

The Muslim

JULY 1969

LONDON

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Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and and fair exhortation* And argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious *For your Lord knows Best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance.
(The Qur'an, An-Nahl 16 125)

BETWEEN OURSELVES

This issue of *The Muslim* is the last for this session. We thank Allah for any success that might have resulted in the spread of the Islamic mission by way of dispelling doubts, clarifying principles and charting out courses. And we seek His forgiveness for any mistakes that have been made in the course of presenting articles or reporting news.

It seems appropriate in this issue to give a review of the Islamic work being undertaken in Britain. As pointed out this cannot by any means be exhaustive but an attempt is made to highlight some of the important developments where these have taken place or should have taken place. What is often underlined is the lack of organisation and proper planning in Muslim work. A. M. Hammard goes into some detail in suggesting possible remedies. A Cost Accountant by training, Hammard has taken active interest in community work in London and his native Ceylon.

But the overall objective of all Islamic work needs to be constantly borne in mind and the inspiration for and basic techniques of this work is derived from the *Seerah* of the Prophet. A long speech given by Khurshid Ahmad at the Sixth Annual Winter Camp dealt in a fascinating way with these aspects. Only abridged extracts which inevitably detract from the quality and thoroughness of the speech are here published.

The number of entries for the essay competition has not been very many after all. Instead of giving the winners in order of merit it has been decided to publish the two best entries—by Ishaq Khan (aged 11 years) and Yasmin Sherif. Prizes shall be awarded to these two.

The next issue of the Muslim shall be out in October 1969, Insha Allah.

The Developing Community

Whether on the factory floor or University union, in school society or among hospital doctors, slowly but perceptibly the Muslim Community is taking shape. The transitions have been tortuous, and any lack of resolution can still mean slipping back into the motiveless and amorphous group which the Muslims originally were. The migration of a million and a half Muslims to Britain has been one usually compelled by economic circumstances. Lack of opportunities, low standards of living, the moth-like fascination with the gay lights of the West, these have been the incentives which inspired this hijrah in reverse. Islamic workers have had to wrestle with the environment. Those who were familiar with the traditions of Islam did not allow it to be made subservient to any other goal. Islam developed from the grass roots. To crystallise these ideas in the community, Student Societies and Islamic missions were set up. Meetings, Libraries, Sunday schools and magazines sought to dispel the inertia. The progress has often been damaged by partisanship and rivalries. For example in Birmingham, a large plot of land may have to be returned to the city after several years, as the people responsible for setting up the mosque were busy wheeling and dealing. Sometimes there have even been squabbles amongst imams, which have been reported in the local press. These petty side tracks have to be avoided. To ensure an efficient and sincere management, a working committee should be set up, consisting of persons respected in the Community, such as representatives of all Islamic organisations. It would direct and co-ordinate their general policies and activities. By reducing overlapping, new fields can be opened and old venues consolidated.

The backdrop for the work of Islamic organisations is dramatic. The sinister vortex of social evils swirls, drawing in its victim. The disintegration of the family, crime among youth, alcoholism, drug addiction and gambling, these are toxic fruits nurtured on everything Islam is against. Organised work in the English Community has so far been beyond the resources of the existing organisations. It is up to the few English-Muslims to take this initiative. They would have the backing of all.

The accounts below will give some idea of the progress or regress in this community. The report is not complete, as so far there is not even a list of all Islamic organisations working in this country. Others are chary of their activities being published. The development of a community is a slow process and it has only just begun in Britain.

MUSLIM CHILDREN: EDUCATION

Responding to the challenge to provide Islamic education and training to children growing up in Britain, a number of organisations and institutions have been establishing week-end schools for the purpose.

One of the most significant of these steps is

the classes which are now being run under the aegis of the Islamic Cultural Centre, London. At the beginning of the year there were three such schools, in East Ham, Balham and Ealing. The number of schools has now risen to ten with the full-time appointment of Mr. Ashraf Ali as Education and Welfare Advisor to the Centre. To establish a school, a list of Muslims in a particular area is compiled from electoral registers. Parents are contacted by post and

personal visits. Then a date is set for the opening of the school in the area, which may either be held in a council hall, a school classroom or church hall rented for the purpose.

The response so far has been very encouraging. One of the main difficulties is of getting suitably qualified and able teachers. Many students in higher education make themselves available. (An important side benefit of the organising of these schools have been the formation of Muslim Parents' Associations in several areas—which now form the nucleus of community action where non existed before) The Education Officer at the end of the year hopes to set up fifty such schools.

A concerted attempt is made to run the schools on an organised basis, with proper attention to streamlining and a varied syllabus—and up-to-date teaching methods. In this respect there is much room for improvements and it is even necessary to provide some sort of training to teachers.

Similar types of schools are run in many parts of Britain where there are concentrations of Muslims—Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, to name a few.

A highly enterprising and imaginative attempt at solving the problem of Muslim children's education comes from the Muslim Education Trust, London, which is recognised by the Department of Education and Science. They are sending paid teachers to schools to teach Muslim children during religious education periods. The experiment is initially being conducted in Manchester, Luton and London. The Trust has already produced the *First Primer of Islam* which has been highly commended. The second primer is to be published soon.

MUSLIM WOMEN: STUDY GROUPS

In London, and nowadays in almost all industrialised modern towns, with the fast and busy tempo of living, people do not seem to find time for such activities as Zikre (remembrance of Allah) and Dawa (presenting Islam). So we women in London have tried to follow the pattern of a group of ladies in Pakistan, who have been successful in applying this method. This is how we do it: A tea is arranged

at a particular house, and we are invited there at a specific time. In our case it is two o'clock on Sunday afternoon. We all go to the invited house, say our Zuhur prayer together, and then start our lecture. Usually the topic is prepared and prearranged. Each time a topic is chosen for the next meeting, everybody studies it beforehand. Then the particular injunction is discussed. We are always amazed to find out how little we actually know about the necessary principles, and how negligent we are.

This study group has become quite popular among ladies and we were invited to faraway places. Now we faced problems of lack of time and transport, and decided that since quite a number of ladies are interested, each one of us should hold a local meeting once a week. Now we have a number of study groups meeting every Sunday, locality wise. Apart from making us conscious of our duties and educating us, we have a pleasant tea with a difference! No one admires or laughs at anyone's clothes, which is so very common in today's society, and a strong feeling of love and friendship prevails.

By forming these little study groups a lot can be achieved. Let us not forget that Malcolm X has said: If you educate a man, you only educate a man, but if you educate a woman, you educate a whole society. So if women start taking an interest in Islam now, the day is not far when their children shall create a true Islamic Society.

YOUNG MUSLIM LEAGUE: LEEDS AND GLASGOW

"Nobody knows what's going to happen to the next generation of Muslims in this country". "One thing is for sure, that the children being brought up will hardly be Muslims". "What should be done to ensure that our children be Muslims?". These are questions on the mind of every Muslim who cares a bit for his children and Islam. The topic is discussed amongst the Muslims in the streets, shops and mosques, but up to now the steps taken to solve the problems have been nominal. Some people write books for the education of children, some publish magazines, while others organise Islamic lectures. All of these activities are worthy of appreciation and must be encouraged

But does anyone go to these children, who are deflecting away from Islam and ask them "what is wrong with you. What do you need?" We cannot be successful in solving the problems of the Muslim youth without their participation. What can be a better solution to problems than the one found by the very people who are facing them ?

The Young Muslim League was formed with this in mind, and the sole aim of "Muslim Youth Welfare", which includes the spiritual, educational and physical fields. We try to correct the spoilt beliefs of our youths, which are a result of the inactivity of the elder generation of Muslims regarding the practice of Islam. We arrange gatherings in the mosques of Glasgow and Leeds at weekends to give them a chance to learn more about Islam and to discuss the problems they face amongst themselves. In these meetings it is seen that every member has a knowledge about the basic principles of Islam at least and that his prayers are correct. Facilities are also provided to teach people their prayers. In fact everything is being done, systematically, to make sure that the generation of Muslims being brought up in this country be real Muslims. In the physical education field we are about to start teaching judo and table tennis in Glasgow, while in Leeds, football, hockey and cricket have already been organised. To maintain better contacts we publish a magazine "The Young Muslim", its precursor being "O faithfulls Rise".

Young Muslim League was formed in Glasgow last May, while the Muslim Youth of Leeds responded to our call in February this year. We would like to establish Young Muslim Leagues in every city in Britain. We are trying our best to achieve this. Every Muslim between the age of thirteen and twenty is welcome.

May we take this opportunity to ask the Muslim youth of Britain to join the Young Muslim League and establish similar organisations in their own cities. Further information can be had from the secretaries of the Y.M.L. at the address below.

May Allah grant us His will to work for Islam whole heartedly.

Qaleem Ullah,
11, Keir Street,
Glasgow S1.

DOCTORS ISLAMIC SOCIETY

About 18 months ago, barely more than a dozen Muslim Doctors gathered in Bury General Hospital one cold January evening. Most of them were on the staff of the above-mentioned Hospital.

They had one ambition: To establish an organization of Muslim Doctors in this country, so that they could get together, lead their lives according to Islam and help other Muslims in doing so. There are more than one thousand Muslim Doctors in this country, the overwhelming majority being from Pakistan. There is no link between them. Some of them are members of the British Medical Association which has nothing to do with their needs as Muslims.

The need to link them on religious basis had been long felt, but work to this end started only in January 1968. The reasons for having a separate society for doctors were obvious: They were enjoying a status in the host community which no other group of Muslim community enjoyed. They could not only influence their Muslim brothers but could also influence the host community. Having been surrounded by an alien culture more profoundly than any other group of Muslim, they were quite vulnerable. With the opportunities available to practice an un-islamic life, they needed tremendous self-restraint.

Sometimes they worked in places where there was no other Muslim in the whole township, and they all tended to move from one hospital to another. For these reasons regional organization of Muslim Doctors would have been completely useless. It was therefore felt that a countrywide organization would be suitable.

In the first few months the pioneer members, through their personal contacts, attracted their friends and other Muslim colleagues. They also attended various gatherings, as Annual conferences of the U.K. Islamic Mission and FOSIS meetings, and absorbed other doctors who were attending these meetings.

Slowly but steadily the membership rose and soon it became obvious that due to their professional commitments, the members could not gather at central places very often. It was

given for him at Picadilly Hotel, London. Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi of Lucknow University, also visiting England, attended.

The U.K. Islamic Mission has started the publication of the Urdu monthly 'Paigham' from May 1969. For the past two years it has been issued in partially printed form. (see The Muslim Review, June 1969). Insha Allah this magazine shall play an important role in developing the Islamic consciousness of the Muslim Immigrant Community.

The Secretary General
The U. K. Islamic Mission.

MANCHESTER: PROPOSED CENTRE

The Muslim population of Manchester is about 10,000. The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin provides various services to the community. It maintains the Manchester mosque, collects and distributes Zakat ul-Fitr, organises lectures and seminars on Islam, and runs part-time Islamic schools. A monthly newsletter, 'Al Islam' is also published, as a medium for transmitting Islamic teachings to the English, Urdu and Bengali speaking Muslims. The community is planning to construct a new building in Victoria Park, to house a 'Jamme Masjid', a school, a student hostel, facilities for ladies and other amenities for the Muslim community, in particular the Youth.

H. G. M. Rajah
President, Jamiat-ul-Muslimin,
Manchester.

BIRMINGHAM: MOSQUE SITE STILL AVAILABLE

The Birmingham 'Evening Mail' in its issue of 19 June gave the news, "City says no to Mosque". It stated that the City Council had told the Muslims that it was their last chance to build a mosque. This caused anxiety and anger to the Muslims of the City. An enquiry however showed that it was sensational reporting. When the Town Clerk was questioned he said any statement regarding the position of the site would be premature because the Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan will be seeing the Chairman of the Building Authority in about a fortnights time to discuss the situ-

ation. He further commented, "As soon as the Muslims will be ready and able to proceed to build the mosque, a site will be provided to them, because the City Council feels that Muslims should have a place where they can perform their religious duties properly."

When this was discussed with the city Muslims they expressed their anger and said, "We still possess the land, our board is still there, and we met the town clerk who assured us that if we start construction we can apply for extension, which will be granted."

It is however appropriate to suggest that Muslims should make a concerted effort to go ahead with the construction and should resolve all their differences.

ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE, LONDON: PUTTING A TERMITE HOUSE

No doubt there have been changes at the London Islamic Cultural Centre in the last few months. Redecoration of sorts, flowers at the gate, and huge illuminating lamps at the front of the building, all suggest the making of a *son et lumiere*. And that is about all. There is no indication of any trend towards tackling the more important questions. The Centre's leprosy is to be ignored, while its ringworm gets all the priority.

The fundamental attitude of the Centre authorities remains unchanged. Not one of the suggestions made in 'The Muslim' (June, July 1968) have been taken up, particularly that of a Community advisory body to help in the running of the Centre. All the evidence indicates that this near contempt of the Muslim Community in London will persist. Not only that, the disregard for Islamic Law and ethics is growing. One pointer to this is the increase in the number and audacity of women coming to the Centre, particularly for Salatu-l-Jumu'ah, in a state of half nakedness. The Centre authorities have nothing to say to them, and the topic does not warrant a *khutbah* from any of the official Imams in the place. But if an ambassador of a Muslim country has a racehorse in some English stakes, and you denounce him for it, the Centre authorities are quick to apprehend you for exposing one of its trustees. The Centre is thus becoming a place where evil is *not* to be forbidden.

Besides these, the quality of the khutbah is still a test of patience, the Mosque fund continues to depreciate, and nothing is heard of the plans for the Mosque any more. Zakatu-l-Fitr, one is glad to note, is no longer paid into the Mosque fund, though it is not disposed as quickly as Islam stipulates, six months. A student who applies for Zakat has to show not only evidence of neediness, as solely demanded in Islam, but of academic ability as well.

The only hope of any improvement in the situation remains direct action by members of the Community. Otherwise, the shame that is the Islamic Centre shall continue to be, and a shame of all Muslims at that.

SHAH JEHAN MOSQUE, WOKING

Since its inception the Woking Mosque Regeneration Committee has repeatedly brought to the notice of the Chairman of the Woking Mosque Trust that management biased to un-Islamic teachings, and totally negligent of the spiritual needs of the majority of Muslims, was doing no service to Islam. This had some effect on both the Chairman, S. K. Dehlvi and Mahmood Haroon and they admitted frankly that change was inevitable. But neither of them gave assurance to hand over the administration of the Mosque to Woking Mosque Regeneration Committee, though S. K. Dehlvi had made a categorical reference to this effect.

The Committee was attempting to raise funds when suddenly the events took a drastic turn and forced us to act. Al-Hafiz B. A. Misri, the Imam of the Woking Mosque, under heavy pressure from the Ahmadis, resigned from his office. Dr. M. A. Khan had been nominated but he had refused on personal grounds. It was during the month of Ramadhan, when there was nobody to perform the necessary duties, so the local Muslims had no choice but to find an Imam, which they did eventually with the support of W.M.R.C.

The coming of the new Imam, Ghulam Mohi-uddin was not welcomed by the Secretary of defunct Trust and instead pressed the High Commissioner to eject the new Imam and castigate the people behind this movement. We could not understand this philosophy—why debar Muslims from employing a new Imam when one is so badly needed in the month of

Ramadhan. It was clearly an attempt to show us that the mosque was the property of one group only and others had no right to it; whereas according to the Islamic teaching mosques are a common heritage and open to all.

The situation had then entered a very delicate phase and the High Commissioner called a meeting with the W.M.R.C. He admitted public opinion had been grossly neglected, so now as Chairman of the Trust he would take control of the mosque directly under him. The Committee could not refuse this, because similar suggestions had originally been made on behalf of the Committee. But the Committee resented the appointment of Dr. M. A. Khan on the grounds of his extreme liberal views on fundamental Muslim beliefs.

The High Commissioner during this meeting agreed that:—

1. In future whenever an Imam at Woking is appointed prior consultation will be held with the W.M.R.C. and the Alims in U.K.
2. To replace Ghulam Mohy-uddin, Qummer ud-Din is appointed temporary Imam until a permanent Imam is found.
3. In future there would be no Ahmadī Control on the Mosque or the Imam.
4. The Trust deed needs to be modified.
5. The Trust deed will be altered to reflect the changing conditions of the time and to enlarge the Trustees.

The new Trust has been formed consisting of over 24 members. The Committee welcomes this move as it is a step in the right direction, but it would have been wiser if they had been elected with general consensus. To amend the new Trust, the Committee has suggested 12 persons respected in the Muslim community, and have explained to the High Commissioner that including those names badly needed public co-operation and confidence could be gained.

We wish to make the mosque as a bastion for our faith and culture in this country—a place we can turn to for guidance. For this, highly trained and sincere personnel, and financial strength is required. We appeal to all readers to help us to restore the mosque to its original dignity.

The Secretary, W.M.R.C.
N. M. Lodhi.

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sidered; the incipient *fitna* is not neglected but faced squarely and in a clear, straightforward and sweet manner.

As far as the technique of work is concerned, how the demands of gradualism are adjusted with the demands of the uncompromising nature of the ideology is a very difficult and tricky point in the life of a movement. On the one hand you have to go gradually and see that certain priorities are created and that you do not rush to all things simultaneously. On the other hand, you might develop the attitude of compromise leaving out the essentials.

If you study the Prophet's life from this viewpoint, you would find a unique balance between the two. For example when the Banu Tha'qif, one of the most highly developed tribes in Arabia, came to the Prophet saying that they were prepared to accept Islam provided they were allowed to continue drinking wine, taking *riba* (interest) and practising adultery—their demand was not accepted. On the other hand some *Sahaba* (Companions) presented the situation to the Prophet that some people accepted Islam but felt that they could not be asked to fulfil the duties of *Salat*, *Zakat* or *Jihad* since they were not prepared for all that. The Prophet told them not to worry but to call the new Muslims to *Salat*. Then he continued, by way of explanation, in these golden words, that once they take to *Salat*, they would take to *Zakat* and *Jihad* as well.

Now you can see the demands of these two *prima facie* conflicting cases being poised to-

gether. This is only one instance. Dozens of them you will find in the life of the Holy Prophet. This is how the workers of the Islamic movement should try to learn how the demands of gradualism and the uncompromising nature of the ideology can coexist and can be adjusted. A study of the *seerah* from this angle brings home the realisation that this is a long drawn-out struggle and it is wrong to think that there is any short cut to it. It demands arduous efforts, continuous work, unceasing struggle, enduring strife. Unless we are prepared for this continuous struggle we would not be able to discharge the responsibility of *daa'i ila al-Haqq*.

What gives promise and confidence is that if a list is made of all those persons who were converted to Islam in the early period of strife in particular—the first ten years of the Meccan period—one is struck with the fact that almost all of them were below the age of thirty-five. No one was over the age of thirty-five and most of them were between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five. This of course, is significant in that a new revolutionary movement which stands for total change should have its appeal and attraction in the minds and souls of those persons who are young, who are enthusiastic, who have something to live for and would think over the problems and respond to the situation. By the grace of Allah, may these be enabled to accept this message, respond to it in the way the early converts responded and seek from the Holy Prophet guidelines for their individual and collective lives.

THE DEVELOPING COMMUNITY

continued

F.O.S.I.S. REVIEW

With the new idea of projects, seminars and regional meetings, the past year has been an active one for many societies. The Audio-Visual Committee met several times at Sheffield, and is developing motion films and film strips on topics related to Islam. Regional meetings were held in Birmingham and Manchester. Dublin (Al Islam), and Brighton (Islamic Horizons) produced small magazines for local circulation, as did the Malaysia Study Group (Kiblat) in London. 'The Circle Review' and 'The Truth' also appeared on the scene. Other societies have increased their help to local Muslim Communities, as at Newcastle and Manchester. Many others are involved in giving introductory talks on Islam to non-Muslim organisations. Normal activities of most

societies now include regular study group meetings, Friday Prayer arrangements, Joint Iftars in Ramadan, and functions at Eid and the Prophet's birthday. Birmingham Islamic Society showed enterprise by organising a 'Conference on World Religion', and setting up a display at the University Festival Week. Annual Qur'an Readings were held for the Northern and Southern regions at Manchester and London respectively.

The London Islamic Circle is organising a forum to be held in a hall in North London on 3 August, to introduce Islam to the West Indian Community.

(Many of the activities of the Societies have been covered in 'FOSIS News' a regular feature of 'The Muslim')