

The Muslim Woman

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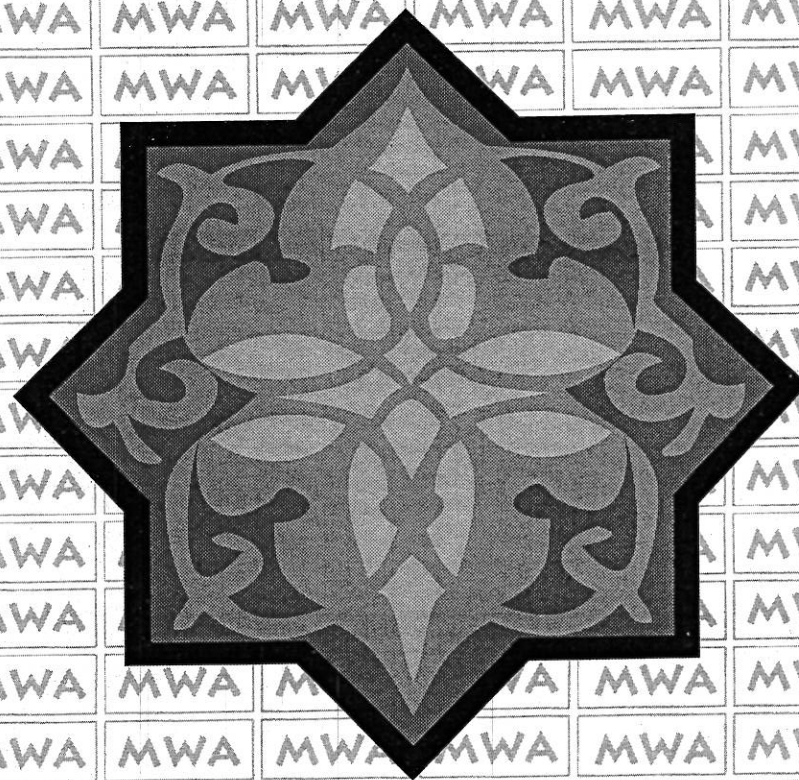
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THE EXECUTIVE

FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 1993 TO NOVEMBER 1995

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OUR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the MWA
will be at 4.00 pm
SUNDAY, 11th December
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 Sunday of each month

EDITORIAL

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
Assalaam-o-Alaikum

Our environment. The Message from Allah is clear about our surrounding. He has given us such a wonderful place to live in - beautiful mountains, forests, rivers, seas, and wild life. It is ourselves who have misused the things around us, and hence the need for educating the younger generation on treating nature with respect. I have found great happiness in reading Sura ar-Rahman - the Most Gracious. The following few ayas are particularly exquisite:

"(At His behest) the sun and the moon run their appointed courses; (before Him) prostrate themselves the herbs (stars) and the trees." (55: 5&6)

"And the earth has He spread out for all living beings, with fruit thereon, and palm trees with sheathed clusters (of dates), and grain growing tall on its stalks, and sweet-smelling plants". (55: 10-12)

"He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they might meet: (yet) between them is a barrier which they may not transgress. Which, then, of your Sustainer's powers can you disavow?" (55: 19-22)

These words from Allah bring sharply into focus what human beings have done to their environment. We destroy nature, we wage wars, and kill innocent children, women and men for the satisfaction of some egotistical aim that we set up for ourselves - either in the name of economics, nationalism, religion or language when we know quite well that any form of destruction for whatever reason is quite unforgivable in the ways of Allah.

May Allah bless and guide us all. Ameen.

Dr Zubeda Osman

THE PROPHET'S NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION

The commemoration of the Night Journey (al-isra) of the Prophet to Jerusalem and his subsequent Ascension (al-miraj) to Paradise, is celebrated on the twenty-sixth night of the seventh month, Rajab. This year Lailat al-Isra will fall on one of the very last days of December; please check exact date. On this night, the Angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and took him on a journey from Makka to Jerusalem by means of the winged steed Buraq. Here Muhammad led the prophets who had preceded him in prayer before commencing the second part of the journey, through the seven heavens.

During the second stage of the journey Muhammad was shown heaven and hell and spoke to all the prophets. Finally he was taken into the presence of God, who spoke to him about many matters and gave the commandment that all Muslims should pray five times a day, in a state of ritual purity attained by ritual washing (wudu). Prayer, being the only direct link between man and his creator, became an integral part of the Islamic Faith. The commandment given to Muhammad on this occasion was confirmed several times over in the revelation of the Qur'an.

The tradition of the Night Journey and Ascension is based on a passage from the Qur'an:

In the name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful
Glory be to him who took His servant on a journey by night
From the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque,
Whose precincts have been blessed,
That We might show him some of our signs,
For He alone hears and sees all things. 17:1

During this night of al-Isra mosques and minarets are lit in honour of the Night Journey. These hours of darkness are spent relating traditions concerning the event, reading the Qur'an and joining together in prayer.

Muslim scholars disagree in their interpretation of this passage, some taking it literally and others regarding it as a vision. However, all agree on the importance of the event. Muhammad was raised to the highest spiritual state of which man is capable, and his status in God's sight as at least equal to that of any of his prophetic forbears was established. He was also assured of God's help and guidance, and given proof of the unity of the universe, the unity of God's messages as revealed through the prophets, and the unity of mankind.

Interpretations

The traditions give three interpretations.

1) The older one, which disappears from the more recent commentaries, detects in this verse an allusion to Muhammad's Ascension to Heaven. This is the more interesting, as these traditions (Bukhari, Muslim, Tabari) retain also the original signification of the story of the Ascension which has been shown to be the initiation

to the prophetic career. The expression al-masjid al-aqsa is interpreted as "the further place of worship" in the sense of "Heaven" and, in fact, in the older tradition isra is often used as synonymous with miraj.

The second explanation, the only one given in all the more modern commentaries, interprets al-masjid al-aqsa as "Jerusalem". In the words of Muhammad Asad "The Remote (lit., "farthest") House of Worship", on the other hand, denotes the ancient Temple of Solomon - or rather, its site - which symbolises here the long line of Hebrew prophets who preceded the advent of Muhammad and are alluded to by the phrase "the environs of which We had blessed". The "new" religion but represents a continuation and the ultimate development of the same divine message which was preached by the prophets of old."

Another view is that to "fix the terminal points of the journey at the Kaba (Makka) and at the Aqsa mosque (Jerusalem) attests to the political significance of Islamic sanctuaries and only incidentally to the exegesis of Q 17:1." (J W, Quranic Studies, 69)

The third interpretation of Sura 17:1 is based on 17:60, where ruya "vision" is explained as isra. This implies that the night journey was not a real journey but a vision. Ibn al-Qayyim, one of the great Islamic thinkers, says in his discussion of "Spiritual Ascension": "Aishah and Muawiyah maintained that the Night Journey was performed by his soul (bi-ruhihi), while his body did not leave its place. The same is reported to have been the view of Al-Hasan al-Basri." "Statements ascribed to Abdallah b Abbas, it was the spirit (ruh) of Muhammad which made the journey from a point depicted not specifically as the sacred mosque, but more generally as sacred enclave (haram)" (J W, Quranic Studies, 69)

Jerusalem

The Dome of the Rock - The Sakhra (rock) is an irregular mass of natural rock in the midst of the Temple area at Jerusalem it actually forms the summit of Mt Moriah. It is possible that the Sakhra, being the highest point in the Temple area, had come to be regarded as the actual spot whence Muhammad had made his famous night journey to heaven. Above this rock a dome was built by Abd al-Malik in 72/691. It is to be noted that the rock is not related to the ascension of the Prophet in early Islamic times. Several reasons are given for the building of this dome which shall not be discussed here except to point out that the Dome of the Rock being the earliest existing monument of Muslim architecture.

The Dome of the Rock is sometimes wrongly called the "Mosque of Umar".

The Umar Mosque - Umar, on his visit to Jerusalem to sign the treaty with its inhabitants in 17/638, asked to be taken to David's mihrab/place. He was ultimately taken to the site of the Temple. All traditions agree that later Umar had a Muslim place of worship erected on the deserted Temple area. The earliest reference to a mosque in Jerusalem is a description by the pilgrim Arculf, who visited the place in about 50/670. "But in that renowned place where once the Temple had been magnificently constructed, (Saraceni quadrangulam orationis domum quam subrectis tabulis et magnis trabibus super quasdam ruinarum reliquias vili fabricati sunt opere ipsi frequentant) in the vicinity of the wall coming from the east, the Saracens frequent a quadrangular place of prayer where they have thrown up a

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THE TEACHER

by Imam Al-Ghazzali - translated by Dr N A Faris

Man occupies four states in relation to knowledge similar to the four states he occupies in relation to money. One state is that of the acquisitiveness of the financial lord, in which case he would be seeking; another is that of possession which would eliminate the necessity of asking for help; another is that of spending his money on himself, in which case he would be indulging in the luxuries it affords; and finally there is the state of spending his money on others, in which case he would be a generous philanthropist. The last state is the noblest.

So also is it with regard to knowledge. First, there is the state of seeking knowledge in which man is acquisitive; another is that of having knowledge in which state he would not need to inquire of others; a third state is that of reflection wherein he would contemplate and enjoy his achievement; and last, there is the state of teaching wherein he imparts his knowledge to others. This last state is (also) the noblest.

"Thus he who has knowledge and shall do and teach the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." In this state the teacher is like the sun, which being itself fragrant, makes other objects fragrant. on the other hand he who possesses knowledge but does not practise it is like a notebook, which itself being unintelligent, nevertheless serves as a medium of transmission for the knowledge that its pages contain; or like the whetstone, which itself being blunt, sharpens the razor; or like the needle, which while it remains naked, serves in making clothing for others; or like the wick of a lamp which burns itself out in giving light for others.? A poet said:

*"A glowing wick is he
Who gives his light and dies".*

Whoever takes up teaching for a profession takes upon himself a great mission and a grave responsibility. He should, therefore, observe its proprieties and fulfil its duties.

From: Al-Muslimoon, September 1964

Children's Corner

WORDS AND ACTIONS SHOULD BE SAME

There once was a boy who loved eating sweets. He always asked for sweets from his father. His father was a poor man. He could not always afford sweets for his son. But the little boy did not understand this, and demanded sweets all the time.

The boy's father thought hard about how to stop the child asking for so many sweets. There was a very pious man living nearby at that time. The boy's father had an idea. He decided to take the boy to the pious man who might be able to persuade the child to stop asking for sweets all the time.

The boy and his father went along to the great man. The father said to him, "O great man, could you ask my son to stop asking for sweets which I cannot afford?" The man was in difficulty, because he liked sweets himself. How could he ask the boy to give up asking for sweets? The learned man told the father to bring his son back after one month.

During that month, the man gave up eating sweets, and when the boy and his father returned after a month, the pious man said to the boy "My dear child, will you stop asking for sweets which your father cannot afford to give you".

From then on, the boy stopped asking for sweets.

The boy's father asked the man, "Why did you not ask my son to give up asking for sweets when we came to you a month ago?"

The man replied, "How could I ask a boy to give up sweets when I loved sweets myself. In the last month I gave up eating sweets."

A person's example is much more powerful than just his words. When we ask someone to do something, we must do it ourselves also. We should not ask others to do what we do not do ourselves.

Always make sure that your actions and your words are the same.

From: Islam for Younger People, by Ghulam Sarwar, The Muslim Educational Trust (edited HH)

POETRY:**A Poem by Diba Kopic***

Somewhere in the back there is a picture
 a picture of somebody long time forgotten
 of somebody who I don't know anymore
 somebody who lives the life of dreams,
 somebody who is not me anymore.
 And as the pictures go by, like
 the sad movie with a story that
 brings tears
 I remember
 a hug, a smile, pockets full of love
 past life
 The new born dreams with fear of waking up
 feels the reality pressed hard on the skin
 opens the eyes with a wish of not seeing.
 The new ones lives the life of nightmares.
 So strong while so gentle it comes
 the little thing turns your day
 a penny of love from his pocket
 filled with nice smelling tobacco
 Hardly given but holds more than
 thousand others
 a hug takes your face on the shirt with
 a smell of the loved one who washed it
 While the pipe rests in his hands,
 the lips make a move and a heart jumped with pride
 'cause it's only for her
 hiding all the unnecessary words
 smile - enough to tell on its own
 the story of love
 somebody who used to be me
 somebody who let the life make her forget
 somebody who is hiding a child deep inside
 somebody who remembers a father.

* Diba Kopic is the young girl from Bosnia, sponsored by the MWA and living at Madina House, London. With the above poem she won first prize at school (year 12). Congratulations.

KITCHEN TALK**AUBERGINES**

Solanum, a botanical relative of the potato, is known as *eggplant* in America, *aubergine* in France and England, and *brinjal* in India, the country of its origin.

Brinjal sold in Indian markets in Hong Kong for example, are often small, white, and egg like, a shape which, no doubt, inspired the American name for eggplant. Americans are often puzzled why eggplants are so named because the "Dutch" variety (a large, dark purple, bulbous fruit) is the only one commonly available there.

In France, aubergine means purple or violet, an obvious reference to the colour.

The Dutch type and the long, light purple, banana-shaped Chinese eggplant are the two varieties usually found in Western supermarkets. The larger Western variety is good for roasting and peeling to make pureed dishes. The Chinese type has a more delicate, edible skin, a firmer flesh, and is the choice for most dishes.

Pick the fruit with an unblemished, unwrinkled skin, firm to the touch, not too thick in diameter and with a freshly cut stem end which is not shrivelled and dried up.

These will easily last two weeks in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. When sliced raw, the flesh should be whitish and the seeds immature and soft.

Eggplants seem to have a special affinity to absorb oil and most restaurants pander to that perversity.

The secret with eggplant is to bake it at a high temperature and let it cook in its own steam or, simply steam, boil or roast it.

Spicy Eggplant**Ingredients:**

1 1/2 lb (600 g) Chinese eggplant	2 tbsp (30 ml) chopped spring onions
1 tsp (5 ml) olive oil	2 tbsp (30 ml) light soya sauce
1 tsp (5 ml) dark Soya sauce	half cup (240 ml) chicken broth
half tsp (2.5 ml) sugar	1 tbsp (15 ml) cornstarch dissolved in
3 oz (74g) minced chicken breast	two tbsp broth
1 tsp (5 ml) garlic-chilli sauce	salt to taste
1 tsp (5 ml) minced garlic	

Method:

Heat oven to 450° F or 200° C - alternatively, steam eggplant for 20 minutes, drain and discard juices.

Slice eggplant diagonally into two-inch pieces and salt one side lightly.

Place eggplant on aluminium foil-lined pan and bake in hot oven for 10 minutes or until toothpick enters easily. Remove from oven and wrap airtight in the foil. Allow to steam in its own moisture.

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Heat half tsp oil in a non-stick wok or frying pan. Add spring onions and garlic and stir fry for 10 seconds. Set aside in a separate dish.

Mix chicken with one tsp dark soya sauce and half tsp sugar. Heat half tsp oil in a non-stick saucepan. Add chicken mixture and stir fry for one minute.

Add chicken broth, two tblsp light soya sauce and garlic-chilli paste to saucepan and bring to boil; simmer for a few minutes. Thicken with cornstarch solution.

Arrange the steaming hot eggplant in a serving dish. Add garlic/spring onion mix to the sauce, mix, and immediately pour over the eggplant making sure the sauce layers evenly into and in between the eggplant slices. Serve at once.

This dish may be prepared in advance and re-heated in the microwave before serving or, can be served cold.

Serves four to six.

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rough sort of building merely by laying large beams across the vestiges of ruins. It is said, to hold three thousand men at once." The simple structure thus described by Arculf is coined by Creswell as the "First" Aqsa Mosque.

The "Second" Aqsa Mosque is dated to al-Walid, and not as previously thought to Abd al-Malik, sometime between 90-97/709-716, according to the contemporary Aphrodito papyri. Over the centuries the mosque building has undergone several repairs/rebuilding programmes. The Mosque was given its name from Sura 17:1.

From an architectural point of view the al-Aqsa Mosque is the archetype of all mosques with colonnades vertical to the qibla and with a wider central aisle. See for example the Gt Mosque of Cordoba in Spain.

The term al-Masjid al-Aqsa is used in Arabic literature in a general sense to include the whole collection of buildings including the Dome itself, the tombs, zawiyahs and sabils. Strictly, the word Aqsa is applied to the mosque built by al-Walid near the Dome. Al-Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) is another name for this group - the third Haram after Makka and Madina.

Layla El-Droubie

EGYPTIAN DISASTER APPEAL

The tragedy in Egypt that occurred recently has shaken our hearts and minds. Please donate generously towards the account required to rebuild the shattered lives of those people affected by this disaster.

Send your donations, clearly marked "*Egyptian Disaster Appeal*" to the Muslim Women's Association, 63 Combe Lane, Wimbledon, London SW20 0BD.

MWA BUSINESS - NOVEMBER 1994

MWA BUSINESS - October

Dr Zubeda Osman

Our guest speaker at the October meeting was Dr Saadia Chishti. She spoke about our responsibility in teaching future generations the importance of environmental obligations in the light of the Qura'an and from the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him). We all enjoyed the talk by this distinguished lady.

MWA BUSINESS - November

Mrs. Khadija Knight

The AGM was held on Saturday the 12th of November 1994 at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London.

Apologies were received from four members.

Business discussed was:

- 1) As of December 1994 it was unanimously agreed to return to meetings on the 2nd Sunday of each month.
- 2) Problems of lack of funds which necessitated overdrafts have existed since April this year. Fortunately generous benefactors have made donations which have enabled Madina House to survive. But the situation is precarious. For the past 12 years we have had no support from any Arab state except one. Social Services do pay for children in Madina House but there is a delay of often more than three months before money is available. Meanwhile bills and salaries have to be paid and food and clothing provided. Members made a variety of suggestions about who could be approached for support.
- 3) A vote of confidence and thanks was passed for the work of the MWA President in particular and the Executive Committee in general.
- 4) Members also suggested a variety of ways in which individuals and groups could work to support the President's fund-raising efforts.
- 5) A proposal to send out a "mail shot" fund-raiser in time for the beginning of Ramadan 1995, i.e., start of February, was agreed. A more dramatic publicity document will be prepared.
- 6) Members were urged to be more committed to the association's aims and support all functions to the fullest extent, as well as to try to increase active membership.
- 7) Mrs Souraya Youssef and Mrs Gul Amin will job-share the responsibility of Religious Advisor to the Association. They hope to increase the specifically religious content of the magazine.

Mrs Swadeka Ahsun has been co-opted to the committee of the MWA.

Next Meeting: Sunday 11th December at 4 pm.