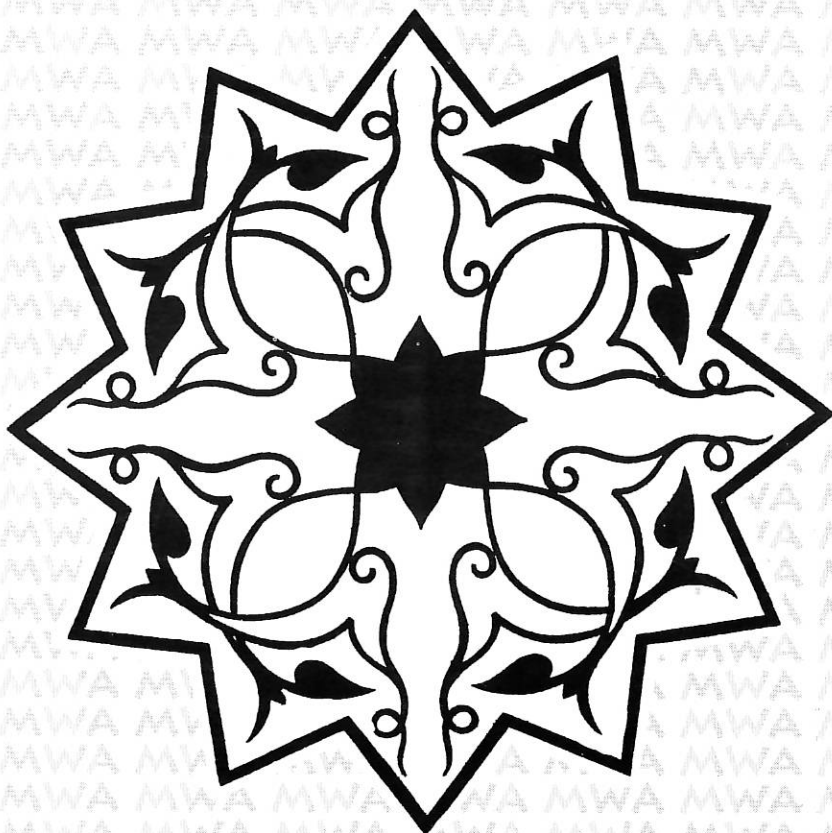


The **MUSLIM WOMAN**

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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 38626, London W13 9WE. 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.

EID DINNER

Sunday 16th February 2003

4pm - 7pm

Islamic Cultural Centre,

146 Park Road,

London NW8 7RG.

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE BENEFICENT, THE MERCIFUL

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers

Assalamu Alaikum,

I hope that you enjoy the articles in 'The Muslim Woman'.

The articles are carefully chosen extracts that we think will be of interest to our readership, or are specially written by our members who wish to share their views or experience.

If you have any experience, travelogue or views that you would like to share, do please send them to the editor, for consideration.

We are looking forward to meeting with you in person at our forthcoming Eid dinner (details in magazine).

Unaiza Malik

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All articles and news for publication should be sent to the editor.

Typeset by Yahya El-Droubie, Croydon, TEL: 020 8654 8801

EUROPE'S MUSLIMS

ISLAM IS now firmly established in Western Europe. Don't be afraid of it.

Who'd be a Muslim in the West? In recent decades, indifference to Islam has turned first to disdain, then to suspicion and more recently to hostility. Public attitudes have been coloured successively by petro-powered sheikhs, Palestinian terrorists, Iranian ayatollahs, mass immigration and then the attacks of September 11th, executed if not planned by western-based Muslims and succoured by an odious regime in Afghanistan. Most recently, amid rising concern about immigration in general, Muslims have had to contend with the charge that aspects of their religion are fundamentally the very word is freighted with images of hairy, wild-eyed fanatics - at odds with the liberal, democratic values of the West. Yet millions of Muslims live in the West - perhaps 1.3m in Britain, 3.2m in Germany, 4.2m in France - and Islam is the fastest growing religion in the United States. Indeed, it is the fastest growing religion in the world. It would be serious if it really were incompatible with liberal, democratic values. Fortunately, it is not. The idea that Muslims constitute an alien fifth column does not hold up. The vast majority live happily beside their neighbours, submit readily to the laws of the land and have no wish to overthrow the government. If a few do believe that religious injunctions take precedence over temporal laws, so also do some Christians (in America, the Balkan, Northern Ireland), some Hindus (in secular, democratic India) and some Jews (in democratic Israel). Individual Muslims flourish in western societies, be they the owner of the corner-shop, the prosperous tycoon, the eminent surgeon or the Aga Khan. Most

work hard, hold strict family values and commit no crimes: model citizens, you might say.

Yet it would be idle to pretend that Muslims do not present problems in the West. These are of two kinds. First are the problems associated with many other immigrant groups. Like these other migrants, Muslims tend to come from poor, rural areas; most are ill-educated, many are brown. They often encounter xenophobia and discrimination, sometimes made worse by racist politicians. They speak the language of the wider society either poorly or not at all, so they find it hard to get jobs. Their children struggle at school. They huddle in poor districts, often in state-supplied housing. For all these reasons they tend to withdraw into their own world, which is relatively easy, since their numbers are great enough to enable them to form a fairly self-sufficient, self-contained community. But this is not the way to fit into society at large.

HERE TO STAY

Governments and other institutions can help. They can, for a start, recognise the obvious, which is that most of these immigrants are in the West to stay. If they are to become good members of society, then, they must be given citizenship, the right to vote and all the other rights that other citizens enjoy. Only slowly are some governments coming to this view: probably no more than 10% of the Muslims in Germany, for example, are entitled to vote there. In France, the belief that immigrants should give up all the cultural characteristics of their native societies has been slow to die; assimilation, rather than integration, has been the traditional aim. Governments must also take steps both to outlaw racial discrimination and to promote the

employment of Muslims and other minorities. Here, too France and Germany lag. Neither yet has a body similar to Britain's 36-year-old Commission for Racial Equality.

Immigrants themselves, however, must make an effort to integrate, and Muslims no less than others, especially as their religion does present particular difficulties. Some in this, the second, category of problems may be cultural, though the trouble that even Muslim may have in deciding whether habits are religious or cultural gives an insight into the all-pervading nature of religion in a devout Muslim's life. Thus, though a Muslim of Pakistani origin in Britain may well say, for instance, that arranged marriages are obligatory under Islam, the idea would be dismissed by most Turks in Germany. Similarly, the ritual slaughter – to some consternation among the wider public – of tens of thousands of sheep in France at the feast of Aid al-Adha each year has no counterpart in Britain.

Islam does, of course, impose some obligations, and zealots say they include outright hostility to the tenets of western society. That, however, is not the view of most Islamic scholars, and the vast majority of Muslims find they can follow their religion in the West without serious difficulty, and without causing annoyance. Rows about headscarves and halal meat at school, not uncommon a few years ago, are now rare.

CLERICAL CHAOS

One difficulty for the authorities, though, is knowing whom to deal with. Islam, like Judaism, is a religion without a clear hierarchy or form structure. Europe's Muslims are represented by umpteen different groups, often squabbling and often as

concerned with the interests of a government abroad as with those of the people they say they want to help. Imams can, and do, spring up almost spontaneously, supported perhaps by a few devotees, financed usually from North Africa, the Middle East or Asia, trained, often minimally, in a country where democracy is an unfamiliar concept, and answerable to no one but God. No wonder moderate grand muftis lament their lack of authority over extremist imams.

Some Muslim scholars call for the evolution of a "European Islam", one that will take account of European culture and policies. That may be an unreasonable demand to make of a universal religion, but it does point up the dependence on foreigners of many, if not most, mosques in Europe, and of the foreign training of the imams who preach in them. This dependence not only encourages Europe's Muslims to perpetuate their links to their countries of origin at the expense of forging loyalties to their new homelands, it also provides an easy point of entry for extreme or hate-filled teaching from abroad. European Muslims need to finance their own mosques and train their own imams as quickly as possible. Governments can help, both by giving planning permission for purpose-built mosques – few exist in Europe – and by extending to Islam the privileges and tax breaks that are afforded to other religions.

In time, most Muslims will integrate successfully into western societies, especially if commonsense policies like language-aching, , job-creation schemes and anti-discrimination programmes are promoted. But they size and concentration of most Muslim communities may well mean that integration takes place more slowly for them than for, say, Afro-Caribbeans. And

meanwhile an additional difficulty is that, for Muslims who are disaffected or alienated from society, religion seems to provide a potent, and not necessarily benign, kind of solace.

The right response to any group that preaches violence- many Islamists do not – is to prosecute and ban it. And plainly, after September 11, the police and security services have work to do. But so, too, do others. Non-Muslims must show that Muslims have an equal place in western societies alongside the followers of other or no religions. And Muslims must show that they can organise their clergy and places of worship from within their own communities, and give no quarter to those who misuse Islam for violent ends.

Reprinted: The Economist, August 10th-16th 2002.

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.

THE CONCEPT OF CHARITY

Sirajuddin Aziz

WHILE CHARITY is a fundamental plank of Islam in terms of Zakat, Muslims all over the world take special care and pleasure in dispensing it during the month of Ramadan and Shawwal. The Qur'an says: "They ask thee, what they should spend in charity. Say: whatever ye spend that is good, is for parents and kindred, and orphans, and those in want, and wayfarers, and whatever ye do that is good ... God knows it well" (2:215).

This verse amply defines what charity is. It addresses what can be given in charity; to whom charity is to be given and how it is to be dispensed. Anything that is useful, helpful and valuable can be given. 'Good' manifests only positive attributes. The connotation here is that any object that is of, say, no useful value, when given in charity, is really no charity. Charity that is good can be, besides money or property, a worthy advice, a useful knowledge or a kind word. Charity should be devoid of harmful or negative intent.

In observing charity, all pretence, show and insincerity, must be shunned. Allah sets in the Qur'an for believing souls a very high standard for charity. The verses from 261-277, in surah Al-Baqarah, provide for the meaning and quality of charity. Allah promises, "The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn; it groweth seven ears, and each ear hath a hundred grains. God giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth". Here, the Lord persuades mankind to carry out acts of charity with the faith and belief that giving from resources blessed by Him will not diminish and reduce them but, on the contrary, if He pleases these would increase manifold.

By giving charity, one must not expect reward or subservience from the taker. Charity must be in the way of Allah and hence reward spiritual or material is to be expected from Him alone, according to His good pleasure and plan. Acts of generosity, if flaunted, lose their real value and cease to be in the way of Allah. "O ye, who believe, cancel not your charity, by reminders of your generosity ..." (2:264). False charity, filled with pretence, to be seen and appreciated by men, is no charity.

Charity, without motives of display or publicity, is true charity. Charity concealed ensures great pleasure of Allah: "but if ye conceal them and make them reach those really in need, that is the best for you; it will remove from you some of your stains of evil ..." (2:271). Charity does not impoverish, but enriches the giver "for charity, seeking the countenance of Allah, will increase, it is those who will get a recompense multiplied" (3:38).

Every verse of the Qur'an that exhorts believers to observe salat, is either prefixed or suffixed, with the need to observe charity. "And especially those, who establish regular prayer and practise regular charity, and believe in God and in the Last Day: to them shall we soon give a great reward" (4:162).

Charity is an act which must be practised at all times, irrespective of prosperity or otherwise. The meaning of charity being so wide, it does not merely encompass the sharing of material wealth. Prosperity is relative, it can be material, spiritual, or both. "Those who spend freely, whether in prosperity, or in adversity ... for Allah loves those who do good" (3:134). Charity infuses in a believing soul traits and attributes of generosity, benevolence and munificence. It erases stains of evil and purifies the inner-self.

There are several Prophetic traditions extolling acts of charity. The entire life of our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) is characterised by kindness and the desire to alleviate human sufferings. If we Muslims sincerely observe the norms of charity as ordained in the Qur'an and as practised by the Prophet (peace be upon him) we can build a society that will be free from pretence and ostentatiousness. In a truly Islamic society all members would lead a simple life.

During the caliphate of Abu Bakr, a blind old woman lived in Madina. Umar used to go to her every morning to help her with domestic chores. After a few days Umar realised that someone else was coming much earlier to help the blind lady. One day Umar started from his home earlier than his usual time. On reaching the blind woman's house he saw Abu Bakr coming out of the door. This was an act that set the ideal standard of charity.

Ayesha was known for her generosity and benevolence. She would go to any length to help others. If she had nothing but only a date she would not hesitate to give it. She once gave away all dirhams in charity, received from the Bait-ul-Mal, for her provisions.

Once Umar bin Abdul Aziz was distributing apples from the Bait-ul-Mal. His youngest son, who was with him, picked up an apple and started to eat it. Umar snatched the apple from the boy who now began to cry. The boy went home and complained to his mother. She bought a few apples from the market and gave it to him. Later, when Umar returned home, he could smell the fragrance of apples. He asked his wife if these were from the Bait-ul-Mal. The wife told the whole story. Umar said: "By Allah, it pained me to snatch the apple from his hand, but even a little

thing that belongs to Bait-ul-Mal cannot be used by the caliph and his family”.

Funds available in the Bait-ul-Mal should, therefore, be used for the needy alone. Under the given conditions today, we are unsure about the judicious use of Zakat which is (in some countries) deducted by banks from account holders' balance each year and is made available to the government. There is not, one can observe, even the slightest alleviation in poverty or a noticeable decrease in the number of beggars on our streets which defeats the end for which charity is meant and Zakat is deducted.

On one occasion a beggar knocked at the door of Ali for food at the time of Iftar. He offered the beggar the only piece of bread he had and broke his fast with salt and water only. This became an everyday routine and Ali did not refuse the beggar ever. “For those who give in charity, men and women, and loan to Allah, a beautiful loan, it shall be increased manifold, to their credit. They shall have a liberal reward”(57:18).

We should not postpone good resolutions to the future. An act, a deed of goodness must be promptly performed. “And spend something in charity, out of the substance which we have bestowed on you; before death should come to any of you and he should say, “O my Lord! Why did Thou not give me respite for a little while? I should then have given (largely) in charity” ... says the Qur'an.

From: Hamdard Islamicus, vol. xxv, no.1.

GREETINGS FROM MALAYSIA

Sayeeda Sherif

Salaam

I met a team of doctors in Kandahar in March this year, members of the Mercy Malaysia charity. I was amazed to see their dedication and the good work they performed, setting up hospitals and treating and operating patients, many of whom were refugees, under very difficult circumstances beyond description. As we all know Afghanistan has been ravaged by war and strife for the past twenty-two years, first by imperialist Russians and recently by American aggression.

Here was a self-financing, dedicated team of doctors from privileged backgrounds who set about to help those less fortunate than themselves. I was so impressed by those Malaysian doctors that I decided to visit their country to find out more about how and what made them leave their homes for a while and travel so far to serve humanity.

I arrived in Malaysia on the 14th September. I was met at the airport by one of the team's doctor and his wife who herself is a specialist in obstetrics. I intended to stay with them only for a day or so until I could find affordable accommodation but their hospitality exceeded to the point that I could not move away from their love and warmth.

Both husband and wife lead a very busy life. The wife, Dr Fatima Asmadi, runs a twenty-bed hospital besides being the mother to five lovely children. The eldest child is fifteen and the youngest is only four. There is no chaos and complete serenity and calm prevails in the home. The garden is full of flowers and

fruit plants like papaya and mangoes. Although both husband and wife work, they find time for other charitable work, *falahior*, besides being members of the Mercy Malaysia charity. They are also supporting educational programmes in Malaysia and in Indonesia.

Almost all women in Malaysia wear their national costume called *Baju Kurung*. The garment consists of a long skirt and a long-sleeved, knee-length shirt. The head scarf is held together by two brooches. They are not only neatly dressed, but look elegant as well.

When I was young I never heard of a country called Malaysia. Malaysia today consists of three separate territories of Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah. It shares borders with Thailand, Indonesia and the enclave states of Singapore and Brunei. The former British protectorate of Malaya, made up of 11 states, gained independence in 1957. The federation of Malaya, incorporating, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah, was founded in 1963. Two years later Singapore left the federation.

Due to the geographical location the area has been occupied/invaded by super-powers since at least the 16th century. People were displaced, often forcefully. Apparently some prisoners and slaves made a tapestry, depicting the story of Abraham which they tried to preserve through their handicraft. The said tapestry is housed at the British Museum. It is well known that the Malaysians, especially the women excel in needlecraft. The Malay people are gentle by nature. Over time Arab ship-owners/merchants, Indian Muslims and Indian Hindu businessmen and Chinese traders came and settled.

Today the population of Malaysia is 20 million. The country has

a harmonious society. The main three strands of the population, Malay, Chinese and Indians live peacefully together. This reflects the tolerant nature of the Malay Muslims who welcome warmly every foreigner and show kindness and gentility which Islam teaches.

The Malaysians are well organised and more literate than many other Muslim countries. They have a national character building programme hence their transport system and their buildings are perhaps safe from the terrible graffiti culture and dirt seen nearly everywhere else in the world today. There is strong and organised *dawa* work going on, respected and supported by the Government. The present head of the *Dawa* centre's name is Hajji Mohammed Nathalie Hajji Ahmad. The recitation, the *Qirat* and *Tarbiya* of people at home and outside reflect his hard work in their manners and courtesy.

New schools are being opened everywhere thus the literacy percentage of the population is near 90%. As said earlier, most ladies wear the national costume which complies with the *sharia*. They study, work and mix freely in all spheres of daily life. In fact, in certain areas particularly in education, women play a more dominant role than men.

I was privileged to attend a function that I feel should be followed the world over. The function, called IBU MISAALI (Exemplary Mother). It was attended by the Queen and some ten thousand people by invitation. This ceremony took place in the Putra World Trade Centre, in a beautifully decorated large hall with an abundance of fresh flowers. Guests were seated before the commencement of the programme which started on time. On arrival of the Queen, the national anthem was played, guests

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

stood. There was complete silence. No children were seen running about in a wild manner, no one talked to their neighbours, only an occasional whisper could be heard. The Queen, the Misaali Mother, and the Head of the *Dawa* centre, together with other dignitaries, were seated on the stage. In fact, the entire ceremony was an example for the many Muslim conferences I have seen in Britain and in other so called Islamic states. There were present ladies from the technical college, many other students and young mothers, all seated in the main hall. Many male students from the *Dawa* university sat in the top gallery. The function, right from the beginning to the end, displayed good organisational skills and was well planned. An example to us all.

The compeer, dressed in pink, welcomed and thanked guests. An eleven-year old girl by the name Faiza Shamsul Arifin of Perak, recited the Qur'anic *ayats* commanding the role of a mother, mankind to respect her and obey her. While she recited the beautiful verses, the *Qirat* touched all hearts. Three young girls sang in praise of a mother. The Queen, dressed simply and elegantly in green, covering her hair with a green *dupata*, delivered her speech beautifully. Then, the famous "Rehan" group of young men sang a song written by a poetess. The music gently played. The *Misaali* Mother got up and read her speech. She was sixty-three years old and had borne fifteen children. She and her family lived in a village where she brought up her children well with meagre means. But all her children graduated from famous universities and are doing well. Her life, from youth to grandmother, was shown on video. She was lucky that her husband was still alive and that she had the love of so many

children and grandchildren. The Queen presented to her a gold-embroidered gown (worth 10,000 ringgit, Malaysian currency), a diamond brooch and two tickets for Umra. The whole ceremony was very moving. Tea was served and the Queen departed while the national anthem was played.

These are the ways by which the Malaysians are bringing love and strength to family life and reinforcing goodness in society.

Eid Dinner

Sunday 16th February 2003

from 4pm to 7pm

(Dinner will be served after Maghrib Prayers)

Venue: The Islamic Cultural Centre,
146 Park Road,
London NW8 7RG.

Please book your tickets in advance by telephoning:
Mrs Nabila Waseem-Saeed, Secretary, 020 8672 5896
or

Mrs Lubna Ilyas, M'ship Secretary, 020 8577 4451.

All Welcome

KITCHEN TALK

MOROCCAN CHICKEN WITH FATTOUSH AND COUSCOUS

Ingredients: for the chicken

6 chicken pieces or 1 large chicken jointed
25 g butter
4 onions, finely chopped
pinch of saffron
1 tsp cinnamon
salt and pepper
225 g canned chick-peas
115 g blanched almonds
115 g mixed olives, pitted
3 tbsps chopped parsley
juice of half a lemon

... for the fattoush (bread salad)

1 pitta bread
1 bag watercress salad
4-6 tomatoes, roughly chopped
1 cucumber, sliced
4 spring onions, chopped
4 tbsps chopped parsley
4 tbsps chopped mint
juice of half a lemon
6 tbsps olive oil
large pinch of sumac
1 garlic clove, crushed

... for the couscous

1 packet couscous
6-8 tbsps extra virgin olive oil
juice of one lemon
2 tbsps chopped fresh parsley



METHOD

Chicken – Melt the butter in a saute pan and fry the chicken briefly to brown it. Add one of the chopped onions and cover with water. Add the saffron and cinnamon, then season and bring to the boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for one hour until the chicken is tender. Add the chick-peas, the rest of the onions, the almonds and olives. Simmer until the onions are soft, topping up with water as necessary. Just before serving stir in the parsley and the lemon juice.

Fattoush – Put the watercress in a bowl with the chopped tomatoes, cucumber, spring onions, parsley and mint. Make the dressing by combining the lemon juice, olive oil, garlic and sumac in a bowl. Toss the dressing into the salad, Toast the pitta bread under the grill or in a toaster. When cook, tear into thin strips and toss the salad.

Couscous – Pour boiling water on the couscous up to 1 cm above the grains. Cover the bowl. After five to seven minutes, when the couscous is swollen and has absorbed all the water, fluff up the grains with a fork. Drizzle over the olive oil and lemon juice and add the parsley.

NOOR INAYAT KHAN

THE BIRTH OF Noor Inayat Khan took place on January 2nd, 1914 in the Kremlin; a strange place indeed, for an Indian Princess and direct descendant of Tipu Sultan, the last Muslim sovereign of South India. Apparently, the Tsar Nicholas II, his country troubled by internal unrest and impending war, was seeking spiritual solutions to the problems facing his regime. Consequently, the influential **Gregory Rasputin**, invited the father of Noor, who was a Muslim mystic, to visit Holy Mother Russia, in order to share with the Emperor's family and court, his Sufistic doctrines of peace and love.

After a time, however, prompted by a concern for the safety of their family, Pir Inayat Khan and his American wife, the Begum Sharada Ameena (formerly Ora-Ray Baker of Albuquerque, N.M., a distant cousin of Mary Baker Eddy, the originator of Christian Science) decided to depart Moscow during the events leading up to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

Following many adventures, they arrived in Paris, where Noor enrolled in the Ecole Normale de Musique, eventually gaining employment as a writer of children's stories for Paris Radio. The arrival of World War II, however, again caused this peaceful family to flee their adoptive country.

Settling in London, Noor, wanting to do her part in the overthrow of Totalitarianism, became an Assistant Section Officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, seconded to the Women's Transport Service. Her familiarity with France and fluency in the language were qualities very much in demand by the British War Office at the time. The continent had been

occupied by 'Axis' forces and the future held in store several more precarious years for the beleaguered occupants of Hitler's 'Fortress Europe'.

After undergoing extensive training in the Special Operations Executive, Inayat Khan was the first woman operator to be infiltrated into enemy occupied France, on 16 June 1943. During the weeks immediately following her arrival, the Gestapo made mass arrests in the Paris Resistance Groups to which she had been detailed, but although given the opportunity to return to England, she refused to abandon what had become the principal and most dangerous clandestine position in France.

She was a 'wireless' operator and did not wish to leave her French comrades without communications and she hoped also to rebuild her group. The Gestapo did their utmost to catch her and so break the last remaining link with London. After three and a half months she was betrayed, taken to Gestapo Headquarters in the Avenue Foch and asked to co-operate. She refused to give them information of any kind and was imprisoned in the Gestapo HQ, remaining there for several weeks, and making two unsuccessful attempts to escape during that time.

She was asked to sign a declaration that she would make no further attempts but refused, so was sent to Germany for 'safe custody' (the first agent sent to Germany). She was imprisoned at Karlsruhe in November 1943 and later at Pforzheim, where her cell was apart from the main prison as she was considered a particularly dangerous and unco-operative prisoner. She still refused to give any information either as to her work or her comrades. On 12 September 1944 she was taken to Dachau Concentration Camp and shot on the following day.

Noor Inayat Khan's George Cross was published in the London Gazette on 5 April 1949. She is also honoured on the Runnymede Memorial in Surrey, for those RAF personnel with no known grave.

POETRY CORNER

If I stumble on the way,
Lift me up, my God, I pray.
Give to me the helping hand,
Wisdom just to understand.
A listening ear to hear they voice,
A heart that makes the sad rejoice,
A tongue to speak and sing they praise,
And strength another soul to raise.
Arms outstretched to welcome all,
Feet to hurry at thy call,
Eyes to see those in distress,
That I may ease their loneliness.
Give me courage to fulfil,
All I must, to do Thy will,
But if I stumble on the way,
Lift me up, dear God, I pray.
Amen

By D.M.L.

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE QUR'AN?

1. So that He might reward, out of His bounty, those who have attained to faith and done righteous” (30:45)
2. And unto the people of Madyan We sent their (7:85)
3. And hold in check their and pardon their fellow-men because God loves the doers of good (3:134)
4. Allah is the of the Day of Judgement (1:4)
5. And remember when prayed for water for his people and We replied (2:60)
6. Name surah 23 in Arabic
7. He it is who enables you to travel on and sea (10:22)
8. It is only Allah Who will our prayers and we should listen to His call and believe in Him (2:186)
9. This Qur'an is a of what has gone before (10:37)
10. The Muslim community is called in the Qur'an (2:143)
11. Blessed be He, Who has the criterion unto His bondman that he may be unto the worlds a warner (18:1)
12. We have revealed to you Muhammad the with the truth, verifying that which is before it and a guardian over it (5:48)
13. This day I have perfected for you, your religion and completed my favour upon you and am well pleased withas your religion (5:3)
14. He has full of all that is in your hearts (67:13)
15. in the name of your Sustainer (96:1)

Answers: 1. deeds; 2. brother Shuaib; 3. anger; 4. Lord/Master; 5. Moses; 6. Al-Mu'minun; 7. land; 8. hear; 9. continuation; 10. Umma; 11. revealed; 12. divine writ; 13. Islam; 14. knowledge; 15. read.

REMEMBERING MY GRAN

Foqia Hayee

When I hear people talking about their elders and leaving them in homes, I remember my gran. I know now that she had Alzheimer's and quite possibly did not know who I was, but that did not matter because I knew who she was. She was my dad's mum and she lived with us. My dad was my ultimate friend and role model. Before he left for work he used to say to me "look after your gran, and make her laugh today". This became my one and only target for the whole day. I used to pluck jasmine flowers from our garden and put them in a damp muslin cloth near her pillow.

I used to nag my mum to make lunch for my gran quickly so that I could take it to her. My mum had devised the perfect recipe for naan – mixed the flour with a little butter and warm water – making it so soft and just right for a frail, toothless mouth.

I remember clearly my gran lying on the bed dressed in clean white clothes which smelled of starch and sunshine. I would go in and carefully comb her hair and start telling her jokes. When I had finished I went in to the other room to get her lunch. When I came back I told her the same jokes (not knowing that many as a child), but she would laugh as much as she had done the first time. I thought then that she did it to encourage me and I was secretly pleased with myself. But listening to people talk now I realise that she must have forgotten it. Her laughter was genuine though, she used to choke on her chuckles! Perhaps that is where I learned to laugh, so free and full of life – the echo of my words turned into pleasure. Her wrinkles disappeared and the sense of

achievement was divine – definitely one to tell dad when he came back home. He would be pleased and gratified and I would feel that warmth not expressed by cuddles.

When my mother made the naan I took the tray with a glass of water to my gran and watched her eat with interest – waiting for her to leave a piece. I had figured out by now that she never managed to eat all of it and I knew that this was the most delicious bread I ever tasted, hungry or not; made with love and care and great expectations of lasting rewards.

What is so special about that, some might ask? But I know it made me appreciate the limitations of dependency and it gave me an insight into the needs of the elderly. They were not bizarre aliens to me like they are to some children today. I remember thinking in my childish way that my gran was like a large toy: walking, talking, crying, laughing, eating and waiting to be bathed and helped to bed, smelling like jasmine flowers. Not someone who could be visited twice a year on holidays, like visiting the zoo with tins of food and packets of sugar.

I wonder if I am going to be a toy smelling of jasmine or an animal in the zoo?

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He who gives knowledge to those who are not fit for it is a fool;
he who withholds knowledge from those who are fit for it is an
evil-doer.

Arabic Proverb

MUSLIM COMIC, SHAZIA MIRZA

HUMOR AND laughter are essential ingredients of the human experience. Islam recognises this fact and allows it provided that certain guidelines are followed. As with every other facet of life Islam demands that a believer maintains a balance while joking and not violate any of religious and ethical strictures. However, in a rush to be a part of the "in-crowd", some Muslims have plunged into entertainment-related professions without realising the Islamic implications of such a career choice. A case-in-point is Shazia Mirza, 26, who is currently being touted as the "only female, devout, Muslim, stand-up comic" in Europe. While she is all the rage in comedy clubs, her outrageous jokes and actions often push and sometimes cross the bounds of Islamic propriety.

Born to Pakistani immigrants in Birmingham, U.K., Mirza earned a degree in biochemistry and for a time taught physics before embarking on her career as a comedian. She says that she always had a sense of humor and wanted to act in Hollywood films. "I wanted to act and be on stage, wanted to do Hollywood films; I never saw any Asian women in Hollywood. Why not? I would ask myself," she told BBC Birmingham Online.

"I feel that I'm making a difference/change just by standing on that stage. Voicing Asian women, voicing Muslim women and representing another section of society, giving an insight to people about how it really is."

She cancelled her show for a week after the 9-11 attacks but came back with the intent of fighting ignorance about Islam with humor. She says that she allows people to laugh when normally they might not for fear of being labelled as racist or bigoted.

Three weeks after 9-11 she returned to the stage and said "My name is Shazia Mirza - at least that's what it says on my pilot's license," to which the audience applauded.

"We're not all fanatics. I tell audiences how they can distinguish me from Muslim terrorists: they have bigger moustaches than I do," she told the BBC.

She wears a scarf while performing and considers herself a moderate and devout Muslim. "The whole point of my act is to help reduce Islamophobia in Britain," she told London's Telegraph. "The reason it took off was that no one had really heard what it's like to be a Muslim woman here. There were so many stereotypes. I talked about my life and I allowed people to laugh along with me."

But of concern to some Muslims is Mirza's take on Islam's empowerment of women, which includes performing in front of drunken crowds. "A lot of Muslim men think that it's not the place for a woman to stand on stage in front of a drunken crowd trying to make them laugh. But actually Islam gives women a lot of power," says Mirza, as quoted by the Telegraph. "We're not all as oppressed as the women in Afghanistan. Just by standing on stage, I'm liberating women and some men clearly fear that means they'll lose the upper hand."

She explains one of her jokes about Muslim women like this: "I always have men come up to me afterwards and ask me questions and say: 'Is it true that [Muslim] women have to walk a few steps behind their husband, is that true?' I say 'Yes, they look better from behind'."

In October, 2001, the BBC reported that Mirza "does not poke fun at her religion." But recently she did and created some

controversy with the joke. Doing her act in front a mixed gathering of men and women she told the following joke about her pilgrimage to Mecca: "I felt a hand on my bottom. I ignored it. I thought: "I'm in Mecca. It must be the hand of God."

This attempt at religious humor so outraged some Muslims that a number of youths reportedly attacked her one night outside a club in which she performs.

The press was quick to point out that Mirza is a very devout Muslim as she prays, fasts and doesn't eat pork or drink alcohol. However, Muslims have concerns that this type of humor goes beyond the realm of what is appropriate and that issues of Islamic guidance on the roles of women have been ignored in the rush to highlight Mirza's somewhat unusual career.

Mohammed Ayub Khan

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BEAUTY

All beauty is loved by the one who is able to perceive beauty, for the perception of beauty is a delight in itself, which is loved for its own sake, not for anything else ... It cannot be denied that where beauty is perceived it is natural to love it and if it is certain that God is beauty, He must be loved by that one to whom His Beauty and His Majesty are revealed. In God and in Him alone are all these causes of love combined and all things loveable found in their highest perfection. He is the only real Benefactor and the Ultimate Cause of all benefits. If, where beauty is found, it is natural to love it, and if beauty consists in perfection, then it follows that the All-Beautiful, Who is Absolute Perfection, must be loved by those to whom His nature and attributes are revealed.

Swadeka Ahsun: Al-Ghazzali, Smith.

