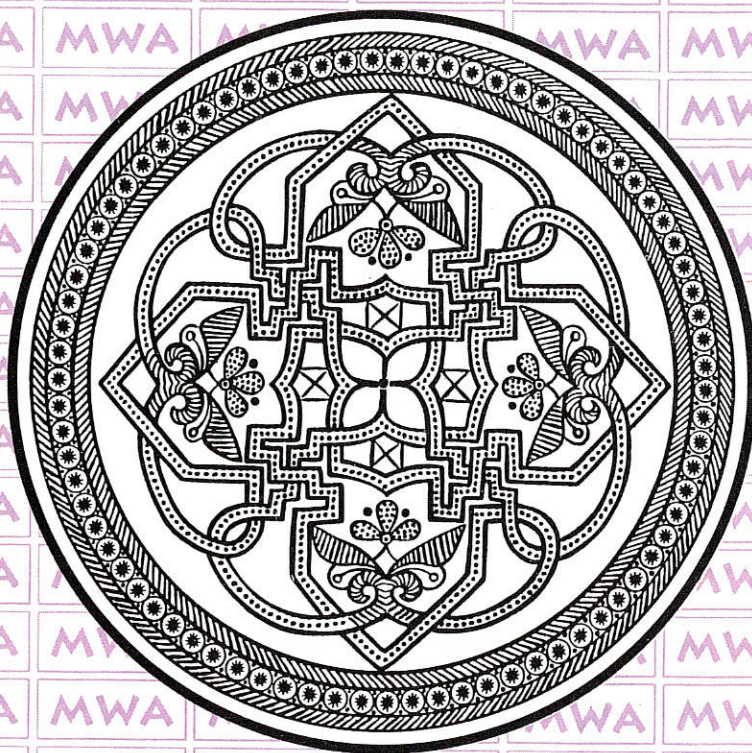


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IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL	3
The Imam: His Role and Responsibilities	4
JUNIORS'S CORNER - Alcohol/Drugs	7
POETRY:	
What I like	9
KITCHEN TALK:	
Coffee (Al Qahwa)	10
MWA BUSINESS	11

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FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 1993 TO NOVEMBER 1995

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NEXT MEETING

OUR NEXT MEETING WILL BE
HELD INSHA' ALLAH
AT 16.30 ON

SATURDAY 13TH AUGUST

AT THE
ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE
146 PARK ROAD
LONDON NW8 7RG

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.

Meetings of the MWA take place on the second Saturday of each month

EDITORIAL

Layla El-Droubie

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

The hot spell we are experiencing at the moment and the tragedy in Rwanda have one thing in common - the need for water. It is too easy for many of us to forget the difference between life and death may just be a cupful of water. Whenever we are in need of water we mechanically open the taps in our homes and the water flows - as much as we need and more without thinking twice about it. The ban of previous years of hosepipes and car washing was simply a nuisance. However, when one hears the remark that future skirmishes in Africa/Middle East may be fought on issues of water the subject acquires an unparalleled importance. Not many realise that the Nile accesses nine riparian states and the Euphrates flows through several countries from E.Turkey into the Persian/Arab Gulf. With increased industrialisation of countries and higher living expectations of populations, the need for water increases dramatically. Also, the geographical positions of the various countries in question adds to the problem.

"Ibn Manzur (d. 711/1311), the most famous Arab lexicographer, mentions in his dictionary Lisan al-Arab under the root (ش = sh ر = r ع = - e) that 'shari'a is the place from which one descends to water ... and shari'a in the acceptance of Arabs is the law of water (shur'at al-ma) concerning the source which is regulated by people who drink, and allow others to drink, from.

"The connection between shari'a as a generic term for Islamic law, and shari'a as the path as well as the law of water, is not a coincidence, and the centrality of water in Islam is obvious in the economic as well as ritualistic sense." (Ch Mallat, Law and The Nile River ... , p. 13.)

The word "water" ("mā' ماء" in Arabic) occurs over 60 times in the Qur'an. (M Abdel-Baqi, Mu'jam al-faz al-Qur'an al-Karim.) It quite clearly states that without water there is no life - "We made from water every living thing". (21:30) But water, besides being the essence of "life" has another function, namely purification. "He sends down water from the sky to cleanse you". (8:11). Thus such a vital resource as water should not be under the control of the mightiest of this world against the less fortunate ones - "Tell them that water is to be divided between them". (54:28)

From the Qur'an we learn "that water is a sign of God's existence, unity, power and care; it is the essence of life, and sustenance; an instrument of cleanliness and beauty; it is not to be monopolised, wasted or polluted." (M Abdel Haleem, IQ, XXXIII/1, p. 49.)



THE IMAM HIS ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The most common answer to the question what an Imam is, is that he is a prayer leader. The term imam is derived from the Arabic root amma, to go to see, to precede, to lead, thus "originally 'leader', particularly 'caravan leader', any one who guides a column of camels, a synonym of hādī; whence also a person or thing who serves as a guide or pattern, eg to the pupil in the school (Lisan, xiv 291)." (FEI, p. 473). In the Qur'an the various meanings of the word imam are, for example:

"وإذ ابتلى إبراهيم ربه بكلمات فأتمهن قال إني جاعلك للناس إماما ...

... He said (God): "I will make thee an Imam to the people ... 2:124
(leader in religion/model, pattern, example)

"... فقاتلوا أئمة الكفر إنهم لا أيمان لهم ...

... Fight ye the chiefs of Unfaith ... 9:12
(the leaders of Unbelief or Blasphemy)

"... ومن قبله كتاب موسى إماما ورحمة ...

... Can they be (like) those who accept a Clear (Sign) from ... 11:17
(a book of guidance and instructions)

"فانتقمنا منهم وإنهما لبإمام مبين"

... They were both on an open highway, plain to see. 15:79
(an obvious example)

"يوم ندعو كل أناس بإمامهم ...

On the day We shall call together all human beings with their (respective) Imams ... 17:71

(different interpretations: each People or Group will appear with its Leader, who will bear witness to its virtues or sins; the Imam is their revelation, their Book; the Imam is the record of deeds spoken of in the next clause)

"وجعلناهم أئمة يهدون بأمرنا ...

And We made them Leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command ... 21:73
(leaders of Religion)

"... وكل شيء أحصيناه في إمام مبين"

... Have We taken account in a clear Book 36:12
(a book of evidence or record - leader in religion/model, pattern, example)

"ومن قبله كتاب موسى إماما ورحمة وهذا كتاب مصدق ...

and before this, was the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy ... 46:12

See also: 25:74; 28:5; 28:41; 32:24;

The progression from the meaning of the word imam to its usage needs some

explanation. "In a non-technical usage it is often applied to a leading authority in a field of scholarship or to the leader of a community. As a technical term in Islamic law and theology, it refers to the legitimate supreme leader of the Muslim community and also to the leader of the ritual prayer (salat). The imamate, as the office of imam, will be dealt with here in these two technical senses."

1. SUPREME LEADERSHIP OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

a) The Sunnis - Classical Theory

"Classical Sunni theory considered the imamate as an institution necessary for the legitimacy of all acts of government. Thus it held that the Muslim Community was under the obligation to set up an imam as its supreme head at all times. It allowed for only a single imam at any time and considered rival caliphs, even if they were in clear control of part of the Islamic world, to be illegitimate. The Imam was to be of Qurayshi descent, male, free, physically fit, and capable to execute the political and military duties of the office. He was to have the knowledge of the religious law required for the judgeship and probity as required for legal testimony. The Imam could be either appointed by his predecessor or elected. The alternative modes of investment were based on the fact that the second caliph Umar, was appointed by his predecessor, Abu Bakr, but before his death set up an electoral Council (shura) of six prominent companions of the Prophet to choose his successor. The later caliphs in most instances appointed their successor, commonly their sons. The formal abolition of the Ottoman sultanate (1922) and caliphate (1924) by the Turkish National Assembly has led to a renewed interest in the question of a supreme and universal leader of Islam. Although some modernists have denied the need for the imamate others among them, as well as fundamentalists, have advocated its restoration".

b) The Shi'ah

"While Sunni Muslims were essentially motivated to back the actual holder of supreme power as the guarantor of the unity of the Muslim community, the Shi'ah have primarily emphasized the principle of legitimacy of the imam, which they see vested in the family of the Prophet Muhammad. The majority of Shi'i imams, except among the Zaydiyyah, never held political power, though the Shi'ah considered them solely entitled to the supreme leadership of the Muslim community and viewed the historical caliphs with the exception of Ali, as illegitimate usurpers. Partly as a result of their lack of political power, the Shi'ah have tended to endow their imam with great religious authority and to place the imamate at the centre of religion".

2. LEADERSHIP OF THE RITUAL PRAYER

"The ritual prayer, which is obligatory for every Muslim five times a day, may be performed individually, or in group with a leader who is called the imam. The same applies to several special prayers, ie funeral prayer. The congregational Friday prayer can only be performed in groups with an Imam. Mosques have generally appointed official imams.

The imam of the Friday congregational worship may be appointed separately from the imams of the daily prayers. He is normally also the preacher (khatib) who delivers the official sermon (khutbah)." (E of World Religions)

From the above it transpires that an imam can either be:

- a) a prayer leader
- b) a scholar
- c) supreme head of the Muslim community

In the absence of an imamate 'c' can be ignored, which leaves us prayer leader and scholar. Which one of these two leads a Muslim community in a Western society is the big question. Numerically, there are more prayer leaders than scholars as any upright Muslim man can lead the prayers. In the case of a woman as leader of prayers, early scholars held different viewpoints, a subject not under discussion in this short article. The honour of leading the prayers was, in the time of the Prophet and also for a long time after that, given to the best man in the community "Those who are well-grounded in knowledge and possess the greatest excellence are most entitled to imama or the leadership of prayer". (Bukhari 10:46.) Thus, being a prayer leader was not a job but an honour. "The present practice of having paid Imams, whose only duty is to lead the prayers, is to a very large extent responsible for the degeneration of the Muslims". (M. A., The Religion of Islam, p 395)

In Muslim countries the imam (prayer leader) is sometimes an official of the town as he has also to supervise the goings-on in the quarter in which his mosque is. A kind of civil servant cum social worker. In the Turkish empire he held also the office of 'registration' ('ilm al khabar).

The role of the imam in the West is by necessity different - an amalgam of the non-technical and technical usage of his title. Besides leading the prayers, he has to be a scholar of Islam as well to equip himself to deal with all the legal and social matters arising of a community living in a non-Muslim society. Beware, many scholars are too deep emerged in their books that they are oblivious of what is going on around them. At the same time, an imam has to have a more than just superfluous, stereotype knowledge of the country he is living in to do justice to his role as leader of the community he is representing. Without it it is hard to see how he could guide his fellow Muslims in matters of everyday living - rights and obligations in matters of state and religion. It goes without saying that he must be fluent in the language of the country of residence. Due to the office he holds it is of vital importance that he can move with ease in western company. There will be occasions when he has to deal formally with officials of state. Remember, the standing of the imam/leader reflects on the community.

Layla El-Droubie



Continued from page 7

1. Reported by Muslim
2. Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim
3. The Qur'an specifies the punishments for certain crimes.
4. For crimes concerning which no specified punishment is mentioned in the Qur'an or Ahadith, the Muslim government may introduce its own punishments.

Juniors's Corner

ALCOHOL/DRUGS

The first declaration made by the Prophet concerning this matter was that not only is wine prohibited but that the definition of khamr extends to any substance which intoxicates, in whatever form or under whatever name it may appear.

He was once asked about certain drinks made from honey, corn or barley by the process of fermenting them until they became alcoholic. The Messenger of Allah replied, "Every intoxicant is khamr, and every khamr is haram".¹

"Khamr is that which befogs the mind".² These are the words spoken by Umar ibn al-Khattab from the pulpit of the Prophet, providing us with a decisive criterion for defining what falls under the prohibited category of khamr. There remains then no room for doubts and questions: any substance which has the effect of befogging or clouding the mind, impairing its faculties of thought, perception, and discernment is prohibited by Allah and His Messenger until the Day of Resurrection.

Drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, opium, and the like are definitely included in the prohibited category of khamr. It is well known that the use of such drugs affects the sensory perceptions, making what is near seem distant and what is distant seem near; that their use produces illusions and hallucinations, so that the real seems to disappear and what is imaginary appears to be real; and that drug usage in general impairs the faculty of reasoning and decision-making, such drugs are taken as a means of escape from the inner reality of one's feelings and the outer realities of life and religion into the realm of fantasy and imagination. Added to this psychological fact are the physical effects: bodily lassitude, dullness of the nerves, and decline in overall health. The moral consequences, moral insensitivity, weakening of the will-power, and neglect of responsibilities are also well known.

When we recall the principle that impure and harmful things have been made haram, there can be no doubt in our minds concerning the prohibition of drugs.

The Muslim jurists were unanimous in prohibiting those drugs which were found during their respective times and places. Foremost among them was Sheikh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah, who said

"This solid grass (hashish) is haram, whether or not it produces intoxication. Sinful people smoke it because they find it produces rapture and delight, an effect similar to drunkenness. While wine makes the one who drinks it active and quarrelsome, hashish produces dullness and lethargy ..."

The hadd punishment for smoking hashish, whether a small or large amount of it, is the same as that for drinking wine. It is the rule of the Islamic Shari'ah that any prohibited thing which is desired by people, such as wine ... is to be punished by imposing hadd,³ while the violation of a prohibited thing which is not desired, calls for ta'zir⁴.

Excerpts from: The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Shorouk International.

Continued on page 6

POETRY:

FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

WHAT I LIKE

I like to drink milk with a straw,
And I like to paint and to draw
With pink, yellow, blue, green and grey,
And I say what I mean to say;
I like to bow only to God and to pray,
And I play when I should play.

I like a good word and a good deed,
And I don't have any selfish greed
For having more than others and for money
Which I need, but not more than my honey;
I like my mother and my father -
A love, which none can smother;
I like to play and to sing
But I never forget God and to bring
Joy and happiness to others,
Who are either my friends or brothers.

... and be what you want to be

When you will grow like Man, free,
When you will grow like a tree,
When you will see what you like to see
And be what you want to be.
When you will flow like a river
And bathe in the Light of the Giver,
And you will be happy and will ne'er fret

by Amin al-Islam, IR April-May-June 1963



KITCHEN TALK

COFFEE (AL QAHWA)

"The coffee plant is a small evergreen tree, extensively cultivated in the humid tropics. The *Coffea arabica* species, which produces the best coffee, is indigenous to Ethiopia, but it crossed the Red Sea to the Yemen in southern Arabia at an early date and has long been cultivated in the mountains there. Of some 60 species of coffee, only two others are cultivated extensively. *C. arabica* is usually grown as a shrub. It bears fruit at three or four years, and will go on producing for about 25 years. There are two or three crops a year, for the coffee tree bears blossom, unripe and ripe fruits simultaneously. The white flowers, fragrant as jasmine, are fragile and ephemeral; in a day or two they fade. The fruits, called cherries, must be picked at the moment of optimum ripeness; too ripe and the beans, the seeds within them, are spoiled; unripe and they are wasted, for the beans will not ripen once picked. The cherries turn from green to yellow to red and finally a deep red-black, when they are ripe and ready to be picked.

Our word 'coffee' derives from the Arabic *qahwah*, one of the words originally used for wine, which came to mean coffee. Coffee beans used to be chewed before it was discovered they could be ground and boiled with water to make a drink. No one knows when or where coffee was first drunk, although it seems that plantations existed in the Yemen by the 15th century. The most reliable early records would suggest that coffee was first drunk by the Sufis.

Muslim mystics, the Sufis discovered that coffee could ward off sleep and stimulate mental activity, thus aiding their devotions. Through their ordinary daily lives coffee drinking spread to urban centres. By the end of the 15th century traders and pilgrims took coffee to Mecca and eventually to all parts of the Islamic world. Although still used by Sufis in their ceremonies, the less pious found coffee an agreeable stimulus to conversation, and the coffee house was born.

These became popular gathering places, offering entertainment, music and dancing, and a congenial atmosphere. But coffee also excited the drinker, ... Soon both imam and temporal rulers were opposed to coffee and sought to close the coffee houses on the grounds that they were places of corruption. Attempts were made to claim that coffee was one of the beverages forbidden by Islamic law, although it is not mentioned in the Qur'an. Edicts and decrees were to be successful for a brief period, then coffee drinking and coffee houses returned until the next ban."¹

"The opposition to coffee drinking consisted of one or more of the following:

1. Coffee was thought in some way physically or chemically so constituted as to make its consumption a violation of Islamic law, either because it was intoxicating or physically harmful, or because some step in its preparation, such as roasting the beans beyond the point of carbonisation, made it unacceptable.
2. Coffee was rejected by the ultra pious simply because it was an innovation, *bid'a*.
3. The political activities that became an important part of the social life of the coffeehouse grew increasingly alarming to the governmental elite.

4. The patrons of the coffeehouse indulged in a variety of improper pastimes, ranging from gambling to involvement in irregular and criminally unorthodox sexual situations, and as such attracted the attention of those officials who were assigned the custodianship of public morality.

Individually or collectively, they are, as far as they go, generally valid explanations of anti-coffee prohibitory sentiment. Nonetheless, these explanations seem in another sense curiously inadequate and hollow. One often finds vaguely sketched objections to things that cannot be pinned down and condemned as contrary to the precepts of the holy law, but which are nevertheless irksome, censurable, and generally objectionable in the context of uncoded cultural tradition.”²

Coffee, besides as a brew, can also be used for flavouring in cooking.

Brazilian Beef - serves 6

Like a number of casseroles, this one improves with keeping, and at its best when made the day before and reheated.

3 tablespoons oil
2 lb braising beef, cubed
2 large onions, peeled and sliced
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 green peppers, seeded and sliced
1 oz flour
1/4 pint unsweetened dry apple/white grape juice
scant 1/2 pint black coffee
1 teaspoon dried oregano
salt and freshly milled black pepper

Heat the oil in a pan and quickly fry the meat until browned. Remove from the pan with a draining spoon and put on one side. Add the onions, garlic and peppers to the fat remaining in the pan and fry gently for 10 minutes.

Sprinkle over the flour and cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring frequently. Gradually stir in the apple/white grape juice and coffee and bring to the boil, stirring all the time. Add the oregano and seasoning and replace the meat.

Cover and simmer gently for 1 1/2 - 2 hours or until the meat is very tender. Taste and adjust the seasoning before serving.

1) Norman, Jill; Coffee, DK London, 1992, extracts from pp 4-7.

2) Hattox, Ralph S; Coffee and Coffeehouses, University of Washington Press, 1988, extracts pp 6-7.

20th August 1994

MILAD AL-NABI

BIRTHDAY OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD
(peace and blessing of God be upon him)
(20th August 570CE)

MWA BUSINESS - AUGUST 1994

MWA Business - The **July meeting** was opened with du'a

Our **yearly Bazaar** was held on Sunday the 24th of July 1994 ...

“... We thank all those who made the excellent effort to cook the food, and sell it, and all those managing the clothes, toys, and book stalls who worked so hard to raise the money which will go to Madina House, sponsored children of the Lebanon, and Bosnia children in this country.

The scale of human disasters around us is now so enormous that our efforts to help seems like a drop in the ocean, but we must not despair, nor loose hope for Allah sees what we do, and for whom we do it. Every act of ours is recorded, and everything we do or say to help our fellow creatures will never be wasted. The important thing is to combine our efforts for the purpose of serving Him and doing good in His name only.

Our main concern at present is to keep MADINA HOUSE - our childrens' home - going. The Home was established thirteen years ago where so far over four hundred children have been cared for. Homes like Madina House are essential for ensuring the religious and physical well-being of Muslim children. The law in this country provides the opportunity for children in care to be accommodated within their religious and cultural environment. In certain circumstances we have also accepted non-Muslim children.

Please help the MWA by giving your support either by (a) informing your local social workers/council of the existence of Madina House; b) by telling your friends and relatives and ask them for financial and or in kind donations.

May Allah Reward you for every act performed in His name. Ameen.”

by Dr Zubeda Osma

NEWS

Congratulations to Samina and Sultan Hasan on the marriage of their son Adnan to Amina. We wish them well for the future.

A **lecture** will be held at the Islamic Cultural Centre, 146 Park Road, London NW8 7RG, at 1830 hours on August the 10th. The topic: The Concept of a good Muslim woman in the West for the 20th century by Dr I Ahmad. All welcome.

BEGUM JAN

It is with **deep sorrow** to announce the death of Begum Jan, a former president of the Muslim Women's Association. May God bestow mercy on her. What a pity Begum Jan never had the chance to visit Madina House which was, after all, her brainchild so many years ago.

Front Cover Picture

Moulded pottery from 9th-century Iraq, the dishes are painted in luster over a lead glaze to simulate the appearance of the metal dishes .