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Federation Samachar

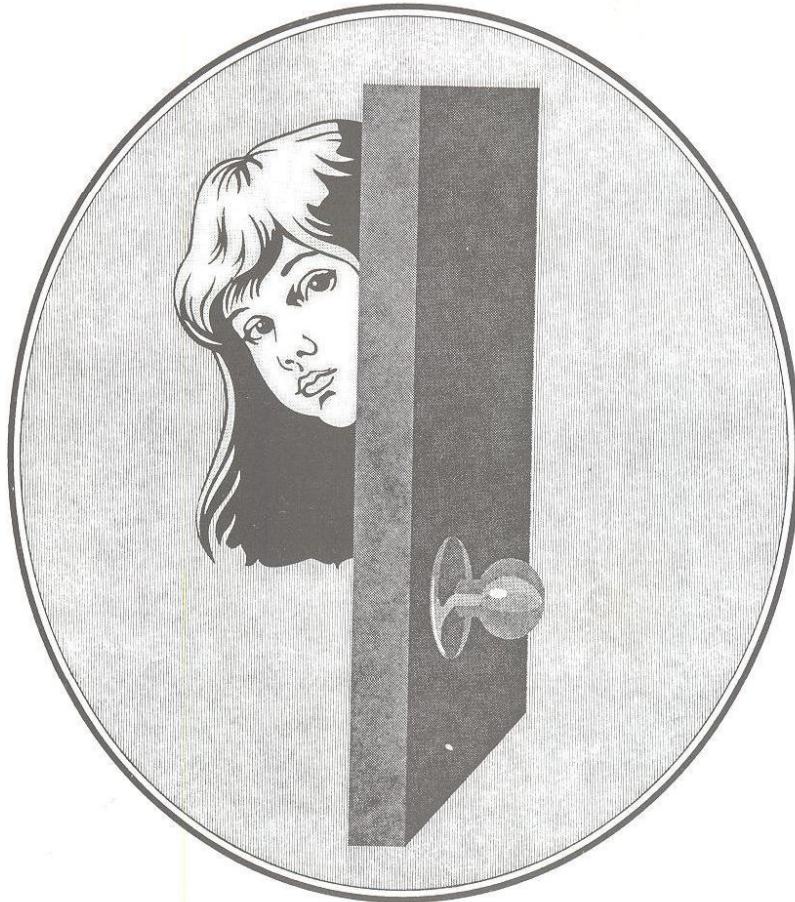


Also Inside

- Clause 20.1-- Why Africa was misunderstood
- CHB hosts historic Medical Conference
- MAB Chairman, Dr. Walji talks to the *Samachar*

AFTER 25 YEARS... SUN RISES AGAIN IN THE PEARL OF AFRICA

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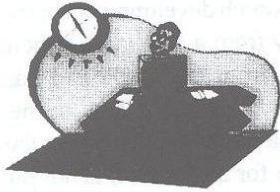
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COVER PICTURE

* After 25 years, the sun rose again in Kampala, Uganda as the Supreme Council convened for its 55th Session from 28 -30 March, 1997. Picture shows delegates and guests from India, Pakistan and Madagascar with the Supreme Council Chairman and Vice Chairman plus the host Jamaat's President and Chairmans of the Organising Committee and Board of Trustees.

From the Editor's Desk

A Meeting that fell short..

With a handsome participation of nearly 200 Councillors, delegates and observers from 32 towns, 12 countries and 4 continents attending the Extra-Ordinary Conference held in Stanmore on 7 June, 1997 one wished that the ambience and the nature of deliberations had been more momentous than rapacious. Unfortunately the ferocity with which some speakers spoke was *beyond the pale* and contrary to the ideals one would expect to see in a meeting of any religious organisation.

We all have rights to express our extreme aversions to views or opinions expressed by others but it is a shocking breach of discipline to undermine, embarrass or ridicule individuals or organisations in a language which crosses all norms of decorum and decency. And to some in attendance the meeting was probably more of a Saturday afternoon show or contest of words rather than a meeting to seriously discuss the deletion of a Clause and they made no effort to hide this by gleefully jeering and pounding their fists on the tables when carried away by oratory rhetoric that undermined others more by the misuse of words rather than the sense and truth in them.

At one stage two entire terms of the Africa Federation were described as wasted just to create a situation to justify deletion of the Clause. In polite words that really meant *stooping too low* because the same situation could have been created by a hypothetical example. But again opinions without adequate elaboration can even make a moon out of the sun and does not the age-old Shakespearean cliché say, *there nearly always is method in madness*—meaning there is an underlying purpose even in deranged verbosity!

As if the unpropitious language was not enough, we had the sayings of our respected Imams brought in to support arguments but this was rather paradoxical because in Islam there is a deep philosophy teaching us not to use lewd language and mock others in public even if they behave inhumanely. If the sayings of our Prophet (S.A.W.) or Imams were to be brought up, the ideal quotes should have been on how Islam emphasises on unity and respect and despises anger and contemptuous talk in all circumstances.

When the Extra-ordinary meeting was convened it was to decide on whether to adopt or scuttle the deletion of Clause 20.1. There was just no question of a war between the World Federation and Africa Federation. Surely, there was a difference in opinion which put more strongly could be defined as a heated resistance to the deletion by the Africa Federation. The irony is that a Federation which has members who differ in their opinions is healthy because it portrays objective thinking by its members thereby leading to constructive dialogue prior to a decision being made or a resolution passed. In a Federation where members are expected to always agree or to *toe the line* when major decisions are to be made, objective thinking is undermined. Impartial opinions are a human right and a religiously correct attitude against even a solid phalanx of opposition but as long as they are supported by sound reasoning.

When the Africa Federation discussed Clause 20.1 at the last Supreme Council Meeting held in April, 1997 in Kampala, its Chairman remained impartial at all times. The dialogue that ensued for and against the deletion was corroborated by numerous reasons and this was followed by a secret ballot which allowed even the meek to vote according to their conscience rather than by fearing personalities. The Kampala Conference voted against deletion of the Clause in a manner which enables nobody to point an accusing finger that it influenced the decision to uphold the Clause.

The London meeting with its many derogatory references will keep coming back like a recurring nightmare to haunt us on our religious sincerity because speaking about religion and practicing are two different demeanours. Ultimately however, the result reflected the opinion of the majority of voters and hence all, including the Africa Federation, would be expected to honour the result without exceptions.

Munir Daya

YOUR LETTERS

Views, opinions or articles should be addressed to:
The Editor
Federation Samachar
P.O. Box 6710, Dar es salaam.

Dear brother,

Religious education.....children need to be kept abreast with the times

In these days of the computer and information technology, very few of our children and youths are taking an active part in the Community, especially in the religious sense. To expect our children to go to Madressa after a busy day at school, and to come out bursting with Islamic knowledge, is not wise. If the same children were given a football after Madressa, you would see a miraculous return of energy to run after the ball.

No doubt Madressa is important. But so are parents. We adults should be wise enough to know that children have massive amounts of physical strength, but get tired quickly with the monotonous ways of our teachings in madressa as well as at home. So how to motivate these children? With computers. You might have seen the number and types of educational softwares for children that have been produced by the western countries. These 'games' are both entertaining as well as educating.

I propose that we, as Muslims, move in the same direction and produce such educational materials as easy to read books, computer linked games (and other related softwares), slides, videos, etc.

Books

By providing books written especially with Muslim Children in mind, it will be possible to achieve two objectives at one go i.e. practise their English; and learn about the Islamic way of life.

Slides

This is especially effective in a Madressa situation where the children have no intention to write notes. Visual aids are known to be as effective as writing notes.

Federation Samachar

Videos

Again, this is a very practical method to teach our children the proper way to do Wudhu, Ghusl, pray Salat, etc.

Computers

For those who have computers at home, they can play Islamic games (e.g. *Shaitan Buster*) or access a CD of Islamic Encyclopedia. Softwares are now out that teach Salaaat. I suggest that a strenuous effort be made by the Council to implement such softwares in our communities for the benefit of our children.

Taking this a step further is very important. We should allocate funds to enable some software specialists, artists and people with good Islamic knowledge to come up with CD's, diskettes, etc. that contain interesting, entertaining and educational material for our children.

Internet/BBS/E-Mail

All these services are available to anyone with a phone line and a modem. Internet consists of a vast range of materials and, therefore, I suggest the Council issue some suggestions and guidelines for parents to follow while allowing their children to access Internet sites. The E-Mail facility can be moulded to our needs by having access to different Muslim children around the world. This is important in this day and age where Muslims are often denied the freedom of speech. Through correspondence, our children would come to know of the difficulties faced by their Muslim brothers around the world. With this, I pray to God to guide us onto the Right Path.

Mahmood H.M. Daya
P.O. Box 14757
Arusha.

Dear brother,

WF Constitution Amendment compels Mulla to lead again

It is sometimes amusing and interesting to watch developments in the community from a sideline, i.e. being detached from the hustle and bustle of high level politics. But, at the same time, having been involved in the community for 52 years, it is not possible to throw in the towel completely.

I believe it was in Tanga in late 60s/early 70s that the constitution of the Africa Federation was amended to state that no one individual would serve in the same capacity for more than two consecutive terms. At that conference I had enquired "why do we need this clause when the person serving was doing an excellent job?" I was told that by not having this clause, other able bodied people normally crop out because someone was doing the job any way (good or bad). By having this clause, the community will be forced to look for someone to captain the ship. Sounded fair!

We know that the present President of the World Federation, Mulla Asgharali M. M. Jaffer is doing an excellent job. We know - at least based on my knowledge of other likely leaders within the community - that he is not replacable easily. But the point remains that by removing this restriction from the constitution, we have created a breathing space (may be breathing universe!!) for others, who would otherwise have been arm-twisted into accepting the position. We now have forced Mulla to continue, when he himself may have preferred for someone else to navigate our *Safina*.

The amendment, to me, seems not an appreciation of services by Mulla but a selfishly motivated manoeuvre by the supporters of the amendment to cop-out from taking the challenge. What was done in Tanga has been reversed so that the incumbent, whether willing or not, is forced to continue.

Ghulam Abbas Sajan
Toronto

Dear brother,

Islamic Messianism -- what about those who continue to read the book?

I refer to Gulam Dhala's letter in the March, 1997 issue of *Federation Samachar*.

In one Hayderi Newsletter issued by the Hayderi Jamaat of London, Mohamed H. Lalji has said: "The book, 'Islamic Messianism' when read by any person other than a Shia would give an immediate low profile of Shia beliefs and the irony is that the book is widely used by university students undertaking religious studies. The long-term damage this book might cause to our faith is incomprehensible and only Allah (SWT) knows better. It hurts even more when one of your own brothers has written it. It is not possible to explain all the details in an article of this sort."

This book is sacrilegious. It casts aspersions on Wilayat, Imamat and Ghaibat of Hazrat Hujjat A.F. and whilst the Toronto Open Forum decided that the issue be considered closed what about those who

Dear brother,

ORATORY CAN PUT US OFF OUR TRAJECTORY

The Extra-ordinary Conference held in London recently provided a vent for misplaced emotions and undue confrontations. Was the shouting down right at a time when a valid intervention to proceedings was sought when the speaker appeared disillusioned on the subject?

Again standard procedures dictate that voting could be by shouts of "Yes" and "Nos" or by show of hands or by ballot. However any participant can object to the first two methods if they can inhibit or intimidate conscientious voting. For example the election of Executive Councillors is by ballot voting and such normal procedures rarely have the need to be mentioned in the constitution.

The amendment at this particular moment of time concerns only Mulla. Though he has not aired his intentions publicly,

continue to read the book? And whilst the writer has proclaimed his own belief, has he really admitted that he has erred as far as writing the book is concerned?

In his letter, Gulam Dhala has praised the writer greatly because he is a Khoja scholar without an 'aba' and assumes that because the writer has served our community in the west in many ways, he should not be touched. But truly, this logic is difficult to perceive.

Dhala also tells us that Ayatullah Khui A.M. personally assigned to him to translate *Al-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an*. Is this true? Probably the author himself can tell us.

Finally we are told that Sheikh Taskhiri has read and approved the book in question but the truth is that he has not read the book.

Mohamed Hemani
P.O. Box 87200
Mombasa
Kenya.

the speakers who spoke a lot about experience certainly had no doubt. As a potential beneficiary he should either have accepted voting in any form or let somebody else chair the session for him to appear unprejudiced.

Then we had two Africa Federation terms depreciated to debris. Can we ask for an interpretation of this alleged retrogression for a term when AF so ably handled the Somalia crisis and subsequent resettlement of displaced citizens. The CHB, Censta and Think Tank were also launched then and there were those historic trips to India, Pakistan and Iran amongst other notable achievements.

God bless our community or else oratory will soon put us off our trajectory

Afzal Mottaqi,
Dar es Salaam.

Dear brother,

Nairobi Islamic Summer Camp was a success

The tabligh sub-committee held a camp for both boys and girls Encouraging them to socialize and seek religious knowledge.

In attending a camp for the very first time So all of us were very happy and fine Longing to be on time for everything over there

A system fair and wise to change our days. Marvellously went everything until the end Inshallah, we will have a chance to meet again, Curiously waiting to know the future plans.

Inspiration we gained,
Nearness we achieved
Truthfulness was our aim.
Excellent it was.

Realistic we became
None other, but we, Muslims
Altogether joined hands
To mark the end of this happy day,
In celebrating and rejoicing
On and on till the very last minute of the day
Nice Muslims we became,
Avoiding bad habits as much as we can.
Looking for ways and means to be the best again.

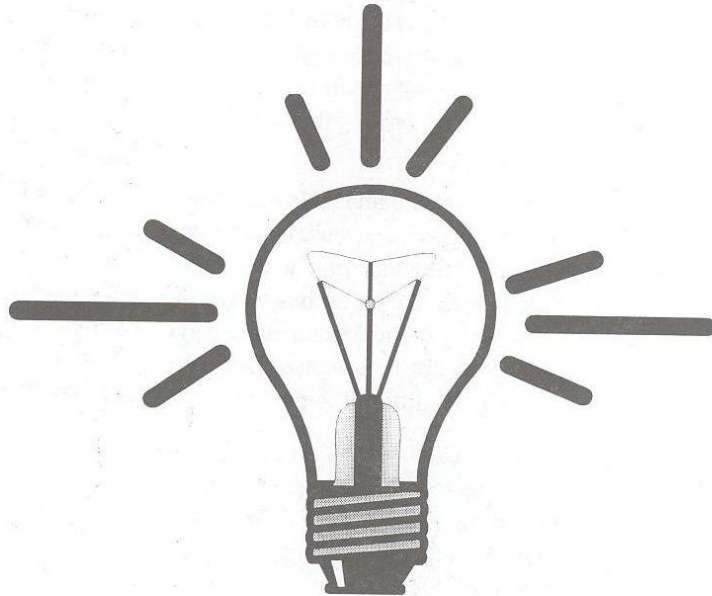
Nairobi was a jolly nice place
And all the girls enjoyed their stay
Ideally it was the best in all aspects.
Remembering the fun we had at the Camp,
On and on, again and again,
Brought satisfaction and pride within Muslim girls.
Indeed! It surely made an impact on all of us.

Sunny and breezy days went by,
Understanding one another with a sigh,
Mashallah, it was a success,
Many girls never got upset
Exchanging ideas and opinions among ourselves,
Ready are we to change ourselves.

Coming and going, early and late,
Attending classes to date,
Meeting friends again and again,
Pleasing them as much as we can.

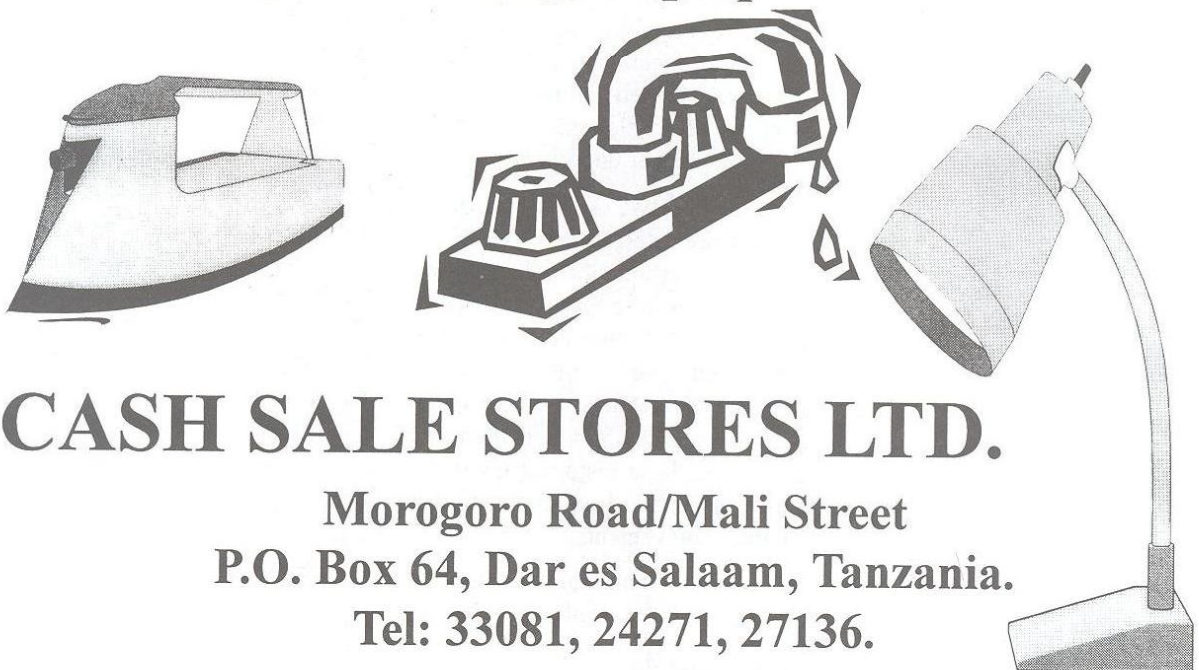
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YOUR LETTERS

Dear brother,

Why the compromises?

Before touching the issue of Toronto Forum, let us remind ourselves the case of Salman Rushdie. Late Imam Khumaini gave his Fatwa in two simple words "WAJIBUL KATL" which the entire Muslim ummah understood. He did not care about the personality of Rushdie nor did he care that he was a citizen of one of the so called super powers and was under their protection. He followed the Islamic Sharia and the matter was over.

Coming to the Toronto Forum, Dr. Sachedina no doubt is a learned person, a fine orator and has a strong grip on our brothers and sisters in the western world especially the young generation. His book *Islamic Messianism* is however rather dubitable and it was thus decided at the Forum that it be discarded by ignoring it.

The book cannot however be ignored as copies are already there in well known universities in the western world at the risk of misguiding present and future generations. Moreover how can we honour Dr. Sachedina as a mumin when he is the author of the book?

Honestly it appears from the way things ended at the Toronto Forum, that it was intended to please all parties without any major compromises. If not, why were issues like withdrawing the book from circulation not considered when we know that it can mislead?

I wish I could be wrong. Can any one with sound knowledge of Fiqh

Federation Samachar

Dear brother,

Islamic Messianism— only the author can undo harm

Whilst not forgetting that in the current anti-Islamic climate in the West and in North America in particular where Islam is being taught by Christians, Jews and Bahais and inevitably, their approach is less than cordial, we cannot deny the fact that the "objective study" by Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina published in the form of a book *Islamic Messianism* (which gives a misguided and incorrect portrayal of the "Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shiaism") is being extensively used in Western Universities to harm the Shia Faith and misguide our own children studying there. The said book will continue to be used as such by anti-Islamic elements as long as Dr. Sachedina remains silent and does not wipe the "slate clean".

The harm done can be undone only by Dr. Sachedina himself. To err is human and to make amends is never late. It matters a great deal when in all sincerity Dr. Sachedina maintains his fallibility as human being and his sensitivity to the concerns of his fellow believers in the community. The time is therefore ripe for him to undo what has erroneously been done by him.

In all fairness, we should confine ourselves to the discussion on the book as a demonstration of the maturity of the community in resolving a long outstanding issue.

through *Federation Samachar* please guide me as I am puzzled, confused and lost. Rather than have a war of words between the members of community, would it

We should not harp upon personalities involved, nor should we be personal about the issue. Against this background the question of allowing ourselves to sling the proverbial "mud" and "lynch" our own in the hope of degrading him does not arise.

It is up to Dr. Sachedina to set straight the misinformation being spread by non-Muslims teaching Islam with the help of his book "*Islamic Messianism*". Dr. Sachedina would be well advised to heed to the suggestion given by Mulla Asghar at the Toronto Forum "*not to defend the book*" but lately in the translators introduction of Ayatullah Amini's book, he has defended his book again. At the same time it would be appropriate for him not to find subterfuge by dedicating his other translation works to distinguished personalities like Mulla Asghar and Hujjatul Islam Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi without obtaining their blessings.

The ball is now in the court of Dr. Sachedina to resolve the issue of "*Islamic Messianism*" in order to put an end to further misuse of his book.

Wama Alayna Illal Balagh.

Fidahusein A. Hameer
Dar es Salaam.

not be better if such issues are handled without compromises?

Senior Citizen
P.O. Box 233
Dar es Salaam.

Dear brother,

There is a reward for restraint

In Surah Al-Anfal (Verse 24), Allah (S.W.T.) addresses the believers to respond to His and His Apostle Mohammed (S..A.W.) calls to live with respect to morals. Usually one is tempted and deviates by personal desires but God-fearing momeen never deviate from the right path for which they are not only rewarded in the hereafter but in this worldly life too.

Take the following incident narrated by a young man who was asked as to why a sweet smell of *mishak* and *amber* emanated from his body:-

"Once an old lady visited my shop and after buying her necessities, she requested me to carry the package to her house and pleaded that because of her advanced age she wished to have the package taken upstairs. Upstairs I was welcomed by a young beautiful girl who said that she had planned with the old woman to get me there. Finding myself in this dilemma, I asked her to allow me to visit the wash-room for which she directed him downstairs. Once in the wash-room I smeared my body with filth and the girl found me so unpresentable that she asked the old woman to turn me away. On my return home, I took a bath and from that moment the fragrance emanated from my body as a reward from Allah (S.W.T.)."

Now let us turn to the incident of Hazrat Yusuf and Zulekha in her palace room where she first covered an idol before trying to seducing Hazrat Yusuf. When Hazrat Yusuf asked the reason, she stated that she was ashamed of carrying out an evil act in the presence of her God. Hazrat Yusuf asked how

he could submit to such a shameful act before God who is omnipresent. During the conversation, Hazrat Yusuf got a chance to slip away but she caught his garment from behind as a result of which it tore.

Failing in her plans, Zulekha complained to the King that Hazrat Yusuf tried to seduce her and called for him to be sentenced. When the case came up for hearing, Allah (S.W.T.) saved Hazrat Yusuf for abstaining from the evil act by making an infant present in the court to speak; who, of course, could not be coerced or bribed to make a prejudiced statement. The infant cried: *"Examine the garment; if it is torn from front, Hazrat Yusuf is guilty and if it is torn from behind Zulekha is guilty."*

In return for his noble act, Allah (S.W.T.) rewarded Hazrat Yusuf with the Kingdom of Egypt and made him Prophet. A few years later, the same infant, in his adolescence, attended the congregation of Hazrat Yusuf where Jibrael was also present. Jibrael was asked to behold this young man and Hazrat Yusuf made him sit beside him and bestowed upon him many gifts. Although the infant testified only as commanded by Allah (S.W.T.), Hazrat Yusuf rewarded him profusely.

Whilst God rewards the virtuous, Verse 25 warns that He is severe in the requital of evil. Today terminal diseases like AIDS are an example of God's curse and so let us all resolve to stay away from evil acts.

**Pyarali Asserwalla
Mombasa,
Kenya.**

Dear brother,

On Amendment to Clause 20.1 -- *Man makes gold but not gold makes a man*

I have meticulously studied the point of view of the Africa Federation about the amendment to clause 20.1 of the World Federation Constitution.

I am sure that the objective of the World Federation is to serve Islam and Islamic Values as well. Our Prophet (pbuh) had rightly announced to overlook any thing for the great one and so why does the Africa Federation similarly not overlook for the great one?

At present the leader of the World Federation is Mulla Sahib and there is no alternative to him. The Africa Federation must accept that Mulla is a divine gift for the entire Shia community because he is the most learned, eminent, honest, pious and great leader. Why replace a *great* leader by a *good* leader!

The amendment requires the majority of the floor and though the Africa Federation may not agree, they must respect democratic values.

Mulla Sahib is and will remain our leader. A man makes the constitution but not a constitution makes a man. We ask Africa Federation to honestly think for the betterment of the entire ummah.

**Syed Ali Ibnul Hussain
President of All India Bilal Mission**

The AF Stand on the Clause was supported by reasoning with no intention to undermine democracy. Editor

Dear brother

Islamic Messianism debate -- who has lost out?

Immediately after you published the first letter from Fidahussein Hameer, I wrote stating that the *Federation Samachar* should not be a forum for discussing issues where controversies thrive. Those aspects should be left to the politicians, and not so political people, to deal with at their general meetings. I get the feeling that you, on

Dear brother,

Forum was inconclusive

I saw a few letters appear in the *Federation Samachar* about Sachedina's Islamic Messianism and the Forum which was held in Toronto and I thought I should add my thoughts as well.

The Forum about Sachedina's antagonist book, although a genteel attempt, was inconclusive. And this was because although Dr Sachedina believes in 12 Imams a.s., he did not give assurance that he will not defend his adverse book. Instead this was said by others.

How can we take Dr. Sachedina's non-defence for granted. I do not believe that in these issues silence is the answer. Rather one must declare one's opinion publicly because our basic belief of Islam teaches us that one can never be a Muslim by reciting Kalema by heart but one has to declare in order to become a Muslim.

I know that Dr Sachedina is intelligent and has done a lot for Islam in the West but then he should also be brave and admit his mistakes so that future generations are not negatively influenced.

If some of the opinions of Sheikh Saduq's *'Itiqadat'* were corrected by Sheikh Mufid's *'Tashih'* (The

the other hand, under the guise of freedom of press, believe it is all systems go. So be it.

We are often given the examples of Safi Gulpaygani. We are told that he is an Ayatullah. I am not so sure based on the information I have received from some people (read maulanans) who know him.

corrections) and if some *'Mutaqaaimun'* (ancient) jurist is corrected by a *'Mutaakhirun'* (contemporary) jurist, then why should not Dr Sachedina be corrected by Moulana Rizwi or for that matter Ayatullah Safi Gulpaygani?

And to make matters worse, at the question time in the Forum, the Chairman curtailed people from discussing the book, saying that enough had been said on this subject. If the Forum was about the controversial book, on what other subject did the chairman want people to discuss on?

I was very disappointed that nothing concrete was achieved in this Forum, which was a good idea to clear the air about Sachedina's book but was marred by limited time to express constructive dialogue.

As things stand, the Islamic Messianism appears to have only been tossed in water from which it will eventually float up. This is why I regard the Forum as being inconclusive.

Muhammad Ladak
P O Box 36
MOSHI
E-mail; mladak@cats-net.com

I read his book which was translated in one of the crudest English imaginable. Sachedina's book is not an easy read. It took me at least 18 readings of Page 3 before I could understand it - the page around which there is so much controversy. I have my doubts with regards to how this page and, for that matter, the entire book was translated for Safi Gulpaygani before he responded in Farsi, which as indicated above, was pathetically translated in English.

The point that I wish to make is "who is the loser?" Is it Sachedina? Is it the academic world? Or is it international agencies? Or is it us? For your readers' information, Sachedina is invited to make academic presentations; he is writing a medical thesis for United Nations; he is regularly invited by the Iranians to give lectures in United States; the Shi'a Lebanese community invited him for reading majalis in English during last two Muharrams; he was requested by Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini to translate his book on the 12th Imam (atf); and he was in the Islamic Republic of Iran recently for the occasion of commemorating the passing away of Imam Khomeyni (ra), as the guest of President Khatemi. So who has lost out? It is the so called defenders of Shi'ism - the people of Indo-Pakistani origin which includes the khojas.

However, doubts linger in my mind. Is the current debate a genuine belief and concern on the part of some of the "scholars" within the Indo-pak community living in Africa, Europe and North America or is it jealousy?

Ghulam Abbas Sajan
Toronto,
Ontario, Canada

Dear brother,

A few suggestions on making our Juloos more effective

Juloos or procession of any sort (peaceful or violent) are commonly meant for the propagation of an ideology or message to the general public, or if it is for a protest, then it is meant to show the strength or unity for a particular cause to State Organs. Similarly, our Ashura Juloos is meant for the spread of the message of Imam Hussain (A.S.) derived from the events of Kerbala.

Our Juloos should be designed for the public eye and thereby for their awareness. Thus whatever we show, portray, display, say or recite should be primarily meant for them. The organisation of the entire exercise should focus on making the Juloos more purposeful. This is now even more important as the Juloos is being telecast live thus reaching thousands of people.

Proposals & Recommendations

On behalf of the Tabligh Section of the Dar es Salaam Jamat, I present a few suggestions, some of which have been introduced but need to be further developed.

1. The overall appearance of the Juloos should portray grief and sorrow.
2. The number of Replicas (Alams, Julas etc) should be reduced.
3. Whatever replicas the committee decides to take out should also portray grief and sorrow. In addition they should not in any way provide an opportunity for the general and innocent Muslims to confirm the anti Shia propaganda of idol worshipping.
4. More banners and placards should be taken out.

Federation Samachar

5. The use of the media (radio, TV, newspapers) to propagate the message of Kerbala should be consolidated. Instead of only a one day Ashura Supplement, it is better to give short articles daily for the first nine days of Muharram in various popular dailies. Similarly special programmes for local TV stations can be prepared to be telecast on Ashura.

6. Effective distribution of handouts and leaflets should be undertaken.

7. Some onlookers should be interviewed for their views on the concept of Ashura.

8. The Scouts, the organisers of the most educational and effective project, 'The Kerbala project' should be fully encouraged and assisted.

9. The reduction in the playing of Urdu *nawhas* to be continued.

10. The increase in Kiswahili lectures on TV to be continued.

11. The services of instructors from Bilal to be arranged well in advance and if necessary increase of allowances to be considered.

12. Re-introduction of the facility of operating a small kiosk for selling books at subsidised rates to be looked into.

13. To continue the practice of delivering the Kiswahili lecture in the mid way of the procession, as introduced two years ago.

14. To display banners outside our Centres during Muharram.

I pray that Allah (S.W.T.) grants us patience, strength, wisdom and unity to fulfil these responsibilities.

Dr. Shiraz Dattoo
Dar es Salaam.

Dear Brother, Islamic Messianism...*Let the Marja decide*

The lack of transparency at any level of gathering is a cause of confusion. The Toronto Jamat in good faith arranged the Open Forum to clear the air but unfortunately polluted it further by branding Dr. Sachedina on one hand as "Mo'omin" and on the other hand bombarded him for some scripts in his book *The Islamic Messianism* which apparently are against our faith.

Transparency demands accuracy. Either accept him with his book or excommunicate him from the community unless he is prepared to accept the laid down Islamic sharia. Before the situation goes from bad to worse and the community is divided, it is high time you as a honest and faithful Editor take initiative and seek a permanent solution from our Marja explaining him in detail the gravity of the situation and for his ready reference attach all materials e.g. the book *Islamic Messianism*, video cassettes of the Toronto Forum, correspondence for and against the book. Please write directly from your desk without involving any Wakil/Agent and request him for his ruling *Fatwa*. After all he is the highest and final authority.

If the Fatwa is in favour of Dr. Sachedina we will accept him with all the respect due to him, otherwise it will be in his jurisdiction either to follow the guidelines of "Angel Fitrus" or "Iblis". Let us all in general and the community leaders in particular stick to transparency for our own benefit.

Gulam Dewji
Dar es Salaam.



BMMA marks successful Muharram in Trinidad

For the third year in a row, the Bilal Muslim Mission of Americas (BMMA) participated in the Ashrae-Muharram (1418/1997) in Trinidad. The success of enlightening the Trinidadians in general and Muslims in particular was very successful indeed.

Every night majlises were held in Port of Spain, the Capital of Trinidad, at Imame Zamana Centre. The theme this year was the message of Imam Hussein (a.s.) in redeeming mankind by breaking the chains of tyranny and adapting freedom with self respect as taught by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). Niyaz was also served every night.

Lectures were also delivered in St. James and Cocorite on the 8th, 9th and 10th nights at different *Chawks* (Imambaras) where *Tadjas* (tazias) were constructed and paraded on the streets of St. James. The theme of the lectures here were to dispel myths and falsehood perpetrated by the media and other critics on the Hossay Procession.

The BMMA printed fliers for the Flag Night, Small Hossay Night and Big Hossay Night. These fliers had a very big impact on the Shia Community and on Trinidadians in general. Only one article against the Hossay Procession was printed in local papers compared to dozens of articles in previous years. The local Government officials admitted at the Hussein Day Seminar that the efforts of BMMA have paid dividends and that the solemnity of the Procession is being realized by the participants and the onlookers and that merrymaking and alcohol drinking is less apparent.

On May 16, 1997 the BMMA was invited to participate in local TV and radio shows which were broadcast Live. Questions by viewers were answered. On May 17, the Imame Zamana Mission organized a Procession from Port of Spain to St. James (approximately 4 miles). Previously this Procession came out simultaneously with the Hossay Procession. This year it came out an hour before the Hossay Procession and received undivided attention. Unfortunately, the Sunni Mosque in St. James where this procession used to conclude was closed but the police allowed the Procession to occupy a portion of a recreation area which was recently constructed on the Main Street by the Municipality of St. James. Alhamdulillah history was made. The first public lecture on the streets of St. James on Imam Hussein (a.s.) was delivered. This lecture was heard by onlookers in silence as the Hossay Procession with drums was not yet out on the streets. The event was a complete success.

The BMMA hopes to continue with efforts to propagate Shiite Islam in the Caribbean and South America.

Extra-Ordinary Conference removes leadership restriction clause in WF Constitution

At the Extra-Ordinary Conference held at the Husaini Shia Islamic Centre, Stanmore, Middlesex, United Kingdom on 7 June, 1997 to discuss the deletion of Clause 20.1 from the World Federation Constitution, the Motion to delete this clause was passed. Of those who voted, 83% were in favour of the deletion with 98 voting for and 20 against. Clause 20.1 previously restricted the President's term to a maximum of two consecutive terms. The Clause, now deleted, read "A person who has served two full consecutive terms as President shall not be eligible to be re-elected for the third term but may be elected thereafter."

Nearly 200 Councillors, delegates and observers from 32 towns, 12 countries, 4 continents attended. The meeting was Chaired by the current President of the World Federation, Mulla Asgher. Voting was done by a show of hands.

Faezeh advocates on Female ministers, hijab and polygamy

Faezeh Hashemi Rafsanjani, who was elected to parliament in March, 1996 expressed hope that Iran will soon have a female minister but said it is too early for the Islamic Republic to have a female president.

When Faezeh, who is the daughter of former President Hashemi Rafsanjani, was asked about the Islamic Republic's rules requiring women to wear hijab, Hashemi said, "administering Islamic rules and regulations in our society have created confidence and trust towards our women which has enabled them to be active in all different social fields from the most remote areas of our country to the urban and rural areas.

"Therefore, I as an Iranian woman would like to say we do feel quite comfortable with this hijab and we do consider it an element of growth for our people and our society.

"The hijab has not created any limitations but in stead gives us trust, confidence and security which have enabled us to have a more prominent and active role in our societies."

She said, "...there is no opposition or impediment in Islam towards the activities of women."

Hashemi also spoke in favour of polygamy, saying "because of natural calamities, disasters and wars there are occasions when the number of men are much less than women and polygamy helps the women with no support." She however cautioned that polygamy should be in accordance with the spirit and guidelines of the holy Qur'an.

Video on sale

Video cassettes of the recent Extra-Ordinary Conference in Stanmore, UK are now available for Shs. 4500/- from the AF Secretariat office in Dar es Salaam.

Bilal Muslim Mission of America organises Imam Husein Day Seminar in Trinidad

The Bilal Muslim Mission of America (BMMA) in association with St. James/Cocorite Hosay Associated hosted the Second Imam Hussein Day Seminar in Trinidad on 24 May, 1997 to propagate the History of Kerbala and the message of Imam Hussein (a.s.).

The Chief Guest Speaker was Sheikh Abdillahi Nassir from Kenya who also visited Guyana for a few days. Other speakers included an Anglican Bishop, a Hindu Priestess from Raj Yoga, an Official of the Port of Spain municipality, the President of Bahai Group, the Public Relation Officer of Trinidad Muslim Sunni League, the President of Imam-e-Zamana Mission, the President of Community Islamic Council, the Public relations Officer from St. James/Cocorite Hosay Association and one from the BMMA. The event was chaired by Br. Gulamabbas Jaffer from Orlando.

The variety of speeches aptly depicted the brave and pietistic qualities of Imam Hussein (a.s.).

Speeches have been recorded on video tape which are available from the BMMA New York office.

The event was well attended and amongst the various dignitaries present was the personal representative of the Commissioner of Police of Port of Spain.

The program started at 4.30 p.m. in the afternoon and ended at 6.40 p.m. The Maghrib and Isha prayers were led by Sheikh Abdullahi Nassir. Thereafter niyaz was served.

The total population of Trinidad is approximately 1,400,000. 30 % of the total population does not follow any religion. 5 to 10% are Muslims and less than 500 are Shias.

BMMA's first visit to Trinidad was 100 years after the massacre of Shias by the British Raj in 1884. This year the Mission has purchased a Centre for the Shias there. The new Centre comes 70 years after the only Shia mosque in Trinidad was demolished during the British Raj conspiracy.

Mulla Asghar recites in Madagascar

The President of the World Federation, Mulla Asgharali M M Jaffer traveled to Madagascar to recite majlises for the first Ashra of Muharram 1418.

Tananarive Jamaat which is now 1800 strong, is the largest in Madagascar. It has a beautiful Imambargah that can accommodate members comfortably. Currently construction work is in progress on the third floor for *Beitussalaat* and two minarets.

On the 8th of Muharram, Mulla Asghar visited Tamatav Jamaat accompanied with Asgharbai Hirani, the Chairman of the Regional Council of Madagascar and his colleagues. Tamatav Jamaat is now constructing a new Imambargah, *Beitussalaat*, Aalim Quarters, Musafirkhana and Madressa. The whole complex is financed by the family of Haji Mohamed Raza Khamis and his brothers. The complex is expected to be

ready in about two months in Rabi ul Awwal 1418.

Soon after Ashura, Mulla Asghar travelled to Majunga accompanied by the office bearers of the Regional Council. There he visited the school and also recited Majlis. Majunga Jamaat has a beautiful Mosque and Imambargah. The membership of the Jamaat has however dropped considerably because many families have migrated to Tananarive.

From Majunga, he travelled to Tulyar where he visited the Bilal Centre and other religious complexes. The school in Tulyar, which is 30 years old caters for our children as well as those of the general public. The new youthful managing committee of the Tulyar Jamaat are very enthusiastic and enjoy considerable support of the elders. Mulla Asghar also recited a majlis there.

Mulla then travelled to Morondava

WF launches Web Seminars

To take full advantage of the Internet and the World Wide Web, the World Federation has launched international seminars on its Home Page on subjects of Community interest. Several seminars will run concurrently with each seminar stretching for a period of two to four months. Contributions from around the world will be posted on the Home Page for Mumineen to read and respond to.

The first seminar entitled "*Increased spending on educational facilities at our centres*" is convened by Dr. Sibtain Panjwani and will run up to 31 October 1997. The second seminar entitled "*Cousin Marriages*" convened by Dr. Mohamedtaki Walji will run up to 31 October 1997.

Those wishing to suggest other topics for discussion or wishing to convene on any topic may e-mail to worldfed@dircon.co.uk or write to the *World Federation, Islamic Centre, Wood Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 4LQ, United Kingdom.*

where he visited the historical Mosque, the Bilal Muslim Mission Centre, our school and the new building of Madrasa al Sadiq. He also recited a majlis there before returning to Tananarive.

In Madagascar we have about 16 Jamats who enjoy membership of the Federation of KSI Jamaats of Africa through the KSI Regional Council of Madagascar.

Bilal Muslim Mission activities in Tananarive are progressing quite efficiently and it is estimated that with the efforts of our mumineen brothers and the Ulama from Qum, there are nearly 5000 Malagasi Shias in Madagascar. Mulla attended the majalis and Azadari held in Malagasi language and was moved by the devotion of the newly converted Shia Ithna-asheries.

Mulla Asghar's Majalis were in Gujarati and covered *Aqaid* and *Akhlaqiyyat*.

"Death and after death" in Minnesota..

Haji Mustafa Jaffer of London who has travelled widely to recite Majalis from Australia to Los Angeles (East-West) and from Sweden to Madagascar (North-South) visited Minnesota for Muharram 1418.

Our Jammāt has a beautiful complex in Minneapolis, Minnesota, called Anjuman-e-Asghari. It is on 3 acres of land and here a juloos is held on Ashura day. The classroom block has just been completed at a cost of USD 500,000. It has 12 classrooms (each named after an Imam) grouped around a large hall. There is also an office and a kitchen and an audio/video link with the Imambargah for it to function as an extra area during major functions.

A total of about 400 Shias use the Centre. There are 150 Khojas, the rest are Arabic, Farsi or Urdu speaking. Some Bohoras attend too. Most of the congregation is English speaking so Haji Mustafa therefore recited the majalis in English including the Masaeb. He had to tag on a little masaeb in Gujarati at the end, which he felt was not necessary. He was impressed at the homogeneity of the congregation which also participated in Matam that was done with Nauhas recited in Arabic, Farsi and Urdu.

Haji Mustafa was impressed with the religious nature of the youths probably through the commitment of their parents. There are nearly 100 children in the madressa many of whom are under 12 years-old. Some parents drive 150 miles to bring their children to the madressa. The State of Minnesota is known to have a low crime rate, low drugs intake and low unemployment compared to other American States. Overall Haji Mustafa feels the place is good for those who would like to emigrate. Anjuman-e-Asghari is the only Shia Centre in the State of Minnesota but there is a large University of nearly 40,000 students in Minneapolis.

During his visit the topic of Haji Mustafa's majalis was "death and after death."

Federation Samachar

"Community in the millennium"

By Bashir Rahim

I had the privilege of reciting majalis in Wessex during the 'ashra. My subject was "The Community in the millennium."

Although the millennium refers to the Christian era it has some relevance to us. In the 18th and 19th centuries some of our ancestors migrated to East Africa where they settled and successfully undertook various vocations. The first half of this century saw a substantial growth in their prosperity but grave errors of judgement were made. We thought that we had taken roots in those countries and could not be dislodged but we were proved wrong. Now many of us are in the West and we need to give serious thought as to how best we can ensure security and economic strength for our children and their progeny.

Creation of wealth is not un-Islamic. In fact it is encouraged by our faith. We have to acquire a measure of economic strength. Certain industries e.g. music, entertainment, manufacture of najis and haram substances are prohibited to us but many others are open and we need to encourage and positively help our people to enter these areas. The successful industrialists, men and women of professions and those in commerce are the back-bone of our community. We cannot allow their efforts or success to be the object of our jealousy.

We must ensure that in the coming generations we do not get alienated from Islam just because of our cultural rituals. We should discard those rituals not founded on the precepts of Islam but to which we are shackled by our own superstition and inherited practices. We must ensure that our rituals and practices are credible.

The *ahle minabir* need to ensure that their utterances have credibility. Since the Jamaat is the employer, the dhakir well knows who his pay masters are and this creates hesitation, if not reluctance, to carry out his duties of *amr bil ma'ruf* and *nahya anil munkar*.

He becomes like those whom Imam Hussain (a.s.) castigated in his famous *khutbah*. Also there needs to be dhakir's accountability to the audience either by allowing questions after the majlis or on the following day. Majalis can not be treated as a ritual, it is an important forum for the dissemination of knowledge which in turn will form opinions effecting public life.

There is a dire need to fully comprehend the importance of the institution of *ijtihad*. We can not allow ourselves to indulge in any experimentation. Some Islamic countries are in the grip of counter revolution. We need to pray that wise counsel prevail and not form emotional alliances.

There is a need to understand the concept of *ummah* in Islam and the injunction of the *wilayatul mu'mineen*. We also need to teach our youths to reflect the true spirit of Islam in their dealings with the indigenous population. There must always be complete integrity and honesty.

Furthermore we need to educate the indigenous population of who and what we are. If we create mental ghettos we shall be guilty of preparing an explosive future for our children. We need to be open and carry the message of Islam and Imam Husain (a.s.) to them. We must get them away from equating Islam with art and architecture. We need to demonstrate that it is not the elegance or the beauty of the mosque that plays any role in our spirituality. That spirituality in Islam has two concurrent sources - a man's relation with Allah (s.w.t.) and his relation with Allah's (s.w.t.) creation. He is Allah's (s.w.t.) representative on earth and as such he is dutybound to think not only of other men and women but also of the environment and ecology.

We also need to impress upon the indigenous population that the main constituents of Islamic ethos are development of personal spirituality, devotion to learning, respect of parents, respect of elders and service to mankind.



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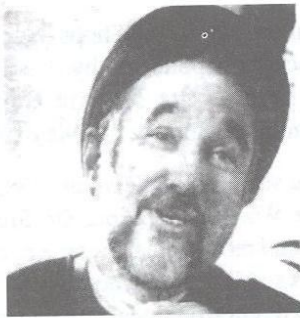
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Khatami is new Iranian President



Cleric Mohammad Khatami is the new Iranian president following his victory over Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri. Khatami won 20.7 million votes of the 29.7 million votes cast. Two other candidates in the election trailed with nominal vote tallies.

The race between Khatami and conservative parliament speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, who was backed by the country's supreme spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was expected to be much closer, and some had even predicted a Nateq-Nouri win.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei endorsed Khatami's victory by offering felicitations. "I give my warm congratulation to Mr. Khatami," he said.

Rival candidate Nateq-Nouri said "I congratulate your election by the people as president and pledge to use all my resources in co-operation with you."

Khatami is expected to take office in August, replacing President Hashemi Rafsanjani who served two four-year terms. Rafsanjani endorsed Khatami, the former culture minister who was also supported by a broad coalition of left-wingers, the youths and intellectuals.

Khatami's win is not expected to fundamentally change Iran's foreign policy. He has for example, ruled out improving ties with the United States, saying "this is not the right time for it."

Khatami, 54, has lived in the West, and speaks English, German and Arabic in addition to his native Farsi.

He sees no reason why women should not have senior positions in government. He recently told *Zanan*, a monthly women's magazine, that he sees "no obstacle to women becoming ministers in the government." It is widely believed that Khatami will be the first Iranian President to appoint women in his Cabinet.

Khatami says he owes his success to his wife and whilst respecting the Islamic Law that women need to advise their husbands before leaving home, he has said that his wife is free to leave the house whenever she wants. Khatami has two daughters and a son.

He was born to a well-known Ayatollah Ruholla Khatami in Ardakan, in central Yazd desert province in southwestern Iran. After finishing his theological studies in Qum and Isfahan, he got degrees in education and philosophy. According to an official biography, he became friends with Ayatollah Khomeini's son, Ahmed and then worked for the Militant Clerics' Association which rallied opposition to the Shah's regime.

Eventually he was noticed by Ayatollah Mohamed Beheshti, Chief Ideologue of the Islamic Republic Party and a key tactician of the revolution. In 1978, Ayatollah Beheshti appointed him to run the Islamic Centre of Hamburg, then a European nerve centre of the Iranian revolution.

Khatami returned to Iran in 1979 and took over the Kayhan Institute which publishes several newspapers. In 1982, he was appointed as Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance which oversees Iranian films, publishing and mass media.

He held the ministerial position for more than a decade and during his term he eased restrictions on the content of books and periodicals and

expanded the list of foreign magazines and newspapers allowed in Iran. His relatively permissive policies put him in the bad books of some clerics which eventually led to his resignation from the ministerial post in 1992.

When he was in Qum prior to the revolution, he wrote and distributed leaflets denouncing the former Shah. His father, Ruholla was a friend and early supporter of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Khatami is actually linked to Ayatollah Khomeini by family because his brother is married to Ayatollah Khomeini's granddaughter.

Khatami enjoys a reputation for personal probity. He drives a boxy Iranian-made Paykan instead of a Mercedes-Benz and lives modestly in a two-storey yellow-brick town house on Revolutionary Guard Street in north Tehran. Khatami is also said to enjoy mountain hikes and a good game of table-tennis.

An individual who worked for Khatami for several years in the 1980s and has remained in contact with him said, "he was definitely the anti-establishment vote but people should not interpret that as thinking he is not an advocate of the Islamic revolution. The truth is that he is a broad-minded advocate of the revolution."

Speaking to a jubilant crowd after his election victory, Khatami said, "*Our backwardness is not due to natural resources or culture - we have both. Iranians are smart and creative, they are known for confidence and bravery. The problem is due to the lack of a correct and independent government. People do not have the opportunity to grow because growth in a country needs sympathy, co-operation and presence in the social scene. It does not mean we should not allow different views.*"

Kitchener hosts Tabligh Conference

The 2nd International Tabligh Conference with the theme "Tabligh and the 21st Century: An Era of Opportunity" was held in the city of Kitchener, Canada during the weekend of 22-23 February, 1997 (Shawwal 14-15, 1417).

The Conference, which was sponsored by the Islamic Humanitarian Service, was held at the Mehfil-e-Husain Mosque (Husainiyah) of the Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat of Kitchener-Waterloo. Participants came from Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Guelph, Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, Vancouver, Lansing (Michigan, USA), New York, Houston (Texas, USA) and from London, England.

Delegates hailing from diverse backgrounds spoke on important and delicate issues pertaining to propagation. Br. Abd al Bari from the Muslim Prisoners Association, Lansing, Michigan highlighted the difficulties experienced by Muslims in prisons like discriminations, delay in receipt of books etc. Sr. Sabira Devji of United Muslim Women of Canada, Edmonton reminded the gathering to draw from examples of women propagators among the Ahlul Bayt (AS) and the present century martyr Bint al Huda, the aalima sister of martyr Syed Baqir as Sadr.

Sheikh Fadhel Sahlani of Al Khoei Foundation, New York emphasized on the significance of acting and speaking uniformly, stressing that both manpower as well as money was required to spread the word of Islam. A psychiatrist from Kansas, Dr Batul Chinoy pointed out that the principles of Islam forces the followers to remember the Creator at all times and behave in an appropriate manner.

Youth Seminar held in London

Syed Muhammad Rizvi of Toronto ran a 6 hour Seminar for youths of ages 18-22 in London on 14 June, 1997. About 80 youths were present. The subjects on which Syed Muhammad spoke were Interaction with Parents/Family, Communication with the opposite Sex/ Marriage, Interaction with other Muslim Sects and Interaction with the society at large (other religions).

An address from the Secretary General of WABIL, Sayed Mohammed Musawi was delivered live from the Hyderi Imambara, London. He strongly suggested that every community must send at least one young member to the Islamic theological university at Qum or Najaf for Islamic studies and return to their own community to propagate the teachings of Ahlul Bayt (AS).

Sayyed Muhammad Rizvi of IEIC, Toronto said children should become part of the decision making process as they are the future of Islam and should be attended to carefully. He also called upon parents to be honest role models.

While Br. Mahmood Jaffer highlighted the role of the madresa in moulding the minds of children, saying that it was not just meant for baby-sitting, Br. Munsif Bhimani of Toronto focused on the need to use computers in propagation, specially through the internet media. Sayyed Ghulam Abbas of Edmonton expounded the theory of 'khalifa' from the Qur'an to prove that messengers and divine personalities were not elected but appointed by the Allah (s.w.t.).

Apart from the speeches that were delivered by the delegates, the participants attended four workshops that dwelt on *Planning for the 21st Century*, *Maintaining Islamic Values in a Non-Muslim Environment*, *Mobilising Youths for Leadership* and *the Role of Mosques/Jamaats in introducing Islam to the public*.

Congratulatory messages were received from the offices of Marja-e-taqleed, Islamic organisations, Canada's Prime Minister, Jean Chretien and Premiers of Alberta, BC and Ontario.

In search of retailing success

A Seminar on "Retail Shops - Survival to Success", sponsored by Break Out was held at the Islamic Centre, Stanmore on Sunday 4th May 1997.

At the session, the Secretary General of the World Federation, Dr. Sibtain Panjwani recalled that the type of challenges small retailers faced in the 70's are different from today. Then, political ethos surrounding small businesses were rooted in collective bargaining, welfarist principles and state control. Today, individual responsibility, less state control and market forces, more or less, define the business environment.

From the perception of the World Federation, it is the mushrooming of supermarket type of businesses that began to affect small retailers within the community. This was even the subject of discussion at the Executive Council of the World Federation held at Southampton in September 1996 which concluded that the extent of the problem within the community be ascertained so as to focus resources to assist individual basis.

Panjwani informed the attentive participants that it is both the hope and desire of the World Federation that sooner rather than later, the business mind of the community together with relevant professionals can produce an economic upliftment scheme through small businesses which can benefit the members of the community.

Muslim Fundamentalist who wasn't

A High school in Toronto erred in the publication of its 1996 year book stating that the former Israeli leader Rabin was killed by a Muslim fundamentalist. The school has since apologized as a result of efforts of Al-Shura and especially Dr. Youssef Mrough, a Lebanese Shi'a Nuclear Physicist. Their apology will be in the 1997 year book.

Again, tragedy strikes during Haj

It can be of little comfort to the relatives of those who perished in the devastating fire during this year's Haj at Mecca that the dead are assured a place in heaven. Past experience reveals the hazards involved when such large numbers of people converge on a relatively small site — this is the sixth disaster at the Haj site. The first was in 1979 when three died during hostilities, the second in 1987 when once again clashes claimed 402 lives. A bomb explosion in 1989 killed one person and wounded 15. By far the worst tragedy was in 1990 when 1,426 pilgrims died of asphyxiation when the air-conditioning in a tunnel shut down. This was followed by the death of some 300 in the 1994 stampede which took place on the route to conduct the ritual stoning of the devil.

The management of such vast crowds — about two million people go to Mecca every year — is an exceedingly difficult task. Guidelines should be issued on how people should conduct themselves during pilgrimages and establish mechanisms to regulate the flow of pilgrims to appointed sites. Such a Board could ensure that the pilgrims are accorded proper transportation, accommodation and medical facilities. The issue of compensation and transporting the dead from unlikely mishaps also need to be stipulated well before passengers arrive in Mecca.

Are the relatives of Haj victims to be compensated by Saudi Arabia or their respective governments? A way out would be to build a risk insurance premium into the cost of the pilgrimage which could be subsidised by the government concerned.

The main glitch in such mishaps appears to be the complete break down of communications. A satellite communication link between the pilgrimage sites and a central authority like the proposed board would make available relevant information to relatives without delay. All these steps are not fool-proof but they will lessen the rigours of long pilgrimages and minimise the trauma in the event of accidents.

Federation Samachar

Previous disasters

May 23, 1994 — 270 pilgrims, mostly Indonesians, killed in a stampede in Mecca when surging towards "stoning the devil."

March 21, 1991 — 92 Senegalese Muslim troops, part of the US-led coalition that liberated Kuwait from Iraq's occupation, killed when Saudi Arabian transport aircraft crashes in the north-western part of the kingdom. The soldiers were being flown back to base after an off-season pilgrimage to Mecca.

July 2, 1990 — 1,426 pilgrims, many of them Malaysians, Indonesian and Pakistanis, killed in a stampede in an overcrowded pedestrian tunnel leading to holy sites in Mecca.

July 9, 1989 — Two bombs explode in

Mecca, killing one pilgrim, wounding 16.

July 31, 1987 — 402 people, mostly Iranian pilgrims, killed and 649 wounded in Mecca when security forces clash with Iranians staging an anti-U.S. demonstration.

August 3, 1980 — Pakistani jetliner carrying hundreds of pilgrims catches fire soon after takeoff from Jeddah to Riyadh, the Saudi capital. Aircraft breaks apart after emergency landing. Three hundred and one people die in the accident. The fire apparently began after a passenger lighted a kerosene stove in an aisle to brew tea.

December 4, 1979 — 75 Sunni Muslim extremists who had taken over the Grand Mosque in Mecca killed in gun battle with Saudi police. Scores of Saudi troops also died.

New Complex for Nakuru

The Nakuru Jamat has embarked on a new project to construct a Mosque, Imambara, Alim's residence, Musafarkhana and two flats on one acre of land at a proposed cost of KShs. 17,100,000/- (appx. US\$ 300,000). Work for the first phase which also includes the mosque has commenced and the Jamaat is seeking donations to enable building work to carry on uninterrupted.

Financial contributions can be sent to:

The Treasurer,
KSI Supreme Council,
P.O. Box 6710,
Dar es Salaam

or to the

Treasurer,
KSI Jamaat,
P.O. Box 14590,
Nakuru.

INNA LILLAH WA INNA ILAHI RAJIUN

Late Sayyid Mohamed Mehdi Shushtary

The death of Sayyid Mohamed Mehdi Shushtary occurred on Saturday 19th April, 1997 at Dubai, U.A.E. Agha Mehdi as he was well known, was the grand son of Hujjatul Islma Sayyid Husein Shushtary. He was born in Zanzibar where he studied under his grand father and then went to Iraq for further studies. On his return he joined the family business and served the Community voluntarily and as a teacher at Faiz Night School as well.

He joined Bilal Muslim Mission, Dar es Salaam since its inception and was the first Editor of *Sauti ya Bilal*. He translated and wrote a number of books. He also translated the Holy Qur'an into Kiswahili which is now being edited by his son Sayyid Mohamed Raza. During his stay in Dar es Salaam on several occasions he led Namaze Jamat and preached Masil in our Mosque.

It is our prayers that Allah (s.w.t.) behakke Chaharda Masoomeen (a.s.) may rest his soul among His chosen ones and that he may grant his family and us all solace to sustain this great loss. Amen.

NASIMCO's Islamic Education Board talks of 'Graduate' expectations

The NASIMCO and Islamic Education Board (IEB) Conference was held on March 28 and 29, 1997, concurrently with the NASIMCO Annual General Meeting. The conference was hosted by the New York Jamaat and held at the Huseini Madrasah. The hospitable New Yorkers also hosted the annual North American sports competition simultaneously.

Participants came from far and wide including Allentown, Atlanta, Boston, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, Orlando, Toronto, Kitchner (Canada), and London (England)

The NASIMO-IEB Conference was designed to elicit input from a broad cross-section of the community on the "Target Profile of a Madrasah Graduate" to agree on the extent of knowledge, values, and skills that an ideal Madrasah Graduate should possess.

The programme was segmented into four events. It commenced on Friday night with a general public event where issues relating to our Madrasah were discussed. The proceedings started with recitation from the Holy Qur'an followed by a warm welcome from Liyakat Fazal, President of New York Jamaat and Ahmed Bhalloo, President of NASIMCO. The presentations that followed were made by Dr. Liyakatali Takim, Chairman of NASIMCO-IEB, Dr. Bashir Dato, the main architect of the workshops, Dr. Mohammedraza Dungersi and Muhsin Alidina, individuals with track record of Madrasah involvement.

Madrasah success stories were then presented by Shauzab Dinani for the New York Madrasah and Mohammed Rajmohammed for the Allentown Madrasah. Sadik Alloo presented a *from the heart view* of hopes, aspirations, challenges and potential of the North American Shia Ithnasheri community. Mujtaba Dato enlivened the proceedings and added his remarkable wit and charm to the success of the program as Master of Ceremonies.

The next morning six concurrent

group discussions were held with a cross-section of our community. The groups included male teachers, female teachers, leaders, Madrasah administrators and parents of Madrasah students. Each group was moderated; the moderators were Shauzab Dinani, Gulzar Meghji, Shul Khalfan, Moshin Manekia, Yusuf Shivji, and Kulsum Manekia.

The group discussions were designed to elicit input in a focused manner on collective aspirations and expectations of the knowledge and skills that the ideal Madrasah Graduate should possess. A preliminary profile was used as a basis for discussion in each group and thoughts, feelings and ideas were solicited bearing in mind that once collective goals are defined these can subsequently be implemented.

A media workshop was presented on Saturday afternoon by the much traveled Nisar Sherali of Toronto. This very popular workshop was designed to make teachers and parents aware of the insidious effects of the print and electronic media. It explored possible ways to reinforce the positive while countering the negative effects. Participants were divided into groups and given the task of finding constructive and imaginative ways to counter or mitigate the effects of the media. When the proposals were presented to the audience, a range of ideas from stage plays, letter writing campaigns, teaching about our values of honesty, bravery and persistence by utilizing the media were aired.

The Conference facilitated a very positive interaction, exchange of views and ideas between participants. Old friends met and new friendships were made. Additional outcomes included:

*A preliminary Directory of all NASIMCO member Jamaats, their Presidents, Madaris and their Principals was distributed. A revised copy has since been published.

*Establishment by May 1, 1997 of an Internet discussion group Madrasah Network (MNET) was announced.

This discussion Forum is especially geared to facilitate interaction and exchange of ideas amongst all the Madaris, Principals, administrators, teachers and others interested in education of our children. To enrol an e-mail can be sent to:

thy@worldnet.att.net,
Mehdiraza Hirji,
MNET Administrator
or to Mehdiraza on MNET at
mnet@ieb.org.

*A commitment was made to send an Alim/Scholar to visit member Jamaats to stimulate co-operation between Jamaats and Madaris in North America. It was hoped that a short weekend intensive course for local youths and a Majalis for the community will be held during such visits.

*A survey of all the member Jamaat Madaris was initiated so as to compile this information in a directory, for use and benefit of all the Madaris.

In the evening an appraisal of morning group discussions was done by Dr. Bashir Dato. Plaque presentations were then made to Mahmood Dewji of Toronto in recognition of his "selfless services to our Madrasah". Chacha Paryani was also presented a plaque in recognition of his "untiring service to the community of North America".

Dr. Liyakat Takim thanked all those who contributed to the success of the Conference. Special mention was made of Ahmed Bhalloo, President of NASIMCO for his continuous support; Liyakat Fazal, President of New York Jamaat, Dr. Shakir Mukhi for being there to take care of all the arrangements and the entire Executive Council for their hospitality; Haider Dinani, Chairman of New York Jamaat IEB for his support; Mrs. Laylabai Dinani for her invaluable help with the workshops, and Nishat Khalfan, Nasimco Chairlady, for helping with arrangements.

Dateline Los Angeles

from Sadik Alloo

Many cooks will not spoil the Madresah cause

We have set anchor in the west for over twenty years. Our children are no longer kids and the analogy is that of people travelling in a fast train, just sub-consciously aware that they are moving, but it takes the effort of looking outside to realize how fast they are moving.

We have many accomplishments to be proud of and celebrate for our Madresahs. Considering the relatively small size of our community scattered over North America, the growth of our Madresahs, both in quality and number of students, is quite an achievement. This is a testimony to the dedication, perseverance and success of the Madresah and especially the teachers. They reserve their precious Sundays to invest in our children. The teachers and the administrators are the ones to whom we, the parents, are very thankful and appreciative. Their dedication and commitment are exemplary. They complement us, the parents, in our efforts to educate our children about our great religion.

Whilst it is befitting that we rejoice on past accomplishments, with the new century around the corner, it is equally appropriate that we look to the future also. The children born today will graduate at age sixteen in the year 2013. Life will be different then; our kids will be independent of us and form a new and more active nuclei of our community, society and nation. We will have two generations, the parents and the children, who will have grown up in the west. They may or may not have memories of their old country, be it East Africa, Pakistan or India but we want and pray that they be proud and conscientious Muslims. Are we preparing them for this eventuality; and if we are, how effective is it?

In our survey of the youths, that was subsequently published in a book, **Muslim Youth at the Crossroads, Advancing into the 21st Century** and a follow up booklet, **A Vision for the Youths and Proposed Action**

Programmes for its Realization, we found youths most vulnerable between the ages of 14 and 24 years when most are in high schools and colleges. This is the age when they have just completed, or are about to complete, their Madresah Program. They then face the relentless challenges of secular institutions and secular extremism. Sadly they frequently lack the knowledge and character strength to counter real-life daunting challenges that they face.

The reality and challenges here in the West are of a very different nature to those in Africa, Pakistan or India. Yet, in many cases, we use the same methods that served us well in Africa. Most parents and teachers are very aware of these differences. Sometimes we cite examples of better teacher training and workshops, new English books with different pictures and the like. These represent the extent of proposed adaptations to the new challenges. Do these address the depth of the challenges, though? We have to recognize and give credit to some wonderful advances that have been made in London and Toronto that are worthy of adopting in the Madresahs. Most Madresahs, though, lack the necessary resources and leadership required to do an effective job.

Our community has a pool of very dedicated and experienced people. It is time that we focus our collective efforts and talents to re-engineer the Madresah Program by re-defining the paradigm Madresah and defining the type of Madresah graduate we want to launch into the high schools, the college system and the world.

What values, ethics, qualities and skills do we need to imbibe in him/her to effectively face life, with all its challenges, pragmatically? To start with, a curriculum needs to be outlined on how to achieve our objective. This would cover the need to facilitate discussions on teaching methodologies, quality teacher recruitment and training, student motivation, parental in-

volvement and communal support and would also involve exploring of new means.

It is recommended that we seek inputs in a methodical and organized manner to come up with a unified curriculum. Out of this process, we can facilitate discussions of the direction, implementation plan, periodic review, and evaluation system as well as facilitate dynamic networking amongst the Madresahs. The goal is to share experiences and cross-pollinate ideas. The final product will be a Madresah Program that we all can take pride in and adopt as a standard world-wide.

It will also be rewarding to establish lasting contacts and form a network of those involved in the future of the Madresah. This network can help in establishing a mechanism for providing continual feedback, discussing changes, new ideas, and hopefully come up with tangible results. These dynamic interactions, valuable insights and experiences can be used by all our widely scattered communities.

The suggestion is that after a first, tentative *Target Profile of a Madresah Graduate* is drafted, reactions and suggestions be sought from as broad a cross-section of community members. For this we need to develop a list of all those interested who can send in their pertinent addresses to the following address:

*Dr. Liyakatali Takim,
Nasimco IEB Chairman,
132 Belle Valley Dr,
Nashville, TN 37209 .
Tel: (615) 353-8078. E-mail
Takiml@ctrvax. Vanderbilt. edu.*

Sociologists, psychologists, educators, Madresah teachers, administrators and others are all welcome to participate.

We are also seeking to compile a list of basic information of all existing Madresahs. Questionnaires have been sent out and we are awaiting feedbacks.

We are all aboard the ship sailing into the 21st Century, consciously or unconsciously. The journey has begun and each of us has to decide our role. We have some thoughtful choices and decisions to make. Lets get going and make sure we make this a united effort. Our cause is surely not one where too many cooks will spoil the broth.

IEB Chairman visits New York

The Chairman of the Islamic Education Board (IEB) of the World Federation, Muhsin Jaffer visited New York, USA from 26 to 30 March, 1997. There he had two meetings with the Committee of the Bilal Muslim Mission of America when he was briefed of its activities in West Indies and in the USA - particularly among Black prisoners. He suggested that in future, distribution of books for tabligh in the USA be channelled through the Bilal Muslim Mission of America.

Muhsinbhai also attended a two-day conference on "*The Madrasah - Defining the Profile of a Target Madrasah Graduate*" organised by the Islamic Education Board of NASIMCO (report is carried elsewhere in this issue of the Samachar). He then attended a meeting called by the Islamic Education Board of New York Jamaat where teachers from the Husieni Madressa of New York, Allentown, Atlanta and delegates from Toronto attended. Addressing the gathering, he underlined the importance of laying stress on Spiritual Development of students.

At Al-Iman School, Muhsinbhai had discussions with the Principal, Syed Nassir and the Administrator, Muhsin Alidina. During these meetings he met a number of University students and discussed plans on how to increase awareness and knowledge of Islam.

MNET is launched

There is a new entry in the Cyber Muslim world. Nasimco in conjunction with the Council of European Jamaats have launched a Madrasah Network (MNET) on Internet to facilitate discussions and exchange of ideas and information between individuals and groups associated with madrasahs.

MNET is expected to stimulate communication and interaction amongst Principals, administrators, teachers and parents of various Madaris along with individuals who can make positive contributions. To enrol one simply has to send an e-mail to Mehdiraza Hirji, MNET Administrator, at thy@worldnet.att.net or via the MNET at mnet@ieb.org.

Federation Samachar

DATELINE TORONTO

from Baqir Alloo in Toronto

POLLING for the office bearers of Toronto Jamaat started at 9.00 a.m. at Selby Imambara, Bramton and at 12.00 to 6.00 p.m. at Bayview Centre on a cloudy Sunday, April 27. Polling was heavy as this election was well contested with individual approaches by both the parties. As the choice was not confined to party lines, the result was a mix of both parties securing equal number of seats in the Executive Committee. Nazir Gulamhusein was re-elected for a second term as President defeating his rival Sultan Davdani. Firoz Nasser was elected against Shabbir Rehmtulla for the post of Vice-President and Ali-Asghar Dhirani defeated Sajjad H.Haji. Electors chose an upcoming graduate, Azeem A. Amirali as Secretary who was opposed by Sajjad Haiderali, the retiring treasurer of the Jamaat. Hard working Mukhi, Mulla Mohamed Taqi Jeraj and equally hard working Chairlady, Sikina Mehdi were returned unopposed. The main task for the new committee which took office on May 1 will be to develop the property at 9000 Bathurst Street at an estimated cost of six million dollars. The campaign as well as the polls were peaceful, downright positive and reflected the maturity of the community members. Prior to the poll I interviewed a few voters and many amongst them said that they wanted Nazir to take a second term to complete the job at Bathurst.

AYYAME MUHARRAM were observed here with all zeal and solemnity at different centres to cater for different language groups. Bayview Mosque had a class of its own in all the arrangements despite the constraints of parking. Sayyed Mohammed Asgar Hussein Naqvi from Dar Es Salaam preached in Urdu eloquently to the satisfaction of the audience. Ladies had their own session of majalis in the morning and young Zakera Humma Khatoon of Los Angeles preached in Urdu. Her sermons were mainly on the inner soul and ladies say that she touched their hearts. For English majalis the young man from New York, Sheikh Hasnain Murtaza Jaffer gave excellent lectures on "*Faith & Self Cleansing*" cautioning youths to guard themselves from the evil influence of materialism and immodesty. Professor Javed Akber of Allahabad preached at the West Jaffery Centre dividing his time between an English and Urdu audience. He dwelt mainly on the purpose of life and our duty to God and to society at large. Crescent Village was linked to the Bayview Mosque Urdu majalis through a video conference line. Sheikh Shafiq Hudda preached at the Rezavi Centre in Hamilton. Majalis were also held at Al Mehdi Centre (Urdu), Ahlus-Beit Centre (Farsi & Arabic), Al-Hudda Centre (Arabic) and at the Islamic Museum/Hussainiyya Centre (Urdu). On Ashura Day, a procession was taken out from Thornhill Community Centre to the Bayview Mosque which was attended by about 500 people. Blood donation was also organised and 168 units were donated to the Blood Bank. To meet the expenses for Muharram Program, the President of Toronto Jamaat, Nazir Gulamhusein appealed for funds and in response \$90,000 was collected. It was made clear that surplus funds would be channelled to the Iran Earthquake Fund.

CRESCENT VILLAGE in collaboration with the H.G. Bernard Public School has set up a students coaching programme. The school identifies the students who need extra coaching and a team of volunteer teachers, University and High School students coach these students in the evening at the Crescent Village Centre. A pivotal role is played by Sister Sajjeda Habib and Sister Sayeda Dattoo with *yours truly* co-ordinating between the Management and the Classes.

AL-SADIQ SCHOOL will now open Grade 7 & 8 thus making it a full fledged Junior School. It is a unique educational institution of our community that has above average educational standards plus the opportunity to inculcate the values of Ja'fary faith in our children. On Friday, May 16 the students held an impressive programme of Muharram when they marched in procession in the school ground wearing tee-shirts with Martyrdom slogans stenciled by the students themselves.

Mulla talks on community challenges in the UK....

....from business woes, high divorce rates, lack of interest in education and on need for post madressa preparation of youths

On 8 March, 1997 the President of the World Federation, Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer addressed some 300 community members of Haidery Jamat at Haidery Imambada, South London.

In his address, Mulla touched on four areas of major concern.

1. Small Traders - He expressed concern over the economic condition of our people in the UK, particularly those doing businesses in Corner shops, tobacconists and small groceries because the onslaught of supermarkets has adversely affected the business of such small traders.

He stated that practical steps need to be taken to elevate the economic status of our members after verifying the type and extent of the problem. He also called upon the Council of European Jamats and Jiba Europe to look into the current adverse situation.

2. Divorce Rate - The President expressed grave concern on the rising rate of divorces within the community in the UK. He informed the gathering that every week he receives some calls relating to marital difficulties of young couples. In hand, he had 8 cases of pending divorces which excluded cases in other UK Jamats.

He called upon members to look into marriage counseling prior to and during marriage and said counseling must be available to all and be provided by experienced and mature people well conversant with Islamic Law and the law of the country.

3. Higher Education - He said that there is a growing perception that community youths in the UK are not taking

up higher education. This is in spite of the fact that higher education is still free to a large extent. He said that if this perception is correct, the missed opportunities will be bitterly regretted by the community.

He said there is a need to instil the value of higher education in our young people by organising youth events and guiding our youths to make most of opportunities that come their way.

4. Religious education needs of youths beyond 14 years of age - The President informed the gathering that the Jamat Madressas cater for religious education, which is rather doctrinal, for children up to 14 or 15 years.

He said in their adult life, they would encounter many questions relating to our faith from non-Muslims and other Muslims. He pointed out that a more rationale approach would be required to answer such questions and youths, including university students, therefore need to be introduced to the scholarly work lying within the community's archives which provide intellectual and rational explanations on almost all religious issues.

He also said that the World Federation has devised a syllabus for university students in consultation with Professor Syed Hussein Nasr. Based on this syllabus, the Islamic Education Board of the World Federation will begin Summer Crash Courses for university students and others in due course.

The meeting ended with Community members expressing their resolve and support to overcome the difficulties facing the community.

Al-Mahdi Deaf Organisation proves that life has a role for all

After performing Ziarat, members of the UK based Al-Mahdi Deaf Organisation compiled various booklets thereby depicting that irrespective of one's handicap, life has a role for one and all. The booklets compiled by members of the Organisation are:

Ziarat places in Iran (with photos)
Ziarat places in Damascus
Ziarat places in Iraq
Ziarat places in Jeddah, Mecca and Madina.

The history of the Organisation dates back to 1988 when a Special Class was formed at the Shia Ithna-Asheri Madressa, Stanmore, London, to cater for the deaf and all children with special needs. The main language was English but the mode of communication was lip-reading and British Sign Language.

In 1990, a Ziarat trip to Iraq and Kerbala was organised for the students. Visits to various ziarats proved an eye-opener and the students realised the importance and significance of each.

In 1992, a second Ziarat trip was organised, this time to Iran and Damascus. In 1994, members of the Special Class joined hands and together, on the Wiladat of our 12th Imam, formed the "Al-Mahdi Deaf Organisation".

In 1996, the first Hajj trip for the Deaf was organised with a sign language interpreter included in the trip.

Senior citizens visit Niagara Falls

The Jaffery Senior Citizens Group of Toronto had their first post winter outing by travelling to Niagara Falls on 3 May, 1997. A group of 65 seniors and volunteers spent the whole day at the Falls and enjoyed a sumptuous meal at the Niagara Mosque after zohrain prayers. More programmes are in the offing awaiting improvement in the weather.

\$15 to the Right Path

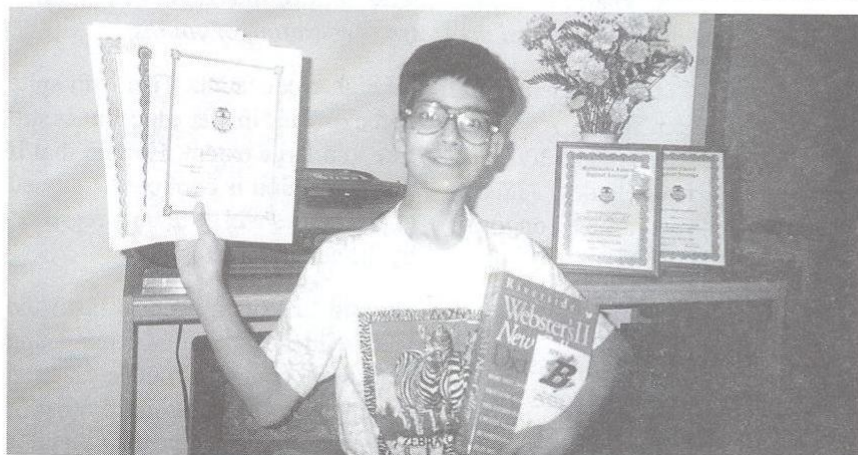
Right Path magazine is now on track and is being published quarterly. The printing is coloured and is done free through the courtesy of West-Star Printers (Gulam Abbas Mukhtarali Jaffer). Those interested in getting copies are requested to send \$15 US, to cover postage, to ABANA, 45 Harris Way THORNHILL, ONTARIO, Canada, L3T 5A6.

Jawaad Sheriff spells his way to success

Jawaad Sheriff, a Middle School eighth-grader was a picture of steely confidence at the 70th annual Buffalo News Spelling Bee Contest. Over 18 rounds, the bespectacled young man stepped up to the microphone in the auditorium of the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Museum and demonstrated his mettle.

O-b-d-u-r-a-t-e. He not only spelt it right but he was the very essence of the word in the face of stiff competition. Then came *D-u-c-t-i-l-i-t-y*. His keen mind, facile as thin wire being drawn through a duct, nailed that one, too. He stumbled in round 19 on *c-u-m-b-r-o-u-s* which means cumbersome but remained unfazed as the pronouncer forgot to offer the same word to a sixth-grader who was the only other contestant in the running at that time.

Correcting her error, she gave Jawaad a new word - *inapplicable* - and he got it right. The sixth-grader then got *precipitated* right and Jawaad despatched *taciturnity*. The sixth-grader got stung by the word *pungent*, misspelling it *pungant* and Jawaad wrestled with *declivate* and won.



Look at my awards! Jawaad with his awards at home

A serious and stoic Jawaad said afterwards that he just familiarises himself with the words without looking at the dictionary and said he does not get uptight about spelling.

His father, Dr. Fuad Sheriff who previously served the Central Health Board (CHB) of the Supreme Council when residing in Dar es Salaam and was an active doctor in the Jamaat's dispensary, credited Jawaad's mother, Naila, an English literature major at the University at Buffalo, as being Jawaad's inspiration. She demurred and attributed her son's success more

to his habit of reading and working hard.

Nineteen other sixth, seventh and eighth-graders competed in this 70th annual contest. They were among champions from 215 schools across Western New York who took a standardised written test to determine who would qualify for the oral finals.

Jawad received an expenses-paid trip to Washington to compete in the national finals which were held in May, 1997 and won by a girl. He also received a copy of MerriamWebster's Third New International Dictionary and its Addenda section.

Parents Seminar held in London

After holding a Seminar for youths the day before, Syed Muhammad Rizvi of Toronto ran a second Seminar on Sunday 15 June 1997. This time it was for parents of teenage children. About 100 parents were present. The Seminar, which was organised by London Jamat covered subjects including:

- *Why is home life so important?*
- *Roles of different family members*
- *Responsibility*
- *Our perception of Education*
- *Rebellion of Youth*
- *How should the energy of youth be channelled?*
- *Teenage problems - possible solutions*
- *They do grow up eventually!*

Federation Samachar

Learn Arabic in a day -- the Nisar Sheraly way!

A 22 page book '*Ali and Aliya build a bayt for their Bear*' is the first in a series of books by author Nisar Sheraly of Toronto who uses a thematic approach to teach children Arabic words.

In this book the theme is the house. Ali and Aliya who also feature in other books by the same author, share the task of building various parts of the house, *bayt*, for their bear, *dubb*.

Two audio cassettes of the proceedings are available from London Jamat for £5 including packing and postage. Contact the WF on Tel: 0181 954 9881; Fax: 0181 954 9034 or e-Mail: worldfed@dircon.co.uk

An interesting and co-operative effort between brother and sister unfolds as the book captures their mood and desire to complete their task in a systematic manner.

The book contains lively illustrations which are well captioned with Arabic words in simple Arabic script and has a pronunciation guide at the end of the story. The book is easy to read and has the advantage of enabling a child to learn a good number of Arabic words in one reading or in a day.

Nisar is a teacher by profession and conducts workshops for youths who aspire to teach in madrasahs. He also has several children television programmes to his credit.

Proposed Work Shadow Scheme will help students to stop *playing cricket on a soccer field!*

By: Malika Chandoo, London

I remember being very confused when I had to choose my A-Levels. I was of those people who didn't really have a clue of what I wanted to do as a career. At one time, to my mother's horror, I even wanted to be an aeronautical engineer!

At the time, it seemed like an impossible choice. There were so many options. Did I want to do sciences or arts? A-Levels or AS Levels - perhaps even BTEC? What degree would I then be able to choose? Was it going to let me do the job I wanted - even though I didn't really know what that was! The choices were endless!

I got through the muddle though - I did it by talking to lots of people about all the options. I talked to people about my A-Levels. I talked to people about different degrees and universities, and to people who were in the professions I was thinking of going into. During my 'I want to be a lawyer' phase, I even set myself up with some work experience in a law firm. After wading through several inch thick files, and reading pages of law jargon which didn't really stir up any excitement, it was a clear conclusion that I was not going to be a lawyer. Today - after all that, I am training to be a dynamic chartered accountant - and surprisingly very happy about my decision!

The Council of European Jamaats is in the process of setting up a WORK SHADOW scheme to try and help you with your decisions. If you're unsure of what you want to do - at whatever stage you're at, we can put you in touch with people who can make a difference. Whether it be about A-Levels, degrees and universities, or jobs. Whether you'd like a quick chat with someone or even do some work experience, please do get in touch with us. It really does make a big difference talking to someone who has actually 'been there and done it'. Together perhaps we can move from being carelessly confused to being carelessly focused.

If you are interested please register

with the Council. If you are in a profession or vocation and can assist our students, please let us have your details. We hope you will be able to give some of your time to show what your career involves. For example an Optician can show interested students what he does and what is involved and similarly a plumber can show first-hand what kind of work is involved. The time you invest with students will not only benefit them but can also be a promotion of your own business within the community.

For registering or for more details, e-mail: mhdatoo@dircon.co.uk.

Study Skills Residential Course planned for September 1997

Modern formal education now involves a variety of teaching and learning methods. This is especially so in the further and higher education sectors where the style of teaching and learning have changed, partly by the natural evolving of the curriculum, and partly by the imposed policies of successive governments.

The new environment comes as a shock to students used to the disciplined constraints of a school system and thereby often leaves them in a precarious situation ultimately even affecting their qualifications. The Council of European Jamaats Education Sub-committee has earmarked a 2-day Residential Short Course on Study Skills on 2 and 3 September, 1997.

The Study Skills short course will be conducted with lecturers, self-assessment questionnaires, exercises, discussion workshops and videos. Instructors will be Dr. Mahmood Dato, BSc PhD CEng MRAeS MIMechE MIM, twelve years experience in higher education; Lady Mary Tovey, Qualified and Licensed Buzan Instructor; Carol Charles, BA PGCE Dip.R.S.A., twenty years experience in higher education, teaching study skills.

The Course will include such subjects as Setting Goals, Motivation, Learning Style, Time Management, Note Taking, Using Notes, Reading Skills, Mind Mapping, Using library resources, effective study groups, Exams Preparations and techniques, Essay and Report writing and developing Memory Systems.

The course is primarily aimed at university undergraduate and postgraduate freshers. Second priority will be given to postgraduate and undergraduate continuing students. Third priority will be given to A-Level students. The course is not open to students of GCSE Level and below.

The number of places on the course is limited to 20. Participants have to make a £50 nominal contribution to the course to partly cover the fees for the external speakers, refreshments, food, course dinner and accommodation. Early application is advised.

For further information e-mail: mhdatoo@dircon.co.uk.

Canadian politics and Islam...

from Ghulamaabas Sajan, Toronto

During the last Federal election in Canada, Muslims were seen to be active. This is a good sign. It is hoped that at the next elections (Municipal/Provincial/Federal) we will have Muslim candidates.

In Toronto, *Al-Shura - The Muslim Consultative Assembly*, was active to some degree. Some 10,000 flyers were distributed at various Islamic Centres requesting Muslims to go to candidate meetings and ask questions on the following three issues:

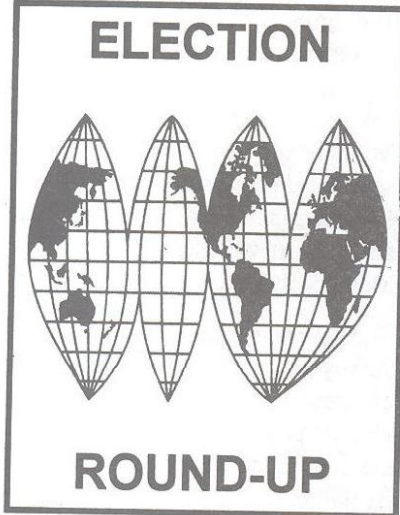
*Jerusalem - candidates were expected to condemn the encroachment by the Israelis.

*Gambling

*Family values.

We understand that a number of Muslims did do it and a few also wrote letters to the Prime Minister and others to express Muslim concerns on these three issues.

Al-Shura has membership of 51 Muslim organizations of Toronto with the mandate to deal with media and politics.



Toronto

Following are the results of the elections held at Ja'ffari Islamic Centre on 27 April, 1997. The office bearers are elected for a term of two years.

President	Nazir Gulamhussein
Vice President	Firoz Nasser
Secretary	Azim Amir
Treasurer	Ali Asghar Dhirani
Mukhi	Mohamed Taki Jeraj Merali
Chairlady	Sr. Sikinabai Baker Mehdi

We congratulate the above members and hope and pray Allah (SWT) successfully guides them to lead the community, Amen.

British Columbia

The Shia Muslim Community of British Columbia, at its Annual General Meeting held on May 4, 1997, elected in the following Executive Committee Members for a one-year term, 1997/98.

President	Mohamed R.M. Dewji
Vice President	Shaheen Rashid
Hon. Secretary	Minaz Fazal
Joint Secretary	Mahmood Jaffer
Hon. Treasurer	Jaffer Ali A. Ladak
Joint Treasurer	Hassanali N. Dewji
Mukhi	Hassanali Fazal
Joint Mukhi	Asgarali Ladak
Member	Hussein Bhojani
Member	Mohsin Dewji
Member	Mehboob Jetha
Member	Amir Meghji
Member	Mohamed Dewji

We congratulate the above members and hope and pray Allah (SWT) successfully guides them to lead the community, Amen.



Kinshasa

The following Executive Committee members have been elected to run the Kinshasa Jamaat for the 1997 to 1998 term.

President	Hassan Alibhai
Hon. Secretary	Rizwan Haji
Hon. Treasurer	Mehboob Ladha
Member	Mohd. Reza Nanji
Member	Alihassan Ratnani

We congratulate the above members and hope and pray Allah (SWT) successfully guides them to lead the community, Amen.

Trollhattan

The current Office Bearers of the Muslim Shia Forsamling (Community), Trollhattan are:

Chairman	Mukhtarali Hirani
Vice Chairman	Sultan Kanani
Hon. Secretary	Zahid Govani
Hon. Treasurer	Shafiq Govani
Member	Mehdi Bijani
Member	Ahmed Manekia
Member	Salim Ghogai

We hope and pray Allah (SWT) successfully guides them to lead the community, Amen.

Songea reshuffle

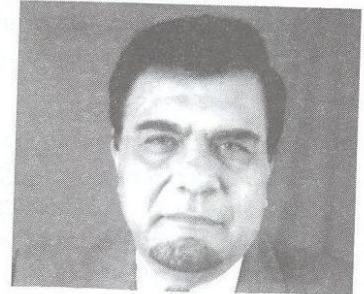
There has been a minor reshuffle in the Managing Committee of the KSI Songea Jamaat which was elected into office on 3 February, 1997. The former Assistant Secretary, Shabbir Remtulla is now the new Hon. secretary whilst Rizwan Dhalla is the new Assistant Secretary.

The reshuffled Managing Committee includes:

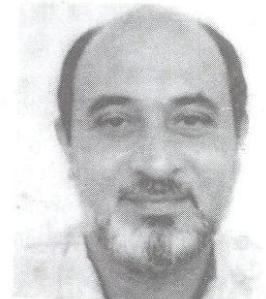
Chairman:	Mohamed Versi
V/Chairman:	Rizwan Kermally
Secretary:	Shabbir Remtulla
Asst. Secretary:	Rizwan Dhalla
Treasurer:	Sadiq Meghji
Asst. Treasurer:	Mohamed Jaffer
Mukhi:	Bashir Versi
Asst. Mukhi:	Munis Panjwani

Dar es salaam

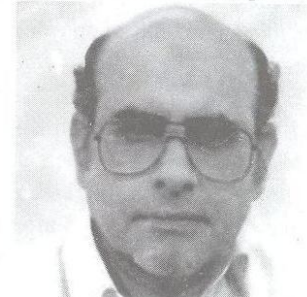
Following are the results of the biennial elections held on 15 March, 1997 at the Dar es salaam Imambara. The office bearers are elected for the 1997-1999 term.



President Asgherali N. Bharwani



Vice President Zulfiqar Dewji



Hon. Secretary Yasin Nurmohamed

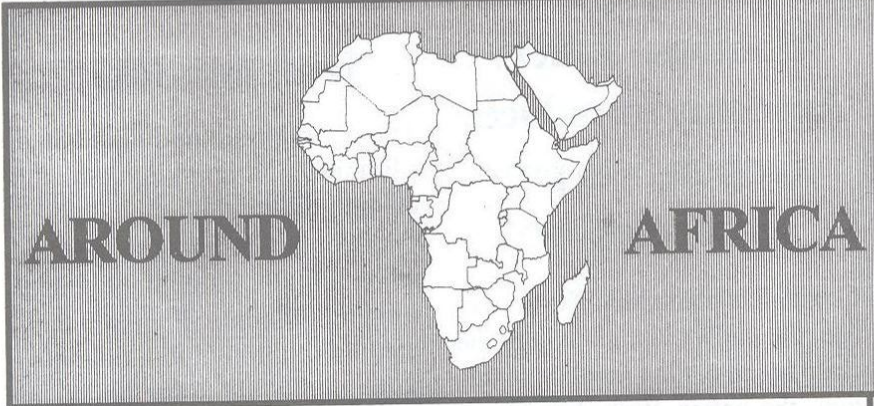
Hon. Jnt. Secretary	Pyarali Shivji
Hon. Treasurer	Mohamed Lalji

Members:

Mushtak Fazal
Dr. Shiraz Dato
Hussein Hasham
Rizwan Mamdani
Shabbir Somji
Murtaza Dhalla
Raza Virjee

Trustees: Mohamed Panju Jessa, Mohamedtaki Dhanani, Gulambhai Fazal and Mohamedali Bhojani.

We congratulate the above members and hope and pray Allah (SWT) successfully guides them to lead the community, Amen.



Our numbers....

The Africa Federation's contact numbers are:
 Tel: (255-51) 150897
 Cellular: 0812 786 710
 Fax: (255-51) 150964/112914/112406
 E-Mail: Federation@raha.com

Awards galore at Mombasa Jaffery Election night

The Annual General Meeting of Mombasa Jaffery Sports Club was held on 4 April, 1997 with a good attendance. On the same night, there was also a presentation of annual awards and a few awards not presented during the Club's 75th Anniversary celebrations.

The following were elected into office for the 1997/98 term:

- Chairman - Mahboob Virji
- Vice Chairman - Muslim Fazal
- Hon. Secretary - Murtaza Kassamali
- Hon. Treasurer - Amir Merali
- Hon. Sports Secretary - Shiraz Gulamhusein
- Committee Members: Salim Khaku, Mohsin Khaku, Zahid Dato, Ebrahim Jaffer, Munir Jagani, Abbas Nazerali and Aunal Kanji (IMM Past Chairman)
- Trustees for the year 1997/99: Moh'd Jaffer Khaku, Amir Kassamali, Haider M T Kanji and Naushad Jiwa.

The following Award Presentations were made:

<u>SPORT</u>	<u>WINNER</u>
Football	1995/96
1. SNR. Footballer of the Year	Fahim Walji
2. JNR. Footballer of the Year	Mehdi Serali
Squash	
3. SNR. Squash Player of the Year	Shahid Kassamali
4. JNR. Squash Player of the Year	Annas Virji
Volleyball	
5. SNR. Volleyball Player of the Year	Fazleabbas Kassam
6. JNR. Volleyball Player of the Year	Mustafa A.P.
Tennis	
7. SNR. Tennis Player of the Year	Asgher Molu
8. JNR. Tennis Player of the Year	Sahir Nazerali
Table Tennis	
9. SNR. Table Tennis Player of the Year	None
10. JNR. Table Tennis Player of the Year	None
Cricket	
11. JNR. Cricketer of the Year	Imran Gulamhusein
12. Best Batsman of the Year	Azim Karim
13. Best Bowler of the Year	Hasnain Allidina
14. SNR. Cricketer of the Year	Fazel Bhanji

Governor Khaku...

The Golden Crescent Group (GCG) Mombasa District inducted Cr. Abbas G. Khaku as the new Governor on 12 April, 1997. He took over from past Governor Cr. Mohamedhusein Somji.

In his inaugural address, Cr. Abbas said he would vie to revive dormant districts of the Group and to consolidate philanthropic activities. Others on the committee are: Ahmed R. Karim (Deputy Governor), Mustafa M. Haji (Secretary), Zakir Pirbhai (Treasurer), Abdulraza Molu, Mustafa Tharoo, Rizwan Khimji and Mohamedabbas Somji (Members).

On the same day a treasure hunt was organised and a Senior Citizen project was launched for male members over 55 years. The first outing took place on 13 April, 1997 with 40 participants.

Blood donated in Dar

On 17 May, 1997 which was Ashura Day, 123 community blood donors from the Dar es Salaam Jamaat donated blood at the Ebrahim Haji Charitable Hospital to commemorate the Martyrdom of Imam Husain (a.s.).

Of these 111 were male and 12 female, for whom a separate room monitored by the Union ladies Section was arranged. Six donors, three male and three female, were rejected because of being either underweight, under age, too old or due to low blood pressure.

The exercise which was organised by the Ithna-Asheri Union Volunteer Corps under their Convenor, Nazeem Jaffer and with the supervision of Dr. Karim Premji and some seven technical staff from the Muhimbili Medical Centre, saw 117 half pint blood bottles being collected. This was donated to the Muhimbili Medical Centre Blood Bank.

Kinshasa Foundation consolidates activities

The early Islamic tableegh activities for the local population in Kinshasa started with the inauguration of the first Shia Mosque and the arrival of (late) Maulana Mohammad Ishaq Najfi as the first resident Aalim for the KSI Jamaat there in 1985.

After the departure of Maulana Mohammad Ishaq Najfi, due to his ill health in 1987, activities remained idle until the arrival of another resident Aalim, Maulana Syed Raza Haider Rizvi in 1990. Unfortunately when he was about to establish a permanent Madressa for the local people, riots in Kinshasa compelled Maulana to leave for Pakistan. He is now resident Aalim for the Idara-e-Jaafariya in London.

Thereafter activities suffered due to the long absence of a permanent resident Aalim in wake of the uncertain political situation. In 1993, another resident Aalim, Maulana Sheikh Zahid Hussain for the Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri restarted tableegh activities. He was resident Aalim for the Jamaat until June, 1996 but from August, 1996, he became involved full time in propagating the teachings of Islamic theology in Kinshasa through the Al-Qaim Islamic Foundation. To date some 700 people have converted to Jaafariya Faith and are now studying at different Madressas in Kinshasa.

Activities include religious education teaching, social training like electrician and tailoring courses to enable students to independently earn a livelihood, conducting of daily Zohrain prayers and weekly Jumaa prayers and the establishment of a polyclinic called Clinic Zainabia Centre to cater for the medical needs of students and their families.

Every Sunday, students from different Madressas gather at the main AL-QAIM CENTER where they recite the Holy Qur'an, duas and Zohrain prayers. This enables students to exchange views and know each other better. Recently karate training was also introduced and plans are also underway to establish an Academic Education Centre.

Mombasa Jaffery Academy introduces computers to pre-school children

Computers being part of everyday life, the earlier the advantage the child has in getting familiar to this tool, the better. With this aim in mind, the KSI Education Board has now introduced pre-school age children to computers at their Jaffery Nursery School. A total of three computers have been donated to the school by Hon. Sajjad M. Rashid, Assistant Minister of Science and Technology.

Rashid handed over the computers to Mohammed Iqbal Sunderji, Chairman of the KSI Education Board, who in turn forwarded them to Mrs. K. Hatim, the headmistress of the school. Sunderji thanked Sajjadbhai Rashid for his generous donation and expressed hope that the computers would help improve children's concentration span and problem solving techniques besides giving them a lot of fun.

The computers are placed in a specially designed Activity room of the Nursery School. This is a unique room fully furnished with all sorts of Nursery School play things and apparatus recommended for use by Montessori Training Institutions.

Iran condoled

The Supreme Council Chairman, Mohamed Dhirani conveyed a message of condolence to Iran on behalf of the Community in Africa when a major earthquake devastated the Khorasan Province there on 10 May, 1997. The following is the text of the letter written to the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tanzania, As-Sayyed Abdulkadir Neemat Ghaderi.

"We are very much distressed to have learnt of the devastating earthquake which took place in Biryand Khorasan Province during the weekend. We also very much regret to have noted the devastating effect of the earthquake which has left thousands dead and homeless."

On this occasion of the calamity we express our deep sorrow and request you to convey our expression of sympathies to the Rahbar of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatullah Al-Ozma As-Sayyid Ali Khamanei, the President Ayatullah Alhaj Ali Akber Hashemi Rafsanjani and the peoples of Iran.

We join you all in our prayers to Allah (S.W.T.) that He grants patience and courage to the victims and success to the Government in its attempt to help the victims and the bereaved families."

Dar to host 8th Supreme Council Sports Festival

The Dar es Salaam Jamaat has accepted to host the 8th Supreme Council Sports Festival during the Christmas holidays this year. Jamaats world-wide have been asked to register their interest to participate to:

*The Secretary
Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat
P.O. Box 233,
Dar es Salaam.
Fax: 150964/112406
E-Mail: Federation@raha.com*

At this stage Jamaats have only been asked to confirm on their interest to participate following which further details will be sent out to them.

New Kiswahili book counters accusations against Shiasm

Over the last two decades there has been a lot of negative propaganda against Shiasm. Some Kiswahili booklets have been written by the Shi'a writers to rebut such false accusations but there was no book in Kiswahili to review the whole structure of Wahhabism to expose their weakness and retort against baseless accusations.

A 408 page book, *Uchunguzi juu ya Uwahhabbi* now fills this gap adequately. It is the Swahili translation of the Arabic book, *Al-Wahhabiyyah fil Mizan* (by the well-known scholar of Qum, al-Ustadh Shaykh Ja'far Subhani). The translation has been done by Shaykh Musabbah Shaabani Mapinda and the book is published by the Ahlul Bayt (A.S.) Assembly of Tanzania (P.O. Box 75215, Dar Es Salaam). It has been thoroughly checked by Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, Chairman of ABATA.

The Swahili-speaking Muslims have never seen such a comprehensive and convincing book on this subject. The book has twenty chapters in addition to three Forwards and an Epilogue. It explains the following topics which are the source of dissent between the Wahhabis on one hand and the Shi'as and other Muslims on the other.

1. The life history of the founder of Wahhabism
2. Building structures on the graves of the Waliis of Allah
3. Building of Masjid near sacred graves
4. Ziyarat of graves in the light of the Qur'an and hadith
5. Positive effects of visiting the graves of sacred religious person

- alities
6. To pray near the graves of the Waliis
7. Tawassul (To seek wailah) with the Waliis of Allah
8. "Nazr" for dead people
9. Celebrating birth and death anniversaries of the Waliis of Allah
10. Seeking barakat and cure from relics of the Waliis of Allah
11. Tawheed in worship
12. Seeking help of Waliis of Allah during their lifetime
13. Seeking help from the souls of the Waliis of Allah
14. Seeking Shafa'at (Intercession) from Waliis of Allah
15. Wahhabis' arguments to show that seeking intercession is haram (unlawful)
16. Belief that Waliis of Allah have supernatural powers
17. To adjure Allah by the right of the Waliis
18. To take oath by the names of other than Allah
19. To seek help from Waliis of Allah
20. A season of Ibadah and a political gathering

The book is a must for all Shias especially the new converts as it provides them with sufficient knowledge to combat the every day accusations against Shia beliefs and traditions. This book is also a caution to those wrongly accusing Shiasm and provides them an opportunity to make amends and if need be, to seek dialogue for enlightenment on issues that they do not agree with. The Tabligh Sub-Committee of Dar es Salaam Jamaat has launched a 'Sponsorship Scheme' by way of which our brethren can pledge for the cost of one or more copies for the sawab of their beloved Marhumeen. To date 500 copies have been sponsored and those wishing to pledge for

further copies can do so by contacting:

The Tabligh Sub Committee of Dar es Salaam Jamaat, P.O. Box 233, Dar es Salaam.

The price for this book is T.Shs. 3000/- and K.Shs. 300/-.

CHB seeks information on death

The Central Health Board of the Supreme Council (CHB) is in the process of establishing a data base to enable it identify the common causes of death in our community in Africa. The statistics are expected to engender apt health care and preventive programmes focused on the more frequent causes of death with an objective of preventing early deaths.

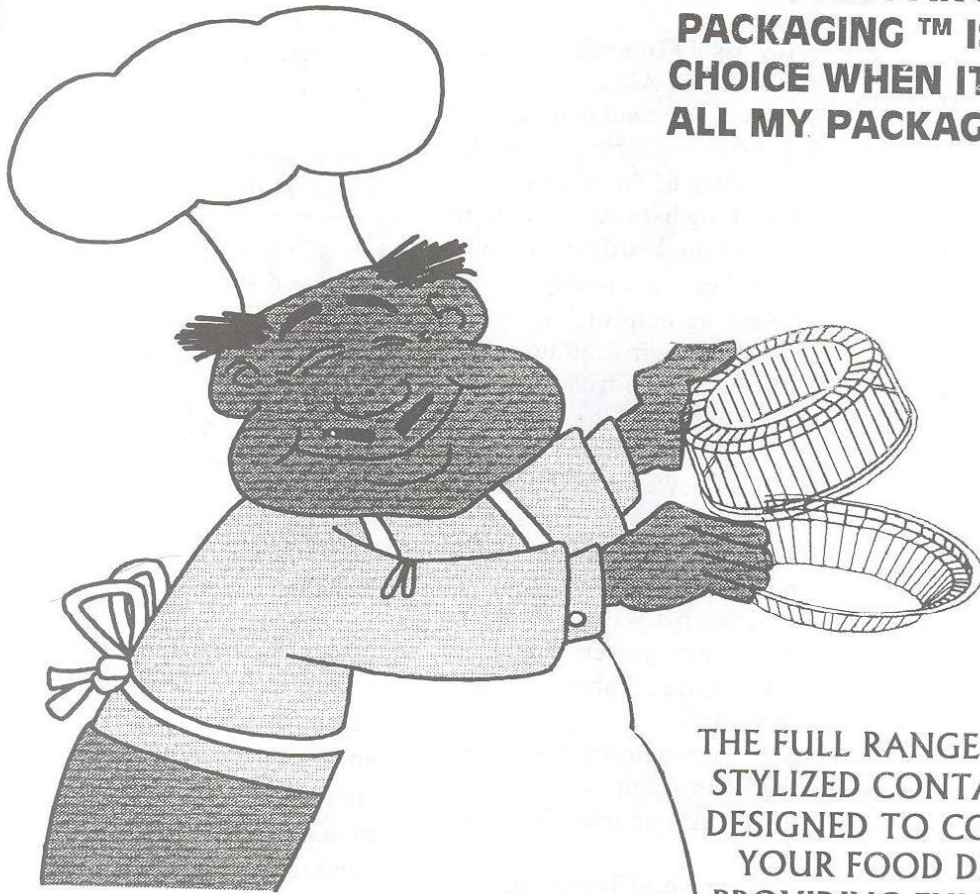
Pertinent forms have been sent to all Jamaats with a request the data be updated and sent on a quarterly basis and to ensure confidentiality, the Jamaats have been given a discretion of providing data without the names of the deceased. The first report is due in from all Jamaats by 30 June, 1997.

To emphasise the importance of having returns from all Jamaats, the CHB has given a point of reference to the United States where the introduction of a special programme some 10 years ago has led to a successful reduction in the rate of deaths caused by heart attacks by 45%.

It has also recommended Jamaats which do not maintain death registration books to do so immediately.

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Zakireen Seminar looks *into* ways to keep people from staying *away* from majalises

A Zakireen seminar was organised by the Tabligh sub-committee of the Dar es salaam Jamaat at the ladies Imambara on 4 May, 1997. The theme of the seminar, "Preparing For 21st. Century Audience" focused on two areas; "Responsibility of Zakireen" (Molvis, Mullas, Mulyani), a paper eloquently presented by a Zakirah, Mrs. Fatim Dewji and "Our Needs and the Traditional Majalis", a paper presented by a resplendent speaker and Zakir, Muslim Bhanji.

In his opening address, the Chairman of the seminar, Habibbhai Mulji (the past Africa Federation Chairman) asked participants to consider the problems facing our community on this issue with the intention of coming up with pragmatic solutions. He added that many "samieen" (the audience, literally the listeners) come to Majalis only for *thawab*. He said that community members need to be motivated to attend Majalis by other reasons as well, like to learn Islam, its principles, morality, history etc. He invited all to give their frank and sincere opinions on this issue.

In his welcome address, the Chairman of Dar es Salaam Jamaat, Asgher Bharwani paid tribute to the Zakireen for their contribution towards raising religious knowledge and moral values in the community. He pledged full support of the Jamaat towards the activities of the Zakireen and praised the Tabligh Sub Committee for effectively initiating and coordinating action plans.

Mrs. Dewji's paper emphasised on the personal responsibility of Zakireen to make our Majalis less traditional and more effective. In

this context, she also emphasised on the need for Zakir/Zakirah to uplift their personal conduct so as to reflect and portray Islamic principles and ideals that they preached from the pulpit.

Muslim Bhanji bemoaned on the lack of adequate local and professional Zakireen who are dedicated to full-time tabligh work in the community. Besides tabligh through Majalis, he proposed other educational media be used like the hosting of regular seminars on specific topics including child upbringing, drug abuse, successful marriage and the like. He also suggested on publishing books and making our secular academic institutions religious-oriented.

In the group discussions that were held after the speeches, the main recommendations included:

Sourcing of Preaching material

It was recommended that for effective preaching, material needs to be sourced from libraries, videos, news-media, internet and audio-visual aids and thereafter adequately adapted and edited before delivery to suit the objective of the Majalis. It was emphasised that topics should be well researched to enable well-prepared deliveries.

Need for pragmatic Majalis

It was further recommended that topics of Majalis should include practical issues on which our day-to-day Islamic life can be adapted to. It was also proposed that burning issues like drug abuse or the problems facing our youths should be discussed and solutions from Islamic perspective given without also excluding subjects of current public interest along with science and technological information or

innovations. It was felt that Majalis on Khushali and Wafat should relate to the particular occasion and the life of the particular ma'sum being mourned or elated upon.

Need for training and formation of Zakireen Groups

It was suggested that Zakireen training programmes should be organised to improve Zakiri standards. It was felt that Public speaking should be included in such programmes. It was also suggested that Zakireen be encouraged to go to Iran or Pakistan to attend crash courses on Islamic studies. Another proposal was to arrange for qualified teachers to be brought in to train our Zakireen. Another proposition was that a Zakireen group be formed through which Zakireen can meet regularly to exchange ideas and discuss social issues for presentation in Majalis.

Urdu is an indispensable language medium

It was emphasised that the language in Majalis should be simple to be easily understood. There was a consensus that the present medium of instruction, Urdu has worked well and should continue because essentially there is no language barrier at present between a Zakir and the general public. It was also pointed out that Urdu is an indispensable medium especially because many reference sources are available in this language. Coming to youths, the issue of a second language, English arose. It was felt that in due course the Community will need to divide Majalis congregations into Urdu and English listeners.

(.....continued on page 30)

...Zakireen seminar

(.....from page 29)

Majalis and youths

It was felt that youths do not generally attend Majalis because Majalis are long and repetitive and because they are often read from a book. It was recommended that Youth seminars be organised regularly and Zakireen should find out the interests of the youths, their concerns, their problems and answer their questions without instilling undue fear in the youths. Rather it was suggested that Zakireen should emphasise on love for Allah (S.W.T.) and Ahlul-bait and on Allah's love for His creation. It was also upheld that youths be encouraged to take up Zakiri.

Hawza

One group saw a need for a Hawza to be established in our community to provide further Islamic studies and promote Zakiri. It was felt that more students would be interested in this field if education is available locally.

Propagating through Dramas

It was suggested that the role of dramas or stage shows in disseminating historical events or episodes be explored and considered. It was observed that some drama programmes have already been organised and have proved effective. The advantage of dramas is that they can also be a source of entertainment.

In his closing statement, the Chairman of the Tabligh sub-committee of Dar es Salaam Jamaat, Dr. Shiraz Dattoo expressed hope that the recommendations from the deliberations that ensued from the session would be implemented soon. A video copy of the proceedings is available from the Tabligh Sub Committee.

INNA LILLAH WA INNA ILAHI RAJIUN

Late Dr. Hassan Pyarali Ahmad Sikiladha

The Community learnt with profound shock and deep regret the untimely and sad demise of Dr. Hassan Pyarali Ahmad Sikiladha in a fatal road accident which occurred between Dar es Salaam and Tanga while he was travelling in a bus on 7 June, 1997, 1 Safar 1418. Marhum was the son of Pyarali Ahmad Sikiladha of Tanga, the brother of Hussain Pyarali of Dubai, U.A.E., and the brother of Murtaza Pyarali and Mohammad Ja'far Pyarali, both of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Marhum was buried on Sunday, 8 June 1997 in Tanga.

His death is a big loss to not only his family but the whole community. He was a kind and dedicated person and his exemplary services to the Tanga Jamaat and the Jaffery Charitable Dispensary there will be remembered for a long time. He has left behind a vacuum which will not be easy to fill.

The late Dr. Hassan was the Central Health Board (CHB) Zonal representative for Tanga region and was amongst those who successfully and enthusiastically participated in the first Medical Convention held in Dar es Salaam in March, 1997.

May Allah (s.w.t.) *behakke Chaharda* Masoomen (a.s.) rest his soul amongst His chosen ones and may He grant the family solace to sustain this loss. Amen. Let us remember Marhum with Sura-e-Fateha.

Mombasa Youth Camp and Seminar a success

A two day Youth Camp and Seminar was organised in Mombasa at the Kanamai Conference centre on 26 and 27 April, 1997 by the Education and Debate section of the Ithnaasheri Young Mens Union (IYMU) under its dynamic head Muntazir Dhanji. The Camp attracted 68 youths of whom 11 boys came from Tanga. the youths were aged between 16 and 35 years.

The Seminar was opened by the Chairman of IYMU, Mehboob Virjee and chaired by Mustafa Tharoo, a Practicing lawyer in Mombasa. The Seminar Co-ordinator was Dr. Murtaza Rashid. Two papers, one on Role of Majlis in present day times by Mulla Mohamed Kassamali from Nairobi and another on *Rites of Azadari: Practice and impact* by Fazleabbas A. Dattoo of Mombasa were presented.

The presentations were discussed in by four workgroups. These were:

<u>Workgroups</u>	<u>Headed by</u>
1. Role of Majlis in Present Day times	Ali Nasser
2. Azadari Rites: Practice and Impact	Shabbir Chandoo
3. Ashura - a Universal Message	Mehboob Nasser
4. Preparation for Muharam	Hussein Mukhtar

The Youth Camp was also spirited with sports activities which included surprise games like arm-wrestling whilst in the morning there was a diathlon (swimming and running). Discipline was well maintained at the camp even after participants *called it a day* in the cottages on the beach. Jamat prayers were conducted by Mulla Mehdi and Br. Fazel.

The Camp and Seminar were a great success and participants expressed hope that similar programmes would be held in future. The organisers hope to make the next such Camp more international with participants coming from more Jamaats.

Clause 20.1 -- Why Africa was misunderstoodand some meeting shortcomings

by Munir Daya, Dar es Salaam

Clause 20.1 of the WF Constitution which restricts the President's term in office to a maximum of two consecutive terms was deleted by majority vote at the Extra-ordinary Meeting held at Stanmore, UK on 7 June, 1997.

After viewing a video tape of the proceedings various shortcomings were vivid and the objective of this write-up is first, to explain why the Africa Federation sought to preserve the Clause and secondly to candidly identify shortcomings of that meeting.

At the Meeting, the Chairman of the Africa Federation, Mohamed Dhirani explained the Africa stand in his address. To begin with he was disgruntled by the fact that a good part of the debate forwarded by the participants was unrelated to the discussion on Clause 20.1. He also decried the polarisation of this matter which, he said, created misunderstandings and catalysed lack of harmony in our community world-wide with possible negative repercussions in the long-term.

He emphasised that the Africa Federation had adopted a stand not out of personal confrontation but by exercising its democratic rights. He said the Africa delegation had not travelled to win a battle as there was no battle to be won and pointed out that the outcome, irrespective of what it would be, would be interpreted as being in the best interest of our community.

The Chairman said that Africa's stance on the proposal was no different from what it had always been, that of supporting the limitation because it is a good safeguard to have within a constitution. He

said that the Africa Federation stand was backed with 50 years of experience.

He described Clause 20.1 as being useful and said its preservation could be supported with logical reasoning. He said the proposal to delete this Clause is opposed on only its principle and merits with due regard to the present and future interest of the World Federation. Taking a retrospective view of Clause 20.1, he said that in October, 1990 the new Constitution was adopted and Clause 20.1 unanimously embodied. The restriction expressed in the Clause, he said, was not in the old Constitution and its addition was seen as a timely improvement. He pointed out that it was the Africa Federation who had, prior to 1990, proposed the restriction, having had the same restriction in its constitution to its advantage with a recurrent rise of new leaders with newer vision and enthusiasm. He said it is but only natural for enthusiasm and zeal to decline through monotony over a passage of time and that a period of six years would seem long enough for applying one's ideas.

Mohamedbhai said the World Federation, being the largest organisation with an electorate much larger than that of the Africa Federation, would stand to benefit even more, if a conducive atmosphere is created for the restriction to produce results as it has successfully done for the Africa Federation for decades. He reminded the gathering that an attempt made in 1994 to delete the restriction was abandoned when the

consensus during the debate seemed against the proposed deletion.

He also questioned why the deletion was being sought when the restriction had not yet been tested or given a chance to show results. He termed the call for deletion as a non-issue and questioned whether it justified the convening of an Extra Ordinary Conference at short notice to discuss the proposal especially when the World Federation elections are only four months away and when the incumbent had not confirmed or declared his intention of offering himself as a candidate for re-election.

He said that if the proposal succeeds, the World Federation may be faced with a situation when the incumbent may still decide not to offer himself as a candidate, something which he declared in the Leeds Executive Council meeting in February, 1997. In wake of this, the Chairman pointed out that it is possible that there will be no other ready candidate at short notice and the post may then have to be filled by one of the delegates present. He warned that then the criterion of suitability would then be sacrificed to succeed in finding one willing to fill the vacancy at short notice.

Mohamedbhai said no one can claim that any one person is an exception. He said that this provision in a constitution is common generally not only with organisations but also with States around the world and said it served as a constitutional rescue of a society from itself! He said the proposal to delete the Clause lacked foresight and

(continued on page 32)

(... from page 31)

made it appear that the *present* is more significant to us than the *future*.

The Chairman also mentioned that long serving leaders can unduly dominate decisions and even meetings could become procedural out of fear of offending an old-serving leader. There would also be no pressure for leaders to earn the score whilst on the other hand the restriction enables new leaders with different methodologies to take over.

He concluded that Allah (SWT) in His wisdom has made no person indispensable for the day to day affairs of the human race. He said the two significant words "AJALIN MUSAMMA" meaning "for an appointed term" or "for a period fixed" keep on appearing at about 19 different places in the Holy Qur'an to impress that it is HE, the Creator who decides the affairs of His creatures while the creatures themselves are transient or temporary in their appearance and agency in this world. He then cited an example of the death of the Prophet to which the people of the time had to get accustomed to despite desperately needing him.

Following the deletion of the Clause at the Extra-Ordinary meeting, scepticism prevails because the current President has at times publicly expressed his unwillingness for re-election.

However from the circumstances by which the recent Extra-Ordinary Meeting was called, it is expected that the current President will seek re-election because the way things stand, it does not appear that anyone has been groomed to take over. If someone has been groomed to take over, the silence to this effect is inexplicable and again would raise the issue on why the Extra-Ordinary Meeting was called so urgently thereby costing the community over \$ 100,000 by way of air-tickets and accomodation alone.

Another aspect considered by the Africa Federation is that it does not necessarily require a groomed leader to take over because we have many individuals in the community world-wide who possess inherent leadership qualities. What such potential leaders need is enough time to adjust their affairs before taking over and in the case of the forthcoming elections, they required to know the stance of the current President and the fate of Clause 20:1.

At Africa Federation level it was also felt that the subject of changing laws or for that matter a constitution to accommodate a personality creates a dangerous precedent which in the years to come could be a point of reference for others to make similar or unrelated changes to accomodate personal objectives.

Another point considered by the Africa Federation is that in the hurly burly of today's life it is wrong for us to expect our leaders to unduly serve long terms because ultimately a time comes when the leaders themselves find it onerous to continue. Ironically the fear of having to serve a possible three terms would serve to deter many potential candidates who would consciously or subconsciously contemplate that traditionally our community is known to take its leaders for granted thereby compelling them to serve endlessly.

Again in many of our decisions we seek Islamic guidance. To this effect, one can find a true interpretation in the Iranian constitution which the late Ayatollah Khomeini often said is a reflection of the holy Qur'an. The Iranian constitution spells out that a leader cannot seek re-election after two terms. This law does not necessarily relate to a country or political party but provides insight on what Islam stipulates on good leadership i.e. it defines good leadership as one where a leader, to remain effective, does

not reign endlessly!

Another point considered was a hypothetical one where a notorious leader, very unpopular with most, has influential contacts to enable him to always retain his position despite his lack of achievements. His influence will see him prevail at the cost of communal progress because there would be no barrier in the constitution to stop him.

In the meeting, it was questioned why we have to be dictated by a man-made constitution which can be changed endlessly to suit circumstances. A constitution in any organisation, including ours, is there to provide precaution for the well-being of an organisation. This is why it requires a 75% majority to remove an existent Clause, meaning, in other words, that a constitution is a noble document prepared by those who seriously wish to follow it because of the benefits that accrue from doing so. Any organisation which keeps on unduly changing its constitution in order to accomodate situations does so to its own detriment.

The main reason given at the Extra-ordinary meeting by those supporting the deletion was on why there should be an artificial restriction when the elections are, in any case, open for all to contest. The other argument was that wisdom grows with experience and that not all people ail with age. Then there was mention of the restriction being a colonial hangover whilst one speaker correlated the limitation to a situation where a good leader could be restricted and replaced by a bad leader. Various speakers also emphasised that running the World Federation is not a layman's job and thus why impose restrictions on ourselves when we already have a capable person to run the show?

The drawback in these arguments is that they consider leadership on

(continued on page 32)

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a short-term basis and condones the fact that there are opportunity costs to electing one man, however able, to lead for three terms. An organisation which elects one leader continuously can easily be led into a state of disarray when the one person who always led is no longer in a position to lead.

What the Africa Federation preferred is a set-up whereby a Chairman should take a break after a maximum of two terms to pave way for new leaders with new vision. With a regular change in leaders, the community would soon have various experienced individuals to lead one organisation or another at any time. With many potential leaders a healthy sense of competitiveness would also ensue and leaders would hence be expected to perform extremely well to be positively rated in opinion polls.

The point referring to the restriction being a colonial hangover was rather paltry because in colonial times there were no elections. Rather, Governors were assigned to rule subjugated territories for fixed periods.

With regard to the reference that a two-term limitation would restrict a good leader who could in turn be replaced by a bad leader, what if the situation is vice versa? This counter question presumably provides a valid answer.

These then were some of the conspicuous points that prompted the Africa Federation to support the retention of Clause 20.1. In the Kampala Supreme Council Meeting, 30 votes were in favour of preserving the Clause, 14 were against and one abstained. The voting was conducted by secret ballot.

Finally some shortcomings in the deliberations and the meeting were noted. These are highlighted hereunder:-

1] Two terms of the AF were referred to as being deconsolate and downcast simply to support the logic that the two-term restriction placed in the Africa Federation constitution is wrong. It is irreligious to unduly tarnish the image of another individual or organisation to justify one's point of view.

In fact it was Mulla Asgher as Chairman of the World Federation (which presumably would also mean his team!!!!!!) who in the 1991 Supreme Council meeting in Arusha inspired the then Chairman to take a further term after he had completed the first term. He defined the then Chairman as being virtuous and chaste and said the Community needed him even more in wake of the Somalia crisis. Video tapes are available. At the end of the same Chairman's term, he was inundated with acclamations (all recorded) for a spate of achievements.

2] The Rapacious tone and lewd language that prevailed in the meeting was misplaced. (*sorry readers, can't repeat this here because I fear my computer could develop a virus!* Editor).

3] To my knowledge on a *point of order* or a *point of information*, one is allowed to interrupt a speaker if it is felt that he is speaking something not based on facts. When it was felt, on the *point of information*, that one speaker was furthering his argument on conjecture with regard to the formulation of the mandate held by the Africa Federation (AF had democratically voted towards preserving Clause 20.1), the dishonouring of this interruption in the name of strictness was tragic. Meeting ethics require the presiding Chairman to at least allow the *point of information* to be ascertained and then acquaint the speaker on whether or not he or she could continue to speak on that subject.

The denial of this right led to a formal protest by the Africa Federation.

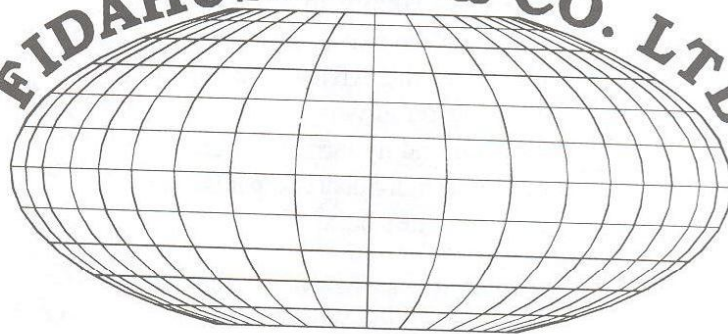
4] The request for secret voting by the AF was not to hide their intentions (for which they already had a mandate) but to allow sincere voting. A secret ballot is the most democratic way of voting because it allows conscientious voting without the fear of intimidation. And in a religious organisation, one would expect the general attitude to be one where fairness is not only professed but also seen to be practised. If a secret ballot was requested for, it would have been honourable to grant this request especially in the wake of the constitution being silent on the subject.

6] When the Chairman of the meeting, in the name of fairness, temporarily delegated the chair to his deputy following an observation by the Africa Federation Chairman that he was a potential beneficiary from the amendment, was it not wrong on the part of those who compelled him back, to do so? It would appear that this was not guidance but misguidance!

In life we all err and this is why *pencils have erasers*. What is important is that we sincerely analyse where we went wrong and make amends for the good of society at large, our community in particular and for the good of our well-being in this world and in the hereafter. When serving in the name of Allah (SWT) and for the sake of Allah (SWT) we are obliged to regulate our conduct to the way prescribed by Him. After all, the *sincere servitude to Allah (SWT)* is the essence of all our constitutions and so should it be.

Video tapes of the proceedings are available. The writer is prepared to accept and even publish constructive comments from readers for the sake of healthy dialogue. Sensationalism or accusations against personalities will not be accepted.

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The sun rises again in the pearl of Africa ... as Supreme Council convenes for its 55th session in Kampala

The 55th Supreme Council Meeting which was held at the KSI Jamaat Imambara in Kampala from 28 to 31 March, 1997 (18 to 21 Zilhaj, 1417 A.H.) was a historic one because this was the first meeting held there since the political turmoil in Uganda, 25 years ago, in 1972, forced most Asians out of the country. The hosting of the Conference in Kampala proved beyond doubt that Uganda, after 25 years, is once again a formidable member of the Supreme Council. On record, the last Supreme Council Meeting was held there in 1955 under then President, Marhum Gulamhusein Kurji Jetha.

As per available records, our brothers first settled in Uganda in the 1880s and a Jamaat was formed in the 1920s with the first constitution being drafted and registered in 1926. Majlises were then held at private homes until the Jamaat's first President, Marhum Khimjibhai Bhanji offered a roofed structure for use as an Imambargah. The Mosque Complex which was the venue for the 55th Session was inaugurated in 1960 and a Housing Complex was founded in 1967. The sad political events in 1972 saw most of our brothers migrate to Europe and North America and a few to Pakistan and India.

Only five families stayed behind and all properties were taken away except for the small Mosque at the Kabrastan which was protected through the efforts of Haji Pyarali Khimji. This is where the few who remained, congregated for religious functions.

When Idi Amin fell, we had 10 families in Kampala. In 1992, the Jamaat obtained Certificates of repossession of all our Jamaat properties. Gradually members began to return from overseas and today the Jamaat prides of 60 families with about 250 members.

This year's meeting was attended by



The deliberations and confabulations never end. Chairman Mohamed Dhirani with the Chairman of the Organising Committee, Dr. Asgherali Moledina as Kampala Jamaat President, Shabbir Najfi (centre), Vice President, Professor Syed Abidi (partly cut) and trustee, Ebrahim Kassam look on.

over 100 participants amongst whom included Presidents and Councilors from many constituent Jamaats plus local and overseas invitees. The meeting commenced on 28 March, 1997 with the Confirmation of the minutes of the 54th Supreme Council Meeting held in Nairobi in April, 1996 following which the audited accounts for the year ending 30 September, 1996 were deliberated and adopted. Budget proposals for the forthcoming years to 30 September, 1998 were also outlined and approved.

At night a reception was held at the Mosque compound which various dignitaries from outside the community also attended. The Chief Guest was the Special Representative of the Mufti of Uganda and a member of the Muslim Supreme Council of Uganda, Haji Simba. The speakers that night included the Chairman of the Federation, Mohamed Dhirani, President of the host Jamaat, Shabbir Najfi and the Chairman of the Kampala Jamaat Board of Trustees, Mohamedali Husein Punjani all of whom highlighted the activities of the Africa Federation and its investments and social work in the countries where its members reside.

With proceedings running late, the planned key-note address by the

Chairman was forwarded to the next morning session which commenced with recitation of Dua e Wahdha recited by Mulla Anu from Mombasa. The President of the Kampala Jamaat, Shabbir Najfi then officially welcomed participants.

Key-note address

The Supreme Council Chairman, Mohamed Dhirani then made his key-note address. At the outset he acclaimed the Kampala Jamaat for taking the initiative to host the Meeting despite its small size and said this was only the second time that the Supreme Council Session was being held there.

He then welcomed participants who came from far and wide for attending the meeting. He also acknowledged the contributions made to the community by those who had passed away in the last year and decried the attack made on the life of the son of our Marja, Sayyid Al-Seestani Seestani in Iraq in November last year.

The Chairman revisited the turbulent spots in Africa including Bujumbura and Zaire (where the situation has since stabilised) and said that the Federation has been in constant liaison with these Jamaats for the well-being of our members.

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Khums appeal

Mohamedbhai then touched on the financial bottlenecks that the Council faces in wake of increasing demands for utilities and for tabligh spending. He reiterated his call to community members to pay their khums dues to the Africa Federation, which can use the *Sehme Imam* portion (for which a valid *Ijaza* has been provided by the Marja) for tabligh activities.

He said the Foundation Fund launched last year in Nairobi had drawn pledges to the tune of \$700,000 but clarified that these funds would be invested and only the returns therefrom would be used for disbursing the community's various demands like education, housing, tabligh and the like. He said the target is to collect about US\$2 million and that in the meantime a committee has been formed to study on the options available for investing the funds.

Current Projects

Mohamedbhai said that in fulfilling its religious obligations, the Community in Africa has launched various projects which require funds to complete. He cited Nakuru where the Jamaat has begun building a Mosque, Imambara, Madrasah, Alim's residential Flat and four Flats to be rented out. He said the envisaged cost for this project is US\$300,000 and called upon momineen to support it.

He said that in Mombasa, the community's old Musafarkhana had been demolished and will be replaced by a new Musafarkhana and residential Flats to be built at a cost of US\$ 300,000. In Mwanza, he said there are plans to build a Madrasah and Widows home at a cost of US\$100,000 whilst in Dar es Salaam he mentioned that the Daya Walji Madrasah is to be extended.

Education

The Chairman said that the Council had repeatedly stressed on the need to educate our youths and said the need to this affect appears to be understood at Jamaat level judging by the number of educational facilities being launched. He gave examples of Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Kampala, Nairobi, Lindi and Moshi where new nursery or primary schools have been or are in the process of being set-up

Federation Samachar

and said it is the right time for all Jamaats to at least think of building a nursery school. In this respect Mombasa Jamaat has a strong educational infra-structure.

Call to revive Boarding Houses

Mohamedbhai sympathised with parents in small towns who have to wind-up their, at times lucrative businesses, to move to big towns so as to enable their children to obtain better education. He said the community needs to give thought to the subject of reviving Students' Boarding Houses of the type that formerly existed in Dar es Salaam and Lindi. He called upon Jamaats to vitalise negotiations with the Tanganyika Education Council in order to catalyse action.

On Higher Education, he said that the demand for scholarships was increasing and with returns from the Foundation Fund only expected after two years, he called upon Jamaats to supplement the Council's efforts in supporting youths who qualify for such scholarships. He expressed bitterness on the fact that some youths did not easily repay their loans and appealed to them to do so immediately so that other students could also be provided with funds. He praised the Education Board of the Supreme Council for its efforts in uplifting educational standards in the community.

Health

On health he was in full praise of the Central Health Board (CHB) for its efforts in raising awareness on health issues and providing facilities for medical care at Jamaat level. He also commended the CHB for hosting its first Medical Convention in Dar es Salaam which he described as a big success. He thanked the Imaan Foundation of India and the Medical Advisory Board in Birmingham for providing medical facilities to patients from Africa.

Tabligh

On tabligh activities, he commended the Bilal Muslim Mission for the new Shia Centre in Arusha which was opened earlier this year. He mentioned that the Mission has procured a building in Dar es salaam at US\$ 290,000 for investment purposes. He said rental income from this investment would help towards tabligh propagation.

The Chairman also acknowledged the presence of Kuwaiti Shias who have been spreading the True Faith in Jinja and a small town some 110 km from Kampala in Uganda and have also built a Hawza, Mosque, Imambara and School in Lamu. He also praised the Ahle bait (A.S.) Propagation Organisation in Mauritius for its efforts to spread religion.

Media, Information and technology

On information and technology, he said the Supreme Council has stayed with the times and that the Secretariat is now accessible by e-mail and also had Internet facilities. He said the *Federation Samachar* can now also be read on the Internet thereby making it accessible to our members world-wide. He commended the *Samachar* Editorial Board for producing admirable copies thereby making it the leading magazine in the Khoja world.

Resettlement and Sports

The Chairman thanked the Setwel Board for its efforts to resettle our Somalia brothers. At present 83 families are residing in Kenya of which only 4 families are on welfare whilst in Tanzania there are 120 families most of whom are not working because the status of their residence permit does not allow them to be employed. The situation thus calls for regular input of funds to sustain the families until they are resettled.

On sports, he appealed to all Jamaats to encourage sportsmen and to provide facilities for youths to play. He also commended the Mwanza, Bukoba and Kampala Jamaats for organising a mini Sports Festival.

The Chairman said the community had good sporting facilities in Mombasa and Nairobi and said that plans are already underway to build a fine sports Complex in Dar es salaam and Arusha.

On the Supreme Council tournament, he said this is now held biennially and that the next one would be held in Dar es Salaam in December, 1997. He also congratulated Mombasa's Jaffery Sports Club for marking its 75th Anniversary.

Mohamedbhai ended his delivery with a reminder to all that he had pledged only to serve for one term ending next

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year and called upon the Community to look for a new leader at least three months prior to next year's triennial Conference so that he would have adequate time to hand over office.

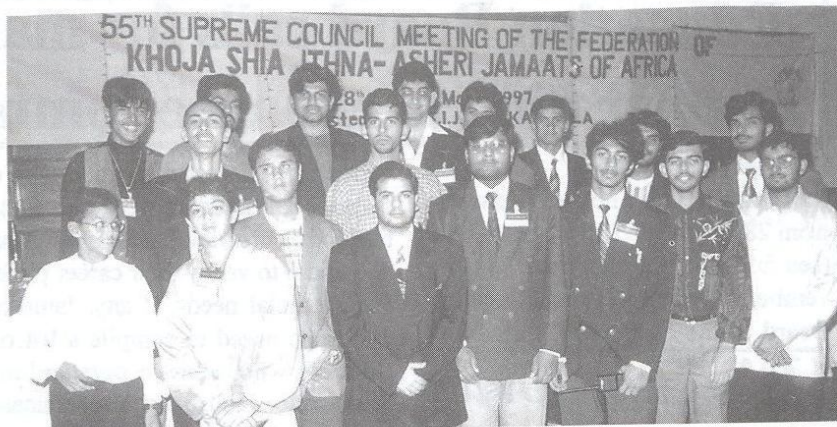
Unity, Unity, Unity....

The Vice President of the World Federation, Manzoor Kanani praised the impregnability of the Africa Federation saying that since 1964, it has been through many unforeseen adversities and has witnessed the wrapping up of quite a few big and small Jamats. He said that by its courage and steadfastness under trying circumstances, the Africa Federation sustained its own existence as well as that of its constituents and defined it as a hallmark which history will long remember. He also emphasised on communal unity and a need for joint decisions on important communal issues.

Dignitaries from overseas were then invited to say a few words and those who spoke were the Chairman of Regional Council of KSI Jamaats of the Indian Ocean Islands (formerly Madagascar Territorial Council), Asgher Hirani, Treasurer of Imam e Zamana Mission, Hyderabad, Captain Hadi, Cutch and Gujarat Federation representative, Aunali Salehmohamed and Nazir Moez of Paris Jamaat. All commended the Africa Federation for its efforts to uplift living standards and spreading religion. They also provided an update on the activities and bottlenecks in their areas. Also present was Anver Rajpar, Chairman of JIBA International and Mehfile Murtaza in Karachi.

During the course of the meeting, two proposed resolutions from the Kampala Jamaat were deliberated on. One stressed on the importance of education, medical care and housing within the community and intended to make this as a right for all deserving and eligible members failing which the onus would ultimately be on the constituent Jamaat or the Africa Federation. The second proposal was to set up a Community hospital in East Africa.

For the first proposal it was felt that education, health and housing needs are



Youths who participated pictured with the zealous volunteers

already being handled by individual Boards of the Supreme Council. It was also felt that passing the resolution would put undue onus on Jamaats and the Federation to fulfil individual demands. For the second proposal, it was felt this could be covered in the resolutions forwarded by the CHB.

Discussion on WF Clause 20.1

The World Federation Constitution Clause 20.1 stated, "A person who has served two full consecutive terms as President shall not be eligible to be re-elected for the third term but may be elected thereafter." The Africa Federation has the same restriction in its constitution.

As an Agenda item this was deliberated at length. To allow free discussions, the Chairman maintained an impartial stand and ultimately in a secret ballot 30 voted in favour of retaining the Clause and 14 voted against whilst one abstained. *(This Clause was removed from the WF Constitution at the Extra-Ordinary Conference held in Stanmore on 7 June, 1997 where in a public ballot, 98 voted for a deletion and 20 against).*

The following morning annual reports from various committees were presented for adoption. The adopted annual reports included the Secretariat's report, Tabligh reports, Bilal Muslim Mission (Tanzania and Kenya) reports, Settlement Welfare Board report, Education Board report, Central Health Board report, *Federation Samachar* report, the Sports Council report and the Foundation Fund report.

The CHB presented resolutions and seven further recommendations *(outlined on page 40 under Medical Convention article)* and it was proposed

that the resolutions be circulated to all Jamaats in Africa in order to give sufficient time to the Jamaats to discuss them to facilitate adoption.

The Education Board suggested that to ensure more efficiency, the Board, at the end of its present term, be transferred to where the Federation's Secretariat is located or the Board be properly incorporated or all its financial aspects including approval of loans be handled by the Secretariat thereby leaving the Board to handle the technical aspects of higher education.

The Education Board also suggested that the Supreme Council and Jamaats should undertake Education and Life Insurance schemes for the benefit of individuals and the Community at large.

Sportsman of the Year

The Sportsman of the Year award for the 1996 Abul Fazl Trophy was won by Zulfikar Pyarali Nanji from Nairobi. Zulfikar represented Nairobi Province in some first class cricket fixtures and also represented the winners Kenya in the Zone VI Cricket Tournament held in Dar es Salaam in August, 1995. He is currently a reserve player in the Kenya National Cricket squad.

The host Jamaat, despite being a small Jamaat, were great hosts and the volunteers worked with great zeal and enthusiasm. Guests were always picked on time and appetizing meals were served. A picnic for all was arranged on the day after the Conference and how nice it was to pray at the historic Mosque in Jinja and lunch at the Iranian Camp and finally observe the sunset at the source of the Nile ...a sunset which was to see dawn the following morning and not after 25 years!

Education Board calls for maximum Jamaat co-operation to enhance communal education

During the Career Training Programme (CTP) held in Mombasa from 28 July, 1996 to 3 August, 1996 (see full report in the *Samachar* November, 1996 issue) the Education Board of the Supreme Council had

It's Stanford for Murtaza



Dar es Salaam based Murtaza Akber Alimohamed graduated in 1994 with a First Division National 'O' Level Examinations pass at the Mzizima Secondary School and then undertook a two-year scholarship course at the International School of Tanganyika (IST) for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Course where he won top awards in some academic subjects and excelled in extra-curricular activities.

He captained the IST Quiz team to two consecutive victories in the annual Inter-school Brainbuster Quiz Championships for which he was awarded return air tickets to London each time.

He has now been awarded a scholarship by Stanford University to attend a four year course in medicine. Stanford is one of the best Universities in the United States. Of the 1700 international students who applied for scholarship, only 35 have been offered admission and Murtaza is one of them. Murtaza had earlier also received scholarship offers from four other universities. It is believed that he will be the first Tanzanian student to attend Stanford University.

He attributes his success to hard work and faith in Allah (SWT) and has expressed willingness to help other students wishing to have more information on further education. We wish him good luck in his career.

called upon Jamaats to undertake a census of all students in their jurisdiction and to interview students in Forms 4, 5 and 6 to verify their career plans and financial needs, if any. Jamaats were also asked to compile a list of students who achieve outstanding qualifications and to organise seminars and workshops for parents and students. Jamaats were further asked to compile and send summarised data of courses offered by colleges, institutes and universities in their region along with names and details of scholarship philanthropists in their area. Only four Jamaats have so far responded, namely Mombasa, Arusha, Nakuru and Tanga and the Education Board has reiterated that unless there is a response from a Jamaat, students from that Jamaat cannot benefit from its services.

The Education Board (EB) also compiled a 'Plan of Action' booklet after the Mombasa CTP Programme which was distributed to all Jamaats primarily to outline implementation points. These included:

- 1] *The need for close contacts between various Jamaats and its schools;*
- 2] *Need for each of the five main centres, namely Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Mombasa, Nakuru and Nairobi to have its own basic Career Library materials;*
- 3] *Need for more parental involvement as parents can provide the best source of inspiration for children to study further;*
- 4] *Need for parents to be enlightened on Career Library materials;*
- 5] *Jamaats to maintain full list of all our students;*
- 6] *Career guidance materials be made available to all students who study in our schools;*
- 7] *Need for inter-relationship between Head Teachers and Administrators of all schools;*
- 8] *Need to engage a qualified External Career Advisor for all Jamaats.*

As Tanga Jamaat was unable to attend the CTP, Ahmed Daya, Mzee M.M.D. Kermalli, Habib Yusufali and Bwana Ali Sheriff travelled on behalf of the EB to Tanga to provide students career guidance and enlighten them on the Career libraries set up in Mombasa, Dar es salaam and Arusha. Another follow-up was undertaken in

February, 1997 by Bwana Ali Sheriff who visited Dar es salaam, Mombasa and Arusha Jamaats and noted that Career libraries had been set up with latest books and were run under able teachers. Similar Centres are also expected in Nairobi and Tanga.

The Education Board was also ably represented by Bw. Ali Sheriff during the Nakuru (Boys) and Nairobi (Girls) Camps held between 21 December, 1996 and 3 January, 1997. He spent a week at each Camp to guide some 240 students on suitable careers using new techniques as agreed during the Mombasa CTP session. He also briefed 20 Instructors on the need and usefulness of individual Career Guidance Sessions with students. The latest Career materials were used including the *KUDOS* computer programme which is available at the Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and Arusha Career Libraries.

The EB Chairman, Hussein Rashid and Honorary Secretary, Shabbir Alidina visited the Nakuru Camp on 28 December, 1996 and the Nairobi Camp on 3 January, 1997. They met instructors and students and informed them of the activities of the EB and finally answered questions from students. The Chairman also addressed the closing session held on 4 January, 1997 in Nairobi.

Finally the EB has outlined some setbacks in its efforts to boost education within the community. These are:

- *Lack of prompt repayments from students who have completed studies and their parents;*
- *Limited response from some Jamaats with regard to repayments from their students, career issues, holding seminars, etc;*
- *Lack of interest from some of our School boards on having a common approach for career guidance, external inspection, exchange of teachers, raising educational standards, etc.*
- *Lack of understanding by some students on the Board's aim and objectives to:*
 - *make full use of the career library materials;*
 - *select the most economical institutions;*
 - *convince their Jamaats to take keen interest in youths, especially for high standards of secular and religious education.*

CHB hosts historic medical convention in Dar es salaam

The Central Health Board of the Supreme Council organised the first ever Medical Convention on 22-23rd March 1997 in Dar es Salaam. Amongst the lecturers were two doctors from overseas, doctors from Dar es Salaam and Professor Sayyed Q M M Kamoopuri also of Dar es Salaam. The subject matter was multifarious and deliberations led to a number of useful resolutions which have been aired for subsequent adoption pending the opinions of individual jamaats.

A medical convention, the first of its kind, was organised by the Central health Board of the KSI Supreme Council in Dar es Salaam on 22 and 23 March, 1997. The event was a tremendous success with over 300 delegates, invitees and observers attending from all over Africa and abroad. Ladies also took an active part in the deliberations.

The objectives of the convention were to bring together medical professionals, community leaders and heads of institutions from varying experiences to a common platform to discuss the medical, moral, ethical and religious aspects of health care of our community and to appraise the current health status of our community and recommend appropriate preventive health educational programmes.

Other objectives were to evaluate and disseminate and where appropriate provide data to bring awareness of the prevalence of serious and infectious diseases affecting our community and to recommend effective programmes to control and prevent them, to encourage and facilitate interactive and innovative panel discussions on matters affecting the organisational structure and development of our health care institutions with a clear goal of achieving excellence meeting the needs of our community in the light of rapidly changing environment and to prepare Resolutions covering the health and organisational issues of importance affecting our community for submission to the Supreme Council for implementation.

The Opening of the Session was held at the Dar es Salaam Imambara amidst a packed attendance. The Session commenced with recitations from the Holy Qur'an followed by a welcome speech by Convenor, Asgher Alidina. Then

came the keynote address from Mohamedbhai Pirbhai, Vice-President of the Supreme Council and a message from Asgherbhai Bharwani, President of Dar es Salaam Jamaat following which the Chairman of the session, Anver Rajpar took over and offered the podium to Aunali Khalfan, the Chairman of the Central Health Board (CHB) who gave an informative talk on the subject of *'The importance of CHB in the present health history of the community in Africa'*. The Master of Ceremonies was Dr. Jaffer Dharshi.

It is quite clear that the CHB has made tremendous progress. Besides arranging treatment of patients in Birmingham, it has now established a well-functioning system in Bombay where patients from Africa receive excellent, reliable and cost effective services. It has also managed to screen most jamaats in Tanzania. Furthermore it is due to embark on new projects including services to medical professionals, health education and general medical co-ordination of all jamaats in Africa.

Dr Walji, Chairman of Medical Advisory Board (MAB) of the World Federation spoke next. In a passionate speech, he described the establishment of MAB, its functions and how it can be of help to our community worldwide in general and to Africa in particular. He presented various statistics on number of patients helped from Africa and the type of diseases they suffer from. By December 1996, the total number of patients from Africa were 2,427, of which 1,821 were from Tanzania, 517 from Kenya and 89 from the rest of Africa. He emphasised that whilst it is indeed a pleasure to look after our patients from Africa, the number is not decreasing inspite of a large number of patients going to India. He suggested that steps should be

taken to improve facilities locally so that the need to go overseas diminishes.

Dr Walji also alerted the community that urgent measures need to be taken to prevent the spread of AIDs in our community, to screening and detect inherited diseases like Thalassaemia and to educate the community in important health issues affecting our community. He suggested that serious considerations should be given to pre-marriage counselling and blood tests. These suggestions were received well by the audience, especially ladies judging by the number of questions Dr. Walji was inundated with.

Dr Anil Mehta then spoke and described the facilities which he is able to provide to patients going to Bombay. The following day, Dr Indira Asser, a lady gynaecologist practising in Dar es Salaam discussed the common problems of our ladies. She was complementary towards the community on its concerns of ladies' health in general but was disturbed to notice creeping trends of 'liberty'.

Dr Karim Manji then gave a powerful and startling speech on the subject of 'Social and religious dilemma surrounding medical practice'. He talked at length on the dilemmas he and doctors like him face when practicing in Dar es Salaam and alerted the community of various very difficult, potentially life threatening problems facing our community. He talked about deteriorating moral standards he encounters when talking to his patients or to students in schools. He appealed to community leaders to pay particular attention to the needs of our youths, to discourage immoral behaviour and to introduce programmes which would keep our youths from debasing.

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Prof. Kamanpoori gave an illuminating speech on religious obligations. He said medical professionals at the global level are beginning to realise that there is a desperate need of co-ordination between medical and religious personnel because many moral dilemmas have emerged from medical practices. He said many modern medical institutions have separate departments of bio-ethical studies where scholars research the religious aspects of medical issues such as the use of reproductive technologies, artificial insemination, abortion, surrogate motherhood, family planning and child spacing, use of contraceptives, decisions about mercy killing, physician assisted suicides, genetic engineering i.e. changing the genetic character of living species and the AIDs epidemic.

He said Islam does not approve the definition of health offered by the World Health Organisation (WHO) because the Organisation defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well being but ignores the spiritual component of human existence. He said the Islamic definition of health is that all our actions and thoughts have either positive or negative effects on our health depending on the way we live, eat, act and react. He said these diseases disassociate from unhealthy thinking, unlawful attitudes and unclean environments.

There then followed a workshop on various medical and allied issues affecting our community. Resolutions were then formulated with the primary intention of promoting health awareness in our community and improving health care infrastructures.

A reception was held at the Kuchi Hall where the Chairman of the Africa Federation, Mohamed Dhirani bode farewell to the participants. He congratulated the CHB for hosting a momentous convention and suggested that future conventions should involve more Jamaats from out of Dar es salaam. He also analysed some of the proposed resolutions and cautioned that some should best be left for the people to implement rather than imposing them to do so. Thereafter



CHB Office-bearers pictured with the visiting doctors, the Supreme Council Chairman and Vice Chairman and the Dar es salaam Jamaat President.

presentations were made to various participants.

The Convention issued the following resolution in the field of Education and Prevention:-

** Female participation in Medical Professional education be encouraged.*

** Mandatory Health and Sex Education our religious and secular institutions. Such education to be a priority at all age levels, and considered for immediate implementation.*

** Structured and expert individual and group counselling in Health and Sex Education be availed to all community members at all age levels and groups of fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, parents-in-law, youths, children and others.*

** Sports and recreation facilities be availed to all community members especially women, youths and children.*

** Mandatory pre-marital HIV Screening and clearance be introduced, confidential to the parties concerned.*

The Health Administration and Referral cases resolution essentially called for:

** Complete autonomy be vested in the health institutions of the jamaats for their functioning with a full delegation of authority to the Administration and professionals by the said institutions;*

** Continuous investments be planned and implemented in the expansion, upgrading and development of health services to reach the level of a Referral hospital to enable the recruiting of competent medical professionals;*

** Adequate emoluments and incentive packages be provided to medical professions;*

** Pricing of health institutions to ensure that they are self-sustaining;*

** A local panel of specialists be formed at each Jamaat level which should liaise with the local CHB Representative in establishing and managing referral cases.*

These resolutions along with seven further recommendations were presented at the 55th Supreme Council Session in Kampala where it was proposed that the resolutions be circulated to all Jamaats in Africa in order to give sufficient time to the Jamaats to discuss them to facilitate adoption.

The seven further recommendations essentially covered:

1. Inclusion of health education as an extra-curricular activity in all our schools;

2. Provision of sports facilities like playing grounds and indoor facilities for physical fitness exercises;

3. Organising of regular health education programmes by way of seminars, lectures, essay and quiz competitions and similar programmes;

4. Emphasis on Preventive Health care at Jamaat level particularly for common ailments like high blood pressure, heart diseases, diabetes, HIV and AIDs, Cancer and hazards from smoking;

5. Organising of two year cycle Medical screening Programmes for all members;

6. Appointment of CHB representative where one has not been appointed;

7. Formation of a ladies Sub-Committee to stimulate Healthcare activities.

In the Kampala meeting it was agreed that the proposed resolutions would currently serve as recommendations for Jamaats to implement and the CHB has asked Jamaats to provide it with a feedback on progress of implementation or obstacles thereto.

MAB Chairman cautions "listen.....or be doomed"

The Chairman of the Medical Advisory Board (MAB), Dr. Mohamedtaki Walji was in Dar es salaam for the Medical Convention organised by the Central Health Board (CHB). The *Samachar* Editor Munir Daya stole a few moments from him for an interview.

1) Can you briefly outline the history and main objectives of the Medical Advisory Board (MAB)?

1. In mid seventies when I was a medical student, I received several requests from our community in East Africa to help them with their treatment when they came to UK. I felt ill-equipped to do so. The need kept on increasing and as soon as I qualified as a doctor in 1977 I was able to do more. However, it seemed to me that the services needed to be better organised. Since the need of our community was from patients from all over the world I felt it appropriate that it be done by the World Federation. I had also started to participate in World Federation's Haj Medical Mission. It was then felt appropriate that such activities be consolidated under one board - Medical Advisory Board (MAB).

The board was then officially formed in 1979 and its objectives approved by the World Federation conference as:

- Treatment of patients from all over the world;
- Haj Medical Mission;
- Help doctors and other health care professionals;
- Health education of our community in terms of specific projects e.g. Govandi, Patna, etc;
- health education literature, articles, lectures, etc.;
- Screening programmes;
- Help other jamaats' medical committees with their own work and projects;
- Fulfill health needs of our communities world wide as and when they occur.

2) You have been the honorary Chairman of MAB since it was inaugurated in 1979. This by no means is a small achievement and God bless you for the many hours you have spent towards community service. However do not you think that the community needs to restrict the period of one's Chairmanship primarily to encourage others to come



MAB Chairman Dr. Walji talking to *Samachar* Editor, Munir Daya

forward to take such positions with out fear of being tied down to the post year in, year out?

2. I have been the honorary Chairman of MAB since it was inaugurated in 1979. In principle, you are right that the community needs to restrict the period of one's chairmanship primarily to encourage others to come forward to take such positions without fear of being tied down to the post year in year out.

However, our community is amazingly indifferent to this concept. It feels comfortable to let people do the work as long as they are generally satisfied with their performance.

Before every triennial conference of the World Federation I have attended (6 since 1979) I have expressed a wish to the office bearers and to the delegates that a new chairman of MAB be appointed for the reasons mentioned above.

People simply don't come forward and the President of the World Federation is left with no choice but to make do with "old tired-me". I have tried extremely hard to encourage fellow doctors and other health care professionals to take up the chairmanship but I have not succeeded. Let alone the chairmanship, I find great reluctance in the professionals in our community to work for the community. In the last few years, things have improved and I

now have a very good team but it was indeed a struggle to find people willing to work for the community.

What I am not prepared to do is to just follow the principle and withdraw from MAB when no adequate provision has been made to ensure that the work continues. I think It would be wrong to do so and the community needs to think very hard about introducing rules which it then can not fulfill. What is the point of restricting the chairmanship to one or two or three terms when the community is not prepared to come up with the workers/leaders when their time is up? To do so would be suicidal and self destructive.

3) Is the MAB subsidised by donors and the World Federation (WF) or is it self-financed?

3. MAB belongs to the World Federation. It is part of the WF. It is one of the boards of WF just like Islamic Education Board, Zaynabia Child Sponsorship Scheme, etc. The Chairman is appointed by the President of W F. It is funded by the WF.

4) Other than by way of arranging health care, in what ways does the MAB spread its assistance to individuals and organisations world-wide?

4. Besides what I have already mentioned, our work involves sending

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vital medical literature in terms of journals and books to other health care professionals, helping fellow human beings in distress (a lot of our efforts and funds are used to send medicines to the Iraqi refugees stranded in camps in Iran-Iraq border), advising our community in health related problems, producing health/medical literature pertaining to the specific needs of our communities and generally being available to the community with out any charge or breach of confidentiality. We also take it as our job to alert and educate the community of its health and medical problems e.g. HIV and AIDs.

5) Would it be of advantage to commercialise the running of MAB whereby the Board would be run by full-time paid professionals?

5. We already employ paid workers in our secretariat. However, the scope of our work and the work-load is increasing and we are considering employing paid health care workers.

6) Our health is our first wealth but yet we often leave ourselves vulnerable to diseases. To what extent does carelessness contribute to our ailments?

6. A lot. I could tell you of dozens of tragic cases which have ended up in disaster because of carelessness. There are cases of Aids, Cancers, and other serious diseases which have been ignored until it is too late. Patients are then come to us when it is too late.

7) In addition to prevention, what primary positive attitudes would you recommend as being conducive to good health?

7. In addition to prevention, I would advise our community to treat their bodies with as much respect as they give to other belongings like cars or televisions. If one's car needs attention, one would take it to a person who knows about cars and how to repair them. We would not advise the engineer what to do because he is supposed to be an expert. We would not interfere with what he is doing to car. In the same context, our community needs to develop some respect for the health care professionals. Instead of going to see quacks or changing doc-

tors frequently or telling the doctor what to do (this is very common in East Africa) the community should accept advice without questioning it or contradicting it.

8) According to the statistics availed by you, the number of overseas patients visiting UK in 1996 was 299. This indicates a drop from the 1995 figure of 416 patients. Is this downward trend attributable to any reason like more patients going to India for treatment because of lower costs or probably because of better health-care facilities overseas?

8. You are right. There is a drop in the number of patients coming to us for their treatment if you compare 1996 figures with 1995 figures. This downtrend may be due to more patients going to places like India, South Africa, Kenya, etc. where treatment is cheaper than UK and of good quality. We encourage this move. However, I don't think the drop is of any significance. We have seen this is variation in the past.

9) What is your opinion of medical facilities provided in India?

9. Medical facilities in India are good. Except in cases where some new treatments and technologies are required for treatment of cancer or IVF, we would like to encourage people to go to India. The CHB has organised a very good set up which would benefit all.

10) Considering the high costs involved for patients seeking medical treatment overseas, complemented by the fact that you receive most patients from East Africa (over 50% come from Tanzania), would it not be prudent and cost effective to create a local infra-structure to cater for medical treatment? This would mean investing in equipment, manpower and property but would provide our brothers in Africa with a cheaper alternative.

10. I agree wholeheartedly with you. We have been advocating this approach for some time. Perhaps it is tame to think along this line more seriously.

11) Do you receive patients who come from overseas for treatment of ailments which can easily be cured in their place of domicile? If

so, can you mention the type of treatments for which patients don't necessarily have to travel overseas for treatment?

11. Yes - indeed. The cases include appendectomy, cataract surgery, circumcision, male and female sterilisation, general body checks, simple gynaecological procedures, etc. These can easily and competently be carried out in the country of such patients' domicile. However, when the treatment is being paid for by the patient, we can not refuse them the facilities of MAB.

12) What are the main killer-diseases facing the community and any suggestions on how to protect ourselves from these?

12. Heart disease, Cancers, Accidents and HIV and AIDs. We should do all we can to prevent heart disease e.g. eat less fat and cholesterol, control our weight, stop smoking, take regular exercise, get conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes adequately treated and adopt less stressful life. It is better to be happy, healthy and have less money than to be unhappy, rich and die prematurely. I see too many premature deaths in men in our community who are striving extremely hard to become very rich fast.

The number of deaths in our community due to cancers (of lung, liver, breasts, ovary, bowel, etc) is rising fast. This is a fact borne by figures. Some of our doctors are doing research into the causes. It is felt that affluence leading to over indulgence in luxury foods like meat may be the cause of this unfortunate increase in cancer incidences in our community.

It is very sad that so many young people die in the prime of their life due to road traffic accidents. Many are seriously injured crippling them for the rest of their lives. All of us know of at least one person killed or seriously injured in an accident. The solution is obvious. Take care. Avoid haste. Make do without unnecessary risks.

What can I say about HIV and AIDS that has not been said. We were the first to raise our voice in the community about the impending calamity but people decided to ignore it. Some of

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our own doctors ignored the writing on the wall and denied that the community has this problem. The affluence in our community and with it, sexual promiscuity has added to the risk of catching HIV. Some of the practices of using used needles in injections and giving contaminated blood during blood transfusion has indeed added to the problems. The community must take urgent action to promote preventative measures. One way to stop the spread of AIDs is to introduce compulsory blood testing before marriage. This should also include thalassaemia testing to prevent children from being born with this very serious disease.

13) After being prescribed antidotes by a doctor for a particular disease, say a common Flu, patients often resort to self-medication when they contract the same virus again presuming they will be medically advised to take the same dosage. What is your opinion on self-medication?

13. Self medication is good provided there is adequate previous experience and not done for too long without consulting a doctor - say 2-3 days. This is so because most diseases in the human body are self limiting and the body's immune system is able to overcome it. The patient must consult a doctor if there is no improvement or if the condition deteriorates. It should restrict to simple medications like paracetamol or cough linctuses and NOT antibiotics, steroids, etc.

14) In your address at the Dar Medical Convention you said the problem of infertility can be adequately handled for almost all situations. What are the new methods to cure infertility and are all such methods allowable by Islamic Sharia?

14. The new methods include artificial insemination of husbands sperms, fertilization of the ovum outside the womb and then re-implanting it, fertilization of ovum whereby husband's sperms are specially cultured when he can not produce any, etc. As long as the gametes involve husband and wife and no outside donation of gametes is involved, the Sheria allows it.

15) With AIDS, previously we were

complacent believing that our youths upheld high moral values. Then cases cropped up and we had to accept that we are equally vulnerable. Based on your evaluation at the Medical Convention, the community could be having between 0.5% to 1% carriers world-wide. The Community's attitude towards AIDS is now geared towards creating awareness but the element of 'urgency' is missing. Don't you think we need to be more pragmatic and down-to-earth in our approach even if this means causing alarm?

15. I do. The community has to recognise its needs and priorities. When we first talked about this problem, there was an uproar. We were accused of creating panic and asked to tone down our message. I hope it is not too late.

16) Talking of a pragmatic fight against contracting the disease, what are the best measures? What is your view of compulsory screening before marriage and of sex education to our adolescents?

16. I think we have no choice but to introduce these measures.

17) HIV carriers are often blamed for their misdemeanours. However not all carriers contract it through illicit sex. Do you have a percentage of how many carriers carry the virus through no fault of theirs?

17. You are of course right. Not all HIV carriers have become infected due to illicit sex. Many have been infected by being given infected blood or receiving injection by a dirty needle.

18) It is said that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is". Irrational or negative thinking often leaves one more vulnerable to diseases thereby accentuating the need for Counseling. To what extent is Counseling undertaken for patients being treated through the MAB? Considering the fact that many of the sick need spiritual healing, do we involve Alims in such Counseling?

18. Not much formally. You are right. Counseling is very important. It can indeed affect the outcome of treatments. Informal counseling of course goes on all the time by our doctors and volunteers. However we must think of

providing formal counseling and involve our alims.

19) Many patients seek particular dates, doctors or hospitals following an Istikhara thereby leading to inconveniences in arrangements. What is your view with regard to the Istikhara-medical connection?

19. This is a very difficult area to comment on. I do not accept that istekhara should be used to rule our life the way some people in our community are using it. They actually use istekhara to decide whether to do istekhara or not.

Surely this is not right and can not happen in the twentieth century. If and when the decision is so much in balance that one simply can not decide, perhaps istekhara can be justified. Surely it is common sense that Allah (SWT) does not want us to conduct our life on in this manner. Surely He wants us to use our intellect.

20) In what way do you publicise the activities of the MAB by way of literature, videos, Internet? You may also wish to mention on what progress has been made to update the community doctors' directory.

20. Over the years, we have tried to publicise our activities as much as possible. We feel we are fairly well known in our communities in the world. However, we need to do more. Our reports are circulated in WF's executive council meetings and in triennial meetings. We are on the Internet on the WF page (address is <http://www.dircon.co.uk/worldfed/>). Our 3rd edition of the directory of health care professionals in our community is going to be issued soon.

21) Finally can you outline the main long-term objectives of MAB?

21. My visit to Dar es salaam has been fruitful. At the Medical Convention my contribution was to introduce difficult health issues affecting our communities in Africa and making people think of them very seriously. At least my visit has started people talking about our problems openly. We have finally broken the ice. It is time to discuss our problems openly without fear or pretense and then TAKE ACTION. We need to listen to the professionals who know the problems of our communities. Otherwise we are doomed.

The history of Azadari

Aza-e-Hussain does not only mean shedding a few tears, having *matams* and processions and being complacent therefrom

by Bashir Rahim, London

When the prisoners from Kerbala were finally freed by Yezid, they asked for an opportunity to have rites of remembrance in Damascus. A house was made available to them and aza-e-Hussain went on for over a week. Just as Hadhrat Musa Kalimullah had been raised in the palace of the enemy of Allah, Firaun, Bibi Zainab laid the foundation of aza-e-Hussain in the very capital of his murderer!

On their return to Madina, Bibi Zainab took over the leadership of aza-e-Hussain in the city of the Holy Prophet. This aroused such strong emotions in the people and such revulsion against the oppressor that Amr ibne Said ibne al-Aas wrote to Yezid to have Bibi Zainab exiled from Madina. This was done in the beginning of 62 A.H. Bibi Zainab died shortly afterwards.

Both the 4th and 5th Imams greatly encouraged aza-e-Hussain. In their times aza-e-Hussain had to be performed in utmost secrecy as the regime was opposed to any remembrance of Kerbala. The poets who composed elegies and the devout Shias who attended the gatherings at which these elegies were recited did so at the risk of their lives.

Gradually, the institution of ziyarah came into being. People would visit the graves of the martyrs and there perform aza-e-Hussain. Our Imams wrote for them ziyaraha to be recited. One of these ziyaraha is recited today by us and is known as *Ziyarat-e-Waritha*.

When we examine *Ziyarat-e-Waritha*, we can see not only a testimony of the greatness of Imam Hussain and the moving sentiments describing his sacrifice for the cause of Allah, but also a solemn pledge and a commitment by the reciter:

"And I make Allah, His angels, His prophets, and His messengers, witnesses to the fact that I believe in

Imam Hussain and in my return to Allah. I also believe in the laws of Allah and in the consequences of human actions. I have subordinated the desires of my heart to his (Imam Hussain's) heart and I sincerely submit to him and promise to follow (his commands)"

Clearly, this undertaking was never meant by our Imams to be an empty ritual. Recitation of *Ziyarat-e-Waritha* is a commitment to Imam Hussain's cause made in the presence of Allah and the angels and the prophets and the messengers and in full awareness of the final accountability of human action. One must always reflect upon the seriousness and solemnity of this pledge.

Until the time of *ghaibat-e-kubra*, we find that our Imams always encouraged aza-e-Hussain. They saw in aza-e-Hussain not only a demonstration of grief for Imam Hussain and the martyrs of Kerbala but also a renewal of one's commitment to Allah and His laws as expounded in the Holy Qur'an and the ahadeeth.

We have records of the sayings of the representatives (Naibs) during *ghaibat-e-Sughra* explaining and encouraging aza-e-Hussain. From 329 AH onwards, the fuqaha and the 'ulemas took it upon themselves to perpetuate the message of Kerbala.

Shaykh Ibne Babawayh-al-Qummi better known as Shaykh as-Suduq who died in 381 AH was the first scholar to have introduced prose as medium of conveying the message of Imam Hussain. He would sit on a pulpit and speak extempore while many of his students sat by the side of the pulpit and recorded the speech. His speeches have been preserved and to this day are known as the Amali (dictations) of Shaykh Suduq.

Public demonstration of grief first occurred in 351 A.H. On the 10th of

Muharram, there was a spontaneous procession in the street of Baghdad and thousands of men, women and children came out chanting "Ya Hussain! Ya Hussain!" beating their chests and reciting elegies.

In the same year, a similar procession took place in Egypt. The regime tried its best to stem the tide of aza-e-Hussain but failed. Very soon aza-e-Hussain became an institution with deep roots in the hearts of Muslims. Majlis evolved into an institution for *amr bil ma'ruf* and *nahya anal munkar* as well as a reminder of the tragedy in Kerbala.

As Islam spread, different cultures adopted different modes of aza-e-Hussain. Taimur Lang introduced the institution of tabut and alam in India. As Islam spread southwards on the sub-Continent, the form underwent changes to take into account local cultural influences so as to portray the message of Kerbala in the medium best understood by the local people, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

By the beginning of the 19th Century, there was not a corner of the world, from Spain to Indo-China, which did not have some form of demonstration on the 10th of Muharram. The form varied from country to country. In Iran, the most popular form has been the holding of passion plays as a medium to transmit the message of Kerbala in addition to majalis from the minabir.

In India, the Ashura processions became part of the Indian Muslim culture. Even the Hindus participated in these processions. The Maharajah of Gwalior was always seen walking behind the 'alam of Hadhrat Abbas barefooted and without any insignia of his exalted office. Marthiyas and majalis were such strong influences on the

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Muslim population that they helped strengthen not only their Islamic beliefs but also their political resolve.

History reports that even Gandhi on his famous salt march to protest against the oppression of the British Raj took 72 people with him in emulation of Imam Hussain protest against Yezid's oppression.

Importance of Aza

The following excerpt from the last will and testament of the Late Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumayni (A.R.) is most touching and relevant:

"The memory of this great epic event (Ashura) must be kept alive. Remember, the cries of damnation and all the curses that are rightfully raised against the cruelty of the Bani Umayyayah caliphs towards the Holy Imams, are reflected in the heroic protests against cruel despots by the nations through the centuries. It is the perpetuation of such protests that shatter oppression and cruelty. It is necessary that the crimes of the tyrants in each age and era be indicated in the cries of lamentation and in the recitals of elegies held for the Holy Imams"

Where ever the Shias have gone they have taken with them the cultural forms of aza-e-Hussain as practised in their country of origin. Today, aza-e-Hussain can be seen around the world.

Aza-e-Hussain is an important institution and we have to ensure that it is kept alive so as to cultivate and nurture Islamic conscience in each one of us and that our children and their descendants remain committed to the cause of Imam Hussain.

Aza at personal level

We must never lose sight of the fact that while the form of aza-e-Hussain may reflect the local indigenous culture, the essence of aza-e-Hussain must always be remembrance of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and our re-dedication to his cause.

There is always the danger that if the form appears to be incongruent to the

local norms and consequently incomprehensible to the young generation or to the indigenous population upon whom we wish to impress the message of Kerbala, the substance might gradually lose its significance. The fabric of the substance invariably depends upon the acceptability of the form.

Throughout history the form of aza-e-Hussain has always undergone changes to accommodate local norms. It is for us, therefore, to seriously re-evaluate the form in order to ensure that we can pass on to our children the substance of aza-e-Hussain in its pristine state and also make aza-e-Hussain an irresistible instrument of tableegh!

We are duty bound to Allah and His Prophet to ensure that our children grow up to accept aza-e-Hussain NOT as a ritualistic activity nor as means for atonement, but as a serious commitment to the basic values of Islam."

Dr. Liyakat Takim in his speech in Toronto on the occasion of the last Hussain Day made this very profound statement: "The message of Imam Hussain can only be properly comprehended when we bear in mind the Qur'anic principle of tawheed which demands our undivided commitment to Allah only."

I accept that not all of us can suddenly make or honour such a commitment. But supposing on the day of 'Ashura, after performing our a'amaals or when the Ziyarah is recited after the aza, each one of us promises, in the name of Hussain ibne Ali, to give up one such activity as is contrary to the doctrines of Islam what a strong community we would be and what an excellent legacy we would leave for our children !

Aza and tableegh

It is our duty to deliver Imam Hussain's message to the indigenous population of the country we live in. We can succeed in this only if we ourselves appear to be true followers of Imam in all our interaction with the community at large. We must reflect the maximum integrity, Islamic values and our sincere commitment to Imam's

.....The history of Azadari

cause. We can not possibly be making the commitment enshrined in *Ziyarat-e-Waritha* without the least intention of honouring that commitment.

Processions are of course the institution effectively used in the countries of the East and in Africa. We have to convince ourselves that this institution can be equally effective in the West. If not, we must explore other means of taking Imam's message to the people. We have to examine such activities as:

1. blood donation through Hussaini Blood Banks;
2. distribution of food to the needy;
3. maximum usage of media to explain the event and the fact the Holy Imam died to save the basic values cherished by all communities;
4. publication and distribution of leaflets;
5. distribution of cold drinks in schools and colleges;
6. visiting the patients in hospitals thereby carrying the message of Hussain to their families too.

All these suggestions are based on the institution of the public "sabeels" which we still have in the East and in Africa. While mourning is important, perhaps we should limit that within the confines of our Imambargahs, and demonstrate the true spirit of Imam Hussain's generosity when he ordered Hadhrat Abbas to provide water to Hur and his army. Perhaps we too may see a large number moving towards Islam and Imam Hussain.

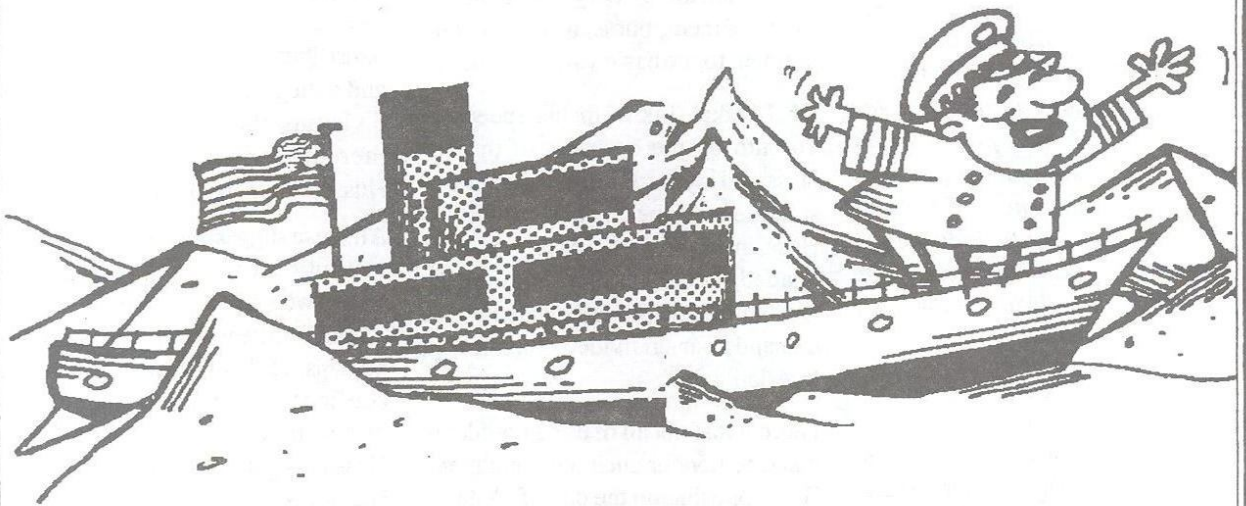
Zakiri and presentation of history --- avoiding exaggeration

I seek, with utmost respect, to offer word of caution to all my zakir colleagues.

Exaggeration can only discredit us and the cause of Imam Hussain. The historical accounts must be adhered to although at times, in our anxiety to arouse emotion, we resort to exaggeration. We should have the recorded history as our guide and reason and logic as our limitations as do most of our 'ulema and fuqaha.

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Abu Mikhnaf was the earliest historian who took testimonies from eye witnesses and compiled his maqal. There is in existence today an book in Arabic called Maqal Abi Mikhnaf. It is doubtful whether this is the original text. However we do have the excerpts quoted by Tabari and other historians. We zakireen have relied on various sources principally Allamah Majlisi's Biharul Anwar and others. Several very good books in English exist on this subject. Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi is the compiler of a book containing several very interesting articles relating to the history of the tragedy of Kerbala. Then there is Shaykh Mufid (a.r.)'s al Irshad.

Extrapolations of certain inferences from known facts are not, in my opinion or in the opinion of the 'ulema, objectionable. For example description of natural human emotions, though not chronicled in vivid detail may be extrapolated if the description is within the bounds of reason and does not detract from the character of the personalities involved.

Some of the maqaatil can be faulted in respect of certain statements. For example Tabari records that the age of Imam Zain-ul-'abideen (A.S.) was questioned at Kufa and he was examined to determine whether he had attained buloogh. (See the History of al Tabari, Vol. XIX page 166). Shaykh Mufid gives the fourth Imam's age at the time as 23 years. It is well known the Imam was married and had a son.

Many such contradictions exist in the maqaatil but this does not mean that we have to categorically reject all accounts. Detailed events, and often the names of those involved, are very difficult to record accurately even by an honest and meticulous chronicler recording contemporaneously as the events are taking place. Abu Mikhnaf began to compile his history, mostly through eye witness accounts at least twenty five years after the tragedy. It is necessary for us to be eclectic for so long as we remain within the confines of reason. To be eclectic we must know what historical material is available and where to find it.

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It is not within the scope of this article to deal with all the historical sources but I refer the reader to S.H.M. Jafri's the *Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam*, Chapter 7. I also refer any reader interested in the subject to the following additional works:

1. The volume of Tabari referred to above.
2. Al-Irshad by Shaykh Mufid.
3. The article by Imam Hussain by Veccia Vaghliers in the Encyclopaedia of Islam in which is based mostly Balaadhuri's account.

Objectives

We have to remember that the 'ashra-e-Muharram is a very emotional period and this emotion

has to be exploited by the ahle minabir to convey the message of Kerbala, to awaken a hatred against all that Yezid stood for and to rekindle a commitment to Islam as preached by the Ahlul Bayt and for which Imam Hussain laid down his life.

We can not perpetuate the illusion that aza-e-Hussain means no more than a few tears, matam and processions. These are the means and not the end. They are important only if they lead each of us towards becoming better Shias than we were in preceding years.

If we lose sight of the objectives we may find ourselves answerable for forgetting and holding to ridicule the cause for which our Imam sacrificed so much! Imam Hussain himself advised a muslim who claimed to be a Shia to fear Allah and not to make a false claim lest on the Day of Judgement he is raised with the liars. "Our Shia," the Imam added, "is the one whose heart is pure of malice, deception and corruption. His words and deeds are only for the pleasure of Allah."

When bidding farewell to Muharram and Safar we must pose this question to ourselves in all seriousness. Did we make a commitment to Imam Hussain's objectives or are we continuing complacently in our current state, paying what can best be

described as lip service to his martyrdom with demonstrative mourning only ?

While I pray that we begin, as we must, to understand the philosophy of aza-e-Hussain and make a serious commitment to the objectives of the King of Martyrs, I sincerely hope that there never comes a day when majaanis are replaced by clinical lectures devoid of all emotion !

Reason when supported by emotion has a more enduring effect, and it is for this very end that as a recompense of the rationality of the message of the Holy Prophet he is told by Allah to ask for no recompense save the love of Ahlul Bayt. Love, while being an emotional force, becomes hypocrisy if one fails to identify and follow the wishes of the loved one.

May all our Muharrams be true demonstration of our love for, and a confluence of emotion, reason and commitment to, Imam Hussain.

References:

1. *Kitab al-Irshad by Shaykh al Mufid*
2. *The History of Tabari, the English translation, Vol. XIX*
3. *The Rising of al-Husayn by Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Deen*
4. *Imam Husayn, the Saviour of Islam by Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi*
5. *Al-Serat the Imam Husayn Conference Number, published by the Muhammadi Trust, July 1984.*
6. *The origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam, by S.H.M. Jafri*
7. *Al-Tawhid, Vol. II No.1, the Editorial.*
8. *Al Tawhid, Vol. XIII, No. 3, Pages 41 to 74, reproducing the article by Martyr Murtadha Mutaharri entitled "Ashura : History and Popular Legend"*
9. *The History of Azadari published by Peermahomed Trust*
10. *Jafferi News.*

THALASSAEMIA the blood disorder

Thalassaemia is a blood disorder also known as Cooley's Anaemia or Mediterranean Anaemia. It is important to understand the structure and function of the blood in our body before Thalassaemia can be understood.

Blood

Blood is pumped round by the heart. It is made up by a yellow liquid called plasma and 3 types of cells - white cells, platelets and red cells.

The white cells defend the body against infections. The platelets stop blood loss when the body is cut. The red cells carry oxygen from the lungs to the body tissues. They are full of red pigment called haemoglobin. There are many more red cells than white cells in our blood.

Anaemia

If there are too few red cells or if there is too little haemoglobin in them, then the diagnosis of anaemia is made. It simply means shortage of blood. If the anaemia is mild it does no harm and may not even be noticeable.

The commonest form of anaemia is *Iron deficiency anaemia* which is due to lack of Iron in one's diet. It can be cured by taking Iron medication.

Thalassaemia

Thalassaemia is quite different. It is an inherited disorder and cannot be cured by taking medicines. The red cells of a Thalassaemia sufferer are smaller so the amount of haemoglobin carried is less thereby resulting in less oxygen being carried to the body.

How is Thalassaemia Passed on

Every characteristic of the body is controlled by 'genes' which are present in every cell. There are always 2 kinds of genes - one passed from the mother and the other from the father. Among many other genes there are two genes present to control how

haemoglobin is made in the red blood cells.

'Normal' people have two normal genes for haemoglobin from each parent. Those who have one normal gene from one parent and one altered or abnormal gene from the other parent are healthy because one gene is working well. They are said to be healthy carriers of Beta-Thalassaemia Trait. Since genes are inherited from each parent, at least one parent must be a carrier. People with Beta-Thalassaemia Major have two altered genes from haemoglobin, one inherited from each parent, so both their parents must be carriers.

When both parents are normal - they cannot possibly pass on Thalassaemia Trait or Thalassaemia Major to their children. When one parent has Thalassaemia Trait and one is 'normal' - 50% of children will be Thalassaemia carriers.

When both parents are Beta Thalassaemia carriers - they are a 'couple at risk' - 25% of children will be normal, 50% will be Beta-Thalassaemia carriers and 25% will have Thalassaemia Major. It is possible to test the foetus during pregnancy to see if it has Thalassaemia Major.

Thalassaemia Major

In Thalassaemia Major a child is quite ill and anaemic. Its haemoglobin drops to less than 50% thus making the child look quite pale. Suffering children often have a big spleen. They need regular blood transfusion - often a unit of blood every month.

If Thalassaemia Major is not treated, the child stops growing and becomes weaker and weaker. The spleen gets larger and larger as a result of which the stomach gets big. The cheek bones and bones of the forehead also begin to bulge and death occurs if no treatment is given.

Treatment of Thalassaemia Major

1. Blood transfusion usually every four weeks.
2. Surgical removal of spleen.
3. Daily injection of drug called *Desferal*.

The ultimate cure for Thalassaemia Major is a bone marrow transplant. It involves a brother or sister donating his or her bone marrow. The whole procedure is extremely painful, dangerous and expensive to the sum of over £50,000.

How does Thalassaemia affect our Community?

When the Medical Advisory Board (MAB) in Birmingham recently screened 390 people in three separate jamaats in the UK the number of people found to be Beta-Thalassaemia carriers were 29.

These results suggest that over 7 out of 100 people in our community are Thalassaemia trait carriers. If 2 carriers marry, their children will have a 25% chance of producing children with Thalassaemia Major. This would be a major disaster for them as well as for the affected child.

Recently the Medical Advisory Board has received several children (patients) from overseas for treatment of Thalassaemia Major. Many have died. **It is therefore very important to avoid marriage between two Thalassaemia carriers.**

Thalassaemia status can only be ascertained by a blood test. It is therefore recommended that all intending brides and grooms should undergo a Thalassaemia blood test before getting married. It is also recommended that Thalassaemia screening be carried out throughout our community.

Since the increase of HIV and AIDS is also increasing in our community,

(continued on page 49)

(.....from page 48)

they might as well have an Aids test too after full counselling.

Since the likelihood of Thalassaemia occurring in an extended family is higher than average, cousin marriages should also be avoided.

The following leaflets are available free from the Medical Advisory Board secretariat in Birmingham:-

1. Birmingham Sickle Cell & Thalassaemia Centre Information Booklet.
2. You could be a carrier of Thalassaemia
3. Thalassaemia - English, Gujarati, Hindi & Urdu.
4. All you need to know about Beta-Thalassaemia Trait - English, Gujarati, Hindi & Urdu.
5. What is Thalassaemia?
6. Alpha Thalassaemia
7. Tied for Life because of Thalassaemia
8. Bone Marrow Transplantation for Thalassaemia
9. Living and Coping with Thalassaemia
10. Fathering Babies
11. Thalassaemics Adolescence and Hormones
12. Gene Therapy for Thalassaemia
13. Cardiac Complications
14. Bone Marrow Transplantation Fetal Blood
15. Clinical Trials of Deferiprone (L1)
16. UK Thalassaemia Register
17. Thalassaemia & Fears
18. Beta Thalassaemia Intermedia
19. Thalassaemia Historical Background
20. Having Babies
21. Beta Thalassaemia
22. Haemoglobin H Disease

Videos available on loan:-

- 1) Blood Ties - English
- 2) Why you need to know about Thalassaemia - English & Gujarati

For more information please contact the Medical Advisory Board, World Federation of KSIMC, 106/108 Anderton Park Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9DS. United Kingdom.
Tel: 0121 449 2788
Fax: 0121 449 5988
e-Mail: mab@dircon.co.uk.

In wake of a world-wide decline in health we need to restrict smoking in Community public areas

One would tend to think that with all the medical advances that we have seen and with all the research that is being done by medical scientists to analyse diseases and seek cures, we would soon be seeing less cancer, less heart diseases and less diabetes world-wide. But this is not the case now and neither will it be in the years to come.

A new report by the World Health Organization predicts the number of cancer cases will double in most countries over the next 25 years. The same has also been forecasted for diabetes. According to WHO, the solution to this global problem is actually quite low-tech. Their group report doctor tells you, "Don't smoke. Take a healthy diet rich in vegetables and fruits. Don't become obese. Carry out physical exercise,"

Smoking is mentioned first because the smoking habit is spreading world-wide despite the many warnings that have been issued and despite the statutory warnings on packets indicating that smoking is hazardous to health. Smoking rates are reported to have gone down in the United States but that's not true for the rest of the world where American tobacco companies have exported the problem. According to WHO statistics, about 60 percent of 18-year-olds in France smoke and the situation is not very different in Frankfurt and many other places.

The situation in Eastern Europe is reported as being even worse and the result is that they have reached levels of lung cancer rates that are the highest ever reported in the history of man. In China as in Canada, the government has recognized and identified smoking as being a big problem and legislation is gradually being passed to ban smoking in public places. WHO hopes this and similar steps will lead to less cancer and heart diseases and, eventually, better global health.

At Community level we ought to also think of restricting smoking in public areas like mosques, madressas, schools, libraries and sports complexes. Well don't we all know that secondary smoke can also kill and what about the many smokers who will unduly grumble? Well, all we have to tell them is that we care about them and hence the smoke zone restrictions!

.....you can stop smoking by using the new nicotrol inhaler

PEOPLE trying to quit smoking, who want an alternative to nicotine patches and chewing gum, could use an inhalable alternative that uses typical smoker's behaviour.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved the nicotrol inhaler, a nicotine inhalation system for prescription use. The person trying to quit smoking, gets the nicotine replacement therapy by inhaling through a cartridge placed in a mouthpiece.

Advanced Therapeutic Products Inc., which developed the device, claims that it is the first form of nicotine replacement therapy to help control a smoker's craving for cigarettes, but also provide one of the behavioural patterns that goes with smoking, the hand-to-mouth ritual.

THE ULTIMATE TEST

The test for whether we control something, or it controls us, is this

Can YOU stop?

Discouraging cousin marriages

Our Holy Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (S.A.W.W) has said, ".....don't get married to a very close relative because the offspring of such marriage will be weak. Defects out of such marriages will not be rectified until three generations of marriages of non-relatives". (Nafhaatun Muhammadia by Muhammad Jawad Maghniya - Pg. 156).

One of our Mujtahedeen, Ayatollah Syed Naasir Makarim Shirazi has studied this subject in detail and has recommended that cousin marriages should indeed be avoided (Falsafa-e-Ehkaam by Ayatollah Nasir Makarim Shirazi: Pg. 119-122). He says that according to various narrations of our Aimmah, cousin marriages should be avoided. When we asked Agha directly, he wrote to us saying ".....such marriages have been discouraged in some of the traditions (ahaadiths)".

Cousin marriages are also known as consanguineous marriages. The practice of such marriages is very old indeed and has cultural and religious ties too. In some religions like Islam it is allowable whereas in Hinduism, it is forbidden.

Cousin marriages are common in our community. In the past they were even more common. Reasons given include:-

- a) Better to marry in a family we know so that the bride/groom can adjust easily to our lifestyle.
- b) Better marry within the family so that our 'wealth' does not go out.
- c) Better marry within the family because we are better or superior than others.
- d) Better marry within the family so that should disputes arise, they can be settled easily, hence reducing the likelihood of divorce.
- e) If a girl or a boy has physical or mental defects, then he or she is married off within the family where force can be applied thereby also inadvertently increasing the chance of defective children.
- f) Agreements made by parents who are related or are good friends.

g) Our Aimmah have done so.

Some of the reasons of such marriages given above may be plausible like the boys' and girls' knowledge of each other's cultures but surely this can be achieved without marrying within a family. Other reasons given are rather selfish. It is indeed immoral to pursue such marriages at a risk to the lives of offsprings simply to preserve one's wealth or vanity. Our Aimmah have married within the family (only two of them) but have discouraged them. They were pure (*Aayat-e-tatheer*). Are we?

Medical research has shown that such marriages should be avoided because children born from such marriages are adversely affected. They have an increased chance of being physically or mentally retarded or to be afflicted by defects like blindness, deafness etc.

Some details are outlined:

- 1) Professor Sarah Bunday of Birmingham University has done an in-depth study of 5,000 cousin marriages and has found that children born from cousin marriages are more likely to have some defects - more so compared to non-cousin marriages. The risks are highest in first cousins i.e. to marry one's father's, mother's, brother's or sister's children (A Five Year Prospective Study of the health of children in different Ethnic Groups with particular reference to the effect of Inbreeding by Prof. Sarah Bunday).
- 2) The MAB has abstracts of 19 published research papers demonstrating increased incidence of birth defects in children born out of cousin marriages.
- 3) A study about a decade ago of British Pakistanis has shown an increasing trend of cousin marriages i.e. 33% in Pakistan but 55% in Yorkshire! Journal of Medical Genetics, 1988.
- 4) Incidence of Cancer and birth defects in children born in cousin marriages have been found significantly higher. (British Journal of Cancer - 1995). Archives of Diseases in Childhood 1994; Ciba Foundation Bulletin

No. 29 Pg. 11.

5) In Lebanon, such marriages are discouraged. It is now a legal requirement for couples to be tested for hereditary disorders like thalassaemia, sickle cell disease, asthma, eczema haemophilia, epilepsy, some specific cancers etc. before they can marry. (The Lancet, Vol. 344, November 19, 1994)

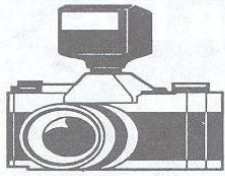
6) Consanguineous marriages can increase the risk of inherited diseases in offspring. Prenatal mortality is high among the British Pakistani population largely due to an increased incidence of congenital malformation. Much of this is associated with parental consanguinity. There is also a considerable increase in congenital disorders and handicapping diseases resulting from parental consanguinity. (Social and genetic implications of customary consanguineous marriages among British Pakistanis. Galton Institute. Occasional papers. Second Series. March 1992).

It is therefore very important to avoid cousin marriages. However, it is not *haram* and such marriages cannot be stopped by force but it is vital that our community is made aware of dangers of such marriages.

The incidence of Thalassaemia is very high in our community (see article on Thalassaemia). The likelihood of the couple (both - the girl and boy) to be Thalassaemia carriers is high if they are cousins and such marriages can lead to the offsprings suffering from Thalassaemia Major which would be a disaster for the child and the parents.

We would therefore recommend to avoid Cousin Marriages. If this cannot be avoided, ensure that (a) there is no family history of inherited diseases like thalassaemia, sickle cell disease, asthma, eczema haemophilia, epilepsy, some specific cancers etc. in either the boy or the girl. (b) the couple undergo blood tests and counseling.

If there is a family history of inheritable disease in both of them or if the blood tests are positive, such marriages must be stopped.



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Standing from left: Hussein Ladha, Manzoor Kanani, Aziz Kanani, Mustafa Sheriff and Mussa Haji.

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Cost of honesty in the name of democracy

by Anon

The Extra-ordinary Conference of June, 1997 in U.K. gave us a cause to probe our own conscience and degrees of conviction in Islamic teachings - as a community. For gathered at the Conference were over 100 delegates representing the bulk of the World community.

The great majority voted for what may appear to be simply an amendment to the Constitution. But there was more to it and around it. The amendment was a removal of the restriction placed against the holder of the Presidency becoming eligible for a third consecutive term, the amendment not being like any other amendment in that:

- a) The restriction is common among many organisations and states wide across the world for the reasons behind it are universally the same and well known.
- b) The restriction was adopted unanimously and emphatically in 1990 by W.F.
- c) Many of the members who voted for the removal of the restriction have and will continue to have the same restriction in their own constitution.

And yet, for the first time in the history of the World Federation there was a record attendance, from all corners of the world for the short session of three hours, to achieve the satisfaction of doing a favour by way of voting the restriction out - all in the name of democracy ostensibly and at the cost of honesty!

No one among those who came to do the favour had the moral courage because they couldn't in the circumstances stand up and point out the anomalies like the denial of a secret ballot or not honouring the right to speak up on a point of order.

Overall, this was a test for all the delegates and the majority of them failed in it against their own soul in upholding what was just or right or fair, and what an easy test when neither life or limb was at stake! They acted as the leaders of the Community who claim to have the obligation of spreading the message from the martyrdom of Imam Husain A.S.

In this context, let's end by quoting the Preamble to the very Constitution which was tampered in a manner that made a mockery of the Preamble.

"We the Organisations comprising of the followers of the Shia Ithna-asheri Faith

RECOGNISING THAT all efforts to serve the believers in particular and humanity in general should be for the sake of none but Allah;

RECOGNISING THAT believers are guardians of one another, they enjoin good and forbid evil;

RECOGNISING THAT commandment of Allah is to establish justice on earth, therefore, a Muslim society acts as an instrument to ensure that His commandment is fulfilled; and

RECOGNISING THAT the affairs of a Muslim society are conducted by consultations,

Do ordain and establish this constitution."

(.....from page 67)

conversation to avoid putting themselves in any sin or situation of corrupt conduct. It is highly recommended that in the beginning of such gatherings a knowledgeable person, with sound reputation and Islamic behavior, should undertake to explain to and exhort them about the Islamic teachings connected with such occasions.

Federation Samachar

A.2: If the topic is within the framework of legitimate subject for discussion and exchange of ideas for young men and women, from the Shari`i point of view, and if the observance is at the level explained in Answer 1, then there is no objection.

A.3: With the observance of the conditions already stated there is no objection.

A.4: Their knowing each other is attainable through the activities mentioned in the other questions.

I am praying for an increase in the felicity to carry out the teachings of Islam for all of you. God's blessings and peace be on you all.

Signed and sealed
Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani
14 Dhul-Hijja, 1416 (May 3, 1996)

After a father's death.....

.....some questions and answers from Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

from Shagufta Damji, Toronto

I write this in loving memory of Hassanali Suleman Daya Walji, my dear departed father who I loved from the bottom of my heart.

Though tears in my eyes do not glisten,
and my face may not always seem sad,
there is never a night or morning,
that I don't think of you, my dear father.
Many of the thoughts that I give to you,
come and go as the long hours go by,
thinking of the things we used to say
and do together, you and I.

Sometimes they make me smile,
sometimes they make me cry,
and yet they are all precious to me,
the memories as they pass by.

In my heart you are always here,
for I love and miss you as each day passes.

May Allah (SWT) rest your soul in eternal peace.

When my father passed away nearly two years ago, I began to think a lot about death. I had many questions in my mind, which I felt had to be answered before I could really be at peace about the whole transition from life to death. Following are some of the questions which I had, the answers to which were given to me by the Toronto Jamaat's resident aalim, Sayyid Muhammed Rizvi.

Damji: It is generally believed that after the death of a person, he/she feels some pain if we touch the body. Is this true?

Rizvi: The person does not feel any physical pain as such, since the body is no longer alive. It is the soul that feels pain if the body is handled disrespectfully. This "pain" can be described as the way one feels when one sees one's child being hurt by someone else. Therefore, it is very important to handle the body with great respect after death.

Damji: After death, can a person donate his or her organs to

a patient for medical research?

Rizvi: You can donate some of your organs (whether minor or major) after death, provided you have expressed your intention clearly in your will. Skin grafting and donating blood would be considered donation of a minor organ whilst kidneys would be classified as a major organ.

Damji: What is the effect on the dead person if the body is kept in the mortuary or if a post-mortem is carried out?

Rizvi: The term 'respect' comes into play again. The body should not be kept in the mortuary unnecessarily. If a post-mortem is absolutely necessary, then it may be performed.

Damji: After death, we normally close the eyelids and mouth of the deceased and straighten the hands and legs. We also ensure that the body is facing the *Qibla* until ghusl is performed. Is this part of our religious obligation or is it a tradition?

Rizvi: Soon after a person dies, all believers are either required or strongly urged to do the following:

- Close the eyelids of the dead person.
- Close the mouth of the dead person.
- Tie the two jaws so that the mouth does not open.
- Straighten his/her arms and place them on the two sides of his body.
- Straighten his/her legs.
- Cover the dead body.
- Switch on the light in the room where the dead body is kept.
- Arrange the funeral as soon as possible.
- Inform the mu'umeen to attend the funeral.

Damji: Before burial, it is normal for family and close friends to view the deceased. What are the rules governing the viewing of the body e.g. *Mahram* and *Na-mahram*?

Rizvi: The same rules that apply during 'life' also apply in 'death'. Only the face should be kept open, therefore if a *na-mahram* views the body, he or she should do so without any bad intentions.

Damji: What is the position regarding burial of a person who dies in a foreign country where there are no family members of the deceased. Our community is often divided in such cases, since family members prefer that all burial ceremonies be attended by the kith and kin of the deceased. This naturally delays burial by a few days. Also, in some places like Toronto, burials devastated by the loss of their loved one. What should be done to alleviate this grief, with

(continued on page 54)

After a father's death.....

(.....from page 53)

are not possible during weekends due to public cemetery restrictions thereby causing delays.

Rizvi: The funeral should be arranged as soon as possible. However, it is a matter of personal choice whether the body should be brought back to the country of residence, so that the next of kin may attend the funeral. If the deceased has specified the place of burial, in his or her 'Wasiat', then this should take precedence over personal preferences. With regard to burials being delayed over the weekend due to the cemetery being closed, unfortunately, there is no other option until we have alternative arrangements.

Damji: After the death of my father in Dar es Salaam, I discovered that the site of the grave was dug approximately only 4 feet, whereas the graves in Toronto are dug much deeper. Are there any rules governing the depth of the grave?

Rizvi: There are no specific rules, however the height of the person to the shoulders is usually considered as a sufficient depth.

Damji: Upon my father's death, his desire to be buried in the grave of his late mother was fulfilled. I was also informed that in some places, due to a shortage of burial sites, the graves are re-used for future burials after many years. What are the rules governing this?

Rizvi: The grave can be re-used and 40 years is the general period considered for a body to decompose.

Damji: I understand that after the burial of a person, he/she undergoes various tests which include questions on the names of

the Panjatan, names of the Imams etc. Therefore, at the time of death, we prepare the person by reciting some duas. What specific duas are recommended?

Rizvi: At the time of death it is recommended to say by yourself or repeat after someone else, the declaration of faith and statement of *Faraj*.

The declaration of faith is that in which you confirm your belief in Allah (SWT), Prophet Muhammed (s.a.w), the twelve Imams (a.s.), the holy Qur'an and the day of Judgement. The translation of the dua is as follows:

I have accepted Allah (SWT) as the Lord, Muhammad (s.a.w) as the Prophet, Islam as the Religion, the Quran as the Book of God, the Kabah as the Qiblah.

And I accept 'Ali as the waliu of Allah and my Imam; and Hasan, Husayn, 'Ali inb Husayn, Muhammad ibn Ali, , Ja'far ibn Muhammad, Musa ibn Ja'far, Ali ibn Musa, Muhammad ibn Ali, Ali ibn Muhammad, Hasan ibn Ali and al-Hujjat ibn al-Hasan (a.s.) as Imams, leaders and guides - I declare my love for them and declare my disassociation with their enemies.

And I believe that surely the Hour of Doom will come in which there is no doubt, and that Allah (SWT) will resurrect all those who are in their graves. And I believe that the reckoning of our deeds is the truth; the Paradise is the truth and that the Hell is the truth.

The translation of the statement of *Faraj* is as follows:

*There is no God but Allah, the Gentle, the kind;
there is no God but Allah,*

the High, the Great.

*All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the seven earths, and whatever is in them and whatever is between them, and whatever is above them and whatever is below them; and he is the Lord of the Great Throne.
And all praise be to Allah, the Lord of the universe.*

It is also recommended to recite two surahs, *Yasin* and *as-Safat* near the dying person. According to traditions, this will relieve the pangs of death.

Damji: The importance of *Namaz-e-Washaat* is also emphasized on the night of burial, with the belief that it sheds light to the deceased in the grave. Other sources have also said that the night before the burial, if *Namaaz-e-Shaab* is recited, it provides additional relief to the deceased. Is this correct?

Rizvi: *Namaz-e-Washaat* should be recited on the first night following the burial. There is no information on the importance of *Namaaz-e-Shaab* to the deceased before the burial.

Damji: Following the death of my father, I used to attend the graveyard to recite *Sura-Yasin* at the most peaceful time of the day, when there was no one else around. yet, I am told that it is Makruh for women to visit the graveyard. Is this true?

Rizvi: It is Makruh for women to attend the funeral or actual burial ceremony but it is okay after burial has taken place.

Damji: The phrase "*Time is a great healer*" does not mean much when family members are

(continued on page 55)

After a father's death.....

(.....from page 54)

reference to specific duas, amaals, etc?

Rizvi: There are no specific duas, but it is desirable (*Mustahab*) to pray *Salatul Walidayn*, a two rakat salat, between Maghrib and Isha prayers, in order to offer it as a gift (*hadiyya*) to parents. Continuous recitation of the Holy Qur'an is also advisable.

Damji: Following the death of a loved one, majalis are normally held for forty days for the thawab of the marhum. What is the significance of forty days? Some sources have also said that the soul of the bereaved comes to the house for the forty days and therefore an incense stick (*agarbathi*) should be kept lit in the room of the bereaved. Is this true and can you shed further light on the issue of having incense sticks when majalis are held?

Rizvi: The process of grief is usually a family issue with no

religious implications. The 'forty day' time line is generally used, similar to the tradition governing Imam Husayn's (a.s.) fortieth (*Chehlum*).

Damji: Can you briefly comment on the concept of reciting the Holy Qur'an for the thawab of the marhum, especially during the forty days following death?

Rizvi: The Holy Qur'an can be recited at all times and there are no specific rules governing the forty day period. Distributing duas (*wakf* for the marhum), offering *Sadka*, donating towards a hospital or school, feeding our mumineen in memory of the deceased, etc. are other charitable methods that provide spiritual benefit to the marhum.

Damji: When we see the dead in our dreams, is there any significance to the messages imparted in the dreams? If we see one in a good/bad state does this imply anything?

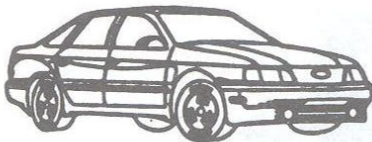
Rizvi: Each dream has its own significance of communication. There is no general statement for all dreams.

Damji: Traditionally, after the death of a husband, the wife would not work outside the home or leave home for at least four months. Many women still follow this. Is there any religious implication to this?

Rizvi: Yes, the rules governing this are that women should not wear any bright clothes (attraction) nor should they go out for social purposes during this period. Working outside the home to earn a living is permissible.

When we hear of or see death we are reminded of our mortality. By finding out more about the religious implications of death we find a wealth of information in our archives which remind us that soon, we too will experience death. Death is a certainty and we should prepare for it in no uncertain manner! May Allah (SWT) rest the souls of all the deceased in eternal peace and guide us towards the right path. Amen.

md motors



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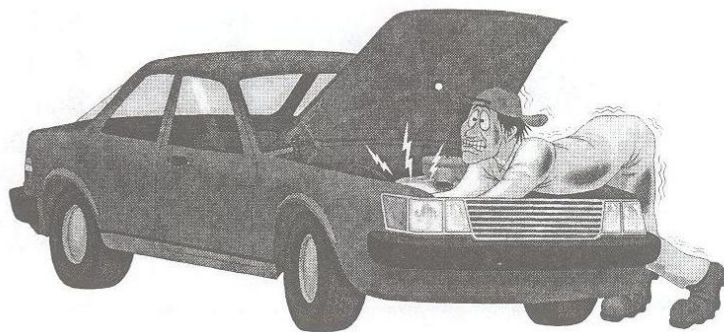
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KIDS SPOT

Dear Children,

Asalam un alaikum.

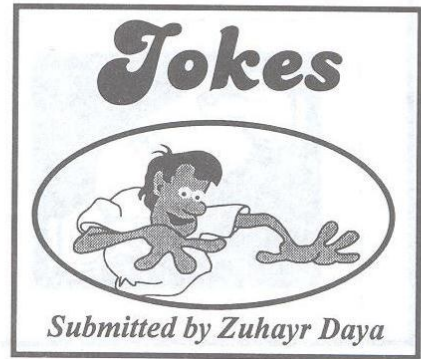
Welcome to the second Children Page of the *Federation Samachar* and thank you young boys and girls for your response to the prize questions and puzzles. The response was fair with a few entries being received from Tanzania and Kenya but what we surely would like to see is many entries from all over Africa and from overseas too.

The winner for the last issue was Muhammadali M.A. Khatau (9) of Jaffery Academy, Mombasa who solved the Jingler correctly and sent us the best answer for the Prize Questions (see *Good and Bad parents on this page*). Congratulations Mohamed and surely what you like to see your parents do and not do is what many other children also want. Well, as children we have a right to also guide our parents when they err and so when we tell them of things we don't like we should expect them to hear.

In this issue we have one puzzle (The Jingler) and one question for you to answer. Solve the puzzle and send us your answers to the question and we have a prize of TShs. 10,000/- for the best answer. Send in your entries on the form below and address it to:

Figure Out
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Name.....
Age.....
School.....
Address.....
Comment (if any).....



Mujtaba: Can you jump higher than the Eiffel Tower?

Salim: No I can't. Can you?

Mujtaba: Yes I can because the Eiffel Tower cannot jump.

Boy: I had a difficult time at the office today.

Mother: But you went to school.

Boy: Yes I know. But the Principal called me in his office because I put glue on my teacher's chair.

Sarfaraz: Why are carrots good for the eyes?

Hassan: Tell me why

Sarfaraz: Because have you ever seen a rabbit wear glasses?

What are the two strongest animals? An elephant and a rhino? No a snail and a tortoise because they carry their houses on their backs.

Good and bad Parents
by Muhammadali M.A. Khatau
Age: 9, Jaffery Academy, Mombasa

I like my parents to recite Qur'an, pray namaz on time, to obey Allah's commands and to buy me things. I do like them not to speak lies and to work for each other. I like my parents to let me play on my bicycle and to take me for a walk. I like my parents listening to majlis and I like my mother because she cooks for me nice meals.

I do not like my parents to beat me or to lie to me and I don't like some parents who don't go to mosque. I don't like parents who treat their children badly or who listen to music or fight all the time. I do not like parents who do not pray on time and who do not allow me to meet good friends. I also don't like parents who make false promises and those who do not give us a chance to speak or explain things.



PRIZE QUESTION



As a child or youth what do you like to hear from our preachers during the month of Muharram? And why is it that you prefer our preachers to recite on this subject? (answers need not be in essay form --jotting down of points will suffice).

The Jingler

The names of four Shuhadae Kerbala can be made from the set of jumbled letters. Re-arrange the letters to name them and letters in brackets will make up the final play word for which a clue is given.

milnibleeqamus _ _ () _ _ _ () _ _ () _ _ _
milsumnibsawaja _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ () _ _ _ _ ()
iawhunibnnhoj _ _ _ _ _ () _ _ () _ _ _ () ()
ryahuznibaynq _ _ () _ _ () _ _ () _ _ _ _

He was one of the companions of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and had heard the Prophet foretell the martyrdom of Imam Husain (a.s.). He too was martyred on the day of Ashura _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ I _ _

Previous solution: ZILKAAD, SHABAN, MUHARRAM, RAJAB, RAMADHAN



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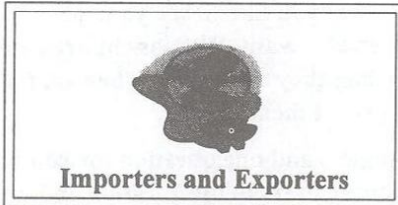
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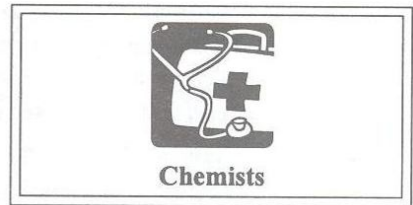
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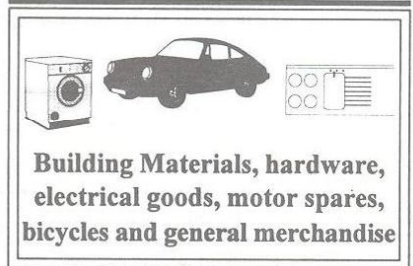
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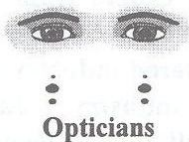
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YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

by Sayed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi from his book by the same name

Q. Is it not allowed in Islam to work as a clerk or driver in E.A. Breweries. If no, give reasons from the Qur'an so as to convince me?

A. Yes, it is strictly forbidden in Islam to work in a brewery in any capacity. The reason is that all firms, companies and shops depend for their success on their employees. If they do not get employees, their business will collapse. So everyone working with a firm which does "Haram" business, helps, strengthens and sustains that business. It is to save Muslims from helping "Haram" business to flourish that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) strictly forbade working in any capacity in such concerns; and he more specifically mentioned the business of liquor. He said:

"Allah had done 'Laanat' on liquor, and the man who sows the seed of grape or grain for this purpose, and the man who makes liquor, and the man who drinks it, and the man who serves it, and the man who sells it, and the man who buys it, and the man who transports it, and the man to whom it is transported".

To give you an example from recent history, when Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian leader, launched a "non-cooperation" in anything connected with British Government students left Government Schools, teachers and civil servants resigned; lawyers left the courts and traders boycotted the English goods for a long time. Of course, it did not at once topple the

British rule in India but in the long run it helped in getting the British out of India, firstly, by cultivating a feeling of 'national cause' in Indians, and secondly by showing the world how much the Indians resented British Rule.

We, the Muslims, are likewise in constant struggle against evil and Haram things; and, therefore, we are not allowed to help the evil in any way.

Q. I intend to start a cottage industry producing labels for the Tanzania Market. In the process of running this industry, there is likelihood of orders coming from Tanzania Breweries Ltd. for making their labels. As you already know Tanzania Breweries deal primarily in liquor bottles, etc.?

Can you please advise me whether such business would be in order without contradicting our Sheriat? The question of not accepting orders from them is out of question because once it is a registered industry and the only such industry in Tanzania, orders will have to be accepted or there will arise chaos.

A. It is my advice that you should not start this industry if you cannot refuse such orders.

Q. Is Kat or Marungi najis or haram to eat or to sell? And what if someone eats Marungi for the purpose of making Ibadat whole night? Or if someone is on a journey and eats it to remain awake to protect himself

from the robbers?

A. I have been told that Marungi, which is also called Miraa, creates intoxication. If so it is Haram to use. But as it is originally non liquid, it will not be Najis. Selling a haram thing (for a purpose which is Haram) is also Haram.

A Haram thing cannot be used on the pretext that it would help in Ibadat. Remaining awake whole night for Ibadat is not Wajib. How can you commit a sin for the sake of a Sunnat Ibadat?

Q. When Islam forbade the use of narcotics (i.e. morphine, hashish) the Holy Qur'an used the word "khamr". Some say this means any intoxicant; others say it means only alcohol. I need historical reference (i.e. if there is a law as such which forbids the use of narcotics as there is for alcohol); also please find out for me if any of the 'ahadith' mention narcotics.

A. Opium, Hashish and other such narcotics are not included in "Khamir". The word "Khamir" is used for liquid intoxicant.

But there is no doubt whatsoever that all narcotic drugs are Haram and unlawful. There are many ahadith which clearly say that all intoxicants are Haram. These Ahadith are famous and you will find them in Wasael-us-Shia, Bihar-ul-Anwar and other books.

The second reason of these being Haram is that they harm the health of the user and in Islam all such food and drink which are injurious to health are haram.

Q. When it comes to foodstuff packed in bottles and imported from say, India would it be okay to eat these pickles?

A. So long as you do not know that the contents of that particular bottle have been touched by a non-Muslim, you may use it.



Squandering of Shah's fortune once again reveals the limitation of wealth!

The plight of the Pahlavi dynasty which once was powerful to an extent that nobody could foresee that it would be rendered out of Iran, continues to this day.

Sure the Shah left a fortune of ill-gotten wealth for his children but now his son, Reza Pahlavi is in court suing one Ali Masoud Ansari for squandering most of the Pahlavi's inheritance reported to be about \$25 million. Pahlavi is reported to have been forced into giving up his monthly expenditure of \$200,000 a month and has been reduced to selling his \$3 million home in Washington DC. He has also dismissed some of his bodyguards and domestic staff.

Ansari, a cousin of the former Queen of Iran, apparently siphoned off Pahlavi's cash to his secret Swiss bank accounts and apart from buying himself houses, is alleged to have sent money to his friends and family back in Iran.

He claims that Pahlavi had no idea what to do with the money he inherited after his father's death and just squandered it. A look back at Iranian history when the Shah ruled Iran reminds one of how he bled the country in alliance with some western powers. This provides us with yet another example on the futility of earning money at any cost --- by doing so we may gain affluence for a few days but with no small price to pay in this world and in the hereafter!

...And now a sequel to "*Then I was guided*"

Noted Tunisian writer Muhammad al-Tijani al-Samavi, the writer of "*Then I was guided*" and "*With the Truthful Ones*" has written another book "*Ask Those Who Know*" which has been published by Ansariyan Publications, Qum.

The book consists of questions which the writer has prepared for Muslim researchers, especially those who have doubts on certain issues pertaining to True Islam. He was particularly tempted to write the book because a section of the non-Shia school have been severe in their disapproval of other Muslims to the extent of calling them derogatory names.

Some scholars met the writer and asked questions about the Shias and many of his answers now make up "*Ask Those Who Know*". He has called upon scholars to explain to lay persons what is difficult for them to comprehend and to guide them to the right path. The author has also called upon Muslims to be united and to write under a common creed as dictated by Allah (s.w.t.), His Prophet (s.a.w.) and the Imams of the Ahl-al-Bayt (a.s.).

Handwritten copies of the Qur'an.....

Old copies of the handwritten Qur'an which were discovered in Sanaa, Yemen from a room of the Grand Mosque have been restored with finances from the German Foreign Ministry. The room in the Mosque was destroyed during rains and floods that hit Yemen in 1971. The copies were written on paper and animal hides. The pages of each copy contain five to seven lines. It is believed that the copies were brought to Yemen from Mecca and Medina during the second Hijrah.

Wooing Asians

During the recent British elections Asian votes were considered fairly significant in almost 40 parliamentary constituencies although the Asians constitute only three per cent of the total electorate.

The victor, labour leader, Tony Blair and his wife Cherie joined Eid celebrations at a mosque in central London and Tory leader Michael Heseltine praised Asian businessmen for their "fascinating sense of achievement."

Former Prime Minister, John Major, began this year by visiting the Indian sub-continent and subsequently threw a number of banquets for the Asian community.

Traditionally, the Labour used to claim almost 90 percent of Asian votes. That proportion has apparently declined dramatically in the last decade, largely because the Asians' economic profile has changed. Unlike the first generation Asian immigrants, the younger generations have either moved into business or white-collar professions.

Britain's top 100 Asian businessmen are collectively worth close to five billion pounds, according to a survey by the *Asian Eye*. Most Asian businessmen have moved away from traditional family businesses in restaurants, laundromats and news agencies to computing, electronic media and finance.

The Conservative Party generally represented the interests of big businesses courting the *nouveau riche* Asian community. The Labour Party homed in on current Asian issues like the Kashmiri self-determination.

Why Islam abhors yet allows "Talaq"

Part Two

by Mohamedhusein Kermalli, Dar es Salaam

TYPES OF "TALAQ"

"Of all things allowed in Islam as "halal", "talaq" is the most abhorrent act in the sight of Allah (s.w.t.) and his Prophet (s.a.w.)."

In the Preliminary Part One of the topic on "Talaq" which appeared in the March 1997 issue of *Federation Samachar*, we discussed the status of women in Islam and the process by which men and women are united by "AQD/NIKAH" to form a family unit in which husband and wife, in their respective roles as equal partners, work together in close co-operation for the happiness, prosperity and growth of the family, guided by the principles of family life in Islam. However, when disputes arise between the partners occasionally, for one reason or another and are left unreconciled, the situation deteriorates and ultimately ends in a separation and divorce which leaves behind a dismal sight of a torn family and bitter memories. When we see this wreckage, we realise the unpleasant social consequences of "Talaq" and the reason why Islam abhors it.

CAUSES FOR THE BREAKDOWN

When we look at the causes of the breakdown of marriage, we find some are major but many are minor and readily repairable. An eminent one-time social worker in our Community with almost thirty years experience in reconciling matrimonial disputes was once asked to give one prime cause, from his long experience, of the breakdown in marriages. He said parents on both sides were largely responsible because they got carried away by their emotions and acted sentimentally, thereby causing further damage to the situation and bringing about what were otherwise avoidable separations. Instead, if they acted

wisely, coolly, rationally and used their strong parental influence to bring about conciliation, many separations and divorces could be avoided and normal family life restored. However, this is not the primary cause but shows the vital role of parents in making a marriage work or break.

Another principal cause for the breakdown that has often been seen is lack of compatibility between the partners. The Prophet (s.a.w.) of Islam laid great emphasis on this essential attribute to be looked for, apart from other factors such as education and upbringing when choosing a partner to the marriage, against other considerations such as beauty and money exclusively. When this requirement is ignored and religiousness cast aside, eventual breakdown becomes inevitable, as the couple find themselves strange bedfellows and at constant loggerheads with each other because they talk on different wavelengths.

There are, of course, many other minor problems which often arise in a married life. But these are, in most cases, solved by showing mutual love and trust, understanding, kindness, tolerance, affection, frankness, selflessness and at times, sacrifice for the pleasure of Allah (s.w.t) who, after all, has complete and absolute hold on our hearts and minds. He has assured His help in solving these problems and to restore harmony between husband and wife provided they are sincere in their intention to concile their differences. (Surah 4:35).

However, when matrimonial life becomes intolerable and separation necessary and beneficial or the damage caused by the disputes irreparable, "Talaq" is the final solution and brings great relief mentally and emotionally to both the

partners. Therefore, this brings us now to discuss "Talaq" in greater detail in order to acquaint ourselves with the Shariah Law together with some important provisions of the Statutory Law relating to divorce in Tanzania.

As stated previously, what prompted this article was the concern shown and questions raised by councillors at the various meetings of the Supreme Council on the rising rate of matrimonial disputes and the consequent numerous divorces in our Community. Questions asked at the 52nd Supreme Council Session held in Arusha in April, 1994 ranged from the fate at the time of divorce of the gifts given to the bride by the bridegroom at the time of the marriage according to both the shariah and the statutory law, to the position where the husband refused to give "Talaq" to the first wife when he had already married a second wife in which case what the time limit would be for the first wife to wait until she could file a petition for divorce and whether or not she had a right to divorce her husband in such a case.

Hujjatul Islam, Maulana Sayyed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi was present on the invitation of the Council at the meeting and replied clearly and concisely to all the questions and clarified several other points relating to marriage and divorce. His answers have been embodied in the following paragraphs, which also contain further details to explain the subject matter at length for the general information of readers. The purpose, as stated earlier, is to educate our people and reduce cases of matrimonial disputes which finally end in "Talaq" with consequent damaging effects to the family and society at large.

(continued on page 63)

.....Why Islam abhors yet allows "Talaq"

(...from page 62)

DEFINITION, CLASSES AND TYPES OF "TALAQ"

Definition

Literally, "Talaq" means to release, set free, let go, repudiate. In the Shariah Law, "Talaq" means dissolution and determination (end) of marriage by either the husband himself or his representative (wakil) on his behalf pronouncing the "Sigha" of "Talaq" in the presence of two "adil" (just) witnesses, after all the conditions relating to "Talaq" have been fulfilled according to shariah law. Basically, these conditions are: the husband who is divorcing his wife must be (a) *sane, not mad* (b) *adult, not minor below 15* (c) *acting independently and out of his own free will, not under compulsion or duress* (d) *sober and serious in his intention, not light minded or joking* (e) *certain that his wife is not at that time in her monthly bleeding period ("haidh") or in her post child-birth bleeding period ("nifas")* (f) *has had no sex with her during the clean, (free from "haidh" or "nifas") period.* These are the general conditions for the "Talaq" to be valid. However, different circumstances arise in life, which are subject to special rulings contained in the "Risalah". Therefore reference should be made to the "Risalah" or the Marja in such cases for "fatwa".

CLASSES OF "TALAQ"

Divorces are broadly classified into two groups, irrevocable ("Ba-en") and revocable ("Raj'I"). In irrevocable divorce the husband cannot take back his wife after the divorce without contracting fresh marriage ("AQD-NIKAH") with her, whereas in a revocable divorce the husband has the option normally of taking back his wife without "AQD" during the period of "IDDAH" (the waiting or grace period) in which she is supposed to be still living with her husband until the completion of "IDDAH" when the divorce becomes effective. Generally, all

divorces are revocable except in five cases they are irrevocable.

These are: divorce to (1) *a minor under nine* (2) *a woman in her menopause (normally around 50)* (3) *a woman in an unconsummated marriage (i.e. not physically completed by sexual intercourse)* (4) *a woman under "Khul'a" or* (5) *"Mubarat"* (This is explained further in the following paragraphs. Generally these are divorces by mutual consent, accompanied by agreed compensatory payment or surrender of rights. The "Risalah" gives detail "masail" relating to this subject.

The first three of the above five cases of irrevocable Talaq require no Iddah (waiting period). Such a woman may contract another marriage soon after "Talaq".

Iddah of Talaq is three month bleeding periods. That is why she is advised to observe Iddah for three months. (Theoretically Iddah may end much earlier).

TYPES OF "TALAQ"

There are three principal methods of dissolving marriage. These are: 1) **TALAQ** - The first and most common method of dissolving marriage is by "Talaq". This is the ordinary Talaq given by the husband to his wife to free himself from the marriage bond. As already stated, if the Talaq is revocable, the husband has the option to take back his wife and normal relations are restored. This can happen by the husband talking to his wife in a manner which indicates his clear intention and willingness to take her back as his wife or by acting in a way to portray his clear wish of taking her back. Having sex with her, would conclusively establish that he has taken his wife back. No further proof would be needed as the "Talaq" is automatically terminated.

2) "KHUL'A"

Second type of termination of marriages in Shariah law terminology is called "Khul'a. The term originates

from the Arabic word "Khula" which means to free oneself, to let go, give up, withdraw or release. In this type of separation the proceeding is initiated by the wife who, for certain reasons, has developed an intense dislike and disdain towards her husband. The hatred becomes so deep and strong that she would not allow him to make love or have sex with her. The matrimonial life thus becomes untenable for her and she wants to be divorced at any cost. Therefore she offers "fidyah" (Redemption) to him by paying him an agreed amount of money or surrenders her "Mahr" to obtain divorce. The Shariah law has set no limit to the amount of such redemption. However, Shariah advises husbands in such cases, not to take mean advantage and demand unreasonable value as redemption. Usually the redemption should not exceed the "mahr" amount, although in desperation the wife may give more.

The Khula when granted is irrevocable. In the event of both wishing to reunite after Iddah, they will have to have a fresh Aqd/Nikah.

If the husband totally refuses to accept money or property in return and denies her the right to get the Khula, she can petition to the court and obtain the divorce but according to the Shariah Law she continues to be his wife until he or his representative (wakil) pronounces the "Sigha" of Talaq on his behalf. If he still does not do that, the Shariah Law provides a relief for her in that she can petition to her Marja setting out the grounds for the divorce. On receiving the petition, the Marja if satisfied, would normally communicate with the husband to inform him of the provision in the Shariah Law and advise him to allow him to act on his behalf to pronounce the "Sigha" for the divorce. If the husband does not respond to the Marja within a specified time, the Marja would then pronounce the "Sigha" unilaterally and relieve the wife

(continued on page 65)

My Ziaraat trip

By Zahid Khimji, age 15

Going for Ziaraat is a wonderful experience and something I shall remember for ever. When we decided to go to Iraq and Syria, I was excited and looked forward to the trip. It was a dream come true.

The benefits of Ziaraat are many, including, acceptance of requests made to Allah(s.w.t.) and a long, healthy and meaningful life. First, we went to Damascus, or Shaam as it is more commonly called. Here Bibi Zaynab, the sister of Imam Hussain (a.s.), who suffered many difficulties during and after Kerbala, is buried here. She was a courageous and powerful lady. We visited the court of Yazid, which was nearby, and it really amazed me how she silenced hundreds of people with her sermon in this very place.

Bibi Sakina is buried in a Mosque near the centre of Shaam. She too was tortured by the men of Yazid and died at a young age in the prison of Shaam.

Hazrat Habil, the son of Prophet Adam is buried in Syria too. His was the first human death on earth and his grave is 17 feet long, possibly the longest ever. When the murder of Habil took place, it is said that even the mountains cried. An impression of a crying mouth is left in a cave. On the top of the mountain (which took some time to climb, and was quite a challenge), it is known that 40 Prophets offered Salaat and Mussalabs mark the place. I actually prayed where Allah's messengers did so too.

After leaving Syria and performing the many other Ziaraats there, we proceeded to Jerusalem for a day. The great Dome of the Rock and Masjidul Aqsa are here. It is the third most sacred place in Islam and it was a great feeling to be in the place where the Prophet ascended to the Heavens. What surprised me was that Christians and Jews were allowed in there too. I was disturbed to see one Mosque in Hebron turned into a synagogue with heavy security. This is where Prophets Ibrahim, Ishaac and Yaqoob are

buried with their wives.

We left Jerusalem for Amman, Jordan to stay for one night. The following day, we started the long journey into Iraq. No air travel is permitted in Iraq so we had to travel by coach and were on the road for 23 hours. This was little to put up with as it meant we'd be going to the Holy cities. Alhamdulillah, we reached Baghdad safe and well.

Baghdad was a big difference to Shaam. It was modern with well built buildings, a proper road system with traffic lights. Paintings and statues of Saddam lined the streets and armed policemen were everywhere. It is actually makrooh to stay in Baghdad but we had to as there are no facilities in the nearby holy cities of Kadhmain and Samarrah.

I found it difficult to believe that we were actually in Iraq, in the holy lands until I was actually at the rauza of an Imam. We went to Kadhmain many times where Imam Musa al-Kadhim and Imam Muhammad at-Taqi (a.s.) are buried side by side in a great Mosque with four grand, golden minarets, which stood out with the two domes.

We spent a day in Samarrah which too is of great importance. The shrines of Imam Ali un-Naqi and his son Imam Hasan al-Askeri (a.s.) are there. There is also the basement of Imam Mehdi (a.s.) where he was last seen before going into Ghaibat. The Harams of Kadhmain and Samarrah are full of poor people whom I sympathised with.

From Baghdad, we went on to the holy city of Najaf where the grave of Ameerul Mumineen, Imam Ali (a.s.) lies. Prophets Nooh and Adam are buried next to him. The Mosque is truly outstanding with its bright shining gold dome and two minarets. People came from all over the world to offer their respects to Imam Ali (a.s.) and I couldn't believe that I was actually standing by the tomb of the first Imam, the hero of many battles and a great leader of the people.

Once I got over my excitement, I remembered the aspects of his life that we should follow. The streets leading to the Mausoleum of Imam Ali (a.s.) are full of beggars, especially children. They walked barefoot on the scorching hot ground. This reminded me of Imam Hussain (a.s.) and his companions in Kerbala.

We had a great opportunity to meet Ayatullah Seestani, the current marja. Just by looking at his face I could tell he was a great, learned and pious man. We were able to ask him questions and he answered in depth giving full explanations. He seemed a very simple man full of masses of knowledge.

In Najaf lies the biggest and oldest graveyard in the world, 'Wadius Salam' meaning Valley of Peace. It is enormous with many, many graves of learned and good hearted Muslims. Prophets Hud and Saleh are buried there.

We spent a day in the sacred city of Imam Ali (a.s.), Kufa where he was killed during his Fajr Namaaz. I saw the place where this happened and imagined the event. There are many companions of Imam Ali and Imam Hussain (a.s.) buried in the Mosque of Kufa including Muslim bin Aqeel and Hadhrat Mukhtar.

There was something about the Mosque in Najaf that attracted me and made me hesitant to leave. I wanted to spend as much time there as possible. We left Najaf for Kerbala, the city that will remain in the minds of Muslims forever. It was here that Imam Hussain (a.s.) and his companions were martyred and sacrificed their lives for Islam.

I hear of the the tragedy of Kerbala every year in Muharram, wondering what it is like there. Now Alhamdulillah, I have been there. There are two great Mosques in Kerbala, both opposite each other. The first is the rauza of Imam Hussain

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(a.s.) with the graves of his two sons Ali Akber and Ali Asgher. The rest of the martyrs are buried here too.

The other Mosque is of the brave and courageous Hazrat Abbas (a.s.). The grave itself is surrounded by the River Furaat and is accessible to only a few people. It was by the ni'mah of Allah that I was given the opportunity to go under the cenotaph of Hazrat Abbas (a.s.) and be on the same level as the grave. The grave is reached by walking through the water, waist high, in small tunnels. I felt scared as it was quite dark and only a few of us were down there with tunnels leading off in different directions but I felt consoled that I was with Hazrat Abbas and should anything happen to me down there, I had nothing to worry. There were concrete walls around the grave to protect it from water. I was able to do tawaaf around the grave and recite Ziaraat. It was an experience I'll never forget and the highlight of my trip.

We stayed in Kerbala for the day of Arafaat and performed the a'amals in the Mosque of Imam Hussain (a.s.). There are many blessings in doing so. A hadith of the a'amiah says that Allah (s.w.t.) looks first at the people in Kerbala on Arafa'at and rewards them, then the Hujjaj.

Many, many Shias were in Kerbala at this time from all around the world. I thought of how Mecca would be with over two million Muslims.

Our time in Iraq was coming to an end. We had to commence the journey back to Amman and I felt sad about leaving the country full of so many tombs of great people, including the graves of six Imams.

In Amman, we went on a sight-seeing tour and saw the luxurious areas with beautiful houses that one can only dream of. Amman is a modern city. You can tell by the clothes people wear and the shops. The following day we flew back to London.

I have completed my Ziaraat to Iraq and Shaam. I remember the places we visited well and hope to Inshallah go again some time. I would thoroughly recommend to all out there who haven't been to Iraq to do so.

.....Why Islam abhors yet allows "Talaq"

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from the marriage bond. The divorce given by the Mujtahid is irrevocable.

In this respect the Qur'an, which is the principal source of the Shariah Law, among other things, says in Surah 2 Ayah 231 "..... And give them liberty, set them free and do not detain them in order to hurt them lest you might transgress, for whoever shall do this he has committed injustice to himself.....".

"MU'BA'RAH"

The third type of termination is called "Mu'ba'rah". The term originates from the Arabic word "bar'aa" which means disapproval or withdrawal. In this case, both husband and wife develop mutual dislike and hatred beyond reconciliation. Therefore the divorce is granted by mutual consent of the husband and wife, either by waiving all claims of compensation or the wife gives an agreed amount of money or property to the husband in return for Mubarah. However, unlike "Talaq Khul'a", Shariah Law has set a limit in this case that the compensation should not exceed the value of the "Mahr" of the wife.

If during "Iddah" - the waiting period in "Khula" or "Mu'barah", both husband and wife change their minds and return to loving each other again, the husband can take her back, should he wish to do so, without a fresh "Nikah", provided that he returns and his wife accepts the amount of redemption which he had received from his wife.

RIGHTS TO DIVORCE

It is evident from the foregoing

passages that a wife has no Shari' right whatsoever to divorce her husband by either herself or her representative to pronounce the "Sigha" of Talaq that she has divorced her husband. She cannot be a **divorcer** under any circumstances but a **divorcee** in all cases. It is only the husband or his representative who can pronounce the "Sigha" of Talaq that he has divorced his wife except, as stated earlier, where a "Marja'a" intervenes under certain circumstances. However this should not be confused with her basic right to petition for divorce on valid grounds irrespective of whether or not it is provided in the contract.

Even if at the time of marriage, it is laid down as a condition of "Aqd" that the wife should be given a right to divorce, all that can be done by the husband is to give an irrevocable "wakalat" under which, when certain specified circumstances arise and the conciliation board fails to settle the dispute, the wife would have the right to obtain divorce through a third person who, acting on behalf of the husband, can pronounce and declare divorce under the "Sigha" of Talaq.

In our third and final part of this series on Talaq, we shall complete our topic by discussing the "Sigha of Talaq", the position of the gifts given by each party to the other, checks and balances kept by the Shariah Law, some important Fiqh masael relating to Talaq and the main provisions of the statutory law in Tanzania. It will also contain clarification and comments made by the President of the World Federation, Mulla Asgharali M.M. Jaffer, at the meeting of the Supreme Council held in Nairobi during April 1996. Make sure you get your copy and it would be ideal to keep together, the three issues in which this article has been serialised

Some Reflections on the Youths of the Community in light of the Recent fatawa of Ayatollah Sistani

by Dr. Abdulaziz Sachedina, Los Angeles

Much has been said in the recent years about the problems faced by our youth living and receiving education, both secondary and higher, in the Western culture. There is a lot of talk about the moral challenge that faces them day and night through different forms of media that continue to exercise considerable influence in their character formation. From private home discussions to the serious discourse that comes from the religious pulpits on a regular basis, our concern about the Muslim youth has almost been trivialized by parents and religious leaders. Everyone seems to be anxiously awaiting a major crisis to occur before a concrete action plan can be offered to the families and communities around the world to respond to the pressing issues related to everyday existence of the young men and women in the society in general.

It is appropriate to acknowledge the efforts that are being made in providing necessary religious education to our children, with much care being taken in teaching the basics of Islam the way we have traditionally done in the past. In the last decade or so new methods have been introduced in the curricular development and some Muslim educators have participated in the actual preparation of teaching materials for our religious education system. However, on examining the contents of the materials that have been recently produced, there seems to be a dearth of challenging materials that can sustain the ever expanding intellectual horizons of Muslim youth. Substantial improvement requires not only well structured research into Islamic and secular materials; it also demands creative imagination that could respond to the generational gap in communicating religious knowledge that continues to dominate the way critical moral information is relayed, whether in the madrasa-system or from the pulpits of our religious

centers.

The suspicion of secular culture that provides the rockbed on which modern education is constructed is not totally baseless. There are serious problems with that system when it comes to the development of an individual's moral character. Such a deficiency has led to moral illiteracy among the youth in society at large. Educators all over the world are aware of the serious problems facing modern men and women and have suggested many useful ways of combatting moral illiteracy that is costing modern society in terms of breakdown of the familial relations as well as social and psychological well being of the most vulnerable victims of the present crisis: the youth.

Nevertheless, it is this critical situation that has forced many conscientious people in the community to look beyond the traditional institutions of religious-moral education that are overburdened with conservative spirit, fearful of any challenge to the status quo in the community. The energies of these individuals have been directed to search for complementary rather than supplementary platforms for religious interaction in the community.

Such platforms, they believe, can allow for more creative and responsible activities to emerge under their new, but authentically Islamic, supervision.

To be sure, major part of the challenge for the community today is to reach out youths who have entered universities and who experience what psychologists have identified as "loss of innocence." This loss pertains as much to the faith as to one's moral commitments. Both these, that is the faith and the personal morality, are the critical ingredients of a Muslim youth's identity. Hence, any threat to these two elements is a threat to one's total being, one's existence.

After all, what happens in the colleges?

Whereas all parents emphasize and support higher education with good and practical reasons, they have a hard time in visualizing the socialization aspect of college life. In some cases, their children are the first generation to get the college education. In other instances, there is a potential confidence in their upbringing. Whatever the case, experience has, at times, revealed the negative consequences of exposure to the "pop culture" of the academia. The situation is indeed serious when one recognizes the casualness of male-female interaction, overshadowed by prevailing promiscuous culture. Ask any Muslim male or female about their socializing experience upon entering a college. In the midst of many interesting encounters are those that challenge them to abandon the moral restrictions with which they grew up in the secure environment of their homes. Moreover, the encounters also indicate their ill-preparation in handling highly tempting and corrupting conditions in colleges.

When parents come to know the situation, if they at all do, they either close their eyes, especially if these young ones happen to be their sons; or they panic when it involves their daughters. Under those conditions the obvious question that is constantly raised in different gatherings and even from the pulpits is about the role of religious institutions rather than religious education in nurturing necessary male-female interaction to further healthy relationships among the younger generation in the community. Obviously, people think that such permission within the context of the community and under its responsible leaders is impossible because Islam does not permit the male-female gatherings of the modern society.

While there is truth in evoking Islamic

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teachings that impose moral restrictions on male-female interaction, it is irresponsible to leave the matter at that. After all, if the institutions in the community cannot provide with morally safe platforms for our young people to interact with each other with a view to encourage them to create healthy bonds among themselves, where else can they turn to receive such directions?

It has become religiously "correct" (just as in the universities it has become "politically correct" to say certain things, even if one is not fully convinced about them!) to oppose any "mixed" gathering (with its peculiar meaning in our community), even when the Islamic Sacred Law, the Shari'a does not object to the supervised "mixed" gatherings, as will become evident in the following fatawa of Ayatollah Sistani. The problem is the way cultural norms have prevailed over the religious truths about human relationships as taught in Islam. Whereas Islam does not see the problem of supervised male-female interaction, the inherited cultural tradition with its strong South Asian emphasis has deemed such gatherings un-Islamic. Where is the truth in this regard? Does the culture bear the solution to the problem or is the religion the provider of reliable directive?

It was with this background understanding that a number of parents approached Ayatollah Sistani during our visit in May of 1996. When the entire situation facing the youths was presented to the Ayatollah he immediately responded by saying that the Sacred Law was against moral corruption and shameful conduct among men and women. It was not against nurturing healthy environment for their interaction, as long as that ethical goal was kept as a guiding principle. But the parents insisted that the Ayatollah should provide written instructions about the permissible "mixed" gatherings and clearly specify the limits that must be observed at all times to avoid occurrence of corrupt behavior. The Ayatollah, thus, asked for submission of questions regarding the situation to which he would then respond accordingly. Hence, the following let-

ter that was hand delivered in Najaf in April of 1996:

**In the Name of God
His Excellency Ayatollah al-Uzma
Sayyid Sistani**

After offering our greetings to you, our last meeting with you [in Najaf] in the presence of men and women from our community was very beneficial. We express our deep gratitude to you for your valuable guidance and attention [to our problems].

Following that discussion and the concern about the Shi'a youths in the West, [let us bring to your attention the following]:

The Shi'a youth are gradually drifting away from religion and even from the precinct of the Shi'a community, getting married under the negative influence of the West and adopting corrupt ways of living. [To combat this situation] it is necessary to establish legitimate contacts between young men and women, so that the Shi'a youth come to know each other and develop sound and legitimate mutual attraction towards each other under the parental and other responsible communal leaders' supervision.

To elaborate further, let us mention this. Such meetings between Muslim young men and women, whether Shi'a or Sunni, can be observed frequently outside the safe environment of the family and traditional religious gatherings. Thus, for instance, there exists an abnormal state of such contacts in the universities. Therefore, the main reason for asking the following questions is to facilitate legitimate ways so that the Shi'a youth can be encouraged to establish sound relationships within the framework provided by the code of behavior by Islamic teachings. Undoubtedly, in these critical and troubled times in which the Muslim families are living in the West, prohibiting or preventing such programs of contact between the youths, which is being propagated by some religious leaders, will result in the detriment of the youth. We request you to provide appropriate guidance to preserve the esteem and faith of our youths in the Western environment so that those responsible in the Shi'a community can

.....Reflection on youths

discharge their religious duties without any confusion and obstacle in the name of Shari'a.

Let it be clear to your excellency that the Shi'a girls in the West, who will participate in these programs, will necessarily observe the minimum hijab [as prescribed by the Shari'a].

Moreover, it can be ascertained that such an observance of the minimum hijab could be made a prerequisite for participation in all religious and educational programs for women.

Q.1: Is it permissible to organize religious and educational gatherings in which young men and women will participate in accordance with the rules of Islamic interaction (that is, without any intention of lust and without any threat of corrupting morality)? Let it be clear that such a program will be organized under the supervision of parents and sympathetic religious persons.

Q.2: Can young men and women in such gatherings exchange views and discuss issues in the form of debate and argument?

Q.3: Can young men and women in such gatherings which has been organized specifically for them give speech and present papers on religious and educational topics for each other?

Q.4: In order to encourage these youths to get married among themselves so that their religious interests will be preserved, is it permissible to organize activities under the supervision of the parents and sympathetic religious persons to allow them to know each other through conversation and discussion?

**Signed: Abdulaziz Sachedina,
9 Dhul-Hijja, 1416
28/4/1996**

Answers from the Ayatollah Sistani:
In the Name of God

A.1: There is no objection provided the girls observe the Islamic dress properly and sit separately from the boys. Both sexes should observe the respectful exchange of character and

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Abortion in Islam

Islam allows the preventing of pregnancy, but does not allow its termination. However, the problem arises in defining the beginning of pregnancy from the shari'ah point of view. Before we look at various methods of birth control, we must first define the beginning of pregnancy; and only then will we be able to say which method is permissible and which is not. One fails to find a discussion in the classical fiqhi books on the shariah definition of pregnancy and even the present Mujtahids have apparently not discussed it. Putting our trust in Allah (SWT), let us study the issue in the light of scientific explanations and try to achieve at a shari'a definition of pregnancy.

First, it is necessary to explain the criteria of defining various things and issues in Islamic laws. There are three possible criteria for definitions of things and concepts in fiqh: *Shari*, *Urfi* and *Ilmi*.

(1) If something is clearly defined in the shariah, then it is known as the *Shari* definition; for example, the definition of the word *Salat* as the ritual prayer consisting of specific actions and recitations.

(2) *Urfi* means conventional, common tradition. *Urfi* definition means a definition acceptable to the common people without any scientific or *Shari* precision.

(3) *Ilmi* definition means a definition presented by science; for example, the definition of pure water as H₂O, a liquid compound consisting of 2 parts of hydrogen and 16 parts of oxygen, or the definition of the beginning of day as the astronomical twilight.

If the shariah defines something, then we must follow the shared definition. But if it is silent on definition of certain things, then should we follow the *Ilmi* definition or the *Urfi* definition? Anyone who is familiar with the shariah will agree with me that in absence of a *Shari* definition, one has to follow the *Urfi* definition. One has to go by the common perception of things, not the scientific perception.

For example, when the shariah says that the water for ritual ablution must be pure (*natlaq*), does it mean scientifically pure? Certainly not! Otherwise, the running water in this part of the world is not scientifically pure, it has some purifying chemicals in it, for example, flouride. The shariah says that such water will still be classified as pure unless the common people can sense (without the help of a scientific lab) the difference in its colour, taste or smell.

However, there is one case where the *Ilmi* definition will prevail: in cases where the common people have no way of defining the issue. So in cases where the shariah is silent and the *Urfi* has no opinion, one has no choice but to follow the *Ilmi* (scientific) definition.

The definition of the beginning of pregnancy is one of such cases where the *Ilmi* definition does prevail; this is so because the shariah is silent, and it is beyond the common people to define when pregnancy begins. Therefore, in this case, we will first see how science describes the beginning of pregnancy and then attempts to find secondary proof from shariah sources to arrive at a conclusion.

The process of conception and pregnancy according to modern science is as follows: *After the semen is ejaculated into the vagina, the sperms move into the uterus, cross the uterus and enter the fallopian tube. The woman's ovum is in the fallopian tube. The sperms travel into the fallopian tube in search of the ovum. When the sperms reach the ovum, normally only one succeeds in penetrating the ovum. The coming together of man's sperm and woman's ovum is known as fertilization. After fertilization, the ovum starts to travel towards the uterus; and after coming into the uterus, it gets implanted on to the wall of the uterus. This process is known as implantation of the fertilized ovum in the womb.*

To determine the sharia pregnancy, one has to answer the following questions. From the shariah's point of view,

does pregnancy begin:

(1) *with the entering of semen into the uterus or*

(2) *with the fertilization of an ovum by a sperm in the fallopian tube or*

(3) *with the implantation of a fertilized ovum in the uterus?*

Presumably the combination of three things form the *Shari* pregnancy: the sperm, the ovum and the uterus. If any two combine without the other then it is not a *Shari* pregnancy. And we will soon prove why the *Shari* pregnancy begins when a fertilized ovum implants itself onto the wall of the uterus.

In search for a *Shari* definition, the only closest issue one can presumably come to is the discussion under the indemnity for abortion. In Shia fiqh, the indemnity for abortion differs according to the various stages of pregnancy. However, what is relevant to our discussion is the indemnity for the first four months of pregnancy. During these four months, the child in its mother's womb is known as *jinin*. The *jinin* (embryo) itself goes through five stages gradually with distinctive names:

Nutfah, when it is a sperm;

Alaqah, when it is a blood-like clot;

Muzgah, when it is a lump of flesh;

Azm, when it is a lump of bones;

Yaksu lahman, when it is dothed with flesh.

[Qur'an,23:12-14]

The first stage is very crucial in our search for the beginning of pregnancy. Most ahadith simply say that the lowest indemnity is for aborting "a *nufsa sperm*". At the first look it would seem that according to these ahadith, pregnancy starts as soon as the sperm enters into the uterus. This would mean that preventing the semen from entering into the uterus is allowed but once it has entered the uterus, then it is forbidden to abort it. But this is *not* so. This would have been correct if the word "*nutfah*" is taken only in its literal sense in which it means "a

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sperm." However, in fiqh and ahadith, the word "nutfah" is used both for a sperm as well as for a fertilized ovum. Fortunately this extended meaning of the word "nutfah" has been clarified in the following hadith by Imam Zainul - Abidin (a.s.).

Saidd bin al-Musayyab asked Imam 'Ali Zainul 'Abidin about a person who hits a pregnant woman with his leg and, as a result, she loses what she had in her womb. The Imam said, "If it is a (nutfah) sperm, then he must pay her 20 dinars." Saidd asked, "What is the definition of nutfah?" The Imam said, "It is a substance which, when placed in the womb, settles down in it for forty days." The Imam has used two words to describe the nutfah:

- (1) "wuzi'at fi 'r-r-rahm" - it is placed in the uterus,
- (2) "fataqarrat fihī - it settles down in it.

It seems the Imam is emphasizing that the earliest stage of abortion is not when the sperm enters the uterus for the first time and just passes through it, rather when it settles down in it. Obviously, the "settling down of the sperm in the uterus" and "implantation of a fertilized ovum in the uterus" are one and the same thing.

Needless to say, the distinction between the entrance of sperm into the womb, the fertilization of ovum in the fallopian tube and finally its implantation was not clearly known to the scholars of fiqh and the scientists till a century ago. But the word "istiqrar (settling down)" shows that our 'ulama' were not completely unaware of the fact that "the sperm goes through various stages before settling down in the uterus." If they had been completely unaware, then they would not have used the word *istiqrar*, instead they would have said "the entering of the sperm into the uterus." This difference becomes more clear in the writing of the Ulama' of post seventh Islamic century. Before the seventh century, we find the expression such as "ilqa'u n-nutfah" (the entering of the sperm into the uterus). But after the seventh century, the Ulama consistently began using the expression of "istiqraru 'n-nutfah" (the set-

tling down of the sperm in the uterus). Even the present Mujtahids describe the earliest stage of abortion as follows: "aborting a sperm after its settling down in the womb (ba'd istiqraru 'n-nutfah fi 'r-rahm)."

Moreover, the Qur'an has always used the word "haml" to describe pregnancy. "Haml" means to carry, and it is obvious that a woman carries the child in her uterus and not in her fallopian tube. And "Haml" starts with implantation and not before it.

In conclusion, the beginning of pregnancy from our viewpoint is the stage when the fertilized ovum is implanted (*istiqrar*) onto the lining of the uterus. And, therefore, whatever prevents implantation is allowed but whatever aborts an implanted ovum is haram. In 1986, Marhum Ayatullah al-Khui was asked for an opinion on this issue. He was asked:

"From medical point of view, after the sperm enters the vagina, it crosses the uterus and enters the fallopian tube. In this tube, the sperm joins the ovum. Then the fertilized ovum enters the uterus and implants itself onto its wall. (Apparently, the expression '*istiqraru 'n-nutfah fi 'r-rahm*' in the writings of Islamic jurists refers to this implantation of the fertilized ovum onto the wall of the uterus).

"By keeping in mind what has been said above, is it permissible to use a medicine or a device which prevents the fertilized ovum from implanting itself onto the wall of the uterus?"

Ayatollah al-Khu'i replied that: "What is forbidden is to abort the sperm after its settling down, whereas to prevent pregnancy before that is okay. However, to specify the minor and major premises of both these issue is upon the individual himself."

I think the answer of the Ayatullah needs some explanation for those not familiar with the fuqahas style. In the first part of his answer, the Ayatullah agreed that what is forbidden in relation to birth control is the act of aborting the sperm after it settles down in the womb. In the second part of his answer, he declined to take it upon himself to specify when the settling down of the sperm actually occurs--- soon after the sperm enters into the

uterus or after its return from the fallopian tube? He further says that classifying any particular contraceptive method (whether it prevents fertilization or implantation) is also upon the individual.

Based on the scientific explanation given earlier and the use of the word *istiqrar* in the hadith in relation to the *nutfah* and the writings of our 'ulama' on the earliest stage of abortion, the implantation of a fertilized ovum onto the wall of the uterus should presumably be the beginning of pregnancy from our point of view. Once this is settled, it becomes easy to decide which method of birth control is allowed and which is not. Any method that prevents pregnancy before the implantation of the fertilized ovum is allowed and any method that terminates pregnancy after the implantation is not allowed and will be considered as abortion. It is in the light of this criterion that we should look at the various methods of birth control that are presently available.

Two years after this conclusion on the shariah basis, Dr. Clifford Grobstein, a leading embryologist of America, published the same conclusion on basis of his scientific research. Dr. Grobstein, whose even handed approach won him places on the ethics committees of both the American Fertility Society and the Catholic Health Association, published his Science and the Unborn in 1988. He writes, "In the last several decades, chiefly as the result of extensive studies of mouse development, it has become clear that in the earliest stages of each new generation, mammals (including humans) go through a preliminary pre-embryonic phase before they become embryos in the usual scientific sense ..."

In mammalian development, which normally occurs within the body of the mother (internal gestation), it is now evident that the early changes undergone by the zygote first establish multi-cellularity, and second, preparation for penetration into the maternal uterine wall, or implantation. The second step, as we have noted, is the true beginning of gestation or pregnancy.

Ref: Marriage & Morals in Islam, Sayyid M. Rizvi, Ansariyan Publications, I.R.N.A.

Iran needs negotiation rather than confrontation



Ever since a German court, earlier this year, formally accused top Iranian leaders of ordering the 1992 killings of Kurdish dissidents, relations between the European Union and Iran took a nosedive.

With the sole exception of Greece, all EU countries withdrew their ambassadors from Teheran. Other 'Western' countries like Australia, Canada and Japan also followed suit and the Iranian government reacted angrily to the German court's ruling, saying that it was politically motivated and totally lacking in legal validity.

There were protest marches against the verdict in the streets of the Iranian capital, Tehran including one extremely energetic demonstration outside the German embassy but the Government refrained from taking any steps that could ratchet up the tension between Iran and the EU.

Of course European countries are keen to minimise the fall-out from the court's verdict and a severing of diplomatic relations has been ruled out. Countries like France and even Germany, also opined firmly against any economic boycotts. The truth is that Europe enjoys close and mutually beneficial economic relations with Iran.

Iran accounts for a substantial percentage of European oil imports and is a ready market for the continent's exports. And despite the threat of US sanctions against any company investing more than \$40 million in Iran's oil and gas industry, European firms like Total have reportedly committed hundreds of millions of dollars.

Not surprisingly, Europe sees little wisdom in a rupture of relations at this point. Likewise, Iran knows nothing is to be gained by getting provoked.

Anxious at what it sees as European indecisiveness, the US has jumped into the fray with the demand that the EU take punitive steps against Iran. A high-powered delegation from Washington did the rounds of various European capitals trying to build up momentum for economic sanctions and in order to lend more weight to the as yet unproven allegation that Iran is a 'sponsor of terrorism', the US has repeated its accusation of Iranian complicity in the bombing of an American military base in Saudi Arabia last year. The blast near Dhahran led to the death of 22 US soldiers but all attempts to establish an 'Iranian connection' have so far come to nought.

Seasoned Saudi Arabia watchers feel there is every possibility that the bombing might have been the work of internal opponents of the US military presence in the Kingdom; there is even speculation about factional divisions within the House of Saud being responsible for the growth of dissidence there.

What is most disturbing about the

US approach to Iran is the reported increasing talk in Pentagon circles about the need for an all-out, Pearl Harbour-style attack on Iranian naval and missile stations. With Washington's strategy of 'dual containment' against Iran and Iraq failing to deliver the desired results, it is logical that they should feel discomfited.

But rather than toying with the idea of a military adventure, the US should stop treating the two countries as outcasts. The best way of resolving differences is through negotiation, not confrontation. The Europeans have wisely decided to play down the possibility of conflict and the US must do the same.

Iran now has a new President, Mohammad Khatami who assumes office in August this year following his victory in the May, 1997 Presidential elections. President Khatami is not expected to fundamentally change Iran's foreign policy but is reported to be conducive to constructive dialogue.

He is reported by the CNN to have temporarily ruled out improving ties with the United States, saying "this is not the right time for it." But that is a change from hard-liners who call the United States the "Great Satan" and say Tehran can never reconcile with Washington.

And surely, unless the United States handles this new opportunity of beginning a fresh dialogue with the new Iranian leader cordially, it would be futile to expect changes in Iran's foreign policy with regard to the USA and other countries.

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