

Madina House: By unanimous vote the members agreed that the present building of Madina House be sold and another building with a garden be bought.

ILLITERACY IN THE ARAB WORLD

Al-Tayeb Saleh, speaking at Doha to AFP said that while the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) had intensified efforts to wipe out illiteracy by the end of the century, the Arab world dismisses the problem as 'a fact of life.'

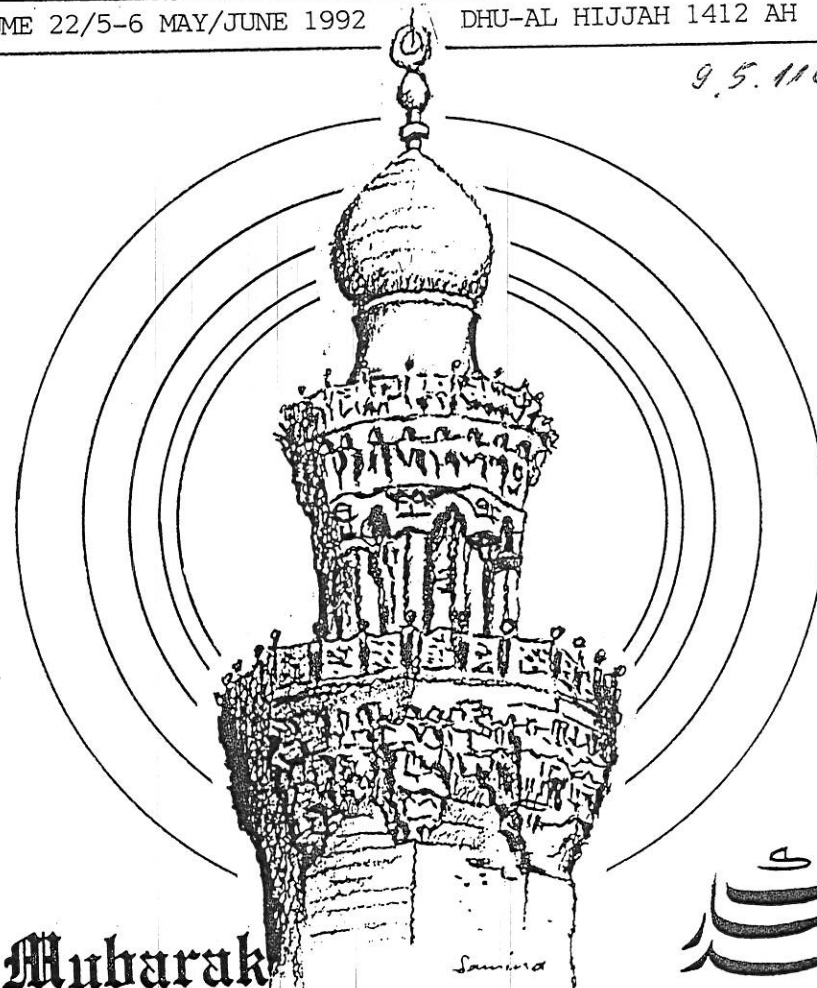
The highest levels of illiteracy in the Arab world are found among women and bedouins, he said, faulting Arab governments for neglecting remedial efforts in order to concentrate on more glamorous projects.

(From "The Muslim World" March 92)

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The MUSLIM WOMAN

DHU-AL HIJJAH 1412 AH



Eid Mubarak



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The next Meeting of the MWA will take place at the Islamic Cultural Centre, 146 Park Road, London NW8 at 4.30 pm, on Sunday 14th June 1992

WE WISH ALL OUR SISTERS A VERY HAPPY EID-UL-ADHA!

MWA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT	Mrs Khanam Hassan
SECRETARY	Mrs Nisa Ali
ASST.SECRETARY	Mrs Karima Mustafa
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EDITOR	Dr Zubeda Osman
CO-EDITOR	Mrs Samina Hasan
ARTWORK/PRINTING	

→ Muḥammad as Family Man

Muḥammad was twenty-five when someone first suggested that he should get married. He was a poor man, a dependent of his uncle Abū Ṭālib. Young men in Makkah were in the habit of frequenting its bars and flirting with the barmaids. Not Muḥammad! He led a life of chastity and purity. Nothing of the petulance of youth or the debauchery of adult life in Makkah was known of him. In the last two years of his bachelorhood, Muḥammad was in the employ of Khadijah, a widow and a merchant, whose interest he had served well enough to deserve her praise as well as that of Maysarah, her long-trusted and faithful servant. The latter went on the trading trips with Muḥammad looking after the interests of his employer. The successful ventures were as much his as Muḥammad's; but Maysarah modestly put Muḥammad ahead of himself, reporting to Khadijah that the successes were exclusively Muḥammad's.

The fact that nobody had spoken to Muḥammad about marriage indicates that marriage was not on his mind. That explains his stupefaction when Nafisah bint Munyah, a friend of Khadijah, suggested that if he would entrust the matter to her, she would secure for him the hand of Khadijah with all the wedding expenses prepaid. Muḥammad was elated, and he and Khadijah were married. Khadijah gave Muḥammad all his children but one: Fāṭimah, who married Muḥammad's cousin 'Alī and bore him his only grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Fāṭimah alone survived her father's two sons, Qāsim and Ṭāhir, who died in infancy. Three daughters, Zaynab, Ruqayyah, and Umm

Kulthūm, all married and died without children before 8/630.¹⁰ In 9/631, another son, called Ibrāhīm, was born to Muḥammad from his Egyptian wife Maryam. That child also died in infancy. Khadijah remained the only wife of Muḥammad as long as she lived. Their marriage lasted until her death in 1 B.H./621. It was during this period that many of the most important events of the life of Muḥammad occurred. It was indeed a happy marriage for both.

Khadijah's wealth relieved Muḥammad of the burden of working for a living. It liberated him from material concern for himself and his family, and provided him with the leisure requisite for long meditations, one of which was the occasion for the first revelation. When those first revelations came, Muḥammad thought himself sick or possessed. He could not bring himself to believe what the Angel had conveyed to him, that he was to be a prophet. It fell to Khadijah to prop up her husband's spirits, to reassure and inspire him, to help him gain confidence in himself and in those extraordinary experiences. With the repeated return of the vision, Khadijah herself needed reassurance. She sought this from Waraqah ibn Nawfal, a distant uncle of hers, reputed for his religious knowledge and wisdom. After hearing a full report, Waraqah exclaimed, "By Him Who dominates my soul, Muḥammad is the Prophet of this nation. The great Spirit that has come to Moses has now come to him. . . . May he be firm!" Khadijah was certainly encouraged; but it was a tremendous burden that she had henceforth to carry as wife of someone who was to be a prophet. Muḥammad loved his wife dearly. He poured on her all the affection of which he was capable. He cried when she died; and he kept her memory on every occasion. Later, his youngest wife, 'Ā'ishah

said, "I have never been more envious than I am of Khadijah, long dead as she may be."

Though Muḥammad married eight times after the death of Khadijah, only one of them was a real marriage. That was his marriage to 'Ā'ishah, daughter of his closest companion, Abū Bakr. The others were marriages for political and social reasons. The Prophet entered into them as an exemplification of a new value Islam taught. A few examples will illustrate. Zaynab bint Jaḥsh, a cousin of his whom Muḥammad knew well, was given by him in marriage to Zayd ibn Ḥārithah, Khadijah's slave whom Muḥammad had manumitted. Incompatibility of the spouses made them miserable, and the marriage broke down. This was a double tragedy, since Arab custom made the divorced wife of a slave a social pariah, forever unmarriageable. Although this custom was abolished by Islam, no Muslim would condescend to marry the woman despite her young age. To raise her status and teach the Arabs a lesson against social stratification, Muḥammad took her in marriage. Ḥafṣah was a widowed daughter of 'Umar ibn al Khaṭṭāb, a close companion of the Prophet. She was in her forties and was poor. Her father was even poorer. He offered her to a number of friends and acquaintances, but all declined. It grieved him deeply that his daughter was homeless, unprotected, and liable to fall into trouble. To uplift them both and teach the Muslims that it is necessary for them to give the needed protection to their single women, especially the widows, the Prophet joined her to his household as his wife.

Sawdah was the Muslim wife of Sakrān ibn 'Amr, one of the first converts to Islam. The Prophet married the couple when Sawdah converted to Islam. She had to run away from her family to avoid their vengeance. The same had happened to her husband. The

Prophet ordered them both to emigrate to Abyssinia. On their return, Sakran died. Sawdah had to choose between staying in the streets or returning to her family and their retribution. Muḥammad had to give her the protection due and reassure his other followers that their families would not be left to the mercy of their enemies, should they fall as martyrs in the raging conflict.

Juwayriyyah was the daughter of al Ḥārith, chief of the Banū al Mustaliq tribe. She was a widow, and she fell captive in the war her people waged against the Muslims. The Prophet took her as his portion of the booty, manumitted her in respect to her father, and offered to take her in marriage. Her father left the choice to her, and she decided in favor of Islam and marriage to Muḥammad. Her honor was thus kept. She proselytized for Islam with her people and brought them all into the faith a few months following her marriage.

These and other women were elevated through their marriage to Muḥammad to the rank of "mothers of the Believers." Each one played an important role in the formative period of Islam and contributed to the social cohesiveness of the new society. Having declared the old tribal ties illegitimate in the new universalist *ummah*, Muḥammad used every other cohesive to consolidate the fledgling society. The honor of belonging to the house of the Prophet or of being related thereto by marriage was part of the great reform Islam had introduced in man - woman relations. Prior to Islam, a woman was regarded by her parents as a threat to family honor and hence worthy of burial alive at infancy. As an adult, she was a sex object that could be bought, sold, and inherited. From this position of inferiority and legal incapacity, Islam raised women to

being looked upon by Islam as a capital and most degrading crime, Islam protected women and guided them against all that may lead to their downfall. It exempted a woman from having to earn her livelihood by obliging her male relatives to support her at all times. It further decreed that in any matter a woman should be entitled to at least as much as she was obliged to give, and so always with kindness.

All these legal reforms were radical in their day; and they remain radical in much of the world today. Muḥammad and his household provided the exemplification of these reforms, and added to it the embodiment of the new ethic. His wives testified that Muḥammad's sympathy for them never waned; that they never saw him except with a smile on his face. And they in turn made his home an abode of peace and contentment. As Prophet and head of state, he did not regard it beneath his dignity to help them in their daily house chores. On the contrary, he made them think of him as their equal. One of them was bold enough once to say to him, "Alright now, it is your turn to speak. But please say only the truth." The remark infuriated her father, 'Umar, who was present and who castigated her severely for her offensive tone. Muḥammad interfered, saying: "We did not invite you here for this purpose." Muḥammad spent long hours with his children and grandchildren. He lengthened his prostration once in order not to push away a grandchild who saw his position as an invitation to ride on his back. He counseled his followers to be good to their families, declaring that "surely the best among you in the eye of God are the best toward their families." Muḥammad called earning a livelihood for one's dependents an act of worship and raised its value to the level of martyrdom.

ISLAMIC RELIEF

هيئة الاغاثة الاسلامية

HEAD OFFICE
517 Moseley Road, Birmingham
B12 9BX
Tel.: 021- 440 3114 / 446 4502
Fax: 021-446 4001

LONDON
38 Mapesbury Road,
London
NW2 4JD
Tel: 081-450 7612

GLASGOW
16 Queens Crescent,
Glasgow
G4 9BL
Tel: 041-353 0083

Charity Registration No. 328158

PRESS RELEASE

Since the start of the armed conflict in the Yugoslav republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the situation has drastically worsened. An estimated 200,000 Bosnians have fled their homes. Many hundreds have been killed or wounded. The Serbian army has taken control of many Muslim-dominated towns and villages including Koragad, Jablena and Billena over the previous weeks.

It was reported that more than 60 (sixty) mosques in Sarajevo have been destroyed. The Khosrove Bige History Islamic Library has also been burned.

"Serbian militants yesterday launched their fiercest attack yet on Bosnia's capital, pounding Muslim areas with heavy machine-gun and mortar fire which set buildings ablaze and left corpses on the streets. "This is the most difficult and dramatic day in Sarajevo's long history," said Sarajevo Radio"

The Independent news paper (Wednesday 22nd April 1992)

Islamic Relief has sent US \$15, 000 and DM 14 000 in aid and preparations are also being made to send another 15 tonne container of food worth over £20,000. A new appeal has been launched targetting to raise £500, 000 to help the people in desperate need of food, medicine and shelter (tents and blankets).

Help is urgently needed as time is fast running out. No donation is too small.

PLEASE HELP US HELP THEM.

Zainal Abidin
COORDINATOR

→ Family Planning & Abortion An Islamic Viewpoint

QAZI MUJAHIDUL ISLAM

→ QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

A) CONTRACEPTION

Q: Is the practice of contraception allowed in Islam?

A: Islam allows the practice of contraception only under certain circumstances. These particular circumstances are discussed in the questions that follow.

Q: What methods of contraception are allowed?

A: Basically there are two forms of contraception –

a) The reversible methods

- i) Physical – coitus interruptus
– rhythm method
- ii) Mechanical – intra-uterine devices
– condom/diaphragm
- iii) Chemical – oral contraceptive pill
– locally acting spermicidal jellies

b) The irreversible methods: these are the sterilization operations

- vasectomy in the man
- tubal ligation in the woman

As far as the reversible methods are concerned, Islam allows the physical methods viz. coitus interruptus and the rhythm method. The husband must however, seek the consent of his wife when practising coitus interruptus. During the period in which the Quran was revealed, Azal (coitus interruptus) was practised by the Arabs, but it was not prohibited by any verse. However, it seems that the Prophet (S.A.W.) did not approve of it entirely. Once a Sahabi told the Prophet (S.A.W.) that he practised coitus interruptus. The Prophet (S.A.W.) thrice commented: "Oh, so you practice Azal?" in such a manner that it was evident that he did not approve of it entirely. Moreover, that which is destined to happen will take place. In this case it so happened that the Sahabi concerned did have a child despite his practising Azal.

The mechanical and chemical methods are permissible only under special circumstances (mentioned later) provided they do not transgress any fundamental Islamic laws eg. they should not be harmful to the user. Therefore it would seem that the use of condoms and spermicidal jellies is permissible. As far as the intra-uterine device and the oral contraceptive pill are concerned, the physician must ensure that there is a proper indication for their use and that they would be safe for the user. Only then would their use be permissible.

The ruling of the Shari'ah on sterilisation operations is as follows:

Vasectomy in the man: This is totally prohibited in Islam. It cannot be sanctioned by the Shari'ah under any circumstances. Islamic law also prohibits castration. A common factor between vasectomy and castration is that both destroy the power of reproduction in man, although the ability to cohabit is still present. It is a cause of the murder of the future generation.

Tubal ligation in the woman: This cannot be declared permissible as a general rule, because it renders a woman incapable of conceiving. There is a possibility that the factor on account of which she is being counselled for tubal ligation might change thereafter. However, there would then be little hope of her becoming pregnant again.

However, if an honest and experienced doctor fears that the life or permanent mental health of a woman would be seriously affected by a pregnancy and there is no other cure for her sickness, in such a case only would tubal ligation be permissible.

Conclusion: It must be made clear that while certain methods of contraception are permissible in Islam, they can only be used under the circumstances sanctioned by the Shari'ah. These specific circumstances are dealt with in the following lines.

Q: Does Islam allow family planning for social reasons e.g. it is fashionable to have small families; having a large family may curtail the social activities of the wife; having many children may spoil her "figure"?

A: Islam does not sanction family planning to meet with the demands of present day fashion or social reasons. Although Islam encourages a woman to look well and to beautify herself for the sake of her husband, it does not sanction the same for the sake of public approbation, which is the present trend, The Holy Quran says:

"And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof: that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands . . ."

(Surah XXIV, verse 31)

Q: Is family planning for professional reasons permitted in Islam, so that the wife can pursue a career?

A: Islam places no burden on the shoulders of a woman or any responsibility for her to earn a living. Her maintenance before marriage is the responsibility of her father, after marriage her husband, and in old age her children. Islam does not want that a woman works like a labourer in the markets or be exploited economically. The general rule, therefore, is that it is not permissible to control the birth of children on account of professional reasons.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there are cases where a woman is forced to seek employment to maintain her children or family on account of desperate circumstances. Under such circumstances it would be permissible for the couple to adopt reversible methods of birth control.

This relaxation, however, does not apply to those women who merely try to maintain a very high standard of living; or who try to earn and accumulate as much wealth as possible in order to keep in step with the current fashionable trends. This would defeat the object of the creation of woman and destroy the family unit which is the foundation of any society.

Q: Is family planning for spacing children permissible in Islam?

A: The concept of spacing children means the practice of contraception in order to allow a reasonable time period between the birth of any two children; the purpose being that each child receives adequate attention of the mother in its upbringing. In the difficult task of nourishing, training and educating a child, the full attention of a mother is required. If a baby is born every year, then it is extremely difficult to provide the necessary care and attention for each child. From the discussion in Raddul Muhtar and other books of Islamic jurisprudence (on the question of abortion), it can be deduced, that if another pregnancy would seriously affect the care and upbringing of the existing child, then reversible methods of birth control may be practised.

Thus family planning towards the spacing of children, so that each child receives adequate attention, would be permissible in Islam. However, it must be emphasised that even this concession should be treated with respect. It must be made clear that spacing of children should not be used as a pretext for continuing family planning for an indefinite period, for this will be contrary to the injunction of our Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) who said:

"Marry and procreate"

FAMILY PLANNING FOR MEDICAL REASONS

Q: Is family planning allowed if:

- having children endangers a mother's physical health, mental health or even her life?*
- A woman is physically crippled and unable to care for herself?*
- a woman suffers from a psychiatric illness?*

A: If an experienced doctor, in all honesty and sincerity, is of the opinion that having children would endanger a mother's physical health e.g. if she is suffering from cardiac disease, renal disease or her life would be threatened, then it is permissible for the couple concerned to practise reversible methods of contraception. The same ruling applies if a mother is physi-

cally crippled and therefore unable to care for a child, or if she is suffering from a psychiatric illness. It must be stressed that the decision to practice family planning under such circumstances does not rest upon the couple concerned. The decision must be taken by a physician and must be based on medical grounds.

Q: There is a risk of a baby being born with a genetic disease e.g. mongolism, haemophilia. Is birth control allowed under such a situation?

A: If it is the opinion of a responsible and an experienced physician that there is a high risk — not just a vague suspicion — of a baby being born with a serious genetic disease, then it is permissible to adopt reversible methods of birth control.

From this it is apparent that there is a role for the Muslim doctor in genetic counselling. The risk of a baby inheriting a serious genetic disease should be carefully determined, and any advice given should not be based on mere suspicion. Reversible methods of contraception should be advocated in those cases where the risk of a baby being born with a serious genetic disease is high.

Q: What role must a Muslim doctor play with regard to contraception and sterilisation for his non-Muslim patients — whether married or unmarried? Should a different standard be adopted for them?

A: The attitude of a Muslim doctor at all times must be in consonance with the teachings of Islam for all his patients. Therefore, a different standard with regard to contraception and sterilisation for non-Muslim patients cannot be adopted.

by A. Muslim

MUSHROOM AND MOZZARELLA RISOTTO

175g/6oz open mushrooms
225g/8oz Mozzarella cheese
3 tablespoons oil
1 large onion, thinly sliced
225g/8oz short-grain brown rice
750ml/1¼ pints Basic vegetable stock (p.6)
pinch sea salt
4 tablespoons chopped parsley
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Thinly slice the mushrooms. Coarsely grate the Mozzarella cheese. Heat the oil in a saucepan over a low heat. Put in the onion and soften it. Put in the mushrooms and rice and stir them for 1 minute. Pour in about one-third of the stock and season with the salt. Simmer, uncovered, until nearly all the stock has been absorbed, about 15 minutes. Pour in a further third of the stock, simmer, uncovered, again for another 15 minutes or until that has nearly all been absorbed.

Add the remaining stock and simmer, uncovered, for 20 minutes or until the rice is tender and the liquid has reduced to a creamy textured glaze.

Take the pan from the heat and fork in the cheeses and the parsley. Serve as soon as possible after the cheese has been added.

Serve with either a salad or a cooked green vegetable such as broccoli or spinach.

JUNIORS' CORNER

RESPECT THYSELF

by Olive Toto

The palm tree in the oasis looked so tall and the water beneath them looked so clear and fresh. A man sitting by this water was saying to himself "How I wish those dates on that palm tree were ready for me to eat".

For this man knew that if there was any fruit on that tree he would eat it and then drink the water, and go to sleep, because he had no food at home to eat nor work to do. "Well", thought the man, "I will beg from my friends and they will give me something to eat or some money to buy some food".

He did not seem to feel in the least ashamed of going and asking his friends for help. He thought of a very good man called Muhammad. He knew this man would not refuse him because he was always saying, "Do good unto others and also feed the starving".

Off this man went to the Prophet, and asked him for help. The Prophet looked at him and saw this man was strong and healthy. The Prophet said "My good man, do you possess anything?" The man said, "I have only a cup to drink from, and a sheet of cloth with which I cover myself and a bedstead".

The Prophet said "Bring two of these articles to me". This was done and then the Prophet asked his friends around, "Who will buy this man's goods?" At last someone bought them for two dirhams. The Prophet turned to the man and said, "Here are two dirhams, with one of these buy food, and with the other go and buy a piece of rope, then go into the woods and collect pieces of wood, tie them up, put them into bundles and sell them in the market".

Two weeks passed and then the man came back. He told the Prophet that he had saved 15 dirhams, and that with some of the money he had bought cloth and food, and still had some money left. The Prophet asked, "Which is more praiseworthy - this way or to go on to the day of Judgement branded with the mark of begging?" The man went away happy and proud, for now he had his self-respect back.

MWA BUSINESS

by Nisa Ali

APRIL MEETING

The monthly meeting of the MWA was held on Sunday, 12th April 1992 at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London. It was opened with a Dua read by Mrs. Gulamin. Apologies were received from Dr. Osman, Mrs. Badawi, Mrs. Bashir, Mrs. Rekhi.

Correspondence: Mrs. Hassan Ali from Guyana, sent Eid greetings and congratulations on the 30th Anniversary of the MWA. Eid Greetings were also received from Dr. Al Ghamdi, Dr. C. Wady and Mrs. Mariam Omar from South Africa.

Members had a lively discussion on mixing of men and women at social functions, dressing for the occasions and music in the background.

ANNUAL MWA BAZAAR The date for the forthcoming Bazaar is Sunday, 26th July 1992.

EID-UL-FITR DINNER

The Annual Eid Dinner was held on Sunday, 19th April 1992 at the Islamic Cultural Centre. The function was opened by Dr. Syed Pasha, Secretary General UMO followed by a welcome address by our President, Mrs. Khanam Hassan.

The function was a success. We were pleased to see our guests enjoy the food and see them chatting with old and new friends.

We must commend all our helpers for the way they carried out their task. Thank you all, your hard work did not go unnoticed.

Committee Meeting

The Committee of the MWA met on Sunday, 31st May. The meeting was opened with Sura Al Fatiha recited by Mrs. Saeeda Sharif.

Correspondence: Invitation to the AGM of the Arab Women's Council, Thursday, 4th June 1992; Invitation