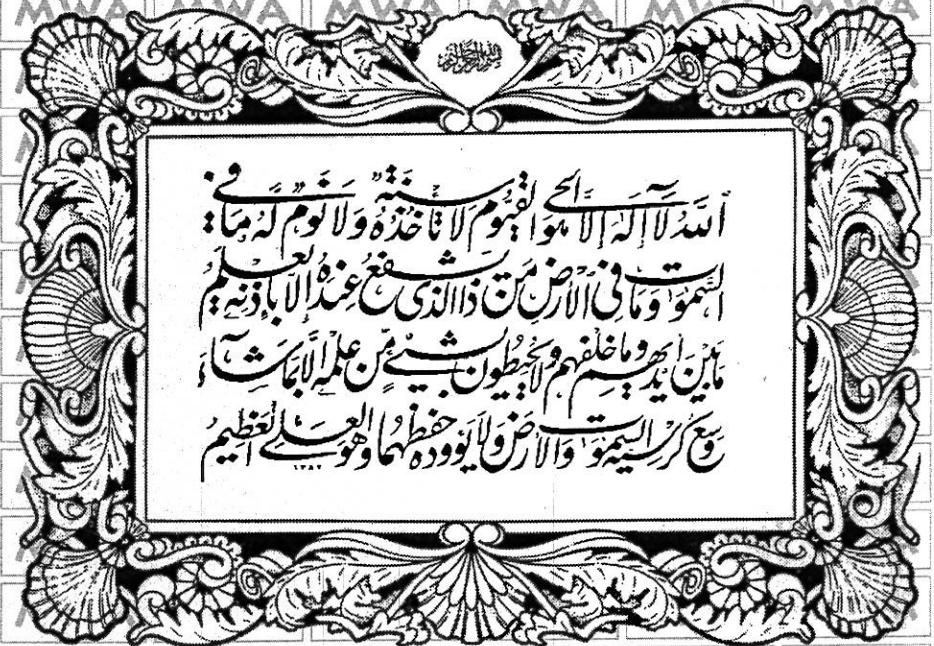


MUSLIM WOMAN

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THE EXECUTIVE

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OUR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the MWA
 will be at 4.00 pm
SUNDAY, 8th January 95
 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

General Reflection on Truth

Truth ought to be perfect by definition. Yet there are qualities that, to our way of thinking, it lacks: for one thing, it's hard to find and, for another, it's harder still to understand. Truth seems to imply intolerance if everything else is to be rejected; yet toleration is essential to liberty, and of other people, which is a vital element of religious teaching.

For truth, though perfect and complete, does change; that is, our understanding of it changes. You can see it happening from time to time. It is true that freedom from regulation is the way to liberate human enterprise so we can grow, but it is also true that regulation is necessary for justice and equity. It is true that censorship can inhibit art and freedom of speech, yet it is also true that total freedom to publish exposes children and our weaker brothers and sisters to forces of hatred and obscenity they cannot readily cope with.

Our understanding of truth must grow, but it only grows through painful conflict, when we give up fondly-held beliefs and positions (which were useful and right when we acquired them) in order to reach out into the unknown for new insights. The pain of this is most acute in countries of conflict where the truth is heavily obscured by hatred, greed and history.

H.H.

THE RACE FACTOR

Layla El-Droubie

Racial Theory

"Racism is a phenomenon of modern European history. As a scientific discipline it leads nowhere; as an ideology it is catastrophic". (Rene Lenzin, SR 4/93)

Xenophobia and racism have hit the headlines in Britain and elsewhere for many years. Plans for a three-year United Nations investigation into race relations in this country are under way. "The UN created the post of special rapporteur on racial discrimination last year after complaints that its human rights investigations focused almost exclusively on Third World countries. Rapporteurs can condemn rights abuses, and urge condemnatory resolutions by the UN, but there are no other sanctions". (The Times, Monday, 12 December 1994) The 1965 UN convention declared war on racism. But what is racism? ...

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines race as "group of persons or animals or plants connected by common descent". Another description is a group of living things, which distinguishes itself from other groups of its kind through a series of inherited characteristics but can be paired off.

Today's mankind can, according to this race-concept, be divided into sub-groups. The description of race however, must be clearly cut from that of nation, which constitutes a linguistic, historical and cultural entity, but often consists of different races. Although not universally agreed upon, mankind consists of three main racial groups: Europeans: white main tribe, Negroids: black main tribe, and Mongoloids: yellow main tribe, all with their various sub-groups.

The theory of "races" goes back to the time of the Enlightenment in Europe. Disciples of the Swedish court doctor and botanist, Carl von Linne, who in 1735 published a book called "The Complete System of Nature". He tried to extend his classification of species to humankind and arrange them in a system. Their original criteria were colour of skin and shape of head, but in the course of time they worked out ever finer measures of distinction - until they had to admit that the differences within a "race" were often greater than those between "races". The logic of this so-called scientific research finally led to the conclusion that racial doctrine could be upheld only if each human being was regarded as a "race" of his own.

In spite of this, the idea of arranging people in "racial" categories could not be expunged. The terrible thing was that the original and basically harmless physical and facial distinctions were compounded in the nineteenth century with moral and social values. This meant that other "races" were defined as inferior, which justified taking them under domination ...

It is perhaps not surprising that Europeans declared themselves to be the highest products of creation. In this way "Racial Theory" was used to justify colonial conquest by European powers." (Rene Lenzin) Thus, political "racial theory" in

particular through national socialism was enlarged to an ideology which served as an excuse for the depreciation of rights and extermination of near entire sections of populations.

"As things are now, the exponents of racial intolerance are in the ascendant, and, if their attitude towards "the race question" prevails, it may eventually provoke a general catastrophe ... (Arnold Toynbee, 1953) The attacks on people from the sub-continent in East London or the fire attacks against houses occupied by Turks in Germany are only the tip of the iceberg.

"The increase in "racism" may be taken as a reaction to growing migratory pressure on the "promised lands", such as the United States and the countries of western Europe. For its part migratory pressure is caused mainly by the lethal mixture of population explosion, war and ethnic cleansing, flight from the countryside and economic hopelessness in general." (Paul Andermatt, SR 4/93)

Equality

The UN International criteria of equality as contained in a report, says: "The principle of quality or non-discrimination implies the following two consequences. In the first place the members of the minority have *the right to the nationality* of the State which exercises sovereignty over the territory where they reside. In a modern State, the possession of nationality implies equal rights for all those possessing it. Secondly, *discrimination de facto* or *de jure* against minority elements is forbidden."¹ But, what happens to members of minorities who have not acquired the nationality of the country of their residence, for example, recent arrivals, seasonal /long-term workers, and migrants who inspite of having lived for most of their lives in their chosen second country, is far from clear. "No international law can succeed if it does not aspire to cultivate harmony among nations". (Hamidullah, 1953)

Multi-National States

The question arises what a multi-national state is. "A state formed by two or more nations, existing as different communities, each of which is aware of - and desires to retain - its own distinguishing characteristics". Such a state can be divided into two: 1) "those in which the State reflects the culture of the predominant nation, whilst the other nations are considered as minorities; and 2) those which do not reflect the culture of the predominant nation, but are neutral in so far as the various nations submitted to their jurisdiction are concerned."² Whether this can ever be achieved effectively might prove to be an utopia.

Is it feasible to have different laws for different people, who for example, living together in the same street/sharing a workplace, in multi-cultural England? What if we are faced with a person's religious practice versus the law of the land, for example the question of "towers of silence" for Zoroastrians? Either we create tensions within the community by allowing it in the name of religious freedom or we disallow it, thus another way of disposing the body has to be agreed upon. In the latter case, integration is enforced.

Islam

One of the moral principles in Islam is the underlying idea that human beings,

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→ THE VERSE OF THE THRONE

Souraya Youssef

The ayat-ul-kursi, the "Verse of the Throne". Q 2:155 Who can translate its glorious meaning or reproduce the rhythm of its will chosen and comprehensive word? Even in the original Arabic the meaning seems to be greater than can be expressed in words.

"God - there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being"

The attributes of God are so different from anything we know in our present world that we have to be content with understanding that the only fit word by which we can name Him is "He" - the pronoun standing for His name. His name - God or Allah - is sometimes misused and applied to other beings or things. We must emphatically repudiate any idea or suggestion that there can be any compeer of God, the one true living God. He lives, His life is self-subsisting and eternal; it does not depend upon other beings and is not limited to time and space. Perhaps the attribute of "quayum" (Eternal) includes not only the idea of self-subsisting but also the idea of "Keeping up and maintaining all life". Perfect life is activity, in contrast to the imperfect life which we see around us, which is not only subject to death but to the need for rest or slowed-down activity (something between activity and sleep.)

"Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth."

God has no need for slumber or sleep. His activity, His life, is perfect and self-subsisting.

"Who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His leave? He knows all that lies open before men and all that is hidden from them."

We realise that His life is absolute life. His being is absolute being, while others are contingent and evanescent, our ideas of heaven and earth vanish like shadows. What is behind that shadow is He. Such reality as our heavens and our earth possess is a reflection of His absolute reality, the pantheist places the wrong accent when he says that everything is He. The truth is better expressed when we say that everything is His. How then can any creature stand before Him as of right, and claim to intercede for a fellow creature? In the first place both are His will and command. But lie in His wisdom and plan are His will and command. But He in His wisdom and plan may grade His creatures and give one superiority over another. Then by His will and permission such a one may intercede or help according to the laws and duties laid on him. God's knowledge is absolute, and is not conditioned by time or space to us. His creatures, these conditions always apply. His knowledge and our knowledge are therefore in different categories, and our knowledge only gets some reflection off Reality when it accords with His will and plan.

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Children's Corner

PETS

Layla El-Droubie

At this time of the year pets are often given as presents to non-Muslim children. Unfortunately, once the festivities are over, many of these pets are abandoned. All too often the excitement of a cute furry little animal disappears quickly when it is realised how much work there is involved in looking after it properly, not to speak of the cost it incurs. Several pet shops up and down the country have stopped selling pets during the weeks leading up to Christmas. It has also been suggested that the owner needs time to get to know the animal and the animal needs time to get acquainted with its new surrounding which cannot happen when the household is in a frenzy of activities.

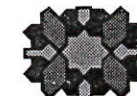
Let us see what the Qur'an says about animals. "There is not an animal that crawls on the earth nor a bird that flies on its wings, but they are communities like you". Q 6:38 This means that every kind of living creature has its own life style within its own community. Spiders are spinning webs, whales swim in the sea, camels cross deserts, lions roam in the wild, and so forth.

"Are you not aware that it is Allah whose limitless glory all creatures that are in the heavens and on earth celebrate, even the birds as they spread their wings? Each of them knows its own way of prayer and praise, and Allah knows well all that they do." Q:24:41

There are many hadiths which tell us to be kind to animals. We are informed that "a certain woman was put in Hell for her treatment of a cat which she tied up so that it died of hunger for she neither fed it nor released it to catch insects or reptiles for itself." Neither are we allowed to hunt and kill an animal for fun. The Prophet said: "Whoever kills even a sparrow for no reason, it will cry aloud to Allah on the Day of Resurrection, saying: 'O my Lord! Such-and-such a person killed me for nothing: he killed me for no good reason'." Equally it was reported that the Prophet forbade setting animals to fight against each other.

Animals have been put at our disposal for their products, i.e. milk, eggs, wool, meat; for enjoyment, i.e. pets, riding; for help, i.e. sheep dogs, guide-dogs for the blind; and so forth. We must never forget that they too are Allah's creatures and thus must receive our respect and kindness.

(See Also *Animals in Islam*, by B. Aisha Lemu.)



POETRY:**A Poem to my Mother**

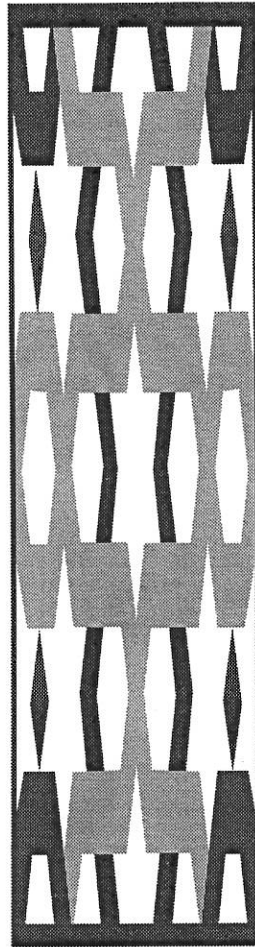
by Bint-i Habib

You cared for me,
 You loved me so,
 You prayed for me,
 You watched me grow.
 Oh mother mine, oh mother mine

You spent your wealth,
 That I may read,
 Forgot your health,
 Forgot your need.
 Oh mother mine, oh mother mine

I cannot thank you
 Far enough,
 I cannot love you
 Deep enough,
 Oh mother mine, oh mother mine

Your heart is great
 In God you trust,
 Your mind is great
 Work hard I must
 Oh mother mine, oh mother mine.



قال الله تعالى: بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
 ووصينا الإنسان بوالديه حملته أمه وهنا على وهن وفصاله في عامين أن
 اشكر لي ولوالديك إلي المصير . صدق الله العظيم .

“And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: In travail upon travail
 did his mother bear him. And in years twain was his weaning: (hear The
 command), “Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: To Me is (thy final) Goal.
 (Qur'an 31:14)

KITCHEN TALK**ASURE - WHEAT PUDDING**

According to legend, Noah's wife, who, after the Ark landed, concocted a final meal out of the leftovers of all the supplies aboard, turning out a wheat pudding whose variations are familiar today in many parts of the Middle East.

Ingredients:

500 gr whole wheat	100 gr pine nuts
150 gr chickpeas	100 gr walnut halves or quarters
150 gr white beans	100 gr hazelnuts
100 gr dried figs	4 litres water
100 gr dried apricots	1,500 gr sugar
100 gr seedless raisin	1 dessertspoon of rosewater
50 gr dried currants	pomegranate seeds for decoration

Method:

In separate bowls, soak the wheat, chickpeas and dried white beans overnight in plenty of water. Drain. Boil the wheat in the four litres of water for three hours, then let it stand in the remaining water.

Boil the chickpeas and white beans, each separately, until tender. Drain them, but reserve the cooking liquid.

Cut up the dried apricots and all but one or two figs and leave them in a little water. When they have softened, force them through a coarse sieve. Chop the hazelnuts. Then squeeze off and discard the skins of the boiled chickpeas.

Put half of the boiled wheat in a blender and buzz until mushy. Pour it back into the pan with the rest of the wheat. Add the chickpeas, white beans, figs, apricots, hazelnuts and raisins. Stir together, add the sugar and bring to boil, stirring. Simmer for 15-20 minutes. If more liquid is needed, use the reserved liquid from the cooked beans. During the last five minutes of simmering, add the rosewater.

Pour the pudding into dessert bowls and let it cool a bit before decorating the top with sliced figs, pomegranate seeds, pine nuts, currants and walnuts.

From: Aramco World, IXXXX 2

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"Whereas they cannot attain to aught of His knowledge save that which He wills (them to attain). His eternal power overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not."

In our thoughts we exhaust everything when we say the heavens and the earth. Well then in everything is the working of God's power, will, and authority. Everything of cause, includes spiritual things. And in the blue sky, and in the mind of man. A motion and a spirit that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, and rolls through all things. A life of activity that is imperfect or relative would not only need rest for carrying on its own activities, but would be in need of double rest when it has to look after and guard, or cherish, or help other activities. In contrast with this is the Absolute Life, which is free from any such need or contingency. For it is supreme above anything that we can conceive.

"And He alone is truly exalted, tremendous,"

Continued from page 5

wherever they live, whatever they look like, are fundamentally one and the same. "O Mankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women. And remain conscious of God, in whose name you demand (your rights) from one another." Q 4:1 Thus, within the creation of living things, we are just one race, the human race, but divided into nations and tribes "so that you might come to know one another." Q 49:13 "Men's evolution into "nations and tribes" is to foster rather than to diminish their mutual desire to understand and appreciate the essential human oneness underlying their outward differentiations; and correspondingly, all racial, national or tribal prejudice ('asabiyyah) is condemned - implicitly in the Qur'an". (Muhammad Asad, 1980) "Behold, God has removed from you the arrogance of jahiliyyah with its boast of ancestral glories". (Hadith) Thus, "Islam not only discarded all artificial barriers between man and man, but further introduced the objective conception of the ethnological oneness of all men as a matter of faith." (SR 1961)

Our apprehension of each other is sometimes a result of our not knowing one another. But, as we have seen above, it is a divine injunction to knowing each other. Just because a person is different does not mean he or she is less worthy of respect. As Muslim we have to work towards harmony within the human race.

- 1) UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/6, Nov.7, 1947, p. 14.
- 2) UN Memorandum sub. by the Sec. Gen., Lake Success, NY, 1950.

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Next meeting - The speaker at our January meeting will be Br. Yusuf Islam. The title of his talk will be "The Role Model".

Please note - There will be no meeting during the month of February due to Ramadan.

MWA BUSINESS - NOVEMBER 1994

MWA BUSINESS - Shirin Hassan

The monthly meeting of the Muslim Women's Association was held on Sunday, 11th December 1994 from 4 pm to 6.30 pm., at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London.

Fourteen members were present.

Apologies were received from Mrs Q Bashir, Huda Cowan, Khadija Knight, and Dr Z Osman.

Mrs Khanam Hassan, the President, asked Sharifa Sharief to open the meeting with a recitation from the Qur'an. Sharifa recited and translated the last two ayats from sura Baqara, highlighting the significance and power of the two verses.

MWA Business - A discussion followed as to why the magazine had been delayed. Mrs L El-Droubie intimated that she would only be editing the magazine for the month of January.

Clarification was sought regarding the printing of the magazine. Mr El-Droubie would continue as the printer. Furthermore, members must receive their magazines four to five days before a meeting. To meet this deadline three weeks must be allowed for the production and distribution of the magazine - one week for collecting/receiving /writing articles, minutes, editorial, typing/typesetting, editing, proof-reading, art work - one week for printing - and one week for posting and receiving it.

Mrs L El-Droubie arranged for Dr Abdul-Haleem, Lecturer at SOAS (University of London) to give a talk on the Muslim perspective on Drugs and Alcohol. Dr Abdul-Haleem was accompanied by his wife who had undertaken a study on the problems of drugs and alcohol. Excerpts from this paper will be published and distributed to members in due course.

Dr Abdul-Haleem began by quoting from the Qur'an that drugs and alcohol are prohibited substances. The two important points from an Islamic view are:

- 1) The family connection.
Islam emphasize that it is not only a parental but a religious responsibility to prohibit the use of drugs and alcohol.
- 2) The role of Islamic governments.
Islamic governments are responsible for protecting their communities. It is the duty of an Islamic Government to ensure that prohibited things are not available.

Dr Abdul-Haleem also contrasted the Western view of individual freedom/liberty as opposed to the Islamic view.

A discussion followed as to how people, particularly the young, could be protected from such dangers. To date such issues have not been dealt with by the Muslim Community, but perhaps they need to be acknowledged and dealt with in the future. Souraya Youssef closed the meeting with a recitation from the Qur'an.

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