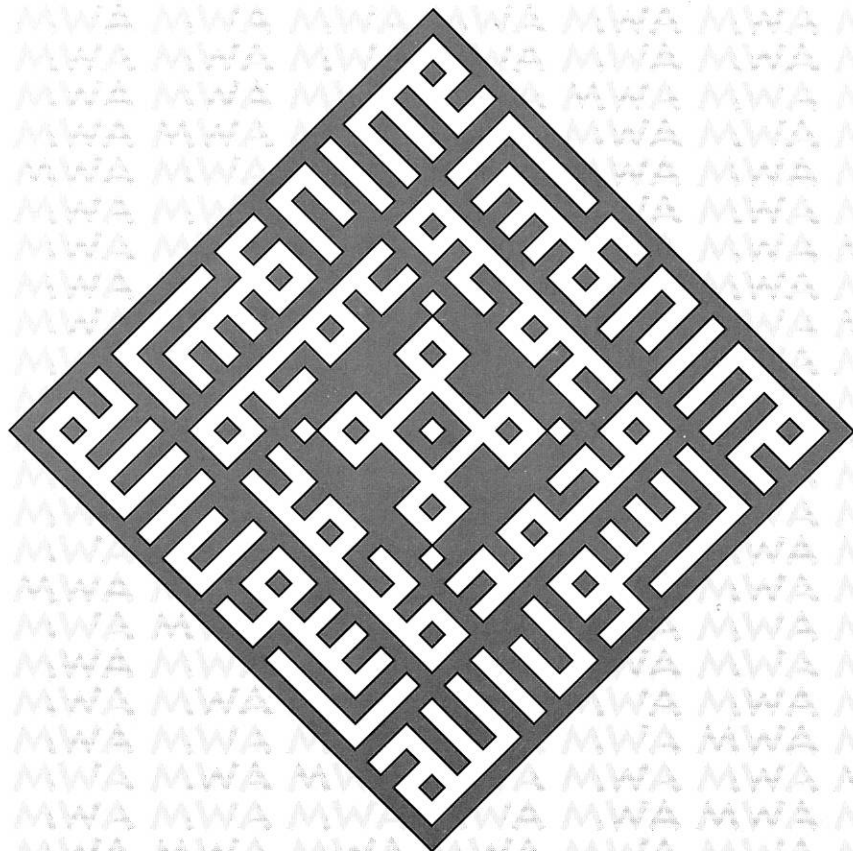


The **MUSLIM WOMAN**

VOLUME XXXIV No. 4

September 2001



A quarterly journal published by The Muslim Women's Association (Regd. Charity)

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FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 1999
TO NOVEMBER 2001

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❖ MEMBERSHIP ❖

The Muslim Women's Association is open to all Muslim Women. Membership Fees (which includes the subscription to *The Muslim Woman*) are: Annual UK £15 Overseas £20 Life membership UK £100 Overseas £120. Meetings of the Muslim Women's Association take place on the second Sunday of each month

❖ ALL CORRESPONDENCE ❖

should be sent to our address, THE MUSLIM WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION, P.O.Box 100, London W5 2XU. Articles, letters and other matter appearing in this publication do not necessarily express the official views of the Executive Committee of The Muslim Women's Association.

AGM

Sunday, 4th November at 4.00pm,
Islamic Cultural Centre,
146 Park Road,
London NW8 7RG.

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE BENEFICENT, THE MERCIFUL

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers

Assalamu Alaykum,

All of us have watched the grief of the bereaved families from the disaster of 11th September in the USA and shared their pain. Some of our readers have had family members and friends that were involved first hand or affected by the tragedy.

In any case it is impossible not be touched by the events.

The expressions of sorrow and grief expressed by our fellow Muslims and by the Muslim Community leaders have become tinged by anxiety due to the hostilities that were expressed by a few people against Islamic symbols.

A lot of progress that had been made in cementing relationships between the police forces and communities was under threat, and in danger of being negated by the events and specially the strong and strident language, which did not distinguish clearly between Islam and the perpetrators of the attack.

It is heartening then, to note that a number of people have written in to say how much this unfair attitude grieved them, like Mrs. Ilse Ahmed who is one of our founder members and has written to 'express [her] deep sorrow at the enmity shown to Muslims at this time'. We are grateful for all these expressions of solidarity, in these troubled times.

Due to the unpredictability of events we were forced to cancel the event arranged for the October meeting. However, this is

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election year and the MWA elections will be held on Sunday 11th November 2001. I would strongly encourage you to attend. Please do express your interest, come and contribute a little of your time and effort.

I do not intend to stand for an executive position in the coming elections and would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all the support I have received during these two years. As a life member I shall of course continue to participate actively in the events of the MWA.

Since this will be the last issue of 'The Muslim Woman' before the month of Ramadan, I would like to wish all of you a peaceful and purposeful month of fasting and prayer.

Unaiza Malik
(President)



ISLAMIC TRADITIONS AND THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT: CONFRONTATION OR COOPERATION?

*Dr. Lois Lamya' al Faruqi**
(rahmat Allah 'alayha)

Whether living in the Middle East or Africa, in Central Asia, in Pakistan, in Southeast Asia, or in Europe and the Americas, Muslim women tend to view the feminist movement with some apprehension. Although there are some features of the feminist cause with which we as Muslims would wish to join hands, other features generate our disappointment and even opposition. There is therefore no simple or "pat" answer to the question of the future cooperation or competition which feminism may meet in an Islamic environment.

There are however a number of social, psychological, and economic traditions which govern the thinking of most Muslims and which are particularly affective of woman's status and role in Islamic society. Understanding these can help us understand the issues which affect male and female status and roles, and how we should react to movements which seek to improve the situation of women in any of the countries where Muslims live.

* Dr. Lois Lamya al-Faruqi received her Ph.D. in Islamic studies at Syracuse University. She taught at Butler University, the University of Pennsylvania, Villanova and Temple University. Her publications include *Islam and Art*, and *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, which she co-authored with her husband Isma'il al-Faruqi. She was killed in her home, along with her husband, May 30, 1986.

The family system: One of the Islamic traditions which will affect the way in which Muslim women respond to feminist ideas is the advocacy in Islamic culture of an extended rather than a nuclear family system. Some Muslim families are "residentially extended" - that is, their members live communally with three or more generations of relatives (grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, and their offspring) in a single building or compound. Even when this residential version of the extended family is not possible or adhered to, family connections reaching far beyond the nuclear unit are evident in strong psychological, social, economic, and even political ties. Mutual supports and responsibilities affecting these larger consanguine groups are not just considered desirable, but they are made legally incumbent on members of the society by Islamic law. The Holy Qur'an itself exhorts to extended family solidarity; in addition it specifies the extent of such responsibilities and contains prescriptive measures for inheritance, support, and other close interdependencies within the extended family.

Our Islamic traditions also prescribe a much stronger participation of the family in the contracting and preservation of marriages. While most Western feminists would decry family participation or arranged marriage as a negative influence because of its apparent restriction of individualistic freedom and responsibility, as Muslims we would argue that such participation is advantageous for both individuals and groups within the society. Not only does it ensure marriages based on sounder principles than physical attraction and sexual infatuation, but it provides other safeguards for successful marital continuity. Members of the family provide diverse

companionship as well as ready sources of advice and sympathy for the newly married as they adjust to each others' way. One party of the marriage cannot easily pursue an eccentric course at the expense of the spouse since such behaviour would rally opposition from the larger group. Quarrels are never so devastating to the marriage bond since other adult family members act as mediators and provide alternative sources of companionship and counsel following disagreements. The problems of parenting and generational incompatibility are also alleviated, and singles clubs and dating bureaus would be unnecessary props for social interaction. There is no need in the extended family for children of working parents to be unguarded, unattended, or inadequately loved and socialised because the extended family home is never empty. There is therefore no feeling of guilt which the working parent often feels in a nuclear or single-parent organisation. Tragedy, even divorce, is not so debilitating to either adults or children since the larger social unit absorbs the residual numbers with much greater ease than a nuclear family organisation can ever provide.

The move away from the cohesiveness which the family formerly enjoyed in Western society, the rise of usually smaller alternative family styles, and the accompanying rise in individualism which many feminists advocate or at least practice, are at odds with these deep-rooted Islamic customs and traditions. If feminism in the Muslim world chooses to espouse the Western family models, it should and would certainly be strongly challenged by Muslim women's groups and by Islamic society as a whole.

INDIVIDUALISM VS. THE LARGER ORGANISATION

The traditional support of the large and intricately interrelated family organisation is correlative to another Islamic tradition which seems to run counter to recent Western trends and to feminist ideology. Islam and Muslim women generally advocate molding of individual goals and interests to accord with the welfare of the larger group and its members. Instead of holding the goals of the individual supreme, Islam instills in the adherent a sense of his or her place within the family and of a responsibility to that group. This is not perceived or experienced by Muslims as repression of the individual. Other traditions which will be discussed later guarantee his or her legal personality. Feminism, therefore, would not be espoused by Muslim women as a goal to be pursued without regard for the relation of the female to the other members of her family. The Muslim woman regards her goals as necessitating a balance with, or even subordination to, those of the family group. The rampant individualism often experienced in contemporary life, that which treats the goals of the individual in isolation from other factors, or as utterly supreme, runs against a deep Islamic commitment to social interdependence.

Differentiation of Sex Roles: A third Islamic tradition which affects the future of any feminist movement in an Islamic environment is that it specifies a differentiation of male and female roles and responsibilities in society. Feminism, as represented in Western society, has generally denied any such differentiation and has demanded a move toward a unisex society in order to achieve equal rights for women. By "unisex society," I

mean one in which a single set of roles and concerns are given preference and esteem by both sexes and are pursued by all members of the society regardless of sex and age differentials. In the case of Western feminism, the preferred goals have been those traditionally fulfilled by the male members of society. The roles of providing financial support, of success in career, and of decision making have been given overwhelming respect and concern while those dealing with domestic matters, with child care, with aesthetic and psychological refreshment, with social interrelationships, were devalued and even despised. Both men and women have been forced into a single mold which is perhaps more restrictive, rigid and coercive than that which formerly assigned men to one type of role and women to another.

This is a new brand of male chauvinism with which Islamic traditions cannot conform. Islam instead maintains that both types of roles are equally deserving of pursuit and respect and that when accompanied by the equity demanded by the religion, a division of labour along sex lines is generally beneficial to all members of the society.

This might be regarded by the feminist as opening the door to discrimination, but as Muslims we regard Islamic traditions as standing clearly and unequivocally for the support of male-female equity. In the Qur'an, no difference whatever is made between the sexes in relation to God. "For men who submit [to God] and for women who submit [to God], for believing men and believing women, for devout men and devout women, for truthful men and truthful women, for steadfast men and steadfast women, for humble men and humble women, for charitable men and charitable women, for men who fast and women who fast, for

men who guard their chastity and women who guard, for men who remember God much and for women who remember - for them God has prepared forgiveness and a mighty reward" (33:35). "Whoever performs good deeds, whether male or female and is a believer, We shall surely make him live a good life and We will certainly reward them for the best of what they did" (16:97).

It is only in relation to each other and society that a difference is made - a difference of role or function. The rights and responsibilities of a woman are equal to those of a man, but they are not necessarily identical with them. Equality and identity are two different things, Islamic traditions maintain - the former desirable, the latter not. Men and women should therefore be complementary to each other in a multi-function organisation rather than competitive with each other in a uni-function society.

The equality demanded by Islamic traditions must, however, be seen in its larger context if it is to be understood properly. Since Muslims regard a differentiation of sexual roles to be natural and desirable in the majority of cases, the economic responsibilities of male and female members differ to provide a balance for the physical differences between men and women and for the greater responsibility which women carry in the reproductive and rearing activities so necessary to the well-being of the society. To maintain, therefore, that the men of the family are responsible for providing economically for the women or that women are not equally responsible, is not a dislocation or denial of sexual equity. It is instead a duty to be fulfilled by men as compensation for another responsibility which involves the special ability of women. Likewise the different inheritance rates for males and females, which is so often sited as an example of discrimination

against women, must not be seen as an isolated prescription. It is but one part of a comprehensive system in which women carry no legal responsibility to support other members of the family, but in which men are bound by law as well as custom to provide for all their female relatives.

Does this mean that Islamic traditions necessarily prescribe maintaining the *status quo* in the Islamic societies that exist today? The answer is a definite "No." Many thinking Muslims - both men and women - would agree that their societies do not fulfil the Islamic ideals and traditions laid down in the Qur'an and reinforced by the example and directives of the Prophet Muhammad, *salallahu alehi wasallam*. It is reported in the Qur'an and from history that women not only expressed their opinions freely in the Prophet's presence but also argued and participated in serious discussions with the Prophet himself and with other Muslim leaders of the time (58:1). Muslim women are known to have even stood in opposition to certain caliphs, who later accepted the sound arguments of those women. A specific example took place during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al Khattab. The Qur'an reproached those who believed woman to be inferior to men (16:57-59) and repeatedly gives expression to the need for treating men and women with equity (2:228, 231; 4:19, and so on). Therefore, if Muslim women experience discrimination in any place or time, they do not and should not lay the blame on Islam, but on the un-Islamic nature of their societies and the failure of Muslims to fulfil its directives.

SEPARATE LEGAL STATUS FOR WOMEN

A fourth Islamic tradition affecting the future of feminism in Muslim societies is the separate legal status for women which is

demanding by the Qur'an and the *Shari'ah*. Every Muslim individual, whether male or female, retains a separate identity from cradle to grave. This separate legal personality prescribes for every woman the right to contract, to conduct business, to earn and possess property independently. Marriage has no effect on her legal status, her property, her earnings - or even on her name. If she commits any civil offense, her penalty is no less or no more than a man's in a similar case (5:83; 24:2). If she is wronged or harmed, she is entitled to compensation just like a man (4:92-93; see also Mustafa al Siba'i 1976:38; Darwazah n.d.:78). The



Reminder —AGM

This forthcoming meeting is our 2 yearly AGM when elections take place. For the future of your Association it is paramount that as many members attend as possible. Please make an effort and attend, your comments and votes count!

feminist demand for separate legal status for women is therefore one that is equally espoused by Islamic traditions.

Polygyny: Although the taking of plural wives by a man is commonly called polygamy, the more correct sociological designation is polygyny. This institution is probably the Islamic tradition most misunderstood and vehemently condemned by non-Muslims. It is one which the Hollywood stereotypes "play upon" in their ridicule of Islamic society. The first image conjured up in the mind of the Westerner when the subject of Islam and marriage is approached is that of a religion which advocates the sexual indulgence of the male members of the society and the subjugation of its females through this institution.

Islamic tradition does indeed allow a man to marry more than one woman at a time. This leniency is even established by the Qur'an (4:3). But the use and perception of that institution is far from the Hollywood stereotype. Polygyny is certainly not imposed by Islam; nor is it a universal practice. It is instead regarded as the exception to the norm of monogamy, and its exercise is strongly controlled by social pressures. If utilised by Muslim men to facilitate or condone sexual promiscuity, it is not less Islamically condemnable than serial polygyny and adultery, and no less detrimental to the society. Muslims view polygyny as an institution which is to be called into use only under extraordinary circumstances. As such, it has not been generally regarded by Muslim women as a threat. Attempts by the feminist movement to focus on eradication of this institution in order to improve the status of women would therefore meet with little sympathy or support.

POETRY

FRUSTRATION

Shariffa Ahmad Bey

In a corner of my mind
Lies an ugly question
Which makes my nerves boil
And my brain stop hoping.
For this question has no answer
Yet leaves me in sheer futility
To what end, why, and as who's story
Were we created?

I am not a woman
But an ant in a vast cage
And this world's illusion
Of happiness and grief
Is mere confusion meant
To taunt our brains into believing
That we are free—yet we die.

All the beaches of world
Are forbidden with naked people.
And we sit, trapped in our own
Ignorance of the reason Why
We cannot
A question infinite and unanswered.
But, we follow with heavy tears in our hearts

The movements of the remote fun-making.

I am a woman
With an animal desire
Who loves to dance
And sing pass
The time on play.
I am a Muslim.
With a soul born to seek God
With responsibility and
Humility who is told
"You cannot". "It is *Haram*".

He told me to fear Him
And I do.
He gave me greed, hatred,
Smallness of mind;
Along with hunger, fear,
And untold pain.
But, He said to squelch
These, and live in "truth",
To deny all that's in me
So to attain lasting peace.

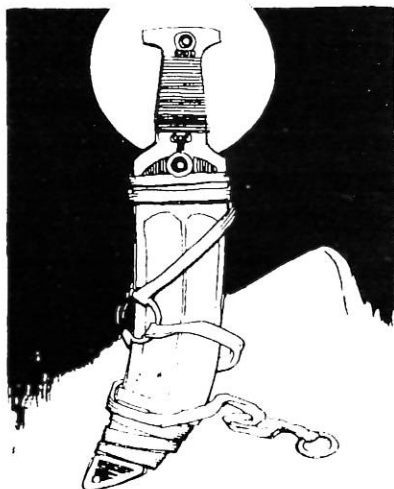
From: The Muslim, Nov-Dec 1972.

JUNIOR'S CORNER

THE HOLY KA'BA

The Holy Ka'ba is a cube-shaped building of stone about 50 feet in height and 40 feet long. It stands in the centre of the sacred Mosque which can accommodate at present 730,000 people simultaneously.

It has a door moulded out of 280 kilograms of pure gold and embellished with Islamic ornamentation and Qur'anic verses on both sides. The door, which is opened at special times, has a length of 312 cm, a breadth of 168 cm, and a thickness of 50 cm. The Ka'ba is covered with the *Kiswah*, a black pall woven with excerpts from the Holy Book in gold thread. The *Kiswah* is now made in the Kingdom by Saudis, but was previously made in Egypt and brought to Makka ceremoniously by Egyptian officials



and pilgrims. There is nothing inside the Ka'ba, because the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} cleansed it of its idols after his return to Makka from Madinah in the year 630.

However, in its eastern corner is an eight-inch stone set in a silver frame at about four feet above ground level.

This stone is known as *Alha Jar Alaswad* or the Black Stone, the only piece remaining of the first mosque built by Abraham^{as}.

There are three more shrines inside the Sacred Mosque:

- 1 The station of Abraham^{as}, where Abraham^{as} bowed down for prayer.
- 2 The well of Zamzam, a well that sprang up from the ground when Hagar was desperately looking for water for her infant, Isama'il^{as}.
- 3 Safa and Marwah, a vast corridor linking two hills, Safa and Marwah, a distance of 440 yards where Hagar ran seeking water for her infant.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the Black Stone was stolen by the Qarmatians in 930 and kept hidden in Hofuf for twenty years?

*From: Finjan Gahwa and a Bit of Everything, by Abdalla Elmadani
(with the compliments of The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia,*

London 1997)

AN APPEAL

MADINA HOUSE

A MUSLIM HOME FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF CARE IN LONDON

Madina House is a Muslim home for children in need of care, established in 1981 under the auspices of the Muslim Women's Association (a registered charity which has been functioning since 1962)

From its inception the organisers worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Security and all other Social Services Agencies in order to comply with the current guidelines on the running of Children's Homes. Subsequently Madina House was registered by the Department of S.S.I. under the Child Care Act.

Aim—The main aim of Madina House is to provide an alternative home for children who for whatever reason, are temporarily unable to live with their parent/s. At Madina House we provide a stable, caring background, founded on Islamic principles and practices. Since its founding we have cared for over 400 children.

The present home does no longer comply with today's regulations and we have been asked to find more suitable accommodation. Thus, we are in desperate need of finance to buy an appropriate building. Failing to do so, the future of Madina House is in question.

Please help us by giving generously to continue to care for our children in need.

Donations, whether by Cheques or Banker's Orders would be greatly appreciated.

AN APPEAL

MADINA HOUSE

"You shall not attain righteousness unless you spend on others of that which you love, and whatever you spend, verily God has knowledge of it."

The Qur'an 3:92

From.....

Name.....

Address

Telephone

I would like to make a donation/Zakat and enclose a cheque for the amount of £.....payable to **Madina House Trust**

To be send either to:

Madina House Trust, PO Box 29891 London SW20 0SS

or direct to:

The National Westminster Bank, Royal Garden Branch, Kensington High
Street, London W8 5EQ

Account Number 77946405; Sort Number 50-30-101 a

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FASTING

Ashor Shamis

Whosoever makes the Fast out of *Iman* (belief) and with dedication, all of his previous sins shall be forgiven.

—The Prophet Muhammad^{pbup}

This time every year, Muslims in their millions all over the world await eagerly the coming of the glorious month of Ramadan. They look forward to it with joy and excitement as it is the month during which they carry out one of the most important religious duties of Islam—that of fasting. They are like someone who looks forward to a cheerful hot-water bath after a long and tiring journey. Fasting is just like a shower, but one that cleans the heart and soul as well as the physical human body.

WHAT IS FASTING?

Many people seem to think of fasting only in terms of giving up food and drink for so many hours a day, 30 days every year. As they do not understand fasting in any other way it is difficult for them to appreciate it or derive benefit from it. Theirs is not fasting in the Islamic sense but senseless and painful starvation.

Besides giving up food and drink from dawn till sunset, fasting in Islam means giving up certain other pleasures in life. When one learns and practices to do without the things which are healthy and *halal* (permissible) for one month every year, then one would stand a better chance to resist the temptations to take and do the things which are not healthy and are *haram* (forbidden),

A SCHOOL FOR SELF-CONTROL

So fasting is really a school in which we Muslims, practice and learn self-control—and enjoy it. For self-control is what fasting is all about. We learn to think about things before we do them. We learn how to be strong enough in our minds, our hearts and our bodies so as not to get carried away by the delights of life. We learn how to feel the presence of Allah^{swt}; and to do our Islamic duties to please Him and not to pretend or show off. This, in our religion, is called *Taqwa*—which means to obey Allah^{swt} and fear Him privately in our hearts and not only when there is someone watching us or checking on us. According to the Qur'an, fasting is prescribed to create this feeling of *Taqwa* in the hearts and minds of Muslims; and it goes on to make it stronger.

WHAT IS THE POINT?

You see, I can easily pretend to fast and make my friends and family believe me by not eating in front of them, but when I am alone I find something to eat or drink.

BUT THIS NOT THE POINT

As a Muslim during Ramadan I should give up eating or drinking even when on my own because I must feel and understand that it is for Allah^{swt} I am fasting and not for anyone else. This is what we should learn in this Ramadan school.

Another thing is the sense of achievement which we gain from fasting all day. The first thing one feels when one breaks the fast is that one had done something great. You have succeeded in going without food and drink from dawn to dusk. And you have done it alone. This means you are strong in your heart, soul and body. This is a great feeling that fills you with *Taqwa* and brings

you nearer to Allah^{swt} than ever before.

In addition to this proud feeling, one also feels strong and courageous when completing the fast. One realises that food and drink are not all there is to life. The satisfaction of material needs is not everything. Our souls also need to be looked after and it has to be trained to do certain things and not to do certain others. Fasting is the kind of sport that strengthens the soul of Muslims and makes them healthy and fit.

In fasting we are also given a chance to feel a tinge of hunger and see how the unfortunate and the poor of this world live. This makes us want to help them and share their suffering by offering them charity and giving them all possible help.

During Ramadan, one can feel a sense of unity amongst the Muslims—all believing in the Faith of Islam, whether rich or poor, white or black, all fasting for the same period of time and for the same purpose.

WHY A WHOLE MONTH?

Obviously one day is not enough to make people really understand the virtues of fasting and to train them in self-control, charitability and equality. Can one become a footballer in one day's training? Allah^{swt}, in his wisdom, extended fasting to last one month. It will not be fruitful to fast for only a month in one's lifetime; and therefore one has to fast every year. This gives us a chance to refuel our hearts with *Taqwa* and renew our obedience and sense of worship to Almighty Allah^{swt}.

THE MESSAGE OF FASTING

Thus we see that fasting in Islam is prescribed solely for our own benefit. Allah^{swt} is in no need of our fasting. We practice it

primarily to prove to ourselves that we are prepared to respond to Allah's^{swt} call and orders willingly and with pleasure. We practice it to enrich our souls and get training in self-control and to strengthen our will-power.

We can summarise the message of fasting as follows:

- 1 It reminds Muslims of their spiritual needs;
- 2 It inspires them to train their desires and will-power;
- 3 It enhances their soul and liberates their emotions and impulses from the chains of worldly pleasures.

In addition to this, fasting has been proved to have several advantageous effects on people's health, especially on the digestive system. It gives the working parts of this system a sufficient break after which they regain their function with more speed and efficiency. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Fast and you shall be healthy'.

3rd Annual AMSS (UK) Conference

20-21 October 2001-09-23

The association of Muslim Social Scientists (UK) is organising its third annual two day conference entitled Unity & Diversity: Islam, Muslims and the Challenge of Pluralism.

The conference sets out to critically analyse and explore Islam's relationship to the concepts of unity, diversity and pluralism. In doing so, it seeks to make a positive and constructive contribution to the challenges faced by modern Muslim communities.

Details from AMSS (UK), p. O. Box 126,
Richmond, Surrey, TW9 2UD

A HOLY MONTH

Ramadan is marked with several Islamic events that are both religiously important and historically significant. The Qur'an was revealed in this month to be 'a perfect guide for mankind consisting of clear teachings which show the right way and are criteria for truth and falsehood' (Al Baqarah 185). The time when this happened is *Lailatu El-Qadar* (the Night of Power) of which the Qur'an says that it is 'better than a thousand months'. Hence Ramadan is a chance for Muslims to show their gratitude for the favour of the Revelation of the Qur'an. And the best way to do this is to fulfil the object for which the Qur'an has been revealed and to live a kind of life that Allah^{swt} wants us to live.

The famous battle of Badr took place on 16th of Ramadan in the first year of *Hijra* (March 624 AD). In this battle 300 Muslims gave a shattering defeat to one thousand heavily equipped Quraysh soldiers.

A NEW TIMETABLE

In Ramadan, along with his behaviour, the timetable of daily routines of a Muslim changes. He becomes more kind, friendlier and more charitable. His meal times shift and he becomes more conscious of Allah's^{swt} existence and supervision over him. He reads the Qur'an more often and says many extra prayers. This change in the timetable changes his attitudes towards himself, towards others and towards life in general. After Ramadan there appears a new and a better Muslim.

May Allah^{swt} accept our fasting and help us fulfil its objectives.

From: Zenith, November 1970

A TOUCH OF MERCY

By Sayyid Qutb, translated by Ashor Shamis

By the white forenoon and the brooding night

Your Lord has neither forsaken you nor hates you

What is to come shall be better for you than what already was

And certainly your Lord will give unto you until you are satisfied

Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you?

Did He not find you wandering and guide you?

Did He not find you destitute and enrich you?

So as you the orphan, do not oppress him

And as for him who asks, scold him not

And as for the bounty of your Lord, proclaim it!

Surah Al-Duha, 93.

This Surah, with its subject matter, rhetoric, scenes, shaded and rhythm is but a touch of tenderness and a breath of mercy. It is a message of affection; it is a benevolent hand that soothes over pains and troubles, spreading refreshment, pleasure and hope, pouring out calmness, satisfaction and certainty.

The Surah is dedicated to the Prophet^{pbuh} in its entirety a message from his Lord to his heart with pleasure, joy, tranquillity and contentment. Altogether it is a flow of mercy and compassion and clemency to his troubled soul, unsettled mind and suffering heart.

It has been conveyed in several narrations that the revelations of the Qur'an unto the Prophet came, at one stage, to a halt and that Jibril, was held up for a while. The unbelievers therefore said,

"Alas Muhammad's^{pbuh} Lord has bidden him farewell!" And so Allah^{swt} revealed this Surah.

For the coming of the Revelations and the meeting of Jibril and the link with Allah^{swt} were the Prophet's whole equipment along his precarious path. They were his only solace in the heat of rejection and his solé sojourn from the hardships of repudiation. They were the source of sustenance to him in this intense situation which was created by those wandering wild souls of the unbelievers who were intent on rebuff and refusal, and bent on directing their wickedness, vileness and organised attack against the Prophet's call, against faith and against guidance.

So that when the revelation was withheld, sustenance for the Prophet was cut off. His lifespriug was sapped and he longed for his heart's friend. Alone he was left in the wilderness—without sustenance, without water, without the accustomed companionship of the beloved friend. Such was a situation beyond human endurance by al means.

By then this Surah was revealed and it came as a rich flow of compassion, love, mercy, tenderness, hope, pleasure, comfort, composure and assuredness. "Your Lord has neither forsaken you, nor does He despise you. And verily what is to come shall be better for you than what already was. Your Lord will ever give you. And you shall be content". Your Lord has never before left you or rejected you, or even denied you any of His mercy or protection or security. "Did He not find you an orphan and protect you? Did He not find you wandering and guide you? Did he not find you destitute and enrich you?"

Do you not see the affirmation of this in your own life? Do you not feel it in your heart? Do you not observe it in your world? No

...No... "Your Lord has neither forsaken you, nor does He despise you". Never had His mercy been taken away from you and it never should be "And verily what is to come will be better for you than what already was". And there will be much more" "Your Lord will give you until you are content!"

With this gracious breath touching on the realities of the situation and the spirit of Prophet is combined the sweet touch in the expression and the rhythm and in the frame of the nature in which this reality is placed. "By the white forenoon and the still night". The expression released an atmosphere of affection, kindness and complete satisfaction. "Your Lord has not forsaken you nor hates you. What is to come shall be better for you than what already was. And certainly your Lord will give unto you until you are satisfied. Did He not find you an orphan and shelter you? Did He not find you wandering and guide you? That tenderness, that mercy, that satisfaction, that silence are all encountered through the sweet expressions and the soothing words and phrases which softly thread along the surah with gentle echoes and lively rhythm as they are enveloped in the frame of the morning hours and the still night. During these periods one's reflections flow like a stream, the soul is best able to communicate with the universe and its Creator, and feels the universe worshipping its; Lord and turning towards Him in praise with joy and happiness.

In addition, the night is described as "still". It is not the dark gloomy night as such but the "still" night that is clear, silent and full of tranquillity; covered with a light cloud of sweet longing and kind reflection. It is a picture similar to that of the orphan's life. More still, the night is cleared away by the crossing morning and

thus the colours of the picture beautifully match with those of the framework, and harmony is achieved.

This ingenuity in perfecting the beauty of the scene points to the perfection in Allah's^{swt} making to which there is no parallel and which is beyond imitation,

"By the morning hours. And by the night when it is stillest Your Lord has not forsaken you. Nor does He despise you. And verily, what is to come is better for you than what already was. And verily your Lord will give you until you are content".

Allah^{swt} vows by those two phenomena and harmonises natural phenomena with human feelings, in order to bring home the fact that the beauty of the one is intertwined with that of the other. Hence the human heart lives in peace with the world, relaxed, unlovely and happily at ease. This style is particularly appropriate in this Surah as the feeling of fellowship is to be stressed as if to tell the Prophet right from the beginning of the Surah that his Lord had already covered him with the fellowship of the world around him and he was by no means forsaken or lonely.

Then followed a direct assertion. "Your Lord had neither forsaken you, nor does He despise you". He has not left you, nor has He been harsh to you as allege those who want to hurt your heart and soul or trouble your feelings. For He is your Lord and you belong to Him and to His Lordship. He is your sustainer and protector. Allah's^{swt} favours on you have neither run out nor have they been stopped, and you (Muhammad^{pbuh}) are to get much more and better favours in the Hereafter than you are getting in this life; for therein will be all the goodness!

Allah^{swt} is saving for you (Muhammad^{pbuh}), what will satisfy you in your mission and ease your hard path and bring about the

victory of your call and the vindication of your truth. These thoughts were in fact preoccupying the Prophet's mind as he was encountering his people's refusal and maltreatment, rejection and wickedness, and malice. "Your Lord ... Until you are satisfied".

The Surah then continues to remind the Prophet of his Lord's attitude towards him from the very beginning of his mission to bring home to his heart how favourably God had been treating him and how kind and generous He was to him. This to make him enjoy the pleasurable memories of such divine treatment, which is a joy revived by the words: "Did He not find you an orphan and sheltered you? Did He not find you wandering and guide you? Did He not find you destitute and enrich you?" Reflect upon your present life and upon your past and see. Has He ever forsaken you or despised you even before He gave you the assignment to be a prophet.

You (Muhammad^{pbuh}) were born an orphan but Allah^{swt} protected you. He made so many hearts to be kind to you even that of your uncle Abu Talib, though he was of other convictions. You were destitute and He made your heart rich with contentment, and He made your heart rich with contentment, and made you rich through your business gains and the wealth of your household (Khadija, may Allah^{swt} be pleased with her) so that you would not suffer from poverty or yearn for what wealth that surrounded you.

You (Muhammad^{pbuh}) were also brought up in jahiliyy surroundings that were marked by confusions and belief and conception, full of crooked situations and ways of life. Your soul was not content with all that but, yet, you did not find a clear and suitable way out. You neither saw your way in the jahiliyy world nor

among the followers of Moses^{as} and Jesus^{as} who adulterated their beliefs, changed them and went astray. But Allah^{swt} guided you through what He revealed to you and through the systems that linked you with Him.

This 'guidance' in the wilderness of disbelief and confusion is the greatest favour, one that cannot be equalled. The release and tranquillity it brings about are net to one. It perhaps came as a result of the Prophet's patience during the absence of revelation and the malice of polytheists. And so came the reminder to put his heart at ease and assure him of his Lord's promise.

Allah^{swt} takes the opportunity of mentioning the orphan, the heathen and the poor to instruct the Prophet and Muslims to protect every orphan, give unto everyone who asks, and voice Allah's^{swt} great favours on themselves, the first of which is guidance to the religion of Islam. "Therefore the orphan oppress not, the beggar drive not away and declare the bounty of your Lord."

These restrictions were a result of the needs of the day, as was pointed out repeatedly, in that lusty, disbelieving environment in which the weak, being unable to take their rights themselves were not catered for. Islam came and elevated that environment with Allah's^{swt} *Shariah* to the level of equity, justice, good-will and with the frame-work of Allah's^{swt} system ...

The declaring of Allah's^{swt} bounties, especially those of guidance and faith, is a form of gratitude to Him, the Giver, which is completed by kindness to the worshipper. It is a practical manifestation of thanks.

From: The Muslim, May-June 1971.

KITCHEN TALK

IRMIK HELVASI (Semolina Halva)

Bashirah Badriyah

Although probably there are equivalent sweetmeats all over the world here is a Turkish one. It is tasty and may appeal to those who have a sweet tooth. It can be eaten warm or cold and can be taken on picnics, served as a sweet at mealtimes, or eaten at any time of the day. Its texture should be firm when cooked and its colour yellow.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 lb. semolina

3 oz butter, margarine (vegetable) or equivalent amount of cooking oil

1 cup (culinary measurement) of white granulated sugar

1 cup of hot water.

This is enough for about 3 or 4 people.

METHOD

Melt the butter/oil in the bottom of a large saucepan over a very low heat. When it is hot, but not sizzling, add in the semolina. Mix with a wooden spoon. The semolina should absorb the butter/oil. Continue cooking for about 5-7 minutes until the mixture begins to give off a very sweet smell (this does not happen with cooking oil). Stir frequently so that the mixture does

not burn or harden. Meanwhile measure the sugar and add it to the hot water, so that the sugar dissolves. Add to the semolina mixture and stir. The mixture should now be liquid. Stir occasionally. It should take about 20-30 minutes for the mixture to thicken and end up in a firm 'lump'. Unless oil has been used, it should not be sticky. Transfer the 'lump' to a plate and leave to cool, according to how you want to serve it up. Cut the halva with a knife and serve on a plate.

HOW TO WRITE AN ARTICLE FOR...

Shehnaz Yusuf

INGREDIENTS

2 scraps of paper
1 pencil
1 rubber (most vital)
1 pen
1 apple
1 postage stamp
1 envelope
some concentrated thoughts
a fresh brain

METHOD

1 Take pencil and to this add some concentrated thoughts.
2 Stir thoughts rabidly or five minutes at least until lucid enough to put on paper.

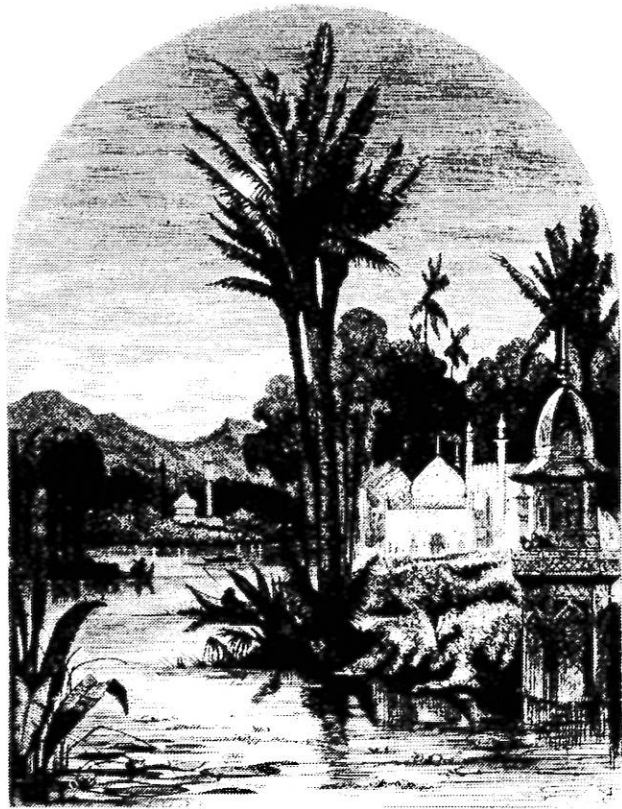
3 Leave aside for a few minutes until apple has been reduced to a core.
4 Re-read the mixture on paper and using rubber, erase lumps to make a smoother consistency.
5 arrange it neatly on the second paper in pen.
6 Fold it into the envelope and stick the stamp at one corner.
7 Send it to the Editor, watch him turn red, green and purple.

WARNING

Temperature of the Editor is likely to rise to about 100 degrees centigrade! Time for cooling down 24 hours.

From: Zenith, July 1971.





Dear Members,

We, the Muslim Women's Association are trying to raise **ADVERTISING** for the newsletter. You can help by: calling attention to the adverts you see in 'The Muslim Woman' and asking your business acquaintances and family if they would wish to advertise. Please contact the editor for rates.

