

The Muslim Woman

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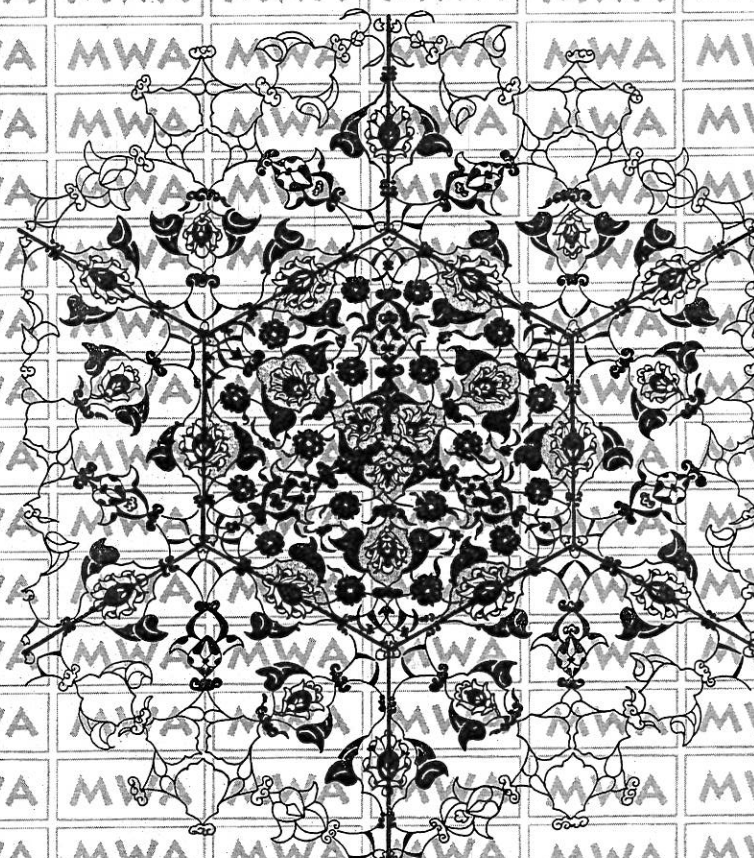
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The MUSLIM WOMAN

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Front Cover Picture

A hexagonal tile decorated with a repeat motif



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THE EXECUTIVE

FOR THE PERIOD DECEMBER 1993 TO NOVEMBER 1995

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Mrs. Layla El-Droubie

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The annual general meeting of the MWA will be at 4.30 pm
 Saturday, 12th November
 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

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
 Assalaam-o-Alaikum

by Laylah El-Droubie

The news that a young Muslim woman, Farida Patel (Evening Standard, Tuesday 11th; The Times, Wednesday the 12th) apparently had been beaten to death must surely evoke nothing but horror. It raises the question why such a brutal act was allowed to happen in 1994's England. The reason given was that Farida was possessed by an evil spirit (jinn). Apparently "the beating was accompanied by prayers and the reciting of verses from the Koran" in order to expel the evil spirit.

It should not be a surprise that this heinous act is not being mentioned in the Muslim Press. Some do not want to acknowledge that it happened, others will sweep it under the carpet with the words, "it has nothing to do with us". But anything like this which is taking place within the Muslim community should be of general concern to all Muslims.

We in the MWA pride ourselves to care what happens to young, unfortunate Muslim children, i.e. Madina House; but should it stop there? Definitely not, what happens to young adolescents, as in this sad case, or in fact to women in general, should also be of concern to us. We can only call each other sisters in Islam if we behave like sisters towards each other and that includes closing ranks ensuring that such a terrible act of exorcism does not happen again. Farida was one of us.

*"A community in the midst of which sins are committed
 and
 which could be but are not
 corrected by the community,
 is most likely to be encompassed in its entirety
 by the punishment of God"*

(Hadith, Umran Publications 1981)

IBN HAZM

INTRODUCTION

Ibn Hazm (Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'id ibn Hazm) lived in Al-Andalus (Spain) at the beginning of the eleventh century AD. "He is accepted by both Islamic and Western scholars as one of the outstanding intellects, not only of his own age, but of all ages. The extent of his formative influence on the great change in European thought that took place in the late Middle Ages is now beginning to be fully appreciated.

Ibn Hazm's position, at one and the same time, of being an activator of Islam as a means of social and moral reform and as a landmark of European culture make him particularly relevant to today's situation.

Morality is the basis of our existence. It is the firm foundation for a just society. It enables each of us to achieve a happy life. Morality is the necessary food for the soul; it provides its staple diet; and a healthy soul creates a healthy body. That is why Allah has sent Prophets and Messengers, disciples and pious reformers, to remind us of our basic need for healthy souls and correct behaviour. The Prophet Muhammad clearly defined his own message as a continuation and completion of the moral messages brought by the Prophets before him. Today, more than ever, we are in urgent need of ethical principles. In the Qur'an, God speaks to everybody, saying that, "*He will never change the outward condition of people unless they themselves change the inward condition of the soul*". (13:11)

Scientific progress has brought countless benefits, but these benefits are equalled in number by new problems and moral dilemmas in the fields of warfare, of sexual relations, of personal life, etc. Science naturally deals only with the material aspects, with material means and material solutions.

Life is not material only, but also spiritual. Islam caters for all the fields of human existence. Islam does not admit of any kind of separation between the material and the moral, or mundane and spiritual life. Islam teaches that spiritual and material forces must work together and that the Muslim should work hard and spare no effort to develop and reconstruct life on sound moral foundations. Islam provides the most needed balance without which life loses its stability and its desirability."

In his book, *Kitab al Akhlaq wa'l-Siyar* (Section IV dealing with Morals and Behaviour) which he dedicated to the benefit of all mankind, Ibn Hazm said:

"Train yourself to think about the things that frighten you. If they do come to pass, you will not be so worried by them. You will not lose anything by growing accustomed to the thought of them, and your pleasure will be greater or even doubled if something nice or unexpected happens.

Blessed is the man who knows his own faults better than others know them.

Anyone who mingles with the crowd is never short of worries to pain him, or sins to regret on the day when he will return to God, or anger to give him a pain in the liver (heart), or humiliation to make him hang his head. Then what shall I say about someone who is intimate with people and always in their company? Solitude is where you will find dignity, repose, happiness and security. You should treat company like a fire: warm yourself but do not fall in. ("You may draw near but without going right in".)

Do not put off to tomorrow what you can do today. If you recognise this obligation you will make haste to do today even very small preparations for tomorrow, or if a small number of tasks are left to mount up they become a great number. In fact they may become too many to do and the whole enterprise will be wrecked.

The plans of an intelligent man may go wrong. The plans of a stupid man never go right.

Put your trust in a pious man, even if the religion that he practises is a different one from your own. Do not put your trust in anyone who scorns sacred things, even if he claims to belong to your own religion. As for a man who defies the commandments of the Almighty, do not ever trust him with anything you care greatly about.

It is the height of injustice to deny to a habitual wrongdoer the opportunity of doing an occasional good deed.

The best persons to help you in your affairs is someone with equal interest in their success. Do not get anyone to help you who would be just as well off elsewhere.

One hour of neglect can undo a year of pious effort.

In the course of affairs, a mistake made by an individual is better than a just policy followed by the whole assembly of Muslims if they are not grouped under the leadership of one man. This is because the individual's mistake can be put right, but the correct views of the Muslim assembly will lead them to ignore something that may have been wrong, and they will get lost because of it.

It is an act of perfect virtue, of self-discipline, a sign that one controls the truth, to confess such faults in order that one day someone may learn from them, if God wills.

The highway (or a long journey) is fatiguing, a quiet retreat is restorative. Too much wealth makes for greed. A small fortune makes for contentment."

(Excerpts from: In Pursuit of Virtue, The Moral Theology and Psychology of Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi 384-456/994-1064, with a translation of his book Al-Akhlaq wa'l-Siyar, by Muhammad Abu Laylah, TaHa Publ., 1990)



Children's Corner

AMINA AND MUHAMMAD

A STORY FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

The Delicious Meal: Mother and Aunt Samia carried out large trays of food into the sitting room where the cloths and plates had been laid. The food smelled delicious! Although the children wanted to hear Uncle Hasan's story, they were now only interested in the food before them.

"What a feast! Uncle Hasan will be very pleased with our hospitality", Amina thought to herself. "My father will be proud that he can offer his guest such a fine meal. He will be very proud of my mother."

The meal was, indeed a feast. There was a bowl of *salunah*, a tasty, thick gravy made with meat and spices; a large bowl of *salatah* (salad) made of tomatoes, cucumbers, and lettuce, and another plate piled high with crisp *sambusak* (a kind of samosas). In the middle of it all was a large tray of roasted lamb on top of a mound of rice. Muhammad's favourite dish - *chicken kabsah* - (stew with chicken and rice, tomatoes and spices) was placed among the other dishes of *mahshi kusah* (courgettes hollowed out, stuffed with a mixture of fried ground meat, spices and pine nuts, and fried), and other delicious foods. At each corner were piles of the warm, flat bread that Amina liked so much. Umm! Everything looked so good!

After the food was put out. Mother called the children into the kitchen for a moment, "Children," she said, "Please remember your manners. Let me see if you know them. Which hand do you use to eat with?"

"Only the right!" Muhammad shouted, hoping he had pleased his mother by his quick response.

"Very good!" said Mother. "And how do you sit on the rug?"

"We sit so that the bottoms (soles) of our feet face no one," answered Amina.

"Correct. What else must you remember?"

"We must remember that it isn't polite to stare at someone while they eat. We should look down at our own food."

"Fine," said Mother. "Now go to the sitting room to your places (after having washed your hands thoroughly)."

Mother went to the door of the *majlis* (reception room) to tell Uncle Hasan and Father that dinner was ready.

"Please sit down, Uncle Hasan", Father said. He indicated to Uncle Hasan that he should sit in the place of honour beside Father on his right side. "*Bismillah*, in the name of God," Father said quietly, before the family began to eat.

The meal was as delicious as everyone knew it would be. Amina and Muhammad ate so much they thought they might burst!

The two large trays of fruit - the oranges and apples, the dates and figs, that Father had brought - were the last things to be eaten. Then, after everyone had finished the meal, Father said with thankfulness, "*al-hamdu lillah!*" which means "Thanks be to God!"

Uncle Hasan leaned back against the pillows and said, "What a fine meal that was! I thank you for your hospitality and generosity. I am so full, I don't know if I can move!"

Muhammad laughed. "I'll help you, Uncle Hasan!" he said. Then Father, Uncle Hasan, and Muhammad went to wash their hands before going into the *majlis* to sit on the couches there.

Amina helped her mother, Aunt Samia, and Grandmother clear the food away and prepare tea and coffee.

Grandmother carefully took the tiny coffee cups out of the cupboard. Amina loved to hold them and look at the pretty blue flowers that decorated them. She put the coffee cups on a tray and then put the small tea glasses on another. When the coffee was ready, Mother carried the tray with the coffee cups into the *majlis*.

Mother poured the hot, fragrant coffee into the little china cups and offered it to all the adults. Muhammad and Amina liked the smell of the cardamom spice that was in the coffee. Mother poured second cupfuls for everyone. But, when she offered a third, each person tilted his cup from side-to-side to show that he had had enough.

Later the grown-ups had sweet, mint tea. The tea pot was left on the table so the adults could continue to sip tea as long as they wanted. Since mint tea is such a soothing, refreshing drink, the children were sure the sipping would continue for some time.

(Aramco World, March-April 1988)

I hope you all have enjoyed this story which describes a typically meal offered to an honoured family guest in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The story tells us three things, a) the type of food served, b) mealtime manners, and c) the coffee and tea ritual.

Well, do you remember the mealtime manners? Write out a list.

(For more Arab dishes see 'Kitchen Talk')

HADITHS:

Good manners

When one of you enters an assembly,
he should greet those present and
also when he decides to depart
Neither is more obligatory than the other.

A rider should greet a pedestrian,
a pedestrian should greet one who is sitting,
a small group should greet a large group and
a younger one should greet an older one.

Neighbours

O Muslim Women!
Let not a neighbour refrain
from sending her neighbour even a goat's shank.

He is not a believer
who eats his fill
while his neighbour
remains hungry by his side.

When you make broth
add more water
remembering your neighbours.

He will not enter Paradise
whose neighbour is not secure against his mischief.

You should be humble.
Let no one boast over his neighbour
and let no one oppress his neighbour also.

(Hadith, Umrans Publications 1981)



KITCHEN TALK

PARSLEY AND CRACKED WHEAT SALAD (TABBULAH)

Ingredients:

85 g (3 oz) burghul
2 bunches flat-leaf (Italian) parsley (about 30 g before washing, or 1 1/2 cu chopped)
1 bunch fresh mint (about 10 g before washing, or 1/2 cu chopped)
3 green (spring) onions or 1 small onion
1 large tomato
90 ml (3 oz/6 tbs) lemon juice
60 ml (2 1/2 oz/4 tbs) olive oil
salt
1 romaine lettuce (optional)

Method:

Wash the burghul and squeeze out the water. Wash and chop the parsley, mint and green onions very fine. Dice the tomato. Combine all ingredients including burghul. Add salt to taste, lemon juice, olive oil and mix well. Serve in a bowl lined with lettuce leaves. This salad can be eaten with a fork, but the traditional way is to scoop up a bite of the mixture in a lettuce leaf and pop it into the mouth.

GRILLED MEATBALLS IN YOGHURT SAUCE (KUFTAH LABMIYYAH)

Ingredients:

a) Kuftah

900 g (2lbs) lean lamb
2 large onions
15 g (3/4 cu) chopped flat-leaf (Italian) parsley
30 ml (1 oz/2 tbs) milk
5 g (1 tsp) salt
3 g (2 tsp) black pepper
3 g (1 tsp) thyme
4 g (1 tsp) cumin

b) Sauce

3 tomatoes
15 g (1 1/2 oz/1tbs) butter
2 rounds day-old Arab bread
450 g (1 lb) yoghurt
30 ml (1 oz/2tbs) meat broth or bouillon
garnish: bell pepper, tomato and parsley

Method:

Put the meat, onion and parsley through the meat grinder, add the milk and spices and mix well by hand. Form into walnut-sized meatballs, flatten them slightly and grill them - preferably over charcoal. Peel, seed and chop the tomatoes, cook them to a sauce in butter. Toast the bread, break or cut it into small pieces, and put it in the bottom of a warmed dish. Spoon the tomato sauce and meat broth over the bread. Beat the yoghurt and pour it over the bread, then arrange the meatballs on the bed of yoghurt. Garnish with slices of tomato, pepper pieces and more chopped parsley.

(Aramco World, March-April 1988)

HEALTH TALK

Growing Older

As you get older, the pressures of work, home and family can make it very easy to forget your own health. Events like bereavement or retirement can increase the pressure.

Getting older does not necessarily mean losing independence. Though people expect illness to become more frequent in old age, you should not assume that nothing can be done, and should consult your doctor if you think you have a health problem. You should continue to lead a healthy life, such as *eating a balanced diet, taking exercise and keeping warm*. GPs must offer an annual health check to all their patients aged 75 and over. You do not have to accept this offer, but it makes sense to do so. It is free of charge and can help to detect early signs of health problems and prevent them developing. When necessary, the health and social services can offer help to people to keep their independence with a range of special services including domestic help, delivery of cooked meals, sitters-in and night attendants.

The Department of Health publication "Health and Healthy Living - A Guide for Older People" contains much useful advice and information about a range of areas that are of concern to older people. Copies can be obtained free by writing to:

BAPS, Health Publications Unit, DSS Distribution Centre, Heywood Stores, Manchester Road, Heywood, Lancashire OL10 2PZ.

Herbal Medicine

"God created the disease and God created the cure." Arabic Proverb (Hadith)

In Moorish Spain the knowledge of herbal medicine was highly developed. The medicines were classified according to their warm or cold, dry or wet properties. See for example the reference work by Abu-l-Kasim az-Zahrawi, known as Abulcasis in Latin. The medicines are all the more revealing, since they refer to the simplest medicines which, at the same time, are foodstuffs. The Arab physicians considered a *correctly balanced diet as the basis of good health*.

For example, let us look at the properties of lentils which figures often in Middle Eastern and Asian recipes. (See last month's 'Kitchen Talk')

"The nature of **lentils** is both cold and dry in the second degree. The red, thick ones are the best. These are used to reduce the acidity of the blood and to strengthen the stomach. Their disadvantage is that they have an adverse effect on sexual performance and impair the memory. This is countered by watercress and taking showers." (Burckhardt, Titus; Moorish Culture in Spain, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1972.)

There is good reason for all cooks of today to consider the value/property of each individual food item to ensure a properly balanced diet.

MWA BUSINESS - SEPTEMBER 1994

1. MWA BUSINESS

Annual General Meeting

Our next meeting which will be the annual general meeting, will be held on Saturday, 12th November at 4.30 pm at the Islamic Cultural Centre, 146 Park Road, London NW8 7RG.

Please do make an effort to attend, your views are important. The MWA is only as good/successful as you make it. See you all there.

* * *

Forthcoming events - Layla El-Droubie

Wednesday, 16th November 1994

Lecture - *The indigenous courtyard house: a true reflection in architecture and urbanism of a Muslim way of life*, by Subhi al-Azzawi, Islamic Art Circle, Lecture Theatre, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1, at 6.30 p.m.; £2 per guest of a member. Contact: Layla El-Droubie, 081 654 8801.

Calendar

In order to plan our social activities for the next 12 months the following dates may be taken into consideration:

Please note that the dates are approximate only. Muslim holy days can only be firmly fixed a few days before the actual event. In all such cases it is as well to check nearer the time.

30th December 1994	-	Lailat-ul-Isra
15th January 1995	-	Lailat-ul-Bara'h
1st February	-	Start of Ramadan
26th February	-	Lailat-ul-Qadr
2nd March	-	Eid-ul-Fitr
10th May	-	Eid-ul-Adha
31st May	-	Al Hijra New Year
9th June	-	Ashura
10th August	-	Birthday of Prophet Muhammad
19th December	-	Lailat-ul-Isra

Hadith Qudsi

There are three (type of men) whose adversary I shall be on the Day of Resurrection: a man who has given his word by Me and has broken it; a man who has sold a free man and consumed the price; and a man who has hired a workman, has exacted his due in full from him and has not given him his wage