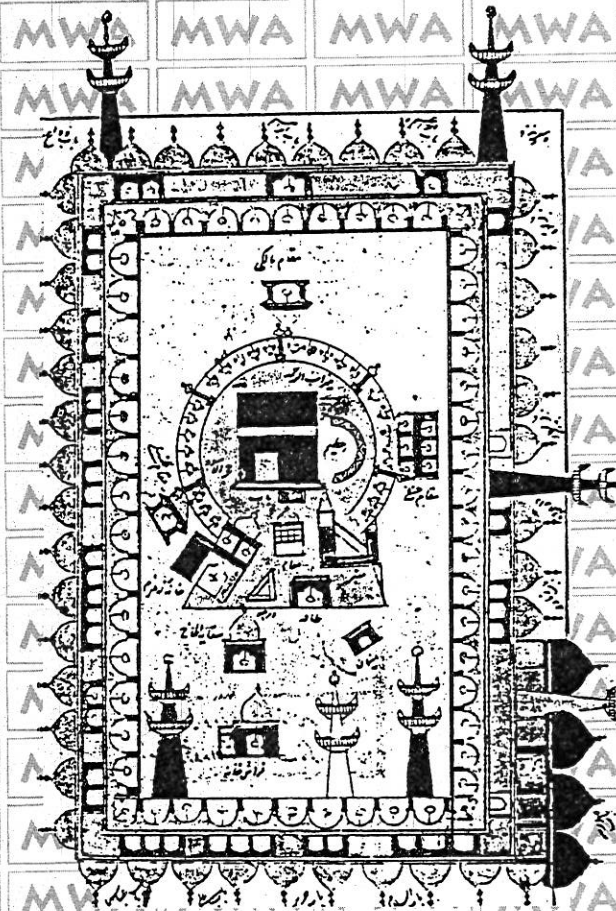


The MUSLIM WOMAN

VOLUME XXIV- No. 4 & 5

April/May 1994 - Dhu Al-Qada/Al-Hijjah 1414



Front Cover Picture

Persian miniature, photograph courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, from Corbin,
Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi.

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THE EXECUTIVE

FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 1993 TO NOVEMBER 1995

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A P P E A L

NEW PREMISES

Please donate generously for the Madina House Project. We hope (insha-Allah) to raise at least £300,000 to buy a new home for children in need. The present house is inadequate for the needs of the youngsters.

Cheques should be made payable to:
"The Muslim Women's Association (UK)"
please send it either to:

The Muslim Women's Association
63 Coombe Lane, London SW20 0BD
OR

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

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May Allah reward you. Amin.

EDITORIAL

Dr. Zubeda Osman

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The news is full of sadness and oppression; all over the world there is loss of life and property, massacre and bloodshed. Those who being weak men, women, and children cry out to Allah "Our Lord, rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors, and raise for us from Thee one who will protect, and raise for us from Thee one who will help". (4:75)

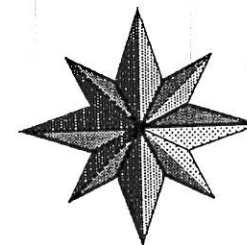
In answer to the prayers of those who are suffering Allah sends help in the form of individuals and organisations from all countries of the world who risk their lives to save them. Many have already lost their lives in trying to save the lives of the victims of war and famine. These are the true martyrs who shall live forever in the memories of those they were trying to save. Allah says of these people that we should not consider them to be dead. They are alive and they will never die.

In our daily existence, too, are people and organisations trying to help those less fortunate than themselves. Some in small ways - others in larger and more powerful ways, but all for the purpose of serving Allah in any way they can.

Those who believe in Allah fight against evil, for this is the true jihad. They do not fear death, because they believe that death will find them out even if they are in towers built strong and high. Hence they are prepared to face death in the cause of justice.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has showed us the way to strive against cruelty and oppression, and his example should be followed by all.

This year many of our members will be travelling to Makka to perform the pilgrimage. We wish them all a safe and successful journey. Amen. This is also a reminder of the great struggle for survival of the Prophet Ibrahim's wife and her son Ismail (peace be upon them all) in search of water in the desert. Just as Allah rewarded them with the creation of the well of Zamzam we pray that the struggles of those who are fighting to establish peace and justice in this world will also be rewarded with success. Amen.



SELF CRITICISM IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

It is now an established fact that the world of Islam, after having remained for centuries in oblivion, has definitely come into its own and is destined to play a prominent role in the world in the shaping of things to come. But it is also equally true to say that those who realize this fact see the obstacles that stand in the way of the Muslim world; for it lacks those requisites which are the concomitants of such a destiny. In other words, before the voice of the Muslim world can command respect from the non-Muslim world, it must equip itself with characteristics which can be described as its own.

The literature that is pouring from the presses of the non-Muslim world is on the increase, and it enables one to get an idea of the nature of the challenge the world of Islam can expect to meet with from the non-Muslim world. Is it ready to meet it? The problems of the Muslim world range from the religious and moral to the political and economic fields. Its leaders in its various parts are trying their hand finding solutions to them. It is no secret to admit that some of them have drifted far from the traditional path and have introduced laws and institutions foreign to the genius of Islam. In fairness to them it would be right to add that they have been forced to adopt this course because they could not get any encouragement from the traditional repositories of the knowledge of Islam - the 'ulama - to translate their ideas into practice. Small wonder that the Muslim countries do not seem to enjoy prestige in the world assemblies which attaches itself to those who possess individuality of their own. As the world of Islam is politically weak and economically underdeveloped, some of its leaders have stood on the fence disclaiming their allegiance to the stronger groups. Even this has not helped very much because they have not been able to produce a system with a stamp of its own.

Below is an example of how even non-Muslim sympathetic writers view our claims to having in the Prophet Muhammad the ideal prophet in all fields of human activity. Leave alone the role of Islam in the realism of politics and economics, the non-Muslims are challenging the very essence of the greatness of the Prophet Muhammad in the domain of morals which is embodied in the Qur'an (68:4): "And surely you conform yourself to sublime morality". We step aside to quote the words of Dr. W. Montgomery Watt, he says:

"The world is becoming increasingly one world, and in this one world there is a tendency towards unification and uniformity. Because of this tendency the day will doubtless come when there will be a set of moral principles which not merely claim universal validity but are actually accepted almost universally throughout the one world. Now Muslims claim that Muhammad is a model of conduct and character for all mankind. In so doing they invite world opinion to pass judgement upon him. Up till now the matter has received scant attention from world opinion, but because of the strength of Islam, it will eventually have to be given serious consideration. Are any principles to be learnt from the life and teaching of Muhammad that will contribute to the one morality of the future?

"To this question the world has not yet given a final answer. What has been said so

far by Muslims in support of their claims for Muhammad can be regarded as no more than a preliminary statement of the case, and few non-Muslims have been convinced by it. Nevertheless, the issue still remains open. **How the world answers the question about Muhammad depends to some extent on what the Muslims of today do.** They still have an opportunity to give a fuller and better presentation of their case to the rest of the world. Will they be able to turn to the life of Muhammad and by sifting the universal in it from the particular discover moral principles which make a creative contribution to the present world situation? Or, if this is too much to expect, will they at least be able to show that Muhammad's life is one possible exemplification of the ideal man in the unified world morality? If they make a good case, there are some Christians who will be ready to listen to them and to learn whatever is to be learned.

"The difficulties confronting Muslims, however, are immense. A combination of sound scholarship and deep moral insight is essential, and this combination is rare. In the wider sphere of religion they have probably to contribute to the world, for they have retained emphases - on the reality of God, for example - which have been neglected or forgotten in important sections of the other monotheistic religions: and I for one gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to the writings of a man like al-Ghazzali. Towards convincing Christian Europe that Muhammad is a morale exemplar, however, little indeed nothing, has so far been accomplished."

Now, how comes that non-Muslims have a poor opinion of us Muslims? This question is worthy of a searching enquiry, and to our mind every Muslim owes it to himself to find an answer to it and a reason for the lack of individuality of the Muslim world. There might be many answers and approaches to this enquiry. To us the deep-rooted cause lies in the lack of self-criticism in the Muslim world. The Muslims for centuries have not practised the art of looking at themselves. Secondly, they have become such slaves to formalism that they cannot see the wood for the trees. In the conduct of their affairs the Muslims have become robots. They all think in terms of people who lived hundreds of years ago. They feel because they have conformed to certain rituals which are understood by them for ends in themselves they have done their duty towards their Creator and their fellow-beings. To enable the entire Muslim community to understand the rightful place of ritualism in its daily life, and to see it in its true perspective, is an immense task beset with great difficulties. As a matter of fact, one does not know where to start.

It is true that efforts are being made here and there to find out the principal root cause or causes of this trouble. Islamic Research Institutes have been founded with a view to giving the right guidance in understanding Islam and its teachings, and to destroying many of the taboos which have grown into the system of Muslim life. Some see the source of trouble in the Hadith literature and the exaggerated place it occupies in the conduct of the daily life of Muslims, while others see the saint worship responsible for their mental decrepitude, and yet others in the garbled forms in which Islam is presented in various parts of the world today. There is some truth in all these statements. Now whatever the real cause, the one question that has yet to be answered is why the world if Islam does not possess its own entity. Can it find its way out of the morass in which it finds itself today?

In our opinion the Muslim individual has to be taught to think matters out for himself and to realize that he is not a mere imitator of his predecessors and that he

Continued on page 11

MURAL CELEBRATIONS - HAJJ

For the 13 centuries until 1950, the hajj journey from Upper Egypt to Makkah took more than a month; there was no way for the pilgrim to stay in touch with his family during that time. It was a journey into the unknown, with an uncertain conclusion, and the return of the traveler amounted almost to a rebirth. Joyful family members greeted the pilgrim at the boat in Suez or another Egyptian port, or at the hometown train station, or awaited the camel caravan's return to the oasis. Thus the hajj paintings expressed the family's happiness at the pilgrim's safe return, and at the same time provided religious inspiration to anyone viewing the murals.

Murals celebrating the hajj are especially noteworthy in the Luxor area of Upper Egypt, including the west bank village of Gurna; in the small villages between the oases of Kharga and Dakhla, some 320 kilometers (200 miles) east of Luxor; and in Farafra, the most distant of the oases in Egypt's Western Desert. Egyptians in these villages are proud of their murals. Eager to share the significance of the hajj in their lives, they are hospitable to visitors admiring the decorations, offering tea and happy to pose for a portrait in front of their paintings.

While the murals share similar themes, technique varies tremendously. Strict adherence to artistic principles is often less important than enthusiasm in the amateur paintings done by friends or family, with charming primitives often created in which the familiar elements of each work are reduced to simple, straightforward geometric shapes. In Gurna, an elderly *hagga*, or woman pilgrim, Umm Hussein Ibrahim, has painted her own mural, with the declarations "God is most great" and the Qur'anic verse "Now shall We turn thee to a *qiblah* that shall please thee", written over and around the Ka'bah and her self-portrait.

Hajj painting in Upper Egyptian villages was first recorded by anthropologists early in this century. Professor Winifred Blackman noted in 1920 in *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt* that some village houses were "decorated with coloured line-drawings of camels, boats, trains, trees ... Such artistic efforts denote that one or more members of the family inhabiting the house have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca".

Forty years ago, Dr. Jean Michot described pilgrimage murals he had seen in the older sections of Cairo, areas occupied at that time by Sa'idis. Simple home-painted murals honoring the hajj can still be found in Cairo-area villages, such as Abu Sir near Saqqara, but aside from these interesting examples, few of the paintings remain in Cairo today. In fact, hajj painting is seldom seen in the north of Egypt.

But in the south of Egypt, hajj painting in all its exuberance continues to flourish. Hajj painters instinctively structure their work using what Islamic art expert Lois Lamya' al Faruqi calls "multi-focal organization of modular segments, no module taking precedence over another", a method used "in all places and at all periods of Islamic history".

Continued on page 10

Juniors's Corner

KNOWLEDGE

By the time you read this page, many of you are busy, inshah Allah, revising your school subjects for the forthcoming exams after the Easter break. You might feel that both school and parents are putting too much pressure on you to do well. But remember, as Muslims it is our duty to seek knowledge. Below are a few verses (ayas) from the Qur'an and a few sayings of the Prophet (ahadith) relating to knowledge. Try to remember them whenever things get tough at school or college.

For him who follows a path for seeking knowledge, Allah will ease the way to Paradise. (Muslim)

He who issues forth in search of knowledge is busy in the cause of Allah till he returns from his quest. (Tirmidhi)

For him who adopts a path seeking knowledge, Allah eases the way to Paradise and angels spread their wings for a seeker of knowledge, being pleased with his occupation, and all that are in the heavens and the earth, including the fish in the water, ask for forgiveness for a learned one. A learned one is superior to a worshipper as the moon is superior to all the planets. The divines are heirs of the Prophets and the Prophets do not leave an inheritance of dirhems and dinars but only of knowledge. He who acquires knowledge acquires a vast portion. (Abu Daud and Tirmidhi)

A believer never has his fill of knowledge till he ends up in Paradise. (Tirmidhi)

Upon him for whom Allah desires good, He bestows understanding of the Faith. (Bukhari and Muslim)

Allah will exalt in rank those from among you who believe and those to whom knowledge is given. (58:12)

Of the servants of Allah it is those who possess knowledge who fear Him. (35:29)

Keep up the supplication: Lord bestow on me an increase of knowledge. (20:115)

May Allah guide you and may He grant you success in your exams.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Ask them: Can those who know be like those who know not?
(39:10)

POETRY

THE DIVINE DIVAN

O Lord, Thou art my life. No other life
Have I but in and from Thee
To whom else should I submit but unto Thee?
Thou art the Ruler of the Universe, Thou art my life.

The sun shines; the rains all; the winds blow;
Bathed in Thy Blessedness, where'er I go,
I feel Thy Peace around me and I know
Thou art the Ruler of the Universe. Thou art my life.

Amidst the myriad mazes of the universe,
From whom should I seek guidance but from Thee?
Thou knowest all, controllest all. From harm, or worse,
Thine Ever-Presence is an instant shield. In Thee

We find our peace and all around behold
Bright beauties blossoming. Lo! delights untold,
Better beauties blossoming. Lo! Delights untold,
Better than gems, before our eyes unfold.

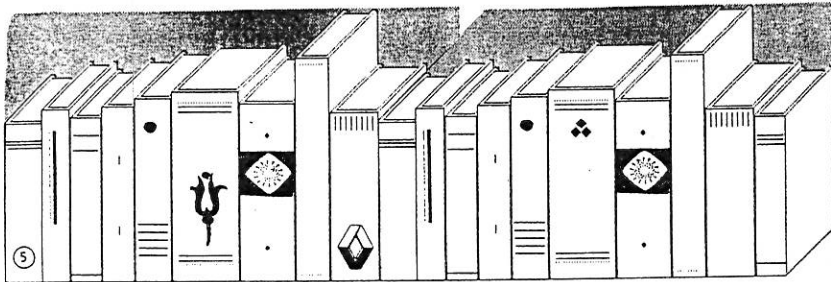
From the illimitable storehouse of the All-Wise, Supreme,
The One, the Ever-living, Whose dear Mercies gleam
Around us ever. Yea, the purport of my days,
Thou One Beloved, still is this - to sing Thy praise.

William Bashyr Pickard

LEARNING

IN ONE'S YOUTH IS ENGRAVING IN STONE.

Arab Proverb



KITCHEN TALK

THE FLAVORS OF ARABIA

The Arabian Peninsula has been closely linked with spices throughout its history. Spices were appreciated everywhere in the Middle East for their fragrances and their medicinal properties, as well as for their enhancement of flavor in food. Herodotus, "the father of history", wrote in the fifth century BC of the spices of Arabia that "the whole country is scented with them, and exhales an odor marvelously sweet". For centuries the Roman Empire, with its insatiable demand for Eastern spices, kept caravans crisscrossing the Peninsula, bringing such important spices as pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, spikenard, nutmeg and cloves to the West. Muhammad himself, as a young man before the Qur'an was revealed to him, accompanied caravans across the Peninsula to Syria, carrying goods which very likely included spices. After Islam was established believers came to Makka from all over the world to make the Hajj, or pilgrimage, and enriched the Peninsula with an enormously varied culinary acquaintance. Arabian cooks developed a mastery of flavouring, using a multitude of spices in each dish to create a taste which is rich and subtle, never overpowering but magnificently enhancing the food.

Za'tar - is the Arabic name for the herb thyme, but it also denotes a delicious mixture of two parts thyme, one part sumac, one part sesame seeds and a little salt. (Proportions may vary, and other spices may be added according to each family's taste). Served with a high-quality olive oil and flat Arab bread, it is a popular breakfast throughout the Middle East.

Manqush - bread baked with a topping of za'tar mixture and oil. Also called simply za'tar.

Jawz al-Tib (Nutmeg) - is the seed of a large evergreen tree native to the Spice Islands (the Moluccas) of what is now Indonesia. The fleshy yellow, peach-like fruit of this tree splits open when ripe, revealing the nutmeg encased in a dark-brown shell, which is in turn wrapped in a bright red net, or aril; this aril is the spice mace. Nutmeg has long been in popular use in the Middle East, as in the rest of the world, both as a flavoring and a medicine; however, its medicinal properties have caused it to be classified officially as a drug and it is therefore banned in Saudi Arabia today. Very large quantities of nutmeg can produce hallucinations followed by ferocious headaches, and an overdose can be lethal.

Aramco World XXXIX/2 1988, pp 33-35 (excerpts).

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ وَالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ
مُخْتَلِفًا أَكْلُهُ وَالرَّيْتُونَ وَالرَّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ

HE IT IS WHO BROUGHT INTO BEING GARDENS TRELLISED AND UNTRELLISED, DATE PALMS, AND CROPS DIVERSE IN PRODUCE, AS WELL AS OLIVES AND POMEGRANATES: ALL RESEMBLING EACH OTHER AND YET DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER. (The Quran 5:141)

NEWS ... NEWS ... NEWS ... NEWS ... NEWS

Belated Birthday wishes: Begum Jan, our one-time President and first one to speak about a future children's home for Muslims, celebrated her 89th Birthday on March the 6th, 1994. Happy Birthday to you Begum.

Congratulations to our President, Mrs. Khanam Hassan, on the birth of her grandchildren Ali and Salma - the twins.

Congratulations to our member Mrs. Bashir, on the recent wedding of her son Dr. Bashir to Dr. Jill.

The U.N. Year of the Family: The CCL will be celebrating the U.N. Year of the Family at their 62nd Annual Conference at Marlborough House on Saturday, 14th May (1000 - 1600 hours). Anyone interested please contact Miss Margaret Brayton on 081-539 7774.

The Rotary Kensington Club's Spring Fair in Chelsea will be held on Saturday the 28th of May at the Chelsea Town Hall, King's Road, Chelsea. The Arab Women's Council is participating in this Fair. All welcome.

The Annual Garden Party of the Women's Council will be held on Monday the 20th of June at Knebworth House, Herts. by the kind invitation of Lady Cobbold. Entrance fee of £5 will include a sumptuous tea and entertainment. For further details contact Layla at 081 654 8801. All welcome.



Continued from page 6

In each pilgrimage mural, these modules are distinctive: the Ka'bah in black, or covered with the elaborately decorated *kiswah*, along with the Prophet's Mosque with its surrounding arches, dome and minarets. Other segments vary in each painting. Depending on local custom, there can be vases, garlands and bouquets of flowers flanking doors and windows; roof lines bordered with an ornamental painted frieze; and so forth.

Quotations from the Qur'an make especially effective wall decorations. Often just one or two evocative words from a Qur'anic verse are enough to remind a Muslim, who learned to recite the Qur'an at an early age, of much longer passages.

Enriched by ancient tradition. Egypt's heritage of pilgrimage paintings shows the unity of religion with everyday life, and contributes a vibrant, everchanging aspect to Islamic art.

Aramco World, XXXIV/3, 1993, *Mural Celebrations*, Ellen Barnett Moinard, pp. 35-39 (shortened).

MWA BUSINESS - April/May 1994

The Muslim Women's Association's Eid Dinner was held at the Islamic Cultural Centre on Sunday the 27th March. Dr. A. Halim, Imam at the Mosque, together with his wife and daughter graced the occasion by their presence. A large number of guests were present including Dr. Esmat El-Said, President, Arab Women's Council, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Everington (Moral Re-Armament) and two of the Women's Council students from Ware College, Herts., and others.

The function was opened by Dr. Abdul Halim with a recitation from the Holy Qur'an followed by a talk entitled "The role of Women in Islamic History". Mrs. Khanam Hassan, our President, then welcomed the guests. She informed the gathering that Mrs. Nisa Ali, Secretary and houseparent at Madina House had resigned in order to return to Trinidad. Mrs. Ali has devoutly served the Muslim Women's Association for twenty-seven years. We shall miss her very much indeed and we all wish her well. A big thank you to you. Mrs. Ali was presented with a farewell present: a carriage clock, and flowers. Mrs. Karima Mustafa was in the chair during the official proceedings of the function. Dinner was then served.

The money raised at this function came to £530 (before deducting expenses) which includes the sale of dinner tickets and contributions. Thank you to everyone who made this such a special occasion.

Mrs Khanam Hassan, President, and members wish to acknowledge the many Eid cards received. Our many thanks to all.

Next Meeting: Our next monthly gathering will be on Sunday the 8th of May, at the Islamic Cultural Centre, 146 Park Road, London NW8 7RG, at 1630 hours. Our guest speaker will be Prof. Dr. Kashif, Imam at the ICC. Please make a special effort to attend. Both members and guests are welcome.

Continued from page 5

possess an individuality of his own. The Muslim of today, while he should realize that he owes a great deal to his forefathers - thinkers and philosophers, etc. - is not like unto the moon that shines from the borrowed light, and that he has also a right to think out his own problems in his own way within the framework of Islam in exactly the same way as did his forefathers, and that he has a right to disagree with others and his predecessors however exalted they may have been in the intellectual and religious spheres. The Muslims of today have to learn to disagree with the views and opinions of their great men of yesterday, as did they amongst themselves. The disagreements between the various Imams of the four principal Islamic schools of thought is a standing testimony to their independent thinking - a quality which the Muslim of today lack. The rigid chains which the Muslims have forged around their feet can only be broken if Muslims wake up to the realization that they can criticize their forefathers who they have enveloped wittingly or unwittingly in a halo of sanctity.

The Islamic Review I/4 1962, pp 3-4 (shortened).