answer.

Then one day I was in a book store with a few friends and this guy walked up to me when I was alone. He answered my question out of the blue. He gave me a list and told me to walk back the line.

When my friends started to come back to me the guy said he had to go and walked around the shelf and disappeared just as quickly as he appeared. I asked my friends if they saw him. They were surprised, telling me that no one was in the book store except them. So I started to do as he said.

Later I learned about a few little Christian sects and then moved to California to learn about Buddhism. There I learned all about the chants of the ten worlds and where it came from.

Simultaneously I attended a group of Christian Scientologists. They were very strange people, but I would sit and talk with them about what I learned against what they taught.

From there I went back to Florida and started to hear about Islaam from different people I met on the Internet. One day I had this feeling to go to one of the Islaamic chat rooms and just sit there and listen to them speak about Islaam for a while. From my nature, I could not sit there and do nothing, so I jumped

into the topic between Islaam and Christianity.

I was pointing out what I knew from my travels and one of the Muslims there started to talk to me separately. He liked that I knew so much and started to point out that all the knowledge I had was already in the 'Qura~n.

This intrigued me. So I started to read parts of the 'Qura~n. One day the Muslim who first talked to me told me about the Shahadah and taught me the concept and words. He asked me if I believed in it totally and if I could say it from my heart. I found that I could. It was the truth. I had found the truth. So he invited me this Islaamic room where I announced my belief to everyone there.

The next day I was so happy. Every one was asking what happened and I just said I was in a great mood. But now I understand what it was I felt.

It was Allaah and I will ever give that up.

**Debbie Miller is an American and currently resides in the U.S. She is a mother of four children and is also a cook. She originally told her convert story on DaralislamLive.com's Chat Room #LiveIslam on the DALNET I.R.C. Server. Debbie is keen to learn Arabic and can be found on the DaralislamLive.com's Forum with the nickname oto-hime.*

THE 'HIJAAZ Railway



Text and Photography by
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Most accounts of the 'Hijaz railroad history are either obscure or inaccurate on the point referring to the originator of the idea. A commonly repeated reference is made of Dr. Ferdinand Zimpel, an American civil engineer, who is usually credited, even in some scholarly works, with



A blown up locomotive between Madeenah and Madaa-n 'Saali'h

the honour of conceiving of the idea of a railroad that connects Damascus to Makkah. A closer inspection of the historical evidence points to the fact that Dr. Zimpel's groundbreaking suggestion was in fact much more humble than what came to be associated with his name. In 1864 he made a proposal to the

Ottoman government for a railroad linking Damascus and the Red Sea.

The pioneering idea, now that Dr. Zimpel has forfeited his claim to it, remains rather obscure. There are several accounts that may all turn out to be reasonably accurate. The search reveals a report of a Hejaz railroad suggestion made by an obscure Ottoman army officer in 1874 to secure Ottoman control in the 'Hijaz. This officer could have been Ahmet Izzet Efendi who was stationed in Jeddah. In a letter to the Sultan, he said that a railway connecting Istanbul to 'Hijaz would constitute an important defence asset for the Ottoman Empire, which was facing the danger of attack by foreign enemies and the indigenous population. The letter also emphasised that such a railway would facilitate performance

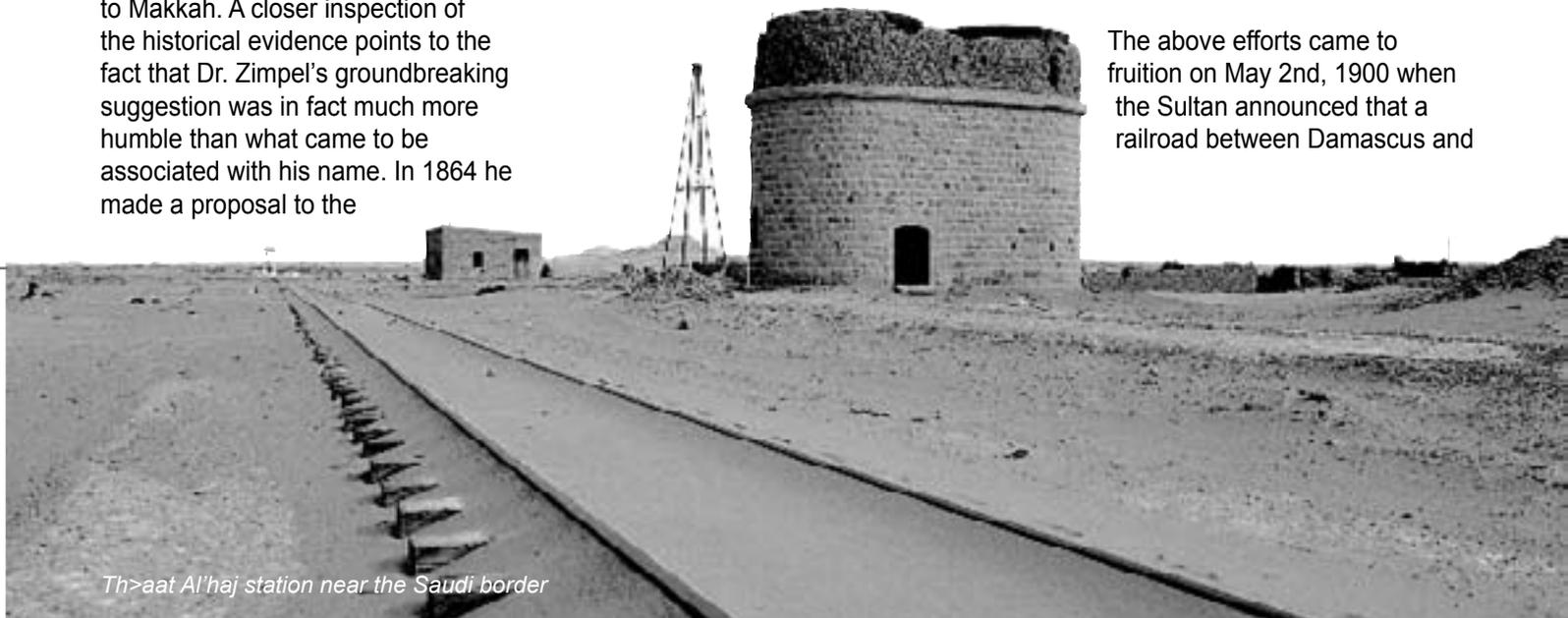
of the sacred Hajj, making the transportation of pilgrims from Anatolia and Syria to Makkah easier.

In 1891, the Ottoman commander in 'Hijaz, Osman Nuri Pasha, sent a letter to Sultan 'Abd Al'hameed II saying that the construction of a railway between Jeddah and Makkah would serve the promotion of Ottoman interests in the region.

And to complete the picture, one must not forget the efforts of Mu'hammad Insha Allaah (the editor of the Urdu journal Watan), who campaigned tirelessly in the late 1890s for the creation of a railroad passing through the holy cities of Madinah and Makkah and ending in Yemen.

Finally, the Ottoman Council of Ministers discussed the idea of a railroad to the 'Hijaz in August 1898.

The above efforts came to fruition on May 2nd, 1900 when the Sultan announced that a railroad between Damascus and



Th>aat Al'haj station near the Saudi border



Madaa-n 'Saali'h station complex

Madinah would be built. Construction of the Hameedy 'Hijaz Railroad was to begin on September 1st, 1900, the twenty-fifth anniversary of 'Abdulhamid's accession to the throne.

There is no doubt that political, as well as military, goals were at the heart of the 'Hijaz Railroad project. This, however, would in no way diminish its noble character in providing faster, cheaper, safer, and reliable means of transporting pilgrims to Madeenah.

The only method of transport for the pilgrims to Madeenah in those bygone days was camel caravan, a journey that would have been arduous for even the most intrepid traveller. The journey would have taken about two months, and a further two months on the return, travelling through winter's freezing temperatures and torrential rains, or the scorching heat of the summer months. Towns and settlements were sparse and hostile tribes, together with an inhospitable environment, no doubt compounded the difficulties.

The concept of the railway presented a financial as well as an engineering challenge. Sultan 'Abd Al'hameed II

announced that the railway would be financed by domestic sources and foreign funds would not be resorted to for the completion of the project. The cost of project was estimated at four and a half million lira, approximately £8 million pounds at the time. Since the Ottoman government was going through a tough period financially, it was impossible to finance the project through state funds and so donations started. The largest donations came from the Sultan himself and from the Shah of Persia. Donations from state bureaucrats in Istanbul and people through out the Ottoman territories followed soon. Donations were flowing so incredibly for the project that when the railway was finished it was probably the first railway in the world, which had no debt upon inauguration. Other contributions came from the Turkish Civil Service and armed forces, and from various fund-raising efforts (which included the sale of titles such as Pasha or Bey).

Not all of the donations were voluntary, but those who did volunteer were rewarded with the Hamidiye-'Hijaz Demiryolu ('Hijaz Railway Medal). The medal came in both wearable and non-wearable versions ranging in size from 26 mm to 50 mm.

The bulk of the medals had the hijry (hegira) date 1318, however special series of medals were issued bearing the dates 1322 (for completion of the rail link to Ma'an) and 1326 (for the link to Madeenah). The wearable medals were 30 mm in diameter, issued in gold, silver and nickel alloy.

Construction, maintenance and guarding of the line all presented enormous difficulties, which was mainly undertaken by more than 5,000 Turkish soldiers. Apart from the unpredictable - and often hostile -- local tribesmen, variations in the terrain itself made construction difficult. The ground was very soft and sandy in places and solidly rocky in others. Water scarcity was the norm, but



Madaa-n 'Saali'h station house

occasional torrential rainstorms caused flash floods, washing away bridges and banks and causing the line to collapse.

The camel caravan owners were far from pleased by the construction of the railway line, as it posed a considerable threat to their livelihood. The railway journey was quicker and cheaper, and no one in his right mind would contemplate spending £40 on an arduous, two-month camel journey when he could travel in comfort in only four days for just £3.50. Frequent attacks on the trains by the tribes and furious caravan operators made the journey to Madeenah a perilous undertaking for pilgrims, whether by camel or by rail.

In September 1900 construction started on the Damascus-Dar'ah line from both ends. This, as well

Wadi crossing with accumulated water in the rain season



as the Dar'ah-Amman stretch, was completed by 1903. In 1904 the railway reached Ma'an. In 1906 Mudawwarah was reached, and a year later the tracks reached Madaa-n 'Saali'h. Up to Madaa-n 'Saali'h, German engineers, who were the foreign expert help in the design and construction of this railroad, ran the supervision of the construction and the engineering work. Muslim Engineers directed the work in Arabia proper.

In September 1907 a festive gathering of in Alula celebrated the completion of the thousands kilometre of the railway. A year later, in September 1908, eight years after its beginning, the line arrived at Madinah.

On September 1st, 1908 the railway was officially opened, and was transporting 30,000 pilgrims a year by 1912. Business boomed, and by 1914 the annual load had soared to 300,000 passengers. Not only were pilgrims transported to Madeenah, but also the Turkish army began to use the railway as its chief mode of transport for troops and supplies. This was to be the railway's undoing, as it was severely damaged during the

First World War (1914-1918).

A final account of the achievement of this railroad shows that it transported a total of 1,311,907 (one million, three hundred eleven thousand, and nine hundred and seven) passengers during its short lifetime, of which the military contingent was less than twenty five percent.

It is important to add that the original intention of Sultan 'Abd Al'hameed II was for the railroad to reach Makkah, but his deposition in April 1909 and the strong opposition of the local tribes acted in unison to see that his dream did not materialise.

After the First World War, and until as recently as 1971, several attempts were made to revive the railway. In 1954 the governments of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria came to an agreement whereby the whole of the 'Hijaz Railway was to be rebuilt and reopened to traffic. After lengthy negotiations a contract was drawn up with Japanese, Spanish and Arab companies but this was cancelled in 1962 and in the following year a British consortium took over the project. Reconstruction started

in 1964 and evoked considerable worldwide interest but, although great deal of rebuilding was carried out south of Ma'an, political and financial difficulties became more and more apparent and in 1971 it was decided to suspend all work on the undertaking.

Road transport was established and, by the Seventies, aviation had made rapid progress. In the year 1970, an estimated 400,000 pilgrims entered Saudi Arabia, of which only 23% were by land. Aviation became the primary means of transporting pilgrims and the railway was rapidly superseded and the huge old steam locomotives clanked sadly to their final halt. But the romance of the railway remains alive.

Mohammed Babelli is an engineer by profession; art lover by choice. He started photography at an early age covering summer camping vacations. He has developed his photography techniques over the years through personal experience and also joining other photographers on photography sessions. He has published a book on Mada'in Saleh (available through Amazon.com), and plans further photography books publications on other contemporary subjects.



Mu'hammad MERCY Upon MANKIND

By Hicham Maged

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Once Sir William Shakespeare asked in his famous play 'Hamlet' this famous question, "To be or not to be, that is the question".

As a matter of fact, this question is a very strategic one and will always be there until the end of days before the Day of Judgment; however the answer – from my point of view – can be mentioned in the following sentence:

• "To Be = Having a role as a Muslim to make life better for Mankind, no matter how small, but just do it right."

Well, I know it is a hard answer; because in order to make it real, one needs to find his way to make a balance between him and others.

I do believe that Man = Human, but



many people have forgotten this today, as selfish became the name; everywhere you find people living for themselves only and let everything else go to hell, why? Because we forget the goal, and think only about taking advantage of the existing moment, whatever it may hurt others.

But who said that this answer didn't happen before? Definitely it had happened in a very successful way in the past; where 'The Islaamic Civilisation' was spreading its wings away for 800 years – between the 7th and 15th centuries – providing humanity the light and the guide it was looking for, in the same time Europe was living in its Dark Ages, and it was the foundation for establishing the Renaissance of Europe starting from the 16th century.

The question rises: how did this happen?

Okay let's take the a machine back into the past. We'll adjust the machine's clock so we can go back 1435 years ago. Now we are in Arabia in 570 A.D. We'll find groups of people settled in city called "Makkah:" and other cities like "Maddenaah" (called Yathrib at this time), and "Attaa-f".

Those people are living under the tribal social system, depending

– mainly – on trading with other nations in Yemen and Syria.

In such a system, we can distinguish two main groups of people; *masters* who are the rich part of the community, who had everything (freedom, money...etc.) and are in charge of everything. The other group are the *slaves* who had nothing to do within the community except serving their masters, without any rights in anything.

Women are something totally ignored; we do find men didn't give them any rights or treat them in a right way. The majority of fathers felt so ashamed when they have daughters, for that matter they used to bury them alive, as sons were always the preferable.

About the beliefs, the majority of the community are pagans; which means they don't believe in any messengers or messages either in Judaism or Christianity; instead they are worshipping many statues which represent god for them.

Every group – or so called family – has its own statue to worship, but the whole community are worshipping the two big ones called "Hubal" and "Allaat" and "Al'uzza", who were

placed in the “Ka’bah” which was established thousands of years ago by Prophet Ibraaheem (Abraham) and his son Ismaa’eel (Ishmael). In the same time those statues are part of trading, as people sell them to the pilgrims who came to Makkah in order to make pilgrimages to Kaa’bah to worship the two big statues.

Within this atmosphere, the most significant person worldwide was born; Prophet Mu’hammad (P.B.U.H.), on the 12th of Rabi’ Alawwal 1426 A.H. according to the Hijri calendar which matches one day of August 570 A.D.

Mu’hammad was raised within this community, but in contrary with the reviling manners, he was well known with his great manners; very honest, trustable, truthful, and that’s why they called him “a’ssaadi’q alameen” (Trustworthy). By the age of 25 he married Khadeejah (may Allaah be please with her) and kept an eye on her trade because of his honesty.

Mu’hammad never believed in what his people did, simply because any native and pure nature automatically denies any kind of worshiping except for a true power. For that matter he used to go to Cave ‘Hiraa- – close to “Makkah” – to mediate for finding a way to reach for the light of the truth within the darkness of this fake community.

By the age of 40 - in 610 A.D. – Mu’hammad was visited by arch-angel Jibreel (Gabriel) who started teaching him the Holy ‘Qura~n by telling him the verse 96:1 which states:

- “Read: In the name of thy Lord who createth,” (The Holy ‘Qura~n [T.M.Q.], Chapter Al’ala’q, verse 1)

This was the spark of the light; Mu’hammad is chosen from Allaah to be sent as the last Prophet and messenger to Mankind, in order to guide them from the darkness of fear and no hope to the light of true life via Islaam;

- “He it is Who sendeth down clear revelations unto His slave, that He may bring you forth from darkness unto light; and lo! for you, Allaah is Full of Pity, Merciful.” (The Holy ‘Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Al-hadeed verse 9).

It’s impossible in this humble article to mention everything about Prophet Mu’hammad as this needs an encyclopaedia, but a quick overview can tell us how Mu’hammad succeeded in transforming those people from being barbarians and pagans to be real believers within 23 years, between the years 610-633 A.D.

It was not simple at all, as the community had stood against him at first, but finally they became believers, because Mu’hammad – simply – came to tell people that there’s an unlimited mighty power named Allaah who’d created this universe and mankind, where man is supposed to be his viceroy on Earth for a definite mission: **urbanising earth** as and this will be the validation for success in life, and to enter *aljan-nah* (Heaven) at last after the Day of Judgment.

Allaah is the mighty power, with no father or wife or son. No more need to have mediator to reach Him; when you need Him, just go and ask Him by praying and supplication, and He shall answer.

- “And when My servant question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So let them bear My call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright.” (The Holy ‘Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alba’qarah, verse 186)

Mu’hammad came to tell people that Islaam will set them free, no more masters or slaves; but rather all are equal, either man or woman, however “Ta’qwa” (pity) is the indicator if someone is better than the other. No more hate for the woman; rather she’s an integral part with man

in order to shape the community – together – for making life better for mankind, as Islaam states.

Mu’hammed came to tell people that Islaam will set there minds free; as minds are very valuable and a gift from Allaah to man in order to use it in fulfilling his mission; thus he must save it and use it to think with.

- “Lo! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allaah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs (of Allaah’s sovereignty) for people who have sense.” (The Holy ‘Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alba’qarah, verse 164)

Mu’hammad came with love and peace for all, and told that Islaam is the last message from Allaah, however this doesn’t mean you hate Jewish or Christians, no, simply because Muslims – in order to be so – are called to believe in the past messengers and books from; simply because they all came from one source: Allaah;

- “The messenger believeth in that which hath been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allaah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers We make no distinction between any of His messengers and they say: We hear, and we obey. (Grant us) Thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto Thee is the journeying.” (The Holy ‘Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alba’qarah, verse 285)

- “Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! Thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright.” (The Holy ‘Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Anna’hl, verse 125)

Mu'hammad came to tell us how does Islaam respect women; either mother, or wife or daughter or even companions at work; as Islaam is not only providing women their true freedom and full rights in everything, but also had guaranteed them, which was something totally new in this Era;

• *“O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allaah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allaah is Knower, Aware.”* (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Al'hujuraat, verse 13)

Animals, birds, plants and fish; they are all creatures like man, so *Mu'hammed* tell us how does Islaam respect them; and for that matter we'd see one of the companions and Hadith narrator was called *“Aboo Hurayrah”* (the man with the kitten) because he used to move with his own cat everywhere.

While the conquest of Makkah in 633 A.D.-8 H.D., *Mu'hammad* gave humanity the first lesson on how treating the enemies, by giving them the security, and forgive them all, without killing any person; simply because Islaam tell him to do so.

In his life; *Mu'hammad* was a humble man; he never makes people feel he's acting proud against them; simply because it's against Islaamic teaching as we are all equal in front of *Allaah*.

By tracing his acts, we can see how kind and honourable treatment for everything; his wife's (as husband), children (as father), neighbours, companions (as teacher), other believers (Jewish and Christians) and even enemies (the pagans); He was an extraordinary Mman; simply by applying what the 'Qura~n told about.

In his last pilgrimage in Makkah – which called *“Hijjat Alwadaa”* in Arabic – *Mu'hammad* did mention

the manual for good manners which Muslims must follow, especially when treating women.

When his wife *'aa-ishah* (*may Allah be pleaed with her*) was asked from the companions about his manners she told: *“His Manner was the 'Qura~n”*, which means he was applying all what Qur'an told about manners, and that what he teaches for the Companions and they applied in their life.

The Companions and followers had applied all of those manners which are considered as a full package in order to be good Muslim, and thus this was the true foundation for spreading Islaam and then establishing the great Islaamic civilisation.

Back to the Future

We are now returning back safely to year the 2005; where we will find that Muslims have reached 1.8 billion persons according to registered statistics, which means that among every six persons you'll find one Muslim.

First of all; we must be proud of our Islaam and our beloved *Prophet Mu'hammad* for all what he had done in order to make it easily for us to born and be Muslim.

But looking seriously to our situation today, I see that Muslims – worldwide – must stop for a while and ask them selves – individually and groups – the previously mentioned question in the beginning of this article.

For that matter, celebrating the birth of *Prophet Mu'hammad* must not only done by words; it's basically done via loving him, and this love came by applying the whole package of which contains:

1. Worshiping Allaah in right way
2. Applying the manners and values that Prophet *Mu'hammad* suffered a lot in order to make it easily reachable for us nowadays.
3. Doing our role in urbanising earth,

to make it a better place for mankind, exactly as the companions and the followers did in the past.

Well, all of us will die one day, but until then we must prepare ourselves for this; and the key = reviving the real Islaamic spirit via applying this whole package, as this will make *Prophet Mu'hammad* be proud of us and thus we can drink from the fountain by his hand in shaa- Allaah after Day of Judgment.

That's why we say that Islaam is always a call for life; either the current one or the second one after Day of Judgment.

Final Words

• *“His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement - all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.”* (W. Montgomery Watt, Author of the book 'Mohammad at Mecca', Oxford, 1953, p. 52.)

Allaah told us in the 'Qura~n about him:

• *“We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples.”* (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alanbiyaa- verse 107)

The Teacher of Mankind

The Mercy upon Mankind

“Assalaat wa assalaam aalik ya rasoul Allaah”

(Peace and Blessing be upon you)





AL'QURA~N

A Befitting Miracle of the Last Prophet

By Ibrahim Babelli

■ ibabelli@nashiri.net

I believe that the number of times I wrote this introductory paragraph and then deleted it cannot be matched except with the number of times I reflected on the topic of this article.

I am attempting, with my limited knowledge and lack of eloquence, to rationalise the choice of the 'Qura~n as the miracle for the last prophet of God. Put differently: Is this lasting miracle the most befitting miracle of the last prophet?

I was always fascinated by the idea that unlike miracles other prophets of God performed in times past, the miracle that became the legacy of the last prophet is always with us. Its presence; its nearness; its availability to any and all; its accessibility; its openness and frankness; its awe; it's remarkable, yet simple, style; all in all, the 'Qura~n is so unique and in a very unique way that almost everyone who took the time to read it in earnest had a different and special experience with it. My attempt at

understanding the rationale for this marriage between the last prophet and the lasting miracle took me, at times, to some uncharted territories where I had to search for answers to questions, and many a times for questions to answers.

I will discuss in this article two interesting and unique features of the 'Qura~n that makes it the befitting miracle of the last prophet. The first idea concerns the difference between the miracles that were performed by other prophets of God and between the 'Qura~n from a temporal point of view, i.e., the historicity and authenticity of the miracles will be investigated. I called this idea "The Ahistorical Miracle", and this appears in the fourth issue of I-MAG.

The second idea, which is the continuation of this article (planned for the fifth issue of I-MAG), illustrates how past miracles, with one exception of course, were absolutely not amenable to emulation by the

people to whom those miracles were sent. It will then become obvious why I describe the 'Qura~n as "The Ultimate Open-Source Code".

I sincerely hope that the ideas discussed below would serve mainly as humble invitation for further reflection and discussion.

A. The Ahistorical Miracle

Throughout history, humans received divine guidance from prophets who were sent by God. Commonly, people disbelieved the prophets at first and then, usually influenced by miracles, gradually started to accept the divine message. Miracles were the most important factor in setting apart prophets from imposters; but only when the performed miracles were categorically beyond the ability of the people to whom the prophet was sent.

Miracles may be divided into three types according to their nature and

into two types according to their purpose. The first type according to nature involves an action that is completely and absolutely outside human ability. The second involves an action that is beyond the human ability of the contemporary people of the prophet but is, in principle, feasible in the future. The third involves an action that is, in principle, within human capacity at the time of the prophet and thereafter.

Miracles are usually performed for one of two purposes, namely, first to convince the non-believers of the truthfulness of the message and second to sustain the believers both spiritually and physically.

Records of miracles performed by messengers of God differ from one source to another; differences are found in details of the same miracles as well as in accounts of various miracles mentioned in some references but are not mentioned in others. The believers know about miracles usually through their respective scriptures, but others who do not believe in the divine origin of the scriptures may not necessarily believe that miracles did in fact take place if no substantiating evidences exist to corroborate the historical account of the miracle in question. Doubt about the historical authenticity of a miracle might be compounded in the eyes of a non-believer when he or she compares scriptures of different faiths that speak of the same prophet or of the same miracle, some times, with contradicting details.

Moses, peace be upon him, and his miracles serve an excellent example in this regard. While both the Old Testament and the 'Qura~n agree that Moses, along with his brother Aaron, were prophets sent by God to Pharaoh, the differences are not negligible. Both scriptures recount the miracle which involved the

transformation of a rod into a serpent, but they differ on whose rod it was. The Old Testament (Exodus, Chapter 7) states that it belonged to Aaron, but the 'Qura~n insists repeatedly that it belonged to Moses. Another miracle attributed to Moses in the 'Qura~n, where the color of his arm whitened significantly and instantly before the Pharaoh and then went back to normal, is found nowhere in the Old Testament.

Muslims would naturally insist that the 'Qura~nic account of Moses' miracles is the correct one, whereas Christians would, also naturally, insist on the veracity of the Bible's account of these miracles. But what about someone who is neither? The truth about the miracles performed by Moses and/or Aaron could only be ascertained (from a neutral point of view and if we are to preach to someone other than the convert) by those who witnessed them.

Therefore, it is only natural that someone who is a believer of neither faith would insist on having indisputable records of the said miracles whose authenticity is beyond any shade of doubt. Those records should also contain the affirmation of many known individuals who witnessed the miracles in question and their testimonies should have no contradicting details and no ambiguity.

A Miracle of this type is an historical miracle.

All miracles that vouched for the truthfulness of the many messengers of God were historical miracles that took place at certain moments in time past, witnessed by a specific group of people and were either recorded or found their way into oblivion; all miracles but one, to be perfectly precise. We have a single and glaring exception to this uniform genre of

historical miracles, viz. the 'Qura~n.

The 'Qura~n is the only ahistorical miracle. It is with us now as it was with the believers at the time of the prophet, peace be upon him. I need neither historical records nor witnesses to ascertain the authenticity of this miracle or the fact that it happened.

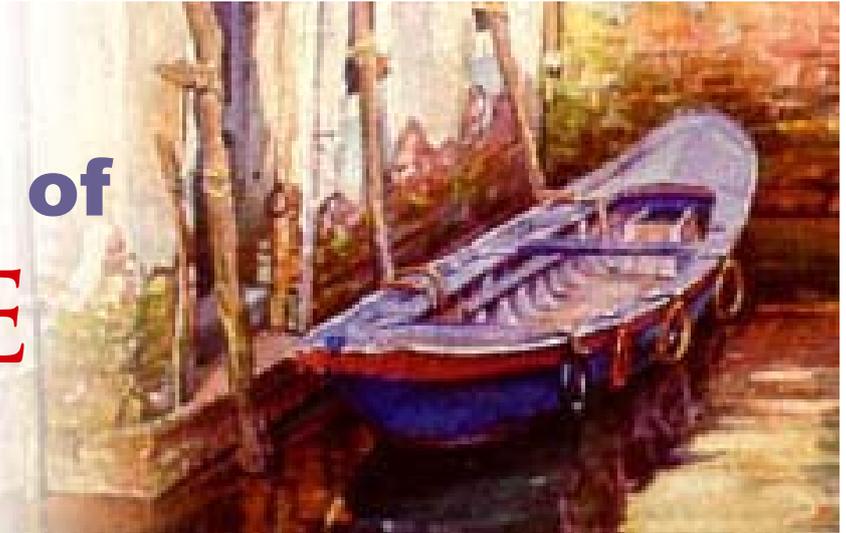
An ahistorical miracle can only be timeless, eternal.

If there is no prophet after Mo'hammad, peace be upon him, then it would be a mockery of intelligence to ask people not to stray away from the true path, unless of course there is a living proof to the veracity of his message; a proof that must be a miracle similar to the miracles that proved the veracity of the messages of past prophets. It does not make sense to ask the Red Sea to part every now and then to attest to the truthfulness of a message, and should not be alert to rod changing into serpents every time a tyrant runs amok, for he/she will find none. Reviving the dead took place to convince the children of Israel that Christ was acting, with God's permission, his miracles. Just imagine how people would react to dead people leaving their graves every time a call is made to show God's miracles in action.

The miracle that is manifested in the 'Qura~n is not only timeless and ahistorical, it is at the same time the only miracle that can be safely left with humans, without a need for further prophets, which will not severely disrupt their lives and livelihood.

And for those who choose to believe, it is guidance and light.

Wooden Foundation of VENICE



By **Ali A. Naser***
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“How is it that the Venetian piles are so strong?”
 Glory be to You, we have no knowledge except what you have taught us. Verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the

is whole, the trunk is safe, but once the bark is damaged it lets through the spores of harmful fungi through the wood. Or it is best with bacterial rot which eventually turns the wood to dust. Of course, it is bad when the bark is injured, but that does not mean that the “wounded” wood will not inevitably rot. Much depends on the species of the wood and its ability to protect itself.

When the bark of a coniferous tree is injured, it starts to secrete resin which consists of turpentine and colophony. The acid turpentine kills “enemies” while the sticky colophony puts a healing “bandage” on the wound.



Fig 1 A view from Venice-Italy

The Italian city of Venice is built on several small islands. The wet sand is as fluid as soft jelly. You build a house and it sinks in a little while. In order to reinforce the ground the Venetians had rammed hundreds of thousands of wooden piles into it so it would make a solid foundation for the majestic city.

But it is a well-known fact that wood rots in the ground. However, the city of Venice has been standing on its wooden piles since the year 810! More than one thousand and two hundreds years passed since then, and suddenly the citizens began to wonder: “What if the piles started to rot?”



Fig 2 Venice-Italy

All-Wise. (The Holy ‘Qur~an [T.M.Q.] chapter of the Cow, verse 32)

The trunks and branches of the trees are covered with bark. It is like skin on the human being. As long as the bark



Fig 3 Larch trees

The powder-post beetle causes the forests a lot of damage, but the resin saves the coniferous trees from the pests. Even if a beetle manages to drill him a hole in the tree-trunk, the resin will get him even there and immure him. That is why beetles avoid healthy trees that have plenty of resin. The smell of the turpentine acts on them the same way as a red traffic-light on people. All trees of coniferous family posses resin, but the Larch is especially rich in it. The abundance of resin makes it remarkably strong. That is why it may be preserved for centuries in wet ground and water.

What is Larch?

Larch or pine has the botanical name: *Pinus larox*. Its family is coniferae, or coniferous.

Synonyms:-*larix Europea*. *Abies larix deciduas*. *Laricis Cortex*. *Meleze*. European Larch. Venice Turpentine.

Description:

Larch grows to about 33 feet (10 meters) tall, with brownish bark, horizontal branches, and a thin crown. The leaves, deciduous needles, from fascicles of ten to twenty on short spur branches. The branches are long, very narrow. Slender, and flexible, three-angled and blue-green. Before falling in early autumn they turn yel-



Fig 4 A Larch tree

low. The twigs are long, stout, dull tan, and hairless, with many short stout spur twigs. Winter buds are small and round, about 1/2 inch (2cm) long and covered by many short, pointed, overlapping scales. Rounded, upright female cones measure 2/5 to 3/4 inch (1 to 1.5cm) long.

Constituents:

The bark contains tannic acid, larixinic acid and turpentine. The larixin, a crystalline principle, resembles pyrogallol.

Briancon Manna is exuded from the leaves in summer. It is white and sweet, occurring in oblong tears and almost odourless. Its peculiar sugar is termed Melezitose. Its use is obsolete. If the trees are burnt, a gum exudes from the trunk called Gummi Orenbergense, soluble in water like Gum Arabic.

Medicinal uses: Larch bark tea is a laxative, tonic, diuretic, alterative. It is useful in obstructions of the liver, rheumatism, jaundice, and some cutaneous diseases (Grieve). She also reports the use of the leaves as a de-

coction for piles, haemoptysis, menorrhagia, diarrhea, and dysentery. The inner bark, made into tea, is good for bleeding of any kind, hemorrhoids, excessive menstruation, and as a tonic to the liver and spleen.

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He is a short story writer; he translates, writes, and publishes novels, short stories and scientific researches from Bulgarian language and English.



Fig 4 A Larch tree

DAYLIGHT THE **Will Overcome** NIGHT



By **Lutfi Zaghul***
lutfi_zag@hotmail.com

He never went to school; neither did
he meet any teacher.

He read only one book.

Never drew, never learned poetry,
never spoke a foreign language,
He never visited a physician,

My father only used herbal
medicine,

He never held spite against people

But he loved them from soul

And he was respected by them all.

All the time, he kept good
relationships with his relatives,

He was faithful to his friends,

He never adored property neither
did he try to be an owner,

Because he believed that God is the
Big Owner,

Life, prestige, titles never deluded
him.

He was a real man his land image
occupied his mind,

And the sleeping history is still

awake in his mind,

He was a real man with compassion
and warmth,

It came out of his eyes so you felt
safe when he nigh,

He was a real man,

He adored God and loved people.

And love is his road to faithfulness.

He was a real man,
Praying to the merciful God
And he died as a real man.

The days of my father and his
dreams,

Together wake up every morning,

Both do not rest even for a while,

They fly on the wings of light then
they alight

On the conscience, they still
challenge oblivion.

My father is staring at me from

behind of the fog of silence,

My father insisted as he is a man,

And he believed in God and in the
'Qura~n.

That land for him is a belief,

He keeps whispering to me,

And sneaks through my arteries as
love

Which does not care for sadness,

As sound calling me through
silence.

"In this land you have seen the light,
grew up with time,

Say it to generations that I love

having more children,

Grow up wheat, flowers and children

in his land,

I love having more and more
children."

My father didn't leave me any
heritage,

Except of his plough,

Which challenges rocks to damage,

Tells the story to the new generation

And embraces the children's dreams.

Even night is so long, so dark, so
tough

But children do insist that there life
will be lit,

And the sun will rise and daylight will
overcome the night,

The green promise will come true it

will be wheat and flowers,

Which we all grew,

Birds will for sure come back to their
nests.

Reference:

This poem was written in the year
1993 during the Intifada and was
translated to English by Iyad Dwaikat
- British Council – Nablus.

**Lutfi Zaghul is a Palestinian poet.*

His website:

<http://www.lutfi-zaghul.com/>

eJilbab:

THE ELECTRONIC FUTURE FOR ISLAAMIC CLOTHING

Interviewed By Hayat Alyaqout

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eJilbab.com

Islamic Clothing for Her

**15%
DISCOUNT!**

I-MAG readers are entitled to a 15% discount on their shopping from Ejjilbab.com!

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eJilbab was established on August 2004 with the simple idea of conservativeness and modesty for the Muslim woman. eJilbab's mission is to fulfill Muslim women in the west with Islaamic clothes at affordable prices. Their main manufacturing products are jilbabs (jilbaabs), abayas ('abaa-ahs), dishdashs (dishdaashs) and traditional thoubbs (thawbs).

Hayat Alyaqout interviews the entrepreneurs of the project and discovers more about eJilbab and how it came into being.

1. How did the idea of eJilbab come in the first place?

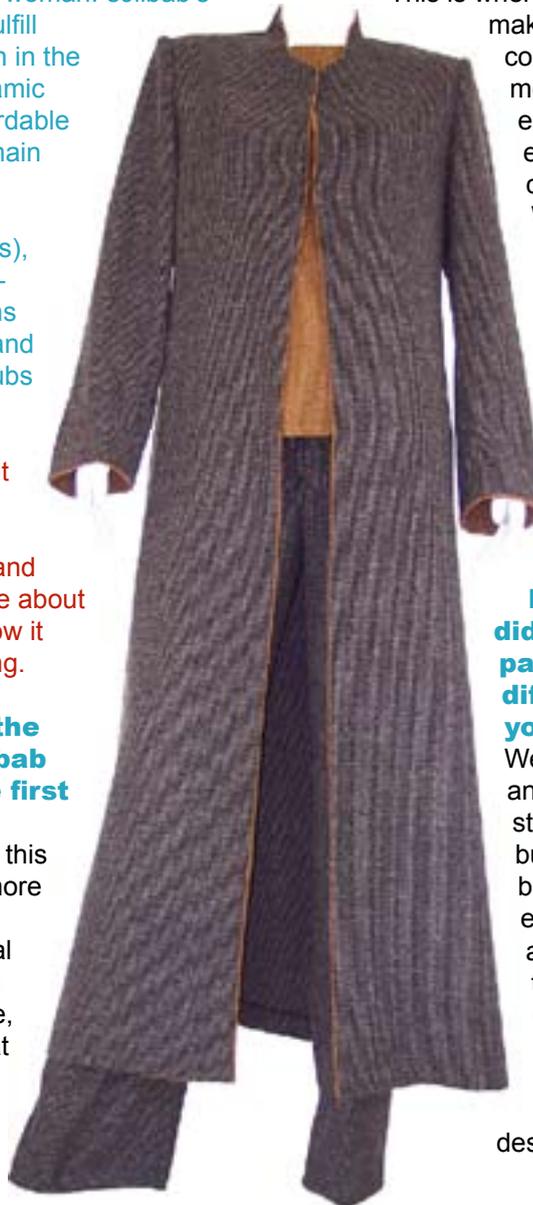
We've been in this business for more than 14 years working in local markets. From our experience, we noticed that most of our merchants make orders from

the U.S.A., Canada, the U.K. and Europe.

This is when the idea of making a convenient communication medium for a faster, easier, and cost effective service came into being. We decided to make an online store to serve Muslims in the West, since they are suffering from a lack of good Islaamic clothes.

2. How did you start the business and did you have any partners? What difficulties did you face?

We believe it is not an easy mission to start up an online business. This is because of many elements, such as the variety of tastes from the global customer, religious conflict like in Europe, geographic destination between



customer and seller, and more. It was pretty hard for eJilbab.com to compete and sell online for the global market. The main difficulties for this kind of business are the technical issues of online commerce systems, and limited market shares, since there are very limited customers who shop online, because of security and trust elements.

3. How and where are the clothes in eJilbab designed and produced?

All eJilbab products are manufactured by us in Jordan. In-house production gives us more flexibility to reach our customer's needs and tastes. Also, the apparel designs are inspired by our creative designer before proceeding to production.

4. How are clothes delivered to the customer?

Since the main factory is located in Jordan, we ship all online orders through international express delivery to any country.

5. Do you think Muslim women in the West have special needs in clothing, and how do you respond to these needs? Do you conduct any studies to check their trends and taste?

Definitely! The customer's taste can vary from country to country, and this is because of many vital elements, such as the life style, the weather conditions, quality



perception, place of residency, and more. These elements can affect the Muslim woman's taste and buying behaviour to buy wintry or summer apparel, to wear abayas ('abaa-ahs) or jilbaabs, to wear 'hijaabs or not. For example in Europe, the Muslim women look for higher quality apparel, and in U.S.A. they are looking for affordable prices. To improve our business, we are always carrying out customer surveys from time to time to measure our credibility, service promptness, and product quality. It is essential to see our progress in the e-marketing competition.

6. How many people are working on the project?

25 Muslim employees are working like one family, sharing the same Islaamic values.

7. How do you evaluate the response of your female customers to e-shopping?

Most of them they prefer the direct shopping rather than online shopping, but the online experience has good advantages for a more convenient way to communicate and buy at the same time. It is also a time saver for busy people. First time online shoppers always have safety concerns about credit card fraud, selling vital information to third parties and so on. This is why we always try

to pay serious attention to these issues by implementing the latest security technologies and policies to protect the financial and personal information of our customers. Our target audience age ranges from 18 – 45 with most of them living in the U.S.A., Canada, the U.K. and Australia.

8. Why eJilbab and not eHijab or eKhimar?

Because our main item production are Jilbaabs, and "e" stands for electronic.

9. Does eJilbab have head quarters or is it totally based online?

We have head quarters. The main factory is located in Jordan, and we have a representing office in U.S.A.

10. Did you notice any difference between Arab women in the West and Western Muslim women?

Of course! Most Arab women don't appreciate online shopping and this is because they have relatives in Arab countries so they can ask their families to buy them clothes. Most Western Muslim women are new to the Islaamic dress code, and they are learning how to differentiate between the 'abaa-ah, Jilbaab and dishdaash, since these terms are Arabic. Currently, most Muslim women are looking for practical Islaamic clothes for their work and lifestyle to merge with the society they live in.


Islamic Clothing for Her

For more information, visit
www.ejilbab.com



All One Hand

TOGETHER HAND IN HAND We Make Life!



By Hicham Maged

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Can anyone do anything for his community alone? The answer is no; as people need to work together in order to achieve something for the community.

Islaam called us to work for the community in parallel with the personal worshipping acts (like praying and fasting...etc.) as those two complementary ways are the roadmap to gain rewards from *Allaah*.

From this simple fact, All One Hand Team had been established 1 year ago in 2004 in Cairo - Egypt.

All One Hand is a group of youth – boys and girls – who had decided to work together – Hand in Hand – in order to act within the community for making it better via the charity work.

All One Hand is the English translation for their Arabic name which's "Kolana Eid Wahda"; as the basic spirit within them is the "team work".

Since the beginning of their work, "kids" who need real help was the basic scope of work; as helping those kids is a basic part of Muslim social life which our beloved prophet Mu'hammad told about.

Complementary, the logo had to reflect a specific message: "To give our hands for people who need help in the community in general and kids especially."

For that matter, the big hand represents the team member hand, while the small hand represents kids who need help, and uniting the two hands together help in fulfilling the goal; as always the adult must take care of kids and guide them to safety.

To framework their mission, All One Hand had listed the following objectives:

1. To gain reward from *Allaah* via our work within the community.
2. To make balance between charity work and team members' private

work/study.

3. To focus the scope of work mainly with kids in different places.

4. To give help for poor people who are suffering from cancer (kids and none).

5. To give help for disabled people (kids and none).

6. To give help for poor people who are living in the slum areas.

7. To support very poor people in Rama'daan and Eid by providing them bags with food.

8. To participate in different revival projects within different stages of Life Makers.

Since 2004 until now, All One Hand had participated in different activities under various categories which can be listed as follows:-



A. Helping poor people:

All One Hand used to organise regular exhibitions in order to support poor people to help them in finding good quality stuff, like clothes and shoes and home equipments. Those exhibits are usually in held the seasons like back to school or celebrating Eid.

For that matter, they had organised three successful exhibitions as follows:

- a. 1st exhibition on 30/09/2004
- b. 2nd exhibition on 01/11/2004
- c. 3rd exhibition on 01/03/2005.

B. Sustaining Orphan Kids:

All One Hand are taking care of orphan kids who already had place to live in (orphanage), and this activity includes supplying the orphanage with some stuff which they don't have and organising parties for the orphan kids in order to make them happy.

For that matter, they had organised two main parties as follows:

- a. Party for orphan kids who live in orphanage on 31/1/2005.
- b. Big party for orphan kids within the "Orphan Day" on 1/4/2005.

C. People who have Cancer:

Visiting and helping sick persons is a must as it's an important part of Muslim social life.

For that matter, they start supporting

poor people who suffer from cancer, and this happens via making regular visits to different places which deal with treating cancer - especially National Cancer Institute - and work as volunteers in various activities which are found there. In addition, they are also giving hand to buy cancer medicines there.

D. Very poor people:

Muslims are called to help poor people, and for that matter, All One Hand is trying there best to do so. They also contribute with other groups to help people in slum areas especially.

Last Rama'daan and 'eed ala'dha 1426 A.H./2004 A.D. they had done some activities which include:

- a. Distributing "Rama'daan Bag" which contains the essential food materials for all Rama'daan. They

had distributed 160 bags.

- b. Organising "If'taar Rama'daan" for some orphan kids accompanied by giving them some simple toys.

- c. Distributing meat on "Eid ul-Adha" among very poor family who can't afford to buy it.

- d. Distributing blankets among very poor families in slum area, who can't afford to buy it for the last winter.

E. In the field of revival projects:

They are currently preparing some projects within the 3rd stage.

Simply, if you feel yourself want to share in there activities don't hesitate and put your hand in their hands, to be all one hand.

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Preach & Run:

THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN TO CONVERT MUSLIMS FROM THEIR RELIGION

Part 1

By Marwah El-Azhary

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In the first series of "Preach & Run" Marwah El-Azhary discusses the issues that Muslims face in Non-Muslim countries.

We have all heard of the infamous phrase "wash and go" from shampoo commercials, provocatively promoting their merchandise to the target audience who are unable to have a conveniently longer stay in the bathroom. Now it is time to suggest a new phrase, "preach and run" for Evangelist preachers who dominate the entire conversation and then fittingly run or avoid the response of the other party who beings to politely reply with valid and valuable feedback.

In light of this perception, it is sincerely hoped that the experiences described herein can serve as an encouragement to the readers to persevere in the fruitful study of Islaam. This is in order to competently respond to questions and key issues when discovering ourselves engaged in conversations with non-Muslims. Therefore, without a doubt, it qualifies a Muslim to uphold the duty to spread the truth about our religion and clarify any misconceptions about Islaam in a humble, rational and polite manner. Indeed Allaah advised us to:

Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have

strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance. (The Holy 'Qura~n [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Anna'hl, verse 125)

The First Encounter

Admiring the picturesque park, I wasn't aware that I was being watched. As I walked from one spot to another, listening to the birds chirping eloquently, I retrieved the digital camera from my bag and took several snapshots of the beautiful scenery. It was winter; it was freezing, yet the sun willed to shine its way down on the city of London, giving us a false sense of security, a false sense of warmth and hope. Unaware that I was being watched, I continued to take pictures. What I did not realise, until later, was that I was actually taking pictures of the predator who was silently watching its prey.

As I walked out of the park, heading towards my father who was viewing the lake, I heard screams. Curious to learn what the commotion was about, I turned around and saw two figures running in our direction. I looked around and noticed my father and I were the only two people in the area. I quickly calculated the chances of these two strangers running towards us or just towards our general direction. It seemed that they were actually running towards us, as they were waving at me in particular to stop walking as they desperately continued to catch up.

Several thoughts rushed through my mind; were they thieves attempting to take advantage of a young Muslim woman? Didn't they see that I had a male figure with me, so they could not dare try anything? Or did I drop my purse somewhere and they were eager to return it to me and ask for a reward? Perhaps I had a huge sign at the back of my head with the words, "When you see this, please run towards it"? Those few seconds of contemplation seemed to dawn on me forever, and I began to prepare myself of their inevitable interaction. "Please wait!" I could hear them gasp, finally catching up. They leaned over and gasped for air. The young middle-eastern looking man held his chest and coughed hard, whereas the young woman looked desperately through her bag for something. She found a book and shoved it into my hands, asking me if I could read. I looked at her and then back at my father in disbelief.

There were two things I could tell this woman in her mid-thirties with an Australian accent. I could inform her that "The Hijab just covers my hair; it does not hinder me from being an educated individual who can read and write". Or I could smile and reply with the affirmative, that I could read. I chose neither, and decided to take it from a different approach. "Do you want me to translate this for you?" The leaflet in my hand was in Arabic, which read "The path to paradise". I looked at my father and we both knew what was to come. We were both to learn what these two eager preachers wanted from us and if they

knew they had come face to face with two humble Muslims eager to spread Islaam. They weren't to know that. After all, there is the misconception that Muslim women are uneducated, oppressed creatures who are desperately asking to be saved from the supposed evilness of Islaam. There is also the stereotypical notion that men with beards, like my father, do not speak English and do not live in the 21st century. These two preachers ran to us as though they saw a sinking boat that needed to be saved. At the end of the conversation it was evident that their thoughts changed about this stereotypical image of Muslim men and women.

The woman was a bit baffled by my reply; she was certainly not expecting it. My father and I took this as our cue to begin informing them of Islaam, as we did not want to let this opportunity pass; after all, they had literally raced towards us, two humble and eager ambassadors of Islaam. Not surprisingly, they were uneducated about the religion. The woman had not read the 'Qura~n, whereas the man claimed he did. However he had all the typical misconceptions about Islaam that he learned in Sunday school, and they were all impolitely thrown at us.

Typical Questions & Misconceptions

Muslims don't believe in Jesus and don't give him the credit he deserves by being the son of god, neither do they believe in the trinity

We politely informed them that we do believe in Jesus, a highly credited and respected Prophet in Islaam. However, we believe he is just a Prophet, and do not go to the extreme of claiming that he is the son of God. We cannot place human qualities to God; He is incomparable as said in the 'Qura~n, and is unlike any of His creations. I took out the

'Qura~n I had in my bag and informed them of the following verses:

Say: He is Allaah, the One and Only; Allaah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him. (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alikhlaa's, verses 1-4)

Their argument was that to attain Paradise, devoted Christians had to follow the way of Jesus. They repeatedly claimed that Jesus was the son of God and therefore part of the trinity.

Regarding this, I informed them that the 'Qura~n, God's final message to mankind, says:

"They do blaspheme who say: Allaah is one of three in a Trinity, for there is no god except One God" (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Almaa-dah, verse 73)

Moreover, the 'Qura~n states: They say: "((Allaah)) Most Gracious has begotten a son!" Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous! At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin, That they should invoke a son for ((Allaah)) Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the majesty of ((Al-laah)) Most Gracious that He should beget a son. Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but must come to ((Allaah)) Most Gracious as a servant. (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Maryam, verses 88-93)

I went on to quote Suzanne Haneef, in her book *What Everyone Should Know About Islaam and Muslims* (Library of Islaam, 1985), where she says "God is not like a pie or an apple which can be divided into three thirds which form one whole; if God is three persons or possesses three parts, He is assuredly not the Single, Unique, Indivisible Being which God is and which Christianity professes to believe in." (pp. 183-184)

The 'Qura~n also informs us that: In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allaah is Christ the son of Mary. Say: "Who then hath the least power against Allaah, if His will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother, and all every - one that is on the earth? For to Allaah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between. He createth what He pleaseth. For Allaah hath power over all things." (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.], Chapter of Almaa-dah, verse 17)

To this, the two preachers argued that Christianity is a monotheistic religion that believes in One God. How is this the case, we told them, the Trinity appoints God as being three separate entities- the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. If God is the Father and also the Son, He would then be the Father of Himself because He is His own Son. This is not logical. Therefore Christianity is a polytheistic religion.

Concerning Jesus, Allaah says in the 'Qura~n: Christ the son of Mary was no more than an apostle; many were the apostles that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how Allaah doth make His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth! (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] chapter of Almaa-dah, verse 75)

Another important verse regarding this issue states:

And behold! Allaah will say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allaah" He will say: "Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, Thou I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest est in full all that is hidden. (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.], Chapter of Almaa-dah, verse 116)

Why do Muslims believe Jesus was not crucified?

When they carried on to argue that Jesus was crucified to save mankind, we stated that the most Merciful God would never use such an example to save mankind, as illustrated in the 'Qura~n. He can forgive mankind without using such a grotesque ideology, and no "father" would be cruel to his "supposed" son, a seriously false claim.

In the 'Qura~n, Allaah tells mankind that Jesus was not crucified, he was saved. This is a miracle! Why couldn't they believe that? Why would they rather look at it the other way round, that he was crucified- where is the miracle in that? The miracle is that he was saved and raised to the heavens, and will return to lead the world to the truth- Islaam.

That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allaah;- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:- Nay, Allaah raised him up unto Himself; and Allaah is Exalted in Power, Wise;- And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them;- (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] chapter of Maryam, verses 157-159)

These are God's final words on this matter, yet they do not want to believe. How can one reject Allaah's final message- the 'Qura~n? Despite all the clear proofs the 'Qura~n reveals, they turn in disbelief, without even trying to open their minds and hearts to it.

In fact, I added, going back to the earlier question of why Muslims do not believe in the trinity: the doctrine of the trinity was formulated in the

fourth century after Christ, by Paul of Tarsus, the man who could rightfully be considered the true founder of Christianity. References in the Bible to a Trinity of divine beings are vague, at best. In Matthew 28:19, we find Jesus telling his disciples to go out and preach to all nations. While this "Great Commission" does make mention of the three persons who later become components of the Trinity, the phrase "...baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" is quite clearly an addition to Biblical text -that is, not the actual words of Jesus- as can be seen by two factors:

1. Baptism in the early Church, as discussed by Paul in his letters, was done only in the name of Jesus; and
2. The "Great Commission" was found in the first gospel written, that of Mark, bears no mention of Father, Son and/or Holy Ghost. (See Mark 16:15)

The only other reference in the Bible to a Trinity can be found in the Epistle of I John 5:7. Biblical scholars of today, however, have admitted that the phrase "... there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" is definitely a "later addition" to Biblical text, and it is not found in any of today's versions of the Bible.

It can, therefore, be seen that the concept of a Trinity of divine beings was not an idea put forth by Jesus or any other prophet of God. This doctrine, now subscribed to by Christians all over the world, is entirely man-made in origin.

They stared at me, apparently trying to find words to say, but instead avoided my reply and changed the topic to another erroneous misconception.

All Muslims are blindly born into the religion of Islaam and are therefore blind followers

This is a generalisation and therefore a stereotypical statement. It is an obligation for every Muslim to seek knowledge in the religion, so that we are satisfactorily convinced with the truth. There is a hadeeth which states: "It is obligatory for every Muslim man and every Muslim woman to seek knowledge." Even the 'Qura~n stresses the importance of acquiring knowledge. The first word ever said to the Prophet Mu'hammad (P.B.U.H.) was "Recite!" Having said that, I went on to modestly inform them that, (without showing off, rather proving a point), I was a successful English Literature student, graduating with honours, and excelled in comparative religion studies throughout my educational life. Therefore I had read the bible, gospels, torah, and other scriptures, and came to acknowledge with full conviction that Islaam is the truth.

Plus, statistics reveal that Islaam is the fastest growing religion in the world; people are not dropping out of it, rather they are embracing it with full "sighted" conviction! Weren't the preachers in front of me the sightless followers, I thought to myself. They were the ones who were criticising a religion they hadn't independently learned about in any depth, so who out of us was supposedly blind? Again, they avoided my reply, and "ran" onto another misconception.

Muslim women are oppressed

My educational and work background also defied the stereotypical misconception that Muslim women are oppressed in Islaam. If that was the case, I wouldn't be an educated young woman with the choice of learning specialised subjects in educational institutions and succeeding in the work field.

There is a difference between culture and religion, I pointed out. Therefore not everything a Muslim does derives from the teachings of Islaam. Even if the Muslim claims an action does derive from the teachings of Islaam, people hold the responsibility to research and discover if that is indeed an authentic source of information.

Regarding the gender issue in Islaam, in front of God women are men are equal in terms of their faith; however their roles are not necessarily identical. One of the various numerical miracles in the 'Qura~n is that the word "woman" and "man" are equally mentioned 24 times each. Surely this is a sign for those who want to reflect. In Islaam, women are allowed to inherit, something that women in the Western world could not do until recently. The Western woman was regarded as an object, a pawn that men could buy and sell, whereas women in Islaam are honoured and respected. In pre-Islaamic Arabia girls were buried alive because it was believed they were a disgrace to the entire family and community. This list is a summary and does not give justice to the full description of the mistreatments carried out towards women. However, Islaam came to abolish these mistreatments and gave the woman the status that is rightfully hers. Clearly an intellectual person should research these points before claiming that Muslim women are oppressed. They should also know the difference between culture and religion, two separate entities.

Again, they avoided my reply, and defensively attacked with another fallacy.

Mu'hammad wrote the 'Qura~n

There is no doubt that Mu'hammad was illiterate. This fact was acknowledged by the Arabian tribes well before Mu'hammad received the

mission of his prophet hood and is also recorded in authentic historical sources. This is indeed the miracle of the 'Qura~n. To convince mankind with the last message, Allaah chose someone who could neither read nor write. The first word sent to the Prophet was "recite" which he could not do. So with the will of God, the Angel Gabriel embraced the Prophet, giving him the ability to memorise the 'Qura~n with his heart and mind. Besides these facts, the 'Qura~n contains various scientific and numerical miracles that a human being could not have known more than 1400 years ago. In fact, scientists have only just begun to recently discover these facts, and various non-Muslim scientists have announced that the Prophet Mu'hammad must have received the 'Qura~n from a divine being, i.e. God.

Even the 'Qura~n informs us of those who claim that the Prophet Mu'hammad wrote the 'Qura~n: "Nay," they say, "(these are) medleys of dream! - Nay, He forged it! - Nay, He is (but) a poet! Let him then bring us a Sign like the ones that were sent to (Prophets) of old!" (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alanbiyaa-, verse 5)

The 'Qura~n repeatedly informs us that the above is a false statement, for example: We have not instructed the (Prophet) in poetry, nor is it meet for him: this is no less than a Message and a Qur'an making things clear: That it may give admonition to any (who are) alive, and that the charge may be proved against those who reject (Truth). (The Holy 'Qura~n [T.M.Q.], Chapter of Yaaseen, verses 69-70)

Or do they say, "He has forged it"? Nay, it is the Truth from thy Lord, that thou mayest admonish a people to whom no warner has come before thee: in order that they may receive guidance. (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Assajdah, verse 3)

The two preachers were surprised and the fact seemed to dawn on them that the Prophet did not write the 'Qura~n. However, they continued to "run" from the straight-forward and rational clarifications we gave them, and rushed to another misapprehension.

The Prayer in Islaam is Repetitive and Boring

The prayer in Islaam is boring and repetitive? Were you a Muslim before? I asked the young man. He shook his head. However, he believed that it was restrictive and uninteresting to pray a certain amount of prayers per day and repeat certain verses from the 'Qura~n. He also found it restrictive that we had to wash before praying and pray towards a certain direction. He claimed these rituals were meaningless.

Here, both my father and I spoke passionately about the prayer which connects millions of Muslims worldwide to the Creator of the universe: Allaah.

Regarding ablution, washing is an essential part of the prayer. We cannot meet Allaah while we are dirty and untidy; this is disrespectful. One would not enter a meeting with a president in an unclean and untidy state. One would take a shower before meeting the president, dress in their most respectable attire, wear perfume even, and make sure their hair is combed before meeting with such a person. So what should we do when we meet God, the Creator of the whole universe? Therefore, Muslims must perform ablution (wu'doo-) before the prayer, to purify themselves and attend to the prayer in a clean condition in front of His Majesty. The 'Qura~n stresses on this importance, stating: O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say, nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (Except when travelling on the road),

you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For Allaah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again. (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Annisaa-, verse 43)

With regards to the prayer, there are 114 chapters in the 'Qura~n, with thousands of verses. Everyday a Muslim chooses to recite a few verses from this generous list, so how can it ever be boring to recite the words of God. The prayer is a beautiful and spiritual flow of movements that Muslims perform five times a day. Even ballet and various dance performances have choreographical and restrictive movements. Everything in this universe has its own set of laws, including when the sun rises and when it sets, and the balance between night and day. We don't view this as restrictive. When it comes to praying to our Creator, why do we overlook its value? The importance of the prayer is repeatedly stated in the 'Qura~n, where Allaah says:

Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the Middle prayer; and stand before Allaah in a devout (frame of mind). (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alba'qarah, verse 238)

The importance of prayer goes further than a spiritual connection towards Allaah. Scientists have recently discovered that the prayer in Islaam is a rotational set of movements that coincides with the rotation of the planets around the sun, the solar system around the galaxy, and the galaxy around the whole universe. We are basically rotating alongside the natural laws that Allaah created. We are all synchronised into harmony with this rotation, congregationally co-existing and uniting to the One that is the centre of our lives: Allaah.

Even the prostration plays a significant importance in our lives, as recent scientific studies have shown. As we prostrate on the ground on our forehead, substances are released from our brain that are vital for the functioning of our bodies. By prostrating, we also permit the purest, freshest air to enter our lungs, which is why the Prophet Mu'hammad described in detail how to prostrate correctly, with our arms above the ground, (not like camels with our arms on the ground), and our backs arched slightly and not pressed on the floor. The Prophet Mu'hammad, (P.B.U.H.) stressed this by rhetorically asking the companions: (Does) one of you kneel down in his prayer as a camel kneels down (i.e. put his knees before his hands).

They continued to nod at my reply, yet not truly accepting it, nor debating with any of the information I had given them. Instead, they moved onto the next fallacy.

Mu'hammad was a warrior while Jesus spread peace and love

Did they know how many people the Prophet killed in his lifetime? I asked. Confidently they replied, "Surely he killed a lot!" They were wrong, I replied. He only killed one person in his lifetime, and it was out of self-defence. A brutal enemy was going to unmercifully kill the Prophet, and so he defended himself.

Naturally if someone was going to kill these two preachers, they would put up a fight, I told them. They agreed. So what was the problem then? We asked them. The Prophet was sent to a nation whose majority was spiteful and cruel; they were born in the desert, which naturally made their characteristics as harsh as the desert sand and climate. When they started attack-

ing the Muslims, and wanted to kill the Prophet so they could stop the message of Islaam from spreading, the Muslims had to simply defend themselves.

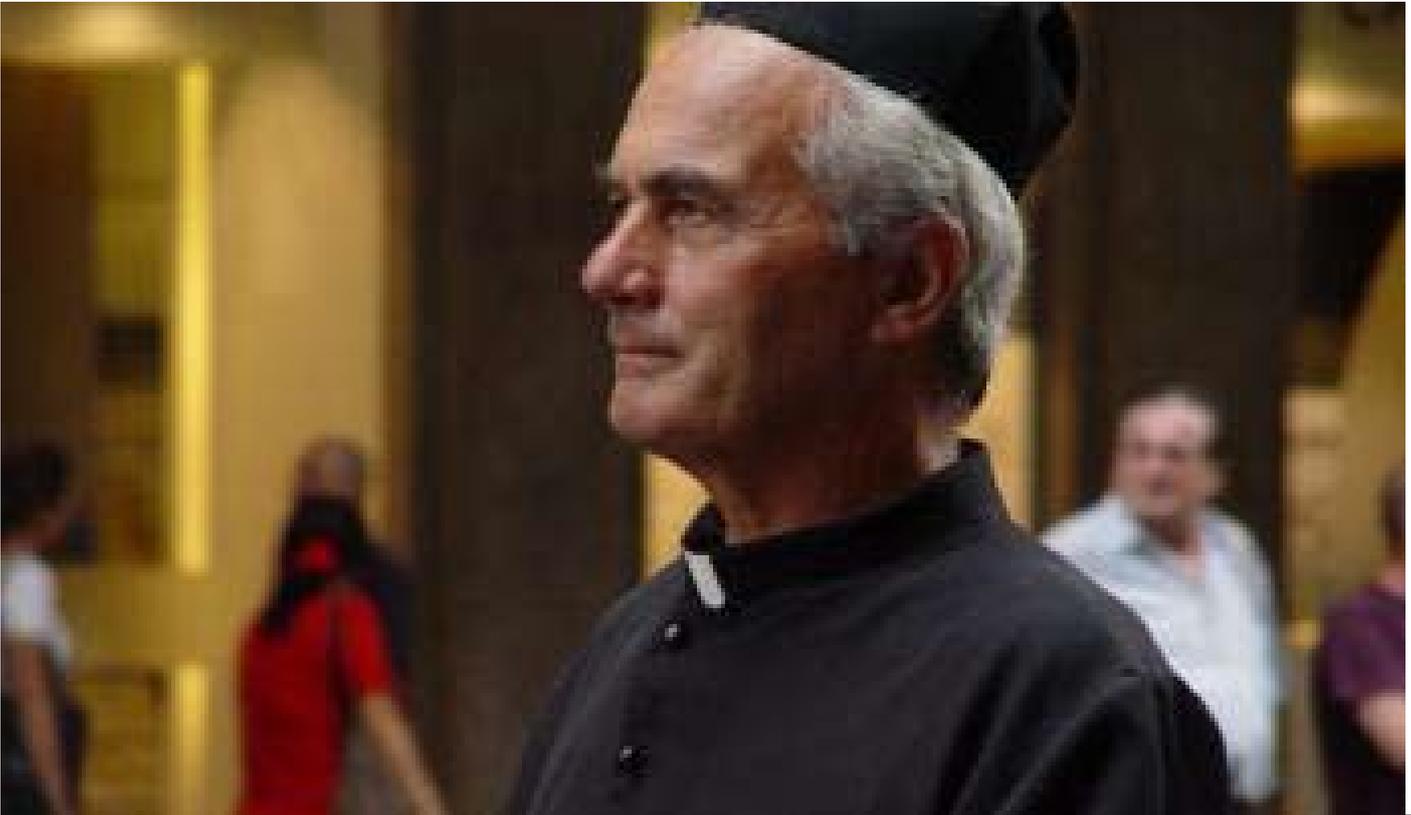
Furthermore, every Prophet was born in a different period of time, with different social, political and economical circumstances and in different environments. Jesus was sent to a nation of people who were different to the nation the Prophet Mu'hammad was sent to. They were also sent to different countries and different periods of time. Therefore, every prophet had to deal with their nation differently, according to the factors mentioned.

By the end of the discussion the two preachers were exhausted, whereas my father and I were ready for more questions. While the two preachers ran out of weak arguments, they became defensive; naturally because they were aware they didn't have anything valuable to say. Since the only reason I was there was to inform them of the true Islaam and not listen to irrational accusations they had begun to blurt out, I told them to halt and recited the following verses of the 'Qura~n:

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allaah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allaah heareth and knoweth all things. (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alba'qarah, verse 256)

Before they could interrupt, I recited to them another set of verses from the 'Qura~n:

Say: O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which ye worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your Way, and to me mine. (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.], Chapter of



Alkaafiroon, verses 1-6)

Obviously they were still adamant on their beliefs, despite our clarifications. However, we had tried, the rest was up to Allaah, for He guides whom He wills, and leads astray whom He wills.

It is He whom Allaah guides, that is on true Guidance; but he whom He leaves astray - for such wilt thou find no protector besides Him. On the Day of Judgment We shall gather them together, prone on their faces, blind, dumb, and deaf: their abode will be Hell: every time it shows abatement, We shall increase from them the fierceness of the Fire. (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Alisraa-, verse 97)

Contemplations

As previously mentioned, they were exhausted, and were eager to leave. They asked for my e-mail address, wishing to send me more information on their beliefs. However, the lady was literally terrified when I asked if I could have hers in return, so that I could send her more information on Islaam. She made up the excuse that she didn't have an e-mail address, to which both my father and I

smiled. Were they that afraid of the truth? Glory be to Allaah, the Lord of the worlds and what is within them.

Months have passed, and this event was forgotten until recently. I have not received an e-mail from them since then, which I expected would happen. I'm sure they did not want to hear more from my father and I. We had made perfect sense to them, it was written on their faces, it was visible in their eyes, yet they could not admit it.

When I returned home and uploaded the photographs I had taken of the park on my computer, I realised something. I had unknowingly taken quite a few photographs of these two preachers talking to other visible Muslims in the park.

It is quite strange how Allaah plans things for us. Perhaps my father and I were meant to be there to patiently and politely shine a tiny bit of the knowledge we had in their direction.

It was later that night while reading the 'Qura~n that I came across a verse that sent shivers down my spine.

If then they **run** away, We have not sent thee as a guard over them. Thy duty is but to convey (the Message)... (The Holy 'Qura~n, [T.M.Q.] Chapter of Ash-shoora, verse 48)

As I sat there, staring at the beautiful words of Allaah, everything came into place. It was indeed a sign from Allaah, to persevere in the study of Islaam and to continue to spread it, and not to be disheartened if all they do is *preach and run*.

Marwah El-Azhary will continue with Part 2 of this series in future Issues of I-MAG.

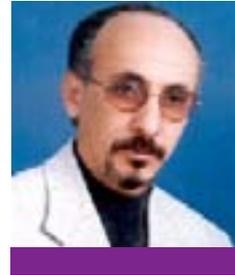
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Balance and Imbalance

IN THE EQUATION ON “DIFFERENTIATION – CONTINUITY” BETWEEN CIVILISATIONS (Part 4 of 4)

“Following Scientific revolutions, and through an unexpected transfer, scientists are now facing a different science’. This is the conclusion reached by Thomas S. Khun in his theory on the structure of scientific revolution. In the case of technological revolutions however, the whole world is exposed to a gradual change, and the rate of change depends on the nature of the technologies of impact and their interaction with the elements of the social environment.”



By Hussein Maaloum*

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Civilisation and Technology and the Struggle of Informatics

The relationship between science and technology, or between commodities and the know-how underlying their existence, does not require many explanations. This is since there is no need for us to reaffirm that science and technology, which are the two component elements of civilisation, are made up of “human” knowledge and skills pertaining to the whole human race and, therefore, not necessarily related to the national identity. In other words, the absence of these two components, leading to the necessity to import does not in principle belittle the national entity when it comes to sovereignty and/or identity. It is when they are turned into a means by the members of one civilisation in order to impose its values on others, with the goal of expanding and enforcing hegemony, that the matter becomes totally different.

What happens, in this case, is a civilisational kind of “invasion” or “the attempt one society to impose its values on another society”, by the civilisation that possesses know-how and technology over the civilisation that lacks them or that possesses them to a lesser degree. This is what is really taking place in the world today, for civilisational hegemony by the power that has the means to impose its own civilisation, and such means are multiple, has become necessary from a strategic point of view to reinforce economic and

political hegemony.

This last assertion, in the light of the current informatics’ leap, signifies that this leap, leads to a concentrated civilisational “theft” and, perhaps, to end (or at least to lessen) civilisational differences, by creating one model with broad generalised mechanisms of its own. This holds especially, if we note that “technology” was, throughout history, the essential engine and product of “cultural” change. On the other hand, we know that most important drive behind new technologies is the strategic creation of a new world market, with the main western economic axes as a pivot. As to the influence of culture and technology, it clearly appears that the technology of information has turned culture into a self-contained industry with its own services, products and attainments, and it seems right to say that culture impacts on almost all the elements of the technological system, and on the interrelations of these elements, although they do not comprise the management of cultural sources only, but which is most important, the edifice of knowledge in society, and the bases and principles underlying this knowledge, as well as its moral sources.

There are many examples of the impact of technology on culture, and we can refer to three such examples in this paper.

Firstly, the impact of the Gutenberg printing press in the middle of the 15th century. This technology

has accelerated the eradication of illiteracy and the monopoly of knowledge, which is one of the main reasons behind the breakdown of the reactionary order. This is in which all the power was in the hands of the nobles and the clergy on the one hand, while a fast development of urban centres and the expansion of trade were taking place on the other. These are the social changes that lead to the industrialisation of Europe and to the democratic transformation of its political institution. At this point, we must underline the influence of printing on Western thought, which led to the age of reason, and the development of scientific, educational and cultural institutions. Printing did not merely help to spread knowledge, it also helped to develop the capacity to think rationally as a result of a cold interaction with texts, far from any speaker’s personal impact and the emotional reactions that are usually provoked by oral linguistic communication.

Secondly, there is industrial technology and the emergence of capitalism which impacted on Christian European thought. The brilliant achievement of science have led, among other things, to the birth of a philosophical thought based on the veneration of science, reason and the belief in man’s capacity to control nature entirely; a kind of thought that is not merely sceptical concerning the existence of God, but that sometimes goes as far as formulating the precepts of a humanistic religion without rites,

churches or clergy.

It is worth mentioning here, in the light of the history of American society at the end of the 19th century, that there was an adverse reaction to what the relation between technology and religion had previously generated in Europe, when the passage from an agricultural to an industrial society led to what may be called "religious fundamentalism", since many sub-cults branched out of the main religions, which led to a multiplication of and religious communities.

Thirdly, is the impact of science and technology, not only on intellectual and literary production, but on creation itself, where literature, drama and art are closely linked to science and technology. The relation between Newton's discoveries of the colours of the spectrum was closely related to naturalism, and this was clearly expressed in art by pointillism, a school created by the French artist Georges Pierre Seurat, who painted little dots with the colours of the spectrum. Neither can we forget the relation between analytical science and analytical (abstract) art by Picasso and Braque.

These three examples reaffirm the influence of technology over culture, although this does not mean at all that it is a one sided influence. This is since technology and culture are two parties in a mutually dynamic relation, but culture in its turn has an influence over technology and architecture is one example of this fact.

For this, art is one of the points where culture and technology coincide, as it is a mixture of figurative art, sculpture, construction engineering and mechanics and material technology added to the influence of the sovereign's power. This is as in the case of the deified pharaohs and of ancient mythology on the architecture of Ancient Egypt, and in that of the Islamic attitude towards the figurative arts with the resulting effect that it had on Islamic architecture, which is further evidence of the impact of culture on architecture.

All this goes to show the mutual relation between culture and technology, or the mutual impact

of technology and culture on each other, although it brings to one's mind the saying that every society has the technology that it deserves, a saying that clarifies the strong connection between the degree of sophistication of a society and the high level of the technology that it provides for others.

In addition, all this shows that the differences in quality that we are currently witnessing between the different societies is due to the enormous growth of the amount of information, and the availability of the scientific capacity, to interact with this enormous amount of data, as well as the vital role played by information all social activities which resulted in turning information into the basic source of political, military, economic and cultural power.

We cannot foretell what will be induced by this complicated phenomenon, but what we can indeed forecast within the frame of the more realistic expectations, is competition – if not a struggle – between the "main economic" axes.

The current international scene reaffirms this idea as follows:

The United States of America exercises pressure with all its scientific, technological economic, political also, military weight, to preserve its own superiority, despite the fierce campaign launched by the Japanese to win the race in these fields, while the Western European states are striving to keep their place in the arena, and the states of the Pacific and some other in south east Asia are seeking to strike a balance between these two parties in the technological struggle, by using the relative advantages provided, by their cheap labour and the successful introduction of some aspects of "advanced technology" in their societies.

Meanwhile, the "developing" countries are split into two groups: one group which tries to seize all the opportunities available a very small frame of manoeuvre. On the other hand, the remaining majority (the second group), which is in a state of deep lethargy, leaving their destiny at the mercy of the mechanisms of social selectiveness (the survival of the most scientific).

Societies are being sifted and rearranged into new "classes", new

blocs and new balances of power so that the weaker, more defeated societies are falling haphazardly through the holes of sieve.

The most important question that we shall briefly refer to, in this context, is the manner in which informatics, the machinery of social change, can be transformed into a play on word in which social interaction become the interaction of speech at the service of the strongest party (such as, for example, the Multilateral Agreements of the "GATT"). This leads us to say that we must renounce all the slogans based on the false assumption that science and technology are neutral, such as the famous slogan: "Technology instead of ideology". Informatics has become the main instrument of the policies aimed at dominating information and influencing education, and we do not think that anyone could deny its impact on the system of values and on the outlook of individuals, given the sharp changes that it has induced in people's standards and modes behaviour.

There is definitely no need to comment on "optimism" or "pessimism" vis-à-vis informatics, and its future expected results, and the realistic expectations that there will be a "between axes in their struggle for informatics".

One important point, however, is that the "developing" (third world) countries, or the countries of the "South", are facing a difficult civilisational predicament, for this very strong "wave" has hit them. They are going through states of extreme fragmentation and isolation, and their national entities are threatened with disintegration, under the impact of heavy external pressures and of ruthless internal constraints.

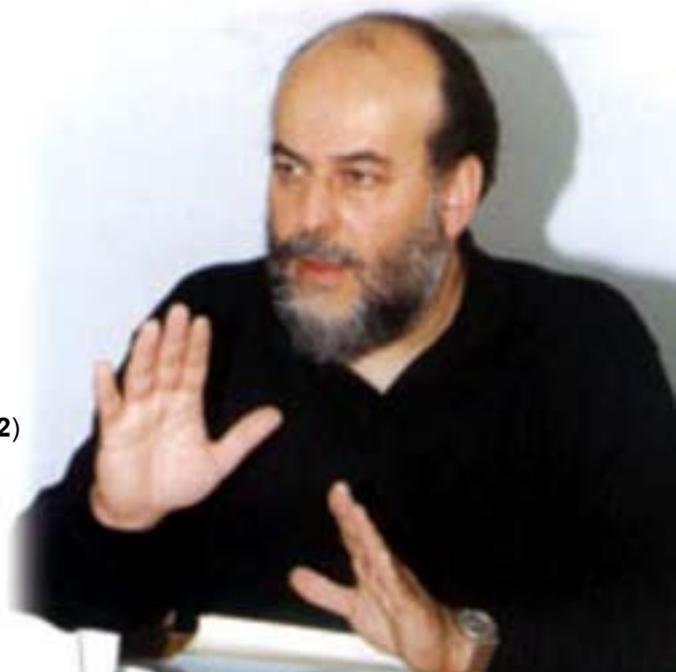
No wonder, therefore, that we should question the possibility of feeling any "optimism", since we know that "pessimism" is, in fact, to expect the worst, and to be unable to impede it, deter it or avoid it.

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First Signs of Numerical Miracles

IN THE HOLY 'QURA~N

(Part 2)



By Bassam Jarrar*

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Now, let us return to the words: "And that those in whose hearts is a disease and the unbelievers may say 'What doth Allaah intend by this mathal?'..." The number 19 is mentioned in connection with the threat of Sa'qar (Hell-Fire), and that it is guarded by nineteen must seem ambiguous. If the fire were described as a burner we could understand that, though different in quality, the fire of the after-life is somewhat similar to fire in this one. If the fire were described as "painful", we would similarly have some point of comparison because we have experienced pain and we know it. But what of the threat of "nineteen"? It is a threat we cannot relate to because the threat from twenty is greater than nineteen. And what is the difference between the threat of 17 and 19?

On this subject Azzamakhshary says in his book, *Kash-shaaf "Pathfinder"*: "The believers see it as wisdom and abide by it due to their belief that acts of Allaah are all good and wise, thus increasing their faith, and the Unbelievers deny it and doubt it, thus increasing their unbelief and aberration." Ka'bi says:

"Fitnah means a trial or test so that believers attribute the secret of specifying a number to the Creator's omniscience." While we accept and agree with Azzamakhshary and Ka'bi, our opinion is that those who believe in the notion of religion, the unseen and heavenly revelation are called on to search for the secret behind this number and for the reason behind there being nineteen guardians. It appears that the matter relates to a natural law. We are expected to exercise our minds, whilst being aware of the limitations of the human intellect. The 'Qura~n has expanded the horizon of the Believer and has rectified his reasoning methodology and stimulated him to meditate and contemplate. There is no reason to believe that the issue in question is one that the human mind cannot ponder.

Mu'hammad A't-'taahir Ibn 'Ashoor says in "*Atta'hreen wa Attanweer*" (Liberation and Enlightenment): "Allaah has made the number of Hell-Fire guardians for other reasons which necessitated that specification which Allaah alone knows." Certainly the answer rests with Allaah, but with Allaah alone?

Ibn 'Ashoor also says: "That number (is) intended for other benefits, for people other than Unbelievers, those who commit knowledge to Allaah's omniscience and to fruitful contemplation." Note the phrase "to fruitful contemplation." Thus, a Believer's faith that the Holy 'Qura~n is the Word of Allaah, the All-Knowing and the Just, makes him take a positive attitude and exercise his mind. He or she will contemplate 'Qura~nic verses and the marvels of the created universe, because the Believer knows that Allaah has revealed and that Allaah has created. It is thus unwise to immediately consign knowledge to Allaah alone and give up hope of intellectually penetrating the mystery of the 'Qura~n's treasures. Our efforts to do this in no way contradict the admission of the inadequacy of the human mind to grasp the whole truth. If anything, the increase in human knowledge is visible evidence of the human mind's fundamental limitations when compared to the knowledge of Allaah. After all, isn't meditation one of the obligations of being a Muslim?

Those who have a religious

approach are led by this to reach for and thence grasp wisdom. However, those who have an atheist approach move in a vicious circle, never reaching true understanding, because their premises do not lead them to results but merely make them question the idea behind the number 19, saying, Why not 20, or even 1000, and so on, without result.

“Thus doth Allaah leave to stray whom He pleaseth, and guide whom He pleaseth.” (The Holy ‘Qura~n [T.M.Q.], chapter of ‘Almuddathir’, verse 31) This comment suggests that fitnah is intended to sort people. Consider His saying:

“Do men think that they will be left alone on saying ‘We believe’ and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and Allaah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.” (The Holy ‘Qura~n [T.M.Q.], chapter of Al’ankaboot, verses 23-) The question remains: How will the number 19 be a trial out of which will emerge certitude?

“And none can know the forces of thy Lord except He.” Azzamakshary says. “It is not hard for Him to increase the mentioned number of guardians, but in this particular number lies a wisdom that we don’t know, but He – exalted be He – knows it.”

“And this is no other than a warning to mankind.” Aboo Bakr Aljazaa-ry in his work Nahr Alkhayr ‘ala Aysar Attafaseer (The River of Goodness to the Easiest Interpretations) says: “It is possible that the pronoun this in the above verse refers to the number of angels (nineteen) and it is possible that it refers to ‘Qura~nic verses or to Sa’qar (hell-fire) or to the forces of Your Lord. This is part of the ‘Qura~nic miracle – one single word means more than tens of

words.”

Nasafy also says, “These verses are no other than a warning to mankind” while Arraazy remarks: “These verses containing these ambiguities ... are a warning to all Believers and those who practice, though the beneficiaries are only the people of faith.”

Tantaawy Jawhaary says in his book Aljawaahir (Gems): “This chapter containing sa’qar and the number of guardians of hell-fire is nothing but an admonishment to them.” Ibn ‘Ashoor says the pronoun this in the aforementioned verse refers to the number of the angels or guardians of hell-fire. However, Al’qaasamy says: “This (i.e. their stated number) is no other than a warning to mankind, or a lesson...It is also said that the pronoun refers to ‘sa’qar and it is said that it refers to verses. To me the first opinion is more plausible...”

In my opinion, if the pronoun refers to sa’qar, the understood meaning is that hell-fire is a warning to mankind. If the pronoun refers to verses it is also understood. However, if the pronoun refers to the number 19, which accords with the surface structure of the sentence and which has been emphasised by Al’qaasimy, then we have to ask: How can number 19 be a warning to mankind?

After this quick survey of the meaning of these holy verses we reach the following conclusions:

1. The Holy ‘Qura~n has not made any number a theme discussed in detail except the number 19.

2. God Almighty has made number 19 a trial for the unbelievers, and this trial has four results:

(i) – The achievement of certitude for the People of the Book that Mu’hammad (P.B.U.H.) is an

apostle from Allaah.

(ii) – An increase in faith for the Believers.

(iii) – There will not be the least doubt for the People of the Book or for believers, which means that the evidence that will achieve certainty is incontrovertible.

(iv) – The meaning of the number 19 will remain a mystery for the unbelievers and hypocrites. They will thus not achieve their aim because of a flaw in the whole approach of their investigation and deduction, and the corruption of their hearts. Consequently they will not achieve the knowledge that would lead to learning from their errors.

3. Those who read the verses will sense that they are in the presence of a serious issue – “This is but one of the mighty portents.” (The Holy ‘Qura~n [T.M.Q.], verses 35)

Suspicion of numbers & the significance of number 19

In the 19th Century there appeared in Iran a sect called the Babists. The first to follow the leader, Albaab (the door), were a group of eighteen, making the total number 19. After the killing of Albaab, Babism became what was called Bahaimism. One of its tenets was the sanctification of the number 19 and in fact they divided the year into 19 months, made a month 19 days and devoted the remaining days of the year to acts of charity, as they perceive them. As Bahaimism was considered a sect that was outside Islaam, we find that many Muslim scholars have taken a hesitant and suspicious attitude towards the issue of number 19. In my view there are no reasonable grounds for this attitude. We will find that there is a logic to the matter that is related to the configuration of letters and words, and our stand should not be a reaction to the illusions of certain people, especially when the Holy

'Qura~n has set this number as a trial for the Unbelievers.

However, in the late 1970's when Rashaad Khaleefah, an Egyptian living in the United States, published research on the number 19 in the 'Qura~n. Initially people received the research favourably, not knowing that it was contrived, and that the researcher was a Bahai with a hidden agenda. Following this, it did not take long before Khaleefah proceeded to claim Prophethood based on the number 19, his claim coinciding with our discovery that he had faked his research. The reader will find details about the issue in our book, "The Miracle of the Number 19 in the Holy Qur'an – Premises Awaiting Outcomes."

The contrived research of Rashaad Khaleefah and his claim to prophethood has left a negative impact on the whole issue of numerical miracles, as if those who were impressed by the research realised later that they had been fooled and reacted accordingly. However, we must remember that the question has nothing to do with either Bahatism or with Rashaad Khaleefah. The 'Qura~n clearly states the specificity of this number and that it is a trial for the unbeliever, and a matter of certainty for the People of the Book who look for truth, and a cause for the increase in the faith of believers. It is remarkable that the case of this number 19 has not been considered at any age before as it is now. It could thus be seen to be one of the prophecies of the Holy 'Qura~n that is now becoming apparent. It now seems that our understanding of this mysterious number will develop in a positive direction that will contribute to the achievement of certainty and the increase in faith, as predicted, in an age when people have raised doubts and

demanded more evidence and more proof.

There is no need for a negative attitude towards the issue of numerical miracles, though verification is a necessity. At the moment we can verify any fact – this is what we have done in our research – and it is possible to judge the significance of any proposition. A negative attitude may close off a major aspect of the 'Qura~n miracle, which may have a positive impact on the level of faith and on the level of 'Qura~n-related studies and on the level of refuting doubts raised about the 'Qura~n, its purity and inimitability. As to Bahatism, its nullity is obvious, its perversity is clear and the number 19 will not help them in promoting their ideology. In fact, the number 19 will be their weakest point, because this number actually testifies to the truth of the Islaamic message which they stand against, thus becoming their fitnah (trial). We are living in a time of the resurgence of certitude that is paradoxically coming from the centre of fitnah. This resurgence, insh'Allaah, includes the signs of this miracle that we have researched in this book, signs that testify to the purity of the Holy 'Qura~n from distortion and alteration, consolidating certainty and increasing faith. What we can see of this question gives promise of universal blessing.

If the number 19 is a warning to humanity as stated in the Holy 'Qura~n, this means that people will reach certitude through this number, a number that is a warning, an admonition and a proof. It makes more sense to say that this will be achieved by a numerical miracle based on number 19, considering that certainty is not arrived at without decisive evidence, and a miracle

is without doubt such decisive evidence. What gives weight to, and confirms, this is what we find in the numerical configuration of the chapter of Almuddathir (chapter 74) which can be summarised as follows:

1. The verses of the chapter of Almuddathir are very short except for one verse that is notably long. This is verse no. 31, which delineates the wisdom of singling out the number 19.
2. This verse consists of 57 words, i.e. 19×3 .
3. This verse falls into two sections. The first section comprises 38 words, i.e. 19×2 . This is the part that discusses the wisdom of specifying number 19. It ends with: "What doth Allaah intend by this mathal?" The second part consists of 19 words, serving as a comment on what was mentioned in the first part: "Thus doth Allaah lead astray whom He pleaseth and guide whom He pleaseth. And no one knows Allaah's forces except Him. This is nothing but a warning to people."
4. The word count of the first 19 verses of the chapter of Almuddathir is 57, i.e. 19×3 , and thus it becomes clear that the word count of verse 31 of the chapter of Almuddathir equals the word count of the first 19 verses.
5. Verses 130- - i.e. to the end of "Above it are nineteen" (aleyha tisaata ashar) - have 95 words, i.e. 19×5 .
6. Verse 30 consists of 3 words, عليها تسعة عشر. Therefore it becomes clear that verse 31 (which discusses the wisdom of earmarking number 19) equals 19 times the number of words in verse 30.
7. The letter count from the beginning of the chapter of Almuddathir up to the end of the word عليها 'alayha (i.e. before تسعة عشر - Nineteen) is 361 letters, i.e. 19×19 . Reflect on this!

8. The phrase تسعة عشر (tisaata ashar - nineteen) consists of 7 letters. In the light of the previous piece of information, it becomes clear that the median letter of this clause is the 365th letter from the beginning of the chapter. This is the number of days of the year. Is this related to Astronomy? We will return to this later.

9. "By the moon and by the night as it retreats and by the dawn as it shineth forth. This is but one of the mighty portents. A warning to mankind." (The Holy 'Qura~n [T.M.Q.], chapter of Almuddathir, verses 32-36) Why swearing by the moon, the night and the dawn, or rather by the moon, the earth and the sun? Is this related to the number 19? In fact, yes, because there is more than one relation between the sun, the earth and the moon based on number 19, which will be discussed in a later chapter.

10. Verse 31 contains 57 words, i.e. 19×3 . It is the last verse in the order of the Mus'haf that contains 19 words or a multiple of that number.

11. In the above-mentioned Verse 31 there is a parenthetical clause –

– "و ما يعلم جنود ربك إلا هو - And none can know the forces of thy Lord save He" – consisting of 19 letters. Is it not possible that this, nineteen, is the numerical miracle of "the forces" stated in the verse? Why not, if the goal when mobilising the troops is the victory of the idea?

12. The verse about debtors and creditors (The Holy 'Qura~n, chapter of Alba'qarah, verse 282), the longest in the Holy 'Qura~n, consists of 128 words, 6 times the average number of words in chapter 2's verses. This is one of the highest ratios in the 'Qura~n apart from two: Verse 20 of chapter 20 (Almuzzamil),

the one preceding the chapter of Almuddathir, whose word count is 78 words or 7.8 times the average word count for the chapter of Almuzzamil, and verse 31 of the chapter of Almuddathir, the one under discussion. With 12.5 times the average of the word count for each verse in the chapter of Almuddathir, this is by far the highest ratio in the Holy 'Qura~n.

So, what does it mean that the word count for the first 19 verses of the chapter of Almuddathir is 19×3 and the word count for the first 30 verses is 19×5 ? And what does it mean that the letter count from the beginning of the chapter of Almuddathir until the word عليها (Alayha) is 19×19 , and that this is followed immediately by the number 19? What does it mean that verse 31 - which points out the wisdom of specifying the number 19 and is relatively the longest verse in the whole 'Qura~n - consists of 19×3 words and is divided into 19×219 ? What does it mean that the number of words comprising it equals the number of words comprising the first 19 verses, and that this number is 19 times the number of words in "Alayha Tis'atata 'Ashar"? And why is it the last verse in the Mus'haf consisting of the number 19 and its multiples? What does it mean that the number 19 is talked about in the first revelation of Apostleship? What does it mean that this number is the only number in the Holy 'Qura~n that is discussed in detail? And what does it mean that Allaah swears by the moon, the earth and the sun, and then we find several astronomical links between these three based on the number 19? It seems that, indeed, "This is but one of the mighty portents."

Do not these observations make interpretation of this verse clearer,

deeper in import and greater in challenge? Let us imagine ourselves when the true nature of this number has become manifest and recurrent. Our book, "The Miracle of the Number 19 in the Holy Qur'an – Premises Awaiting Outcomes", is nothing but an introduction to this grand series which predominates so that everyone will realise the trivia of the Bahais and that the ambivalence of the good-hearted avails nothing against the truth.

Or

Do not these observations make interpretation of this verse clearer, deeper in import and greater in challenge? We have explored the meaning of the number 19 fully in our book, "The Miracle of the Number 19 in the Holy Qur'an – Premises Awaiting Outcomes" and will return to it later in this one. But for now we will leave (you with) these questions and move on to study the overall mathematical structure of the 'Qura~n.

In the Next issue:

Continuation of Noon Studies' Chapter 1 on Numerical Miracles in the Holy 'Qura-an

Book Information:

First Signs of Numerical Miracles In the Holy Qur'an.

Author: Bassam Jarrar.

Reviewed by: Tariq Hamideh and Basim Albassumi.

Publisher: Noon Center for 'Qura-anic Studies & Researches.

Website: www.islamnoon.com

**Bassam Jarrar is the Director of Noon Centre for 'Qura~nic Studies and Researches.*

C.A.I.R.

Council on American-Islamic Relations

By Marwah El-Azhary

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The Council on American-Islamic Relations (C.A.I.R.) is a non-profit 501(c) (4), grassroots civil rights and advocacy group. C.A.I.R. is America's largest Islaamic civil liberties group, with regional offices nationwide and in Canada. The national headquarters is located on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C.

Since its establishment in 1994, C.A.I.R. has worked to promote a positive image of Islaam and Muslims in America. Through media relations, lobbying, education and advocacy, C.A.I.R. puts forth an Islaamic perspective to ensure the Muslim voice is represented. In offering this perspective, C.A.I.R. seeks to empower the American Muslim community and encourage their participation in political and social activism.

C.A.I.R.'s Slogan

The council on American-Islamic relations, C.A.I.R., promotes a simple slogan, "To enhance understanding of Islaam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, and empower American Muslims..."



C.A.I.R.'s Founder

Omar Ahmad is the founder of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, better known by the acronym C.A.I.R., a Washington D.C.-based grassroots civil rights and advocacy group which seeks to empower the North American Muslim community through political and social activism. As the Chairman of the Board of Directors since founding in 1994, Mr. Ahmad has successfully led C.A.I.R. to becoming the largest Muslim civil rights organisation with 29 regional offices and chapters.

Mr. Ahmad is a well-known activist and a community leader in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is frequently interviewed by national news media such as the New York Times, Washington Post and the LA Times. Mr. Ahmad is also the founder, President and C.E.O. of a software technology company in the Silicon Valley. He holds B.S. and M.S. in computer engineering.



American Muslims

C.A.I.R.'s Mission and Principles

C.A.I.R.'s vision is to be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding.

standing.

Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islaam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

C.A.I.R.'s principles are as follows:

1. C.A.I.R. supports free enterprise, freedom of religion and freedom of expression.
2. C.A.I.R. is committed to protecting the civil rights of all Americans, regardless of faith.
3. C.A.I.R. supports domestic policies that promote civil rights, diversity and freedom of religion.
4. C.A.I.R. opposes domestic policies that limit civil rights, permit racial, ethnic or religious profiling, infringe on due process, or that prevent Muslims and others from participating fully in American civic life.
5. C.A.I.R. is a natural ally of groups, religious or secular, that advocate justice and human rights in America and around the world.
6. C.A.I.R. supports foreign policies that help create free and equitable trade, encourage human rights and promote representative government.

based on socio-economic justice.

7. C.A.I.R. believes the active practice of Islaam strengthens the social and religious fabric of our nation.

8. C.A.I.R. condemns all acts of violence against civilians by any individual, group or state.

9. C.A.I.R. advocates dialogue between faith communities both in America and worldwide.

10. C.A.I.R. supports equal and complementary rights and responsibilities for men and women.

C.A.I.R.'s Chapters

C.A.I.R. has offices in 30 states across North America. These chapters are dynamic arms of C.A.I.R. which actively promote a positive image of Islaam and Muslims in America. They assist in presenting an Islaamic perspective on issues of importance to the American public. The chapters also empower the American Muslim

community within their region through political and social activism, training, media relations and internship programs. Moreover, the chapters assist the Muslim community in protecting their civil rights and assist them in discrimination cases.

C.A.I.R.'s Publications

C.A.I.R. has numerous publications, with the aim to inform participants with important issues, such as "Media Relations", "A law enforcement official's



American Muslims

guide to the Muslim community", and "Unpatriotic acts- The status of Muslim civil rights in the United States 2004".

C.A.I.R. has also produced free publications which are available on their website, such as, "Muslim Community Safety Kit", "Know your rights pocket guide", and "Learn about C.A.I.R. brochure".

C.A.I.R.'s Projects

Currently C.A.I.R. is organising an open library project, which aims to provide local libraries across the U.S. with balanced and accurate Islamic resources. They aim to do this by attracting people to sponsor a library. The details are that for only 150 U.S. Dollars (package value over 300 U.S. Dollars) C.A.I.R. will send enlightening materials to a library of the person's choice that is interested in receiving them. C.A.I.R. has embarked upon an ambitious campaign to put quality materials about Islaam in all 17,000 public libraries in the United States. If every person or community agrees to sponsor up to 10 libraries, they will easily meet their goal. A person can help educate their fellow Americans

about Islaam as a religion of peace and justice that has a rich civilisation and culture.

There are other various projects that aim to inform the American society about Islaam, including, "Not in the Name of Islaam" petition, calling for all Muslims to sign the petition to end the misconceptions of Islaam, which can be found here: <http://www.cair-net.org/default.asp?page=notislampetition> More projects initiated by C.A.I.R. can be found on C.A.I.R.'s website.

How Does C.A.I.R. Accomplish its Mission?

Civil Rights Work

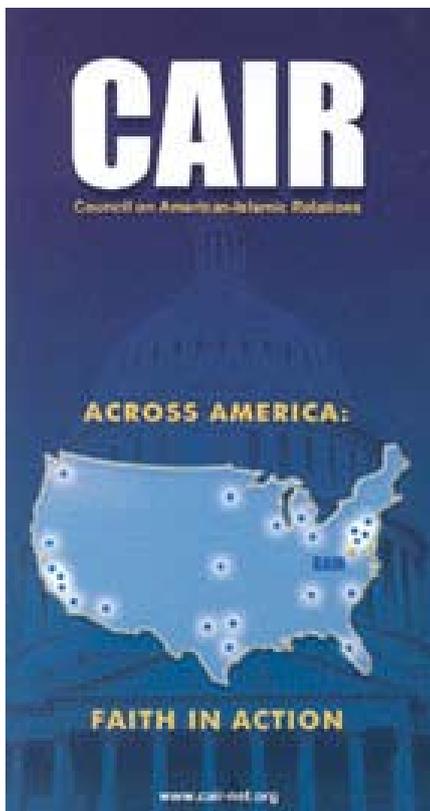
C.A.I.R.'s Civil Rights Department counsels, mediates and advocates on behalf of Muslims and others who have experienced religious discrimination, defamation or hate crimes. The department works to protect and defend the constitutional rights of American Muslims, thereby supporting the rights of all Americans.

Government Affairs

C.A.I.R.'s Governmental Affairs Department conducts and organises lobbying efforts on issues related to Islaam and Muslims. The department is active in monitoring legislation and government activities and then, responding on behalf of the American Muslim community. C.A.I.R. representatives have testified before Congress and have sponsored a number of activities designed to bring Muslim concerns to Capitol Hill.

Media Relations

C.A.I.R.'s Communications Department works in conjunction with local and national media to ensure an accurate portrayal of Islaam and Muslims is presented to the American public. C.A.I.R. monitors local, national and international media in part, to challenge negative stereotypes, but also



to applaud and encourage positive representations of Islaam and Muslims. Over the years, C.A.I.R. has become a respected and credible source for journalists and other media professionals.

Action Alerts and CAIR-NET

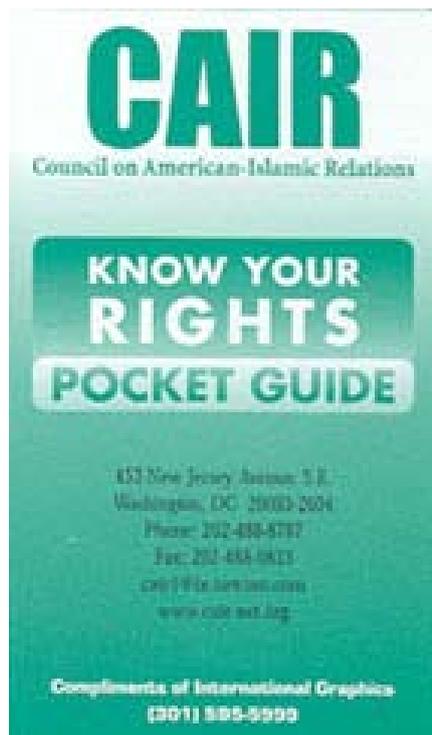
In an effort to empower the American Muslim community, C.A.I.R. issues "Action Alerts" as a means of generating a grassroots response to critical political, social and media-related issues. These alerts have produced overwhelming results and have made a significant impact in bringing about change. C.A.I.R. also offers an email list designed to be a source of information and news for the American Muslim community. Subscribers to the CAIR.NET list receive news releases and other materials dealing with American Muslim positions on issues of importance. To subscribe to CAIR-NET, go to: <http://www.CAIR-net.org/default.asp?Page=C.A.I.R.NetSubscription>

Research



Publications

Research Department conducts empirical research studies on subjects relevant to the American Muslim community, including gathering and



Publications

analysing data for the annual civil rights report. The North American Muslim Resource Guide: Muslim Community Life in the United States and Canada (Routledge) is a product of the research department.

Internships

C.A.I.R. offers internships to students or other interested individuals who wish to gain experience in media relations, political activism or civil rights work.

C.A.I.R. Publications

C.A.I.R. offers a variety of publications that address the needs and rights of American Muslims. These publications include guides for employers, educators, healthcare providers, and law enforcement. C.A.I.R. also produces practical handbooks and resource materials for the Muslim community. C.A.I.R.'s Research Department publishes an annual report on the status of American Muslim civil rights, which serves to document hate crimes and discrimination cases reported to C.A.I.R.'s Civil Rights Department.

Education: Conferences, Seminars and Workshops

C.A.I.R. organises regular conferences and training seminars for government and law enforcement agencies, media professionals and the academic community. These events are designed to present easily accessible and accurate information about Islaam and Muslims. C.A.I.R.'s TeamWorks sensitivity and diversity training workshop is offered to employers, educators and organisations as a proactive approach that highlights relevant Islaamic practices and offers suggestions for religious accommodation. C.A.I.R. also provides training for the Muslim Community and activists in areas such as media relations, public speaking, lobbying, and civil rights.

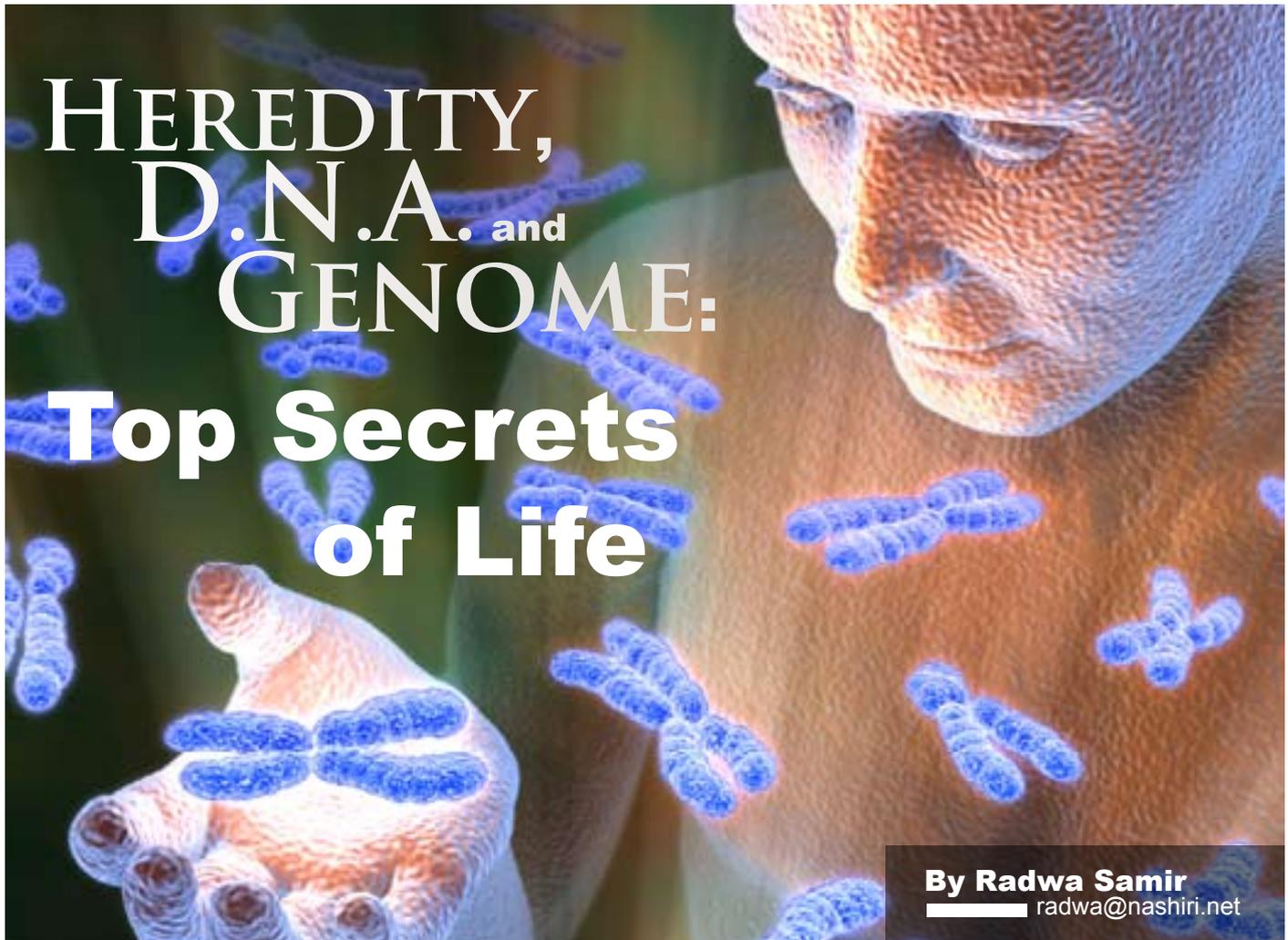
Voter Registration

In order to increase Muslim participation in the political arena, C.A.I.R. and its chapters regularly sponsor voter registration drives across the country. To register to vote, visit the C.A.I.R. website.

Outreach and Interfaith Relations
Each year, groups representing people of all faiths visit C.A.I.R. offices to learn more about Islaam and Muslims in America. Through these visits, as well as other interfaith initiatives, C.A.I.R. strives to educate others about Islaam while building strong relationships with other faith communities.

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HEREDITY, D.N.A. and GENOME: Top Secrets of Life

By Radwa Samir
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1. Heredity:

Did you ask your self about the similarities between you and your father? Why your son has different colour eyes than yours and his mother's and from where he got them? Ever wondered about the mystery behind transformation of special features through generations and how it could have occurred?

Maybe in the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century this would have been hard to discover, however now we have the keys of these confusing questions.

Before the beginning of heredity as a huge science, many scientist were wondering about special features that were found in animals and how it transported from one generation to another like the tall neck of a giraffe. Some explain that the old giraffes used to stretch their necks to reach high trees, you know it seems funny if we try to apply this theory on humans. For example, we

may have long arms if we stretch them in the gym, and the snake known as "cobra" has a flat neck that maybe because it squeezes it self under a tree! This is totally unbelievable. Then the well-known scientist "Charles Darwin" started to establish his theory which is known as "natural selection".

Darwin and Natural Selection:

Charles Darwin has a well-known theory which is natural selection. He used three ideas to drive it.

First:

All living things are able to have many offspring than they actually do. Darwin chose to illustrate this with the slowest breeding animal he knew, the elephant, assuming that it start to breed in its 30s, stopped when it is 90 and has six young over 60 years. He suggested that after 740 years there would be 19 million elephants existing, descending from

the first pair.

Second:

Elephants face environmental pressures such as limited supply of resources. The trees and grass they eat can not multiply as elephants. So in every generation some generation will starve to death.

Finally:

In each generation, the offspring slightly differs from one another. The members who are strong enough will survive and increase in number and will dominate over weak members.

Humanity owes a great deal to peas and drosophila:

Mendel...the father of heredity:

Gregor Mendel was a monk and like many monks at that time, a scientist. Born as Johann Mendel, he changed his name when he entered the monastery, north of Vienna in what is now

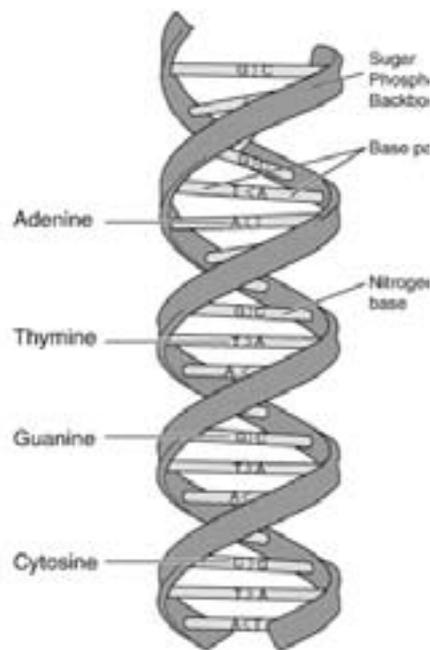
the Czech republic.

Mendel was a gifted scientist who set out to discover how new species arose. He studied variety of peas that differs in single easily recognised traits. Some were tall, others short, some have white flowers, others purple. In all, Mendel worked with seven pairs of traits. Mendel made hybridisation between two kinds of peas, that has not happened in nature, and sat to study difference in the first and second offspring f1, f2. His notes stated that in the first generation one character is dominant over another but in the second generation he found that the weak character appears in low present. From these trials Mendel put three laws:

Mendel Laws of Inheritance:

1st the law of uniformity:

When plants that differ in a particular

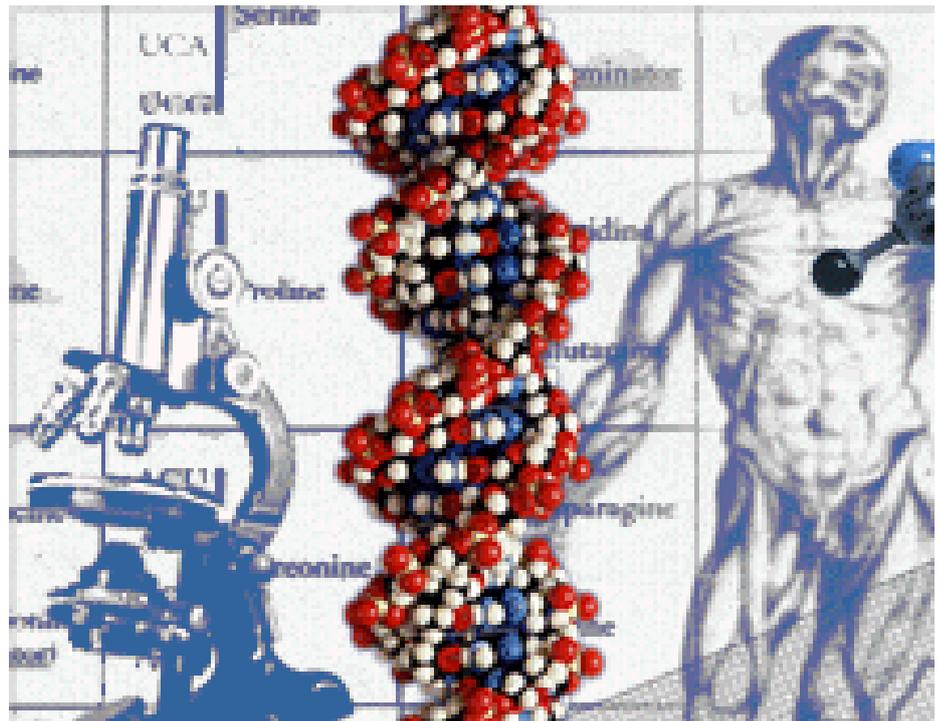


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trait are crossed with each other, the offspring are uniform and resemble one parent.

2nd the law of segregation of alleles:

The alleles in the parents separate and recombine in the offspring. This explains why the expression of a particular trait in an organism.



3rd the law of independent assortment of alleles:

The alleles of different characters pass to the offspring independently so inheritance of, say, green peas says nothing about whether the peas will be wrinkled or smooth.

The researches of Mendel were ignored for a long time and no one could understand his theory. Until three men simultaneously and independently did a similar experiment and finally understood Mendel's work.

They were the Dutch botanist Hugo De Vries, an Austrian, Erich Tschermak and German Carl Correns. Through Hugo De Vries' trials he discovered a new phenomena in heredity, which is "mutation". As he studied evaluation by making crosses between garden varieties of evening primrose plants. Among the offspring he grew, a few were noticeably different from there parents. De vries coined the term "mutation" to describe there sudden changes.

Morgan's Drosophila:

Morgan arrived at Columbia University in 1904 to determine development. He started to chose suitable animals for his study. He found that mice and rats bred too slow for his purpose. Morgan turn to the fruit fly, drosophila. It is small, a thousand or more flies can fit into a small bottle. It breeds quickly, producing 30 generations a year, it is easily observed as its eggs develop outside the female's body. As consonance plays an important rule in heredity, as in case of Mendel and de vries. Also with Morgan as the study of development and heredity in fruit fly allowed him to make a new discovery which was that some characters are related to sex and transported to the generation attached to the sex chromosome.

But what is "chromosome" and what carries these features through generations?

In the Next issue we will know more about genes, chromosomes, and we will try to discover the mystery of the double helix "DNA".

Is Israel a Viable State

Without the U.S. Aid?



By Dr. Saadeh A. Khalil*

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When Mu'ti Algarissi moved to Kadim (a settlement in the occupied West Bank) in 1987, his red-roofed house and small garden cost him the equivalent of 5,000 U.S. dollars today. The Israeli government had already informed the settlers that they could expect compensation from up to 100,000 U.S. dollars, the equivalent cost of an average three-bedroom apartment in Israel. The question is: who financed building 192 settlements in the occupied territories? Although Israel is an "advanced, industrialised, technologically sophisticated country," it "receives more U.S. aid per capita annually than the total annual [Gross Domestic Product] per capita of several Arab states." Total U.S. aid to Israel is approximately one-third of the American foreign-aid budget, even though Israel comprises just .001 percent of the world's population and already has one of the world's higher per capita incomes. Indeed, Israel's G.N.P. is higher than the combined G.N.P. of Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza.

With a per capita income of about \$14,000, Israel ranks as the sixteenth wealthiest country in the world; Israelis enjoy a higher per capita income than oil-rich Saudi Arabia and are only slightly less well-off than most Western European countries. In fact, Israel's 1995 per capita gross domestic product was \$15,800. That put it below Britain at \$19,500 and Italy at \$18,700 and just above Ireland at \$15,400 and Spain at \$14,300. Since World War II and soon after the establishment of "Israel" and right after Harry Truman recognised the Jewish state in 1948, the U.S. Congress approved an aid package in the form of \$135 million. Until 1973, this aid was made up of military, economic and export-import bank loans.

After the 1973 war, the aid to Israel constituted largely of military and economic grants to strengthen the Israeli army. The aid included \$12-80 million annual grant used in building Jewish settlements.

Most Americans are not aware how much of their tax revenue their government sends to Israel. For the fiscal year ending in September 30, 1997, the U.S. has given Israel \$6.72 billion: \$6.194 billion falls under Israel's foreign aid allotment and \$526 million comes from agencies such as the Department of Commerce, the U.S. Information Agency and the Pentagon. The \$6.72 billion figure does not include loan guarantees and annual compound interest totaling \$3.122 billion the U.S. pays on money borrowed to give to Israel. It does not include the cost to U.S. taxpayers of I.R.S. tax exemptions that donors can claim when they donate money to Israeli charities.

Since 1949 (as of November 1, 1997), the U.S. has given Israel a total of \$84,854,827,200. The interest costs borne by U.S. tax payers on behalf of Israel are \$49,936,680,000, thus making the total amount of aid given to Israel since 1949 \$134,791,507,200. According to Steve Cohen, a Jewish lawyer and activist, the amount could exceed 178 billion dollars. This means that the U.S. government has given more fed-

eral aid to the average Israeli citizen in a given year than it has given to the average American citizen.

According to Stephen Zunes, "U.S. government officials argue that this money is necessary for "moral" reasons- some even say that Israel is a "democracy battling for its very survival." If that were the real reason, however, aid should have been highest during Israel's early years, and would have declined as Israel grew stronger. Yet "the pattern... has been just the opposite." According to Zunes, "99 percent of all U.S. aid to Israel took place after the June 1967 war, when Israel found itself more powerful than any combination of Arab armies..."

The real reasons that U.S. supports Israel to serve as "a surrogate for American interests in this vital strategic region" are that "Israel has helped defeat radical nationalist movements" and has been a "testing ground for U.S. made weaponry." Moreover, the intelligence agencies of both countries have "collaborated," and "Israel has funneled U.S. arms to third countries that the U.S. [could] not send arms to directly... like South Africa, like the Contras, Guatemala under the military junta..." Zunes cited an Israeli analyst who said: "It's like Israel has just become another federal agency when it's convenient to use and you want something done quietly." Although the strategic relationship between the United States and the Gulf Arab states in the region has been strengthening in recent years, these states "do not have the political stability, the technological sophistication, [or] the number of higher-trained armed forces personnel" as does Israel.

The Israeli paper Yediot Aharonot described Israel as "the godfather's messenger" since [Israel] undertake[s] the 'dirty work' of a godfather who 'al-

ways tries to appear to be the owner of some large, respectable business.” Israeli satirist B. Michael refers to U.S. aid this way: “My master gives me food to eat and I bite those whom he tells me to bite. It’s called strategic cooperation.” “To challenge this strategic relationship, one cannot focus solely on the Israeli lobby but must also examine these “broader forces as well.” “Until we tackle this issue head-on,” it will be “very difficult to win” in other areas relating to Palestine.

The results “of the short-term thinking behind U.S. policy are tragic,” not just for the “immediate victims” but “eventually [for] Israel itself” and “American interests in the region.” The U.S. is sending enormous amounts of aid to the Middle East, and yet “we are less secure than ever”—both in terms of U.S. interests abroad and for individual Americans. Zunes referred to a “growing and increasing hostility [of] the average Arab toward the United States.” In the long term, said Zunes, “Peace and stability and cooperation with the vast Arab world are far more important for U.S. interests than this alliance with Israel.”

This is not only an issue for those who are working for Palestinian rights, but it also “jeopardises the entire agenda of those of us concerned about human rights, concerned about arms control, concerned about international law.” Zunes sees significant potential in “building a broad-based movement around it.”

The same applies to the president, the secretary of state, and the foreign aid administrator. They all submit a budget that includes aid for Israel, which Congress approves, or increases, but never cuts. But no one in the executive branch mentions that of the few remaining U.S. aid recipients worldwide, all of the others are developing nations which either make their military bases available to the U.S., are key members of international alliances in which the U.S. participates, or have suffered some crippling blow of nature to their abilities to feed their people such as earthquakes, floods or droughts.

The lobby that Israel and its supporters have built in the United States to make all this aid happen, and to ban discussion of it from the national dialogue, goes far beyond A.I.P.A.C.,

with its \$15 million budget, its 150 employees, and its five or six registered lobbyists who manage to visit every member of Congress individually once or twice a year.

A.I.P.A.C., in turn, can draw upon the resources of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations, a roof group set up solely to coordinate the efforts of some 52 national Jewish organisations on behalf of Israel. Among them are Hadassah, the Zionist women’s organisation, which organises steady stream of American Jewish visitors to Israel; the American Jewish Congress, which mobilises support for Israel among members of the traditionally left-of-center Jewish mainstream; and the American Jewish Committee, which plays the same role within the growing middle-of-the-road and right-of-center Jewish community. The American Jewish Committee also publishes Commentary, one of the Israel lobby’s principal national publications.

Perhaps the most controversial of these groups is B’nai B’rith’s Anti-Defamation League. Its original highly commendable purpose was to protect the civil rights of American Jews. Over the past generation, however, the A.D.L. has regressed into a conspiratorial and, with a \$45 million budget, extremely well-funded hate group. But that’s not quite all. Receiving its annual foreign aid appropriation during the first month of the fiscal year, instead of in quarterly installments as do other recipients, is just another special privilege Congress has voted for Israel. It enables Israel to invest the money in U.S. Treasury notes. That means that the U.S., which has to borrow the money it gives to Israel, pays interest on the money it has granted to Israel in advance, while at the same time Israel is collecting interest on the money. That interest to Israel from advance payments adds another \$1.650 billion to the total, making it \$84,854,827,200. That’s the number you should write down for total aid to Israel. And that’s \$14,346 each for each man, woman and child in Israel.

It’s worth noting that that figure does not include U.S. government loan guarantees to Israel, of which Israel has drawn \$9.8 billion to date. They

greatly reduce the interest rate the Israeli government pays on commercial loans, and they place additional burdens on U.S. taxpayers, especially if the Israeli government should default on any of them. But since neither the savings to Israel nor the costs to U.S. taxpayers can be accurately quantified, they are excluded from consideration here.

Further, friends of Israel never tire of saying that Israel has never defaulted on repayment of a U.S. government loan. It would be equally accurate to say Israel has never been required to repay a U.S. government loan. The truth of the matter is complex, and designed to be so by those who seek to conceal it from the U.S. taxpayer. Most U.S. loans to Israel are forgiven, and many were made with the explicit understanding that they would be forgiven before Israel was required to repay them. By disguising as loans what in fact were grants, cooperating members of Congress exempted Israel from the U.S. oversight that would have accompanied grants. On other loans, Israel was expected to pay the interest and eventually to begin repaying the principal. But the so-called Cranston Amendment, which has been attached by Congress to every foreign aid appropriation since 1983, provides that economic aid to Israel will never dip below the amount Israel is required to pay on its outstanding loans. In short, whether U.S. aid is extended as grants or loans to Israel, it never returns to the Treasury. Israel enjoys other privileges. While most countries receiving U.S. military aid funds are expected to use them for U.S. arms, ammunition and training, Israel can spend part of these funds on weapons made by Israeli manufacturers. Also, when it spends its U.S. military aid money on U.S. products, Israel frequently requires the U.S. vendor to buy components or materials from Israeli manufacturers. Thus, though Israeli politicians say that their own manufacturers and exporters are making them progressively less dependent upon U.S. aid, in fact those Israeli manufacturers and exporters are heavily subsidised by U.S. aid.

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PERSONAL CHANGE

PART 2

By **Marwah El-Azhary**

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When is it the time to change?

Is your life not all it could be? Do you feel that you are not fulfilling your potentials? More than often a person comes to the stage where they halt and recall their life's achievements and failures.

What have we succeeded with so far? Have we done the things we have always wanted to do? Surely there is more to life than this mechanical, programmed, repetitious life style one may have? As mortals, we naturally only live once. So we only get one chance to live life. Why waste it in idleness and negativity? Why let opportunities pass one by until one grows old and wails, "If only I had..."

If these worries have sprinted across your mind, it is a most likely time to change. Seeking a better quality of life is something that has become a recent craze, as people retire to an exotic country and live the life they had always dreamed of, or spend more time with their family by cutting back on a few work hours, or travelling the world.

Life is indeed a rollercoaster ride, especially since the last hundred

years from the beginning of the industrial evolution, when the quality of people's lives changed and life became easier, faster and more advanced. Since then, people haven't had the time to pause and take a few moments to breathe and reflect. We are all running with the time, and often enough, we don't know where we would like to run to.

That is why it is vital to have goals and objectives- a plan that will define the structure of your life and



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where you want it to lead to. This might be easier said than done. However, take a step back from your life, sit down and think deeply about what you want to change in your life. If you are unhappy about something in your life, you hold the key to change it! It just takes will, determination and bravery to make a change, three characteristics which are installed in the average human being.

The Difficulties of Change

It can be quite difficult to break free from the cycle of life that you have become accustomed to for so long. You might fail in the beginning and return to the quality of life you so desperately wish to change out of. However, persevere in your steps to change, form friendships with people who will encourage you to change, ask your family for support, take up a sport- all of these factors will make it easier to change, since you are pro-actively taking the steps to reach your destination, with the prospect of change not just a mere an idea in your mind.

Of course no one expects you to change overnight, however, gradual and steady change will build a con

crete foundation to your eventual success.

How can we change?

The most important thing is to include a few of the following steps in your schedule to change your quality of life and lead a more satisfying and successful life:

Master basic skills:

Build a solid foundation for your life by:

- Setting your goals and objectives.
- Managing your time well (time management).
- Having creativity and life tracking workbooks (recording your goals, action plan, and successful achievements in your workbook). By doing this, you will be bringing more control and focus into your life.

Empower your personality:

Understand yourself and how life works. Build self esteem, self worth, mental discipline and inner power with methods such as:

- Owning a journal where you can express yourself freely (jotting down your feelings in a diary to understand yourself better and release repressed emotions and thoughts).
- Discover yourself, write your life so you can identify key phases and achievements in your past and therefore accept your past and move on to build a stable, brighter future.
- Positive thinking and personal growth awareness techniques will help you reach your goals and change the quality of your life for the better.

Open to a higher power:

Find more meaning, purpose and joy in life through connecting with your Creator. Spirituality plays a significant role in discovering your fullest potentials and succeeding in your life. Pray to Allaah, invoke your

supplications to Him alone, and ask Him to help you change for a better and happier life style. Always be content with what you have, always look on the good side of life, don't sink into self-pity and negativity. You have the power to change without having these negative traits.

Of course, everyone has their own techniques and methods to change their quality of life and live as happier and healthier individuals.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that to make a change, one must start with the first step, and that is identifying that a change must take place soon. Once the identification process is completed- knowing what must be changed- a person can then plan how to change their

lives for the better.

We only live once, so we all deserve to live life to our fullest potentials and achieve all our dreams, after all, what is the point of having dreams if you won't even try to make them come true.

Remember, you deserve a happy life, you deserve to change, so think positively and make that change starting from today!

“Live every day as if it were your last. Do every job as if you were the boss. Drive as if all other vehicles were police cars. Treat everybody else as if he were you.”

– Phoenix Flame



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By
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 Translated by Ahmad Konash

■ Idea

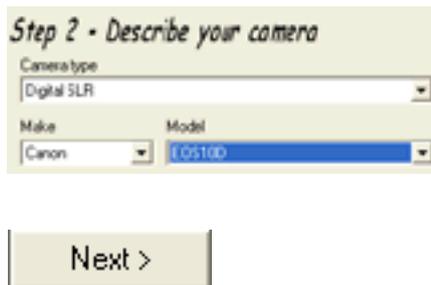
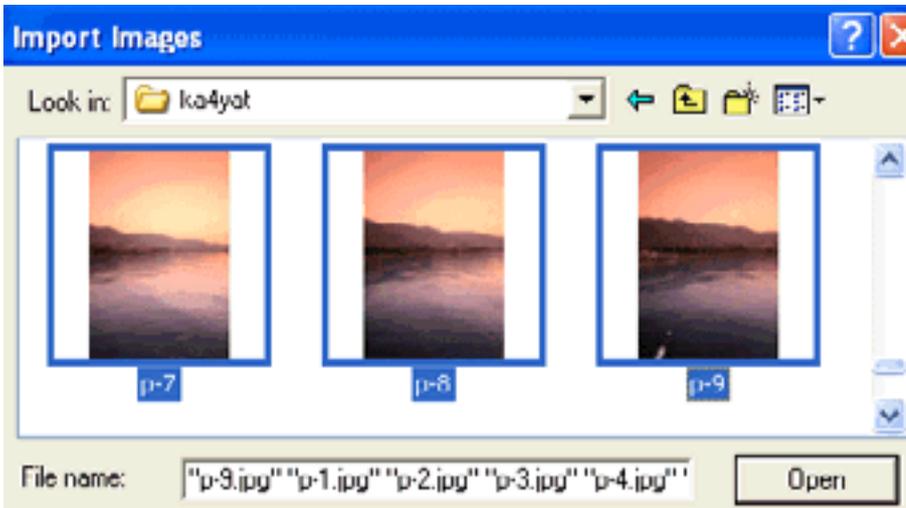
A Wider Vision

A shot could be nice, but the whole scene is even nicer.

■ Tools

- . A camera (SLR - Semi SLR).
- . A Tripod (preferred with rotation angle scale).
- . A Cable release (optional)
- . "The Panorama Factory" software
www.panoramafactory.com

Make a PANORAMA!



Steps

1. Place the camera on the tripod, and set the scale to ZERO degrees.
2. Avoid using Wide Angle Lenses so you don't have distorted edges, and in case you are using a Tele-Lens, set it to a focal length greater than 50 mm.
3. Select Manual Focus, (MF), and set it to be focused in your subject.
4. If you have a Cable Release, plug it to the camera. It will enable you to maintain stability 100% to the camera. If you don't have it, just make sure to be gentle when pressing the button, so you don't move the camera.
5. Take the first shot, and let it be the first from the right.
6. Rotate the Tripod 30 degrees to the left, and take the second shot. If you did not have an angular scale, make sure that the second shot overlaps the first about 15%-20%.
7. Repeat the last step until you've covered the whole scene.
8. Run "The Panorama Factory"
9. Use the Wizard by clicking 
10. Click "Import" and choose the photos you've taken.
11. In some cases, you'll have to re-arrange the photos simply by "Drag-and-Drop" method.
12. Click 
13. The software will blend and stitch the elements of your panorama photo, this could take some time, depending on the image size, and your machine's speed.
13. Congratulations, don't forget to save it!

If you have any nice designs that you would like to share with us, please contact:

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“Spread the Light”

This image is mainly done by editing the original photo taken by me of a freind. The photo can be found on http://www.lqta.com/gallery/details.php?image_id=1464.

It was then manipulated and retouched in photoshop. To add the lighting effect, it was done using the pencil tool, and diffrent blending options.

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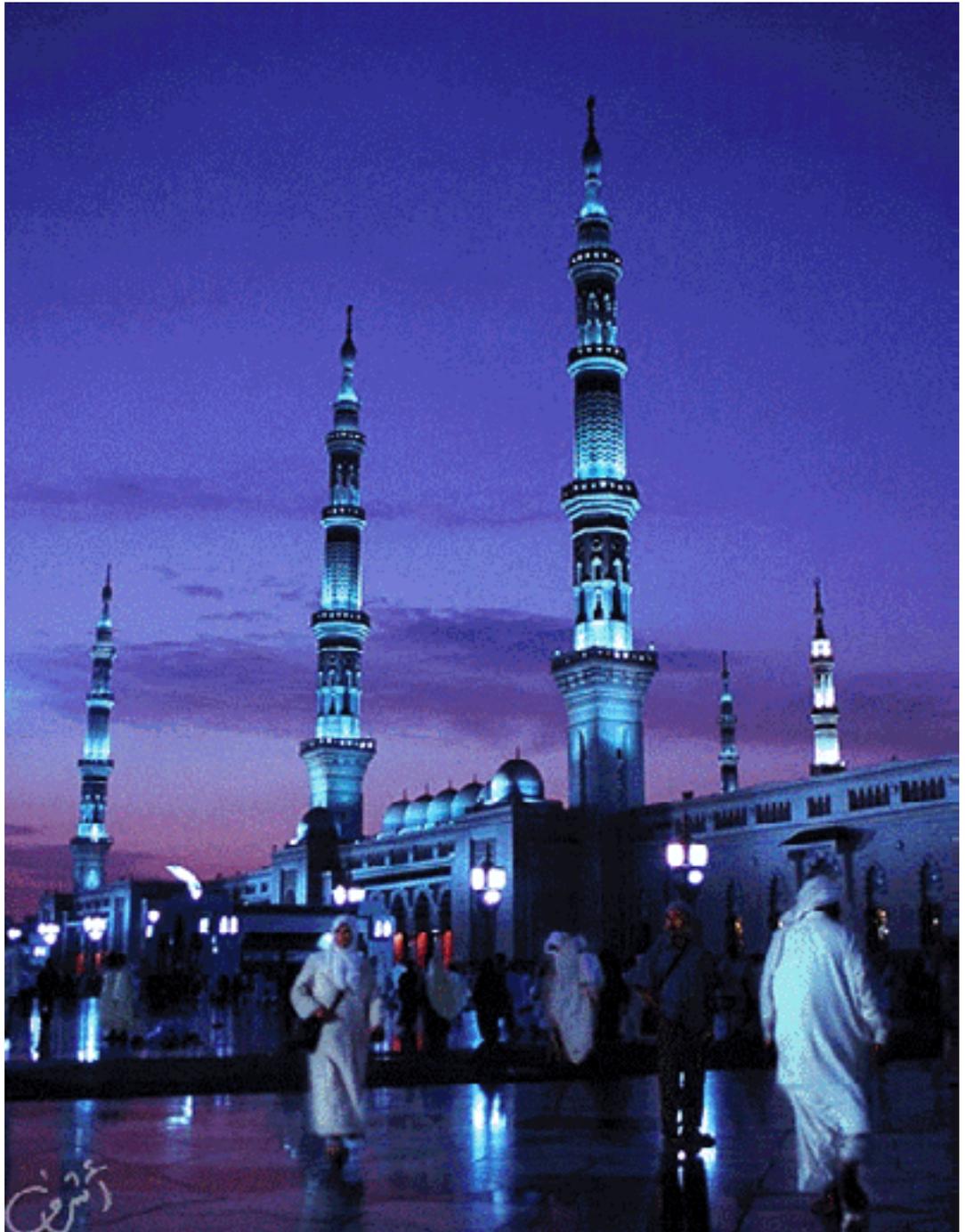
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“Stop the War!” by Ashraf Al-Fagih

**“Beats of the
Madenah”**



Photos by
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ABOUT

I-MAG

About I-MAG:

I-MAG is a free online non-profit Islaamic monthly magazine published by Nashiri E-Publishing House. I-MAG is an acronym of Islaam Magazine. I-MAG is pronounced in two syllables; “I” as in “eye”, and “mag” as in magazine.

I-MAG is edited by a team of talented youth from all around the Islaamic world.

I-MAG is published in P.D.F. format, which means it can be read on any operating system. Moreover, it can be read on your P.D.A. (palmtop) or on some mobile phones, which makes I-MAG your perfect companion for reading a staid content about Islaam.

P.D.F. files resemble the look of a normal paper magazine which gives the reader a feeling of intimacy. I-MAG has a very creative eye-inviting design which makes reading a most enjoyable journey for the eye and the mind.

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Cover Design: Ahmad Konash

Scope and Readership:

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The diverse content of the magazine also appeals to non-Muslims who will find an enriching content about Islaam.

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I-MAG

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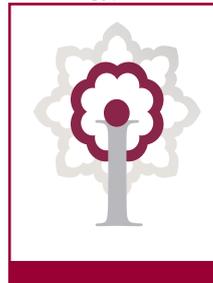


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