



Recently, the Rahmath Group organized a 'Visit My Mosque Day 2020' at Bangalore's Modi Masjid, situated in Tasker Town, close to the Shivajinagar bus stand. The mosque, almost two centuries old, is named after Modi Abdul Gafoor, who had given a certain portion of his vast property for building a mosque. A beautiful structure was erected in its place only a few years ago. The Visit My Mosque Day event was posted on social media and there was an overwhelming response to it. According to Sadiq Sailani, one of the organizers, the event was planned for 100 people but more than 300 people showed up. Many people of different communities visited the mosque, and for some it was their first such visit. What happens inside a mosque is not known to many in the outside world, and so this event quenched the curiosity of people regarding mosques. The organizers had made it clear that this was a completely different activity and had no connection whatsoever with the ongoing protests on the CAA-NRC and that any talk regarding about that issue would not be entertained. Through the event they sought to bring different religious communities together and talk about unity. Rahmath Group seeks to organize more such events shortly.

This beautiful initiative was taken to spread love and understanding between different religious communities and promote interfaith harmony. People

## Promoting Interfaith Understanding

Bangalore Mosque Hosts 'Visit My Mosque Day'



attended the event in large numbers to declare that no matter what happens, we stand united. A lot of misconceptions about Islam were cleared in this event and people who had never seen the inside of a mosque were brought in, where they were informed about how worship happens in a mosque. One of the organizers, while explaining the rationale behind this event, said that today Islam is being identified with the bad morals of Muslims and we have created a wall between Muslims and people of other faiths by wrongly viewing them as 'other'. He also pointed out that while Muslims blame the media for misrepresenting Islam, Muslims themselves are to blame for not having explained Islam to others. There is a prevalent negative attitude towards Islam and somebody has to take the first step in overcoming that

By Haris F. Farooqui

negativity. He added that the Prophet's Mosque was open to everybody.

Even people of other faith communities would come inside the mosque and benefit from the teachings of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). So, we should strive to make our mosque like the mosque of our beloved Prophet.

The exotic-looking chandeliers of the mosque coupled with a silky feeling carpet and the beautiful calligraphy on the walls had a very soothing effect on my nerves. The mosque also has a separate lady's chamber where women pray. The towering minarets could be seen from a distance, in spite of so many huge structures in its vicinity.

The chief organizing party of the

event, Rahmath Group is run under the Darul Ehsan charitable trust, which is under the guidance of Hazrat Talha Sahib Naqshbandi, deputy of Shaykh Zulfikar Ahmad Naqshbandi. Under his guidance, Rahmath Group is carrying out humanitarian activities across communities. The Mission statement of Rahmath Group reads *Muhabbat ka deep jalao, nafrat ki aag bujhao*, ('Light the lamp of love and extinguish the fire of hatred'). Their members directly reach out to people from all walks of life and strive to end hatred and spread love. They run a library on Tannery Road, which doubles up as their office and as a unit to store and pack aid, which is then distributed amongst the needy living in slums. They also conduct Quranic classes, skill development and corporate training workshops and medical camps, and visit schools, colleges, hospitals, and are planning to

organize visits to jails. While serving people, they do not look at the religion of the person. They serve based on humanity. At Darul Ehsan, they also run a spiritual treatment centre. Guests can come from any state and are allowed to stay in harmony with others and learn the skills to serve humanity for their betterment, thus enhancing their personality.

The mosque visit event was organized on 19th of January 2020, when people had their new year declarations fresh in their minds. The timing was just right to add another declaration of interfaith harmony on everybody's lists. The crowd was very happy and excited and I could not see anyone leave midway. The entire audience gave their 5 hours on a Sunday to learn about Islam and show unity with their Muslim brothers and sisters.

A few feet away, from the entrance of the mosque, I was greeted by two little girls holding a placard, which read 'Welcome' in several different languages. Desks were arranged to greet the visitors. I noticed a list of people who had already registered for the event. Each visitor was given a name badge. I could see a huge crowd of educated people from different faith communities walking in with curious eyes and having a look at the interiors of the mosque. Visitors were told the importance of ablution before entering the mosque. Women were taken to a separate chamber and later joined in the main portion of the mosque, alongside men.

► Page 11

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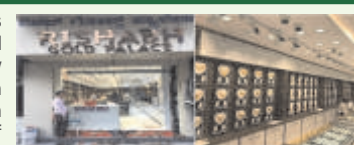
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Human life is at the centre of all Islamic teachings. It is said that Allah created human being in His own image, awarded him life and made him His khalifa vicegerent. He is made superior among all creatures and supervisor over the land, waters and skies (17:70). While on earth, he was promised that whenever guidance comes and whoever follows it, there shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve (2:38). Thus, he is required to adhere to and comply with the holy guidance in letter and in spirit. But very few people remember the divine promise while most of us are forgetful.

Forgetfulness is a part of human nature. We are called 'insaan' an Arabic word derived from verb 'nasiya', which literally means to forget. This indicates the human tendency to forget. It is evident through Quran which says "... Indeed We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot. ..." (20:115).

In daily life, we experience forgetfulness. Sometimes we forget names/appointments or petty items. We often forget what we listen to, read, watch, think and encounter directly or indirectly in life. Many of us do not even remember what we have eaten a week before. The positive side of forgetfulness is that it 'lessens' our mind, enabling it to remember what is most essential. It also allows us to be oblivious of the bitter memories of the past and move forward. Similarly, nations forget their past enemies with whom they have fought wars over years in order to build a strong future. The example of the Second World War can be cited in which many nations fought against each other but now they are friendly.

But the negative side of forgetfulness makes people ignore their origin and specially the purpose of coming into the world. It is a plain truth that no one can

achieve his/her goals unless they remember them. The ensuing struggle rests on the constant remembrance of the exact goal.

To obviate this human weakness, every religion has prescribed certain rites and ceremonies for its adherents to perform in order to make them constantly aware of their goal. These are not an end in itself but means to an end. It is for this very reason that Islam stresses on the importance of matters of practice and the significance of ritualistic acts. These are often repetitive in nature because they are our reminders. For instance, the daily ritualistic prayers are considered significant because they are the most powerful reminder of our submission towards our Omnipotent Master. Similarly, Islam's utmost emphasis on reflecting upon natural signs carries multidimensional significance.

Moreover, nature has devised its own system of reminding every individual on a regular basis. It manifests signs and signals around every individual's life to remind him or her to be careful and conscious. For example, in every society, we observe diseases, death and distress. These are natural signs for every individual to be careful and understand the inherent message of every occurrence. In short, each sign indicates that life on earth is but a short passage in eternity; it is a testing ground and everyone has to reap what they sow.

Though these signs are reminders, they also open new avenues for further progress and development. They propel humans to think and

# Daily Reminders

**Forgetfulness at the level of worldly matters can be excusable, but one must not forget the Creator.**



By Amin Valliani

discover divine secrets, unfold puzzles. They also make humans strong and courageous in adversity,

humble in success with a sense of realisation that success or failure is not only due to human efforts.

But most people do not heed the natural signs and reminders. They are beset by their worldly problems with a tendency to be hypnotised by the temporal and to forget the eternal. They just want to improve the mundane aspects of life by getting good food, good clothing, good housing and improving their social status. Sometimes they drift away from the right path to get things done by indulging in unfair means and unethical practices. Thus they forget the noble cause of their life enshrined in the teachings of Islam.

In addition to this, the task of reminding people is also assigned to a special group whom Allah has rewarded. Allah says that there should be a group of people inviting to all that is good (3:104). This group may include a variety of dignified people such as Imams, mystics, scholars, historians, intellectuals, philosophers, educationists, and all other leaders known by different titles/designations who have excelled in their field of endeavour. During the last 1,400 years, Muslim history has witnessed many dignified people who have reminded the ummah of its purpose.

Forgetfulness at the level of worldly matters can be excusable, but one must not forget the Creator. Allah warns us "And be not like those who forget Allah and He caused them to forget their own selves. ..." (59:19).



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## Australia Bushfires: Muslims Reach Out To Help

Millions of acres of land have been burned, tens of people have been killed, and countless others have been left stranded following the devastating bushfires that have taken a toll on Australia in recent months. The horrifying fires were nothing short of disastrous and destructive. But they were also met with humanity in a time of tragedy. A Muslim group made it out to a fire-stricken town in

tirelessly attempting to contain the fires that have erupted in East Gippsland.

"No words can describe how proud we are of our sisters, may Allah reward you all. You are an inspiration to all," the Australian Islamic Centre wrote in a Facebook post.

Offering a helping hand, Australian Muslims have come together to help people affected

crisis. "Today I joined with my Muslim sisters and brothers in Adelaide in prayer for rain," Priest Patrick McInerney, from

the center for Christian and Muslim Relations, said. According to the 2016 Australian Census, the number

of Muslims in Australia constituted 604,200 people, or 2.6% of the total Australian population.



Australia to offer their support to those who have been affected by the devastating fires.

That's not all they did.

Over the weekend, women volunteers at the Australian Islamic Society from Newport, Victoria cooked meals for 150 firefighters at the Johnsonville Volunteer Fire Brigade. In just 48 hours, the women were able to supply five trucks of aid supplies, raise \$1,500, and organize a breakfast for the firefighters who have been

by bushfires which continue to wreck havoc on many parts of the country, destroying homes and wildlife and affecting the lives of thousands. In Sydney, a group of Muslims has been praised for donating 36,000 water bottles to firefighters struggling to contain the vicious blazes. In another show of support, a group of Muslims gathered at Bonython Park in Adelaide as part of a public prayer service for rains amid the worsening drought and bushfire

## Massachusetts' First Muslim Mayor Elected

Sumbul Siddiqui, 31, has become the first Muslim mayor in the American state of Massachusetts, getting elected in Cambridge. She was elected unanimously on the first ballot by her fellow councilors. Following the vote, the packed chamber stood and showered her with applause. Siddiqui holds a

bachelor's degree from Brown University and a law degree from Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. Between college and law school, she served as an AmeriCorps fellow at New Profit, a Boston nonprofit that works on improving social mobility for children, families and their communities.

## UK: Imam Receives Queen's New Year Honours

The Imam of Chesham is among those who have been named in the British Queen's New Year Honours. Arif Hussain has been made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to the Muslim

community in the UK and abroad during the past 35 years. Mr Hussain, whose work focuses on peace, tolerance and acceptance of one another, became the youngest Imam in the UK at the age of 25.

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## This Afghan Father Wins Hearts

Mia Khan, a resident of Sharana in Afghanistan, has won social media's respect with his daily routine, which involves travelling 12 kilometers to take his daughters to school every day. According to the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, an NGO that works in the region, Mr Khan travels 12 kilometers on a motorbike daily to get his daughters to school, and then waits outside for a few hours until they are dismissed. This, they write, has now become a routine for him.

Mia Khan brings his three



daughters every day to the Nooraniya school, which is run by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. He explains that his daughter's education is important to him because there are no female doctors in their area.

"I am illiterate, and I live on daily wage, but my daughters' education is very valuable to me because there is no female doctor in our area," he says. "It is my greatest desire to educate my daughters like my sons".

Rozi, one of Mr Khan's three daughters, says that she is happy that she is able to study. "I am in grade six this year," she tells the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. "My dad or brother brings us on a motorcycle every day to the school and when we leave, he brings us home again."

## Leading Indonesian Muslim Scholar meets Pope Francis



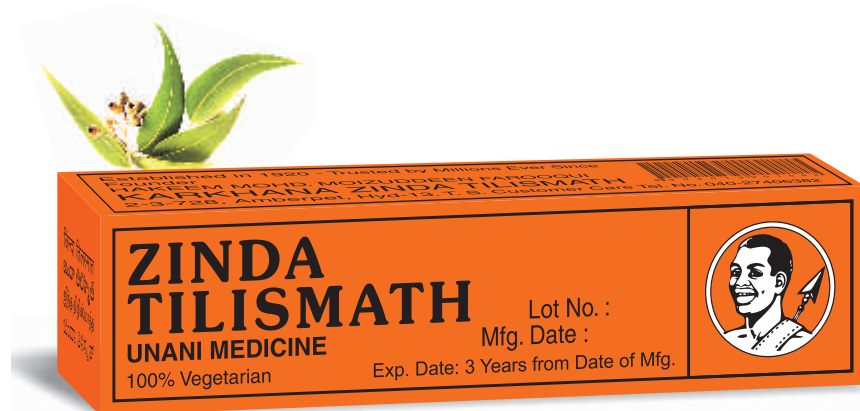
(Yahya Cholil Staquf (left) with Pope Francis)

Indonesia's largest Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has highlighted the importance of social activism in addressing interreligious conflicts during a discussion with religious leaders held as part of the Abrahamic Faiths Initiative forum in Rome recently. The discussion, held at the Gregorian University, Rome, focused on the stance and measures that can be taken together in tackling crises that are heavily influenced by interreligious conflicts, according to NU supreme

council secretary-general, Yahya Cholil Staquf, said in a statement. Following the discussion, Yahya and 17 other religious leaders held a meeting with Pope Francis, global head of the Catholic Church, at his residence in Vatican City to talk about conclusions from the earlier discussion. Yahya said that during the visit, Pope Francis emphasized that regardless of their conflicts, people must return to the roots of their beings, and that was to become each other's brothers and sisters.

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## UN Condemns Human Rights Abuses Against Myanmar's Rohingyas

The UN General Assembly has approved a resolution strongly condemning human rights abuses against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims and other minorities, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and deaths in detention. The 193-member

world body voted 134-9 with 28 abstentions in favour of the resolution. It also calls on Myanmar's government to take urgent measures to combat incitement of hatred against the Rohingya and other minorities in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states.

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## Enas Khamis

### Egyptian Eco-Activist Turns Agricultural Waste into Crafts

The sustainable disposal of agricultural waste has long been a challenge in Egypt. Despite a 2012 government ban on burning rice straw at the end of the harvest, every year thick black clouds choke the nation's skies as farmers set their waste ablaze.

An estimated 22-26 million dry tons of agricultural waste in Egypt is burned annually, according to figures from the American University of Cairo. As well as being burned in fields, agricultural waste is often used as fuel in primitive ovens that can cause health problems and damage the environment.

Enas Khamis, one of Cairo's leading anti-waste activists, was ahead of her time when she set up El Nafeza, a waste reduction workshop, in 2007. Her social enterprise turns the huge



amounts of dumped rice straw into a resource for both humanity and the environment. The workshop also trains and hires people with disabilities to recycle rice straws into paper products that are sold all over the country. Proceeds from selling El Nafeza crafts are used to run further workshops for young people, women and people with disabilities, teaching them how to use papermaking skills to create products from agricultural refuse. "It's important that we empower these groups and teach them a

craft that enables them to live in dignity," says Khamis.

El Nafeza has established specialized training centers to teach and spread art techniques especially skills working with rice straws, Nile water lilies and bananas

stalks. "The handmade paper industry is considered a non-traditional source of income in poor areas and the development of these crafts will help to solve the unemployment problem in Egypt," said Khamis.

The El Nafeza workshop in Cairo produces more than 150 handmade products, including paper, envelopes, notebooks, handcrafted cards and frames. Khamis relies on this workshop to act as a marketing tool for the brand, which sells to both locals and tourists.

## M. Nurul Islam Gets 'Sir Syed Award'



The founder and General Secretary of the West Bengal-based Al-Ameen Mission, M. Nurul Islam, was awarded the 'Sir Syed Award' by the American Federation of Muslims of Indian Origin (AFMI) in their 28th International Convention on Education and Gala Award programme held in Bhubaneswar recently. Amidst standing ovation, Mr. Islam received the award from the president of the organisation, SirajThakor. After receiving the award, Nurul Islam expressed gratitude for honouring him and said that he was overwhelmed by this prestigious award. He believed the award was meant for his colleagues who had dedicated their lives for the mission of Al-Ameen Mission. Without them, the Mission could not have reached the present position, Islam observed.

Nurul Islam said, "When we began our journey, the percentage of Muslims in higher education was only 2 to 3 per cent in West Bengal while the population was roughly 25 per cent. Now the percentage in professional courses like medical, engineering etc has increased to 20 to 25 per cent.

With great satisfaction, we can say that maximum students come from Al-Ameen Mission. When we started, we had several models in front of us. Ramakrishna Mission showed us the way and Al-Ameen Education Society of Bangalore boosted our morale. At the same time, I was influenced by the Aligarh Movement and its founder Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.

A social reformist, historian, and philosopher, Sir Syed laid the foundation of modern scientific education in undivided India. Besides, he was among those early pioneers who recognised the critical role of education in the empowerment of the poor and backward Muslim community." Mr. Islam added, "We believe firmly on that verse of the Qur'an, where Allah said, "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of the people until they change what is in them."

AFMI is a philanthropic, service based and issue-orientated organization formed in 1989. It strives to work towards the educational and economic uplift of Indian Muslims by seeking cooperation among American and Indian relief and educational organizations.

## Malala Yousafzai Declared 'Most Famous Teenager' Of Decade By UN

The United Nations (UN) has declared education activist and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai as "the most famous teenager in the world" in its Decade in Review. In part one of its review series, which takes into account events that happened between 2010 and the end of 2013,

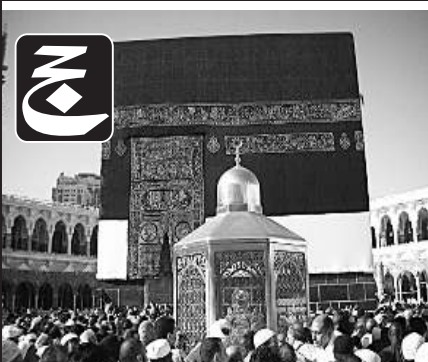


the UN highlighted the

devastating Haiti earthquake in 2010, the beginning of the ongoing Syrian conflict for 2011 and Malala's work in favour of girls' education for the year 2012. In 2014, Malala became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her efforts for children's rights.

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## Mauritanian Imams Speak Out Against Child Marriage

"I refused to marry off my daughter for a simple, good reason: I want my daughter to be empowered," said Lemeima mint El Hadrami, 49. "I don't want her to go through the same difficulties I did when I was young." El Hadrami was married when she was only 13. As is often the case for child brides, she became pregnant in adolescence and was forced to drop out of school. She had two daughters, both following difficult pregnancies. Then her husband left them. "Back then, people didn't know that child marriage was harmful to a girl's health. It was a common practice for us," she recalled.

El Hadrami is from Selibabi in Mauritania, a Muslim-majority country in north-west Africa where around 37 per cent of girls are married off by age 18. Ending child marriage in Mauritania and other countries in the Sahel region, where the median age women and girls marry is 16.6 years, calls for a change in society's unwritten rules governing the practice. This means getting support from Muslim religious and community leaders on a whole host of gender-related issues.

"An immature girl cannot bear a child because she herself is still a child whose body is not ready to carry a baby," said Telmidy, the imam of the Kuba Mosque in Selibabi, stressing that many adolescent girls in his communities have died for that reason alone.

Telmidy is one of 200 religious and community leaders mobilized across Mauritania by the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project, a collaboration



between the UNFPA (UN Population Fund) and others, to show that child marriage is in fact *haram*, or forbidden by Islam.

"Early marriage is a complex issue and we have addressed it in a manner that respects Islam," he said. "Islam protects the dignity of men and women."

Telmidy and his fellow imams want to be agents of change. "We discuss and share our knowledge of Islam and our experience by going door to door or during Friday prayers and people are starting to understand and respond."

The SWEDD project is financed by the World Bank and implemented by the governments of Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, with technical support from UNFPA. In addition to working with religious leaders, the project shares messages on girls' empowerment through a popular radio programme.

"I was really moved by the messages on the radio," El Hadrami said. "I do not want my daughter to experience the same difficulties that I did. I would like her to go as far as possible in her studies, to have a good job – a job that will allow her to enjoy a decent standard of living. She

could become a minister, a doctor or a midwife."

The radio messages work in concert with the faith-based outreach efforts. "The recommendations and guidelines broadcast on the radio are very important, especially because they are supported by religious beliefs," said Telmidy. "People must listen to the radio to be informed."

The imams have reached around 370,000 people in rural Mauritania with training sessions on the dangers of child marriage. UNFPA is also helping the national network of Islamic scholars to learn about sexual and reproductive health issues, including not only related child marriage concerns, but also the benefits of birth spacing, and the importance of ending gender-based violence and female genital mutilation.

"Islam is a religion that honours human beings. Any action that harms an individual's physical or mental health is therefore forbidden," said Hademine Saleck Ely, an imam from the Central Mosque of Nouakchott. "But some people are wedded to traditional practices and do not understand the danger of these customs."

Telmidy pointed out that acquiring knowledge is compulsory for all Muslims: "The Qur'an shows that a father has a responsibility to educate his daughters and protect them, and that he must delay their marriage until they turn 18... He must also allow them to earn a living, that is their right." "We must assume our responsibilities and fulfill our mission to share our knowledge with the community," he added.

## Future Bright For Arab Women's Empowerment?

**YouGov study shows 59 percent support women holding ministerial roles in the region  
GCC countries are a prime example of women excelling in every arena, says expert**

Women's empowerment in the Arab world has a bright future, if the findings of a YouGov study commissioned by Arab News for the Arab Strategy Forum are any guide. Several recent regional developments women driving in Saudi Arabia and an increase in the number of women holding ministerial roles in the Arab world are viewed by substantial numbers of Arabs as positive.

A combined average of 61 percent said they expect to see more female empowerment in their home country over the next 10 years. This thinking was strongest in the Levant at 60 percent, followed by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries with 48 percent and 44 percent in North Africa.

The study surveyed 3,079 Arabic speakers, aged 18 years old and above, from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to better understand their current and future concerns on various topics.

June 24, 2018, will go down in history as the day Saudi Arabia lifted its longstanding ban on women driving. Two-thirds of the poll respondents actively supported that country's new driving law, with only nine per cent expressing opposition.

Commenting on women's standing in the MENA region, Maria Al-Qassimi, an Emirati writer, said recent decades had witnessed a movement led by Arab women to redefine social norms through a call for "equal opportunities and less restrictive laws."

Despite the rapid speed of policy changes, Al-Qassimi says she wishes to see further progress in the standing of women in Arab societies.

"I hope that policies and regulations will be revised to

allow both men and women to strike a balance between their responsibilities and contributions both at home and at work," she told *Arab News*.

Al-Qassimi believes that the situation of women and other "vulnerable" segments of society as of now is largely determined by economic factors.

If women continued to play an important role in driving Arab economies forward while demonstrating their "indispensability" on the global level, countries would have an incentive to enlarge women's empowerment, she said.

Al-Qassimi cited the GCC states as a prime example of women's excellent performance in almost every field. In the UAE, women make up 70 percent of all university graduates, and hold 66 percent of all public-sector jobs, she said.

In Saudi Arabia, the number of women working in the public and private sectors has increased by "282 percent" over the past year. "The hope is not only for women to occupy more leadership positions, but to push for more merit-based career advancements across the GCC," Al-Qassimi said.

Women holding ministerial roles in the Arab region is a development that gained strong support from respondents, with 59 percent expressing positive sentiment, as opposed to 14 percent who were negative.

Other questions in the survey dealt with topics such as forced marriage and honor crimes. The findings suggest that 77 percent of the Arab world disagree with the practice of forced marriage, with 67 percent of respondents strongly opposed to it.

(Extracted from arabnews.com)

## Saudi justice minister vows action against underage marriages

Saudi Justice Minister Walid bin Mohammed Al-Samaani has issued a memorandum to all courts and marriage officials to refrain from concluding any marriage contract for those under the age of 18. The minister instructed the courts and officials to refer all such cases to the competent courts to take necessary legal measures in accordance with the Child Protection Law.

The executive regulations of the Child Protection Law stipulate: "Before the conclusion of the marriage contract, it is necessary to ensure that a person marrying under the age

of 18 will not be harmed, whether male or female." The circular also stated that matchmakers found violating

the rules will also be held accountable and would be referred to the ministry for necessary legal action.

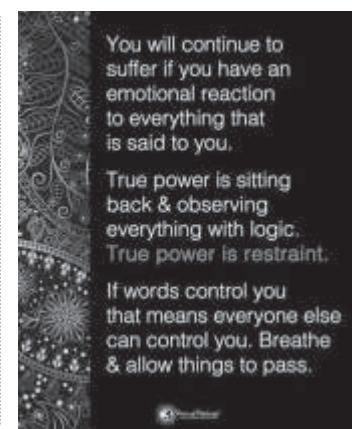
## Muslim Association of Britain Elects First Female President

The Shura Council of the Muslim Association of Britain has elected Raghda Altikriti as its new President. Upon her appointment, Altikriti said: "It is an honour to be elected as the first female President of the Muslim Association of Britain, to represent and serve our members from all across the

country. "I look forward to working with our branches and departments to strengthen our ties to civil society and continue pushing for the betterment of society. As our country continues to face increased division and distrust, I hope that with this new leadership we can bring and promote continued unity

and mutual understanding."

The Muslim Association of Britain was founded in 1997 with the aim of encouraging Muslims to participate proactively in the British society, to make the most of the avenues available and to function positively to become fruitful citizens of the UK.



Samima Khatun, the daughter of an imam from West Bengal's East Burdwan district, has been awarded a travel grant to present her paper at an international conference in London. The conference is being co-organized by Imperial College London and University College London. The grant is worth nearly 200,000 rupees. It was never easy for a girl belonging to a lower-middle-class Muslim family to come this far. She is scheduled to deliver a paper titled *Exploring the Thermodynamics And Conformational Aspects Of Sulindac And Chlorpromazine Binding With BSA* at the 26th International Conference on Chemical Thermodynamics: ICCT-2020 that is scheduled to be held between July 19 to 23 in London.

The travel grant is sponsored by Nature Research, under its subfield, the Communications Journals, which offers it in three subjects: Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Samima was awarded the Communications Chemistry grant which is given to only one candidate all over the world in the field of Chemistry.

## Samima Khatun's Inspiring Journey

The 29-year-old woman is from Nischintapur village in East Burdwan's Khandaghosh locality. Samima did her matriculation and higher secondary from Al Ameen Mission. She completed her B.Sc, M.Sc in Chemistry at Aligarh Muslim University. She was awarded a doctorate under the supervision of Professor Riyazuddeen, Department of Chemistry, at the same university. She also worked as a Research Associate in a CSIR Project in the Department of Chemistry, University of Delhi. Currently, she works as an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry, at Aligarh Muslim University on a contractual basis.

Apart from all this, she is also a devout practicing Muslim. The second daughter of Sk Rahamat Ali, she has four other siblings. The 57-year old Ali, a graduate in Political Science from the University of Burdwan, runs a small stationery shop at a nearby village, Khejurhati, where he used to be the imam of the village



Samima Khatun

mosque for a monthly remuneration of 700 rupees. But for the last two years because of his age, he only runs the shop.

During her doctorate studies, Samima married Tahasin Mondal, a scholar in the Department of Sanskrit of Aligarh Muslim University in 2017. She says that it was because of her father and husband that she could reach where she is now. She says her real strength was her determination to fulfill her father's dream and her desire to achieve something noble in life.

"My dreams come true partially when my parents sent me to Al Ameen Mission where I got admission with very nominal monthly fees, 120 rupees per month. The secretary of the mission agreed to admit me because of my zeal for study, for he could read my dreams in my eyes and that's why he even paid me 1,250 a month until I started getting stipends. It was because of him that I came to this stage of success."

Neither her family, religion, nor her villagers were any hindrances for her education. It is normally difficult for a Muslim girl to stay away from home for long. Besides her parents' support, Samima balanced the practice of her faith with the demands of a modern educated girl. She has now become a role model for local Muslim girls and their parents, who now send their girl children for higher studies. "I was never told either by my parents or by any of my villagers that I should not leave home for education. Rather

my father paid extra care to send me first to the Mission when I was in the ninth grade. He only spent his earnings only for the education of his daughters and not for his son. It was later followed by my co-villagers and they started sending their girl child outside the home for their education."

Asked whether her in-law's had any problem with her education and staying outside, she replied, "Not at all. Like my family, my husband, my in-laws have told me to do whatever I wish to pursue and forbade me to worry about it."

To another question her future plan, she said, "I want to go back to my home state once I get a government job there. I have many wishes to follow for my community as it is lagging in all sorts of fields, especially for Muslim women whose condition is worst."

Her message to Muslim women, "No one can change your life except your self-respect, hardwork, proper education. So have it, do it, grab it. You women! Change your life by yourself."

(Extracted from an article hosted on mattersindia.com)

## From homemakers to life coaches

Gazelle S Khan and Yasmin Mehtab, two lifelong friends, were full-time homemakers, busy taking care of their family, kids and other responsibilities to make their homes run smoothly. There was something they both aspired for but were unclear about the exact nature of what they wanted till they attended a workshop on self-management. Speaking to TwoCircles.net, Yasmin said, "It started in December 2017 when Gazelle and I participated in a workshop and witnessed a transformation in ourselves." Gazelle says- "The workshop that we attended touched our lives and we decided to take the skills we learned to others in need to be transformed. And that is how You Touch Lives (YTL) began." Yasmin who came up with the idea of having the platform to help many who are even clueless



Gazelle Khan (left) and Yasmin Mehtab

about the crisis they are in, to which Gazelle readily agreed. The duo began by organising small workshops with women in places that they often hired to conduct the workshop by charging a small amount from those attending the sessions, following which they began having such sessions at schools. After having conducted several free workshops spanning over a few hours paved the way for the duo to think bigger. The success

of the workshops, made them plan a two-day workshop, with women from their friend circle. With time, the number of women coming to our workshops kept increasing.

Their participants can't help but praise their work. "I learned how to overcome our shortcomings by a little awareness of our thoughts and dealings. The whole workshop helped me to understand myself and to transform towards a better and peaceful living. Life no longer is bad for me," says Shabana Anwar, a Kolkata-based educator. Gazelle and Yasmin plan to change many such lives in the coming days.

(Extracted from an article on twocircles.net)

## Youngest Ever Muslim Lawmaker In UK Parliament

December's general election results in the U.K. set a new record for female Muslim lawmakers, in what international media outlets have heralded as the most diverse parliament ever in the country's history in terms of gender and ethnicity. The British Parliament now welcomes more female Muslim MPs than male Muslim

representatives for the first time in its history.

After the last general election, the number of Muslim parliamentarians has reached a new record of 21. Of those, 11 are women. 27-year-old MP, Zarah Sultana, set a new record of becoming the youngest Muslim in the UK to be elected as an MP.

## Lebanon's New Defence Minister First Woman in Arab World to Hold Post



Zeina Akar was recently named as defence minister in Lebanon's new government,

making her the first woman in an Arab country to hold the post. Akar, one of six women named to Prime Minister Hassan Diab's cabinet, was also appointed deputy prime minister.

## Muslim Bride Demands 100 Books As Mehr



**Kollam (Kerala):** This bookworm bride demanded books as *mehr* instead of gold or money. Breaking stereotypes, Ajna Nazim, who married Ijas Hakkim, had asked for 100 books as dowry. The list included Quran, Bhagavad Gita, Bible and the Constitution of India. The 'demand' was put forth by Ajna when they got betrothed in October. Ijas Hakkim, a 26-year-old civil engineer, procured 96 books by their wedding day, December 29. The couple, who got married at Nilamel in Kollam, has set up a big bookshelf in their bedroom. "She also wasn't particular about them being new books. However, I tried getting as many new books as I can. We've now also decided to take part in book exchanges," Ijas said. The couple now tries to set aside dedicated time for reading. Ajna, a BEd student, had also included

books by Khaled Hosseini and Haruki Murakami and Michelle Obama's biography in her list. The couple succeeded in going ahead with the decision with a non-traditional *mehr* with the support of their parents.

This isn't the first time, however, that a couple has broken convention. In 2016, another Kerala bride, Sahla Nechyil, a political science graduate from the University of Hyderabad, demanded 50 books as *mehr*. She said she wanted to show the Malappuram Muslims that a wedding can take place without obsessing over the amount of gold transacted between both parties. Her fiancé sourced the books from various stores in Bengaluru.

(Extracted from mattersindia.com)

## Need For Spiritual Companions

By Rajat Malhotra

We need trustworthy companions who will support us at every juncture of our life. According to the Quran, these trustworthy companions are none other than angels. The Quran guides us on this point. It says:

*As for those who say, 'Our Lord is God,' and then remain steadfast, the angels will descend on them, saying, 'Have no fear and do not grieve. Rejoice in the good news of the Garden that you have been promised. We are your companions in this life and in the Hereafter. Therein you shall have all that your soul desires, and therein you shall have all that you ask for.'* (Quran: 41:30-31)

From this we learn that among the greatest blessings we could have is having angels as our companions. But the question is: How can we win the companionship of angels?

The answer to this can be understood from an incident from the life of Prophet Muhammad.

One day, the Prophet was sitting



with some of his Companions when a man came up to them and insulted Abu Bakr, who was one of the Prophet's closest companions. Abu Bakr however remained silent. The man insulted him again, and this time too Abu Bakr did not say a thing. But when the man insulted him for the third time, Abu Bakr reacted negatively. As soon as the Prophet heard Abu Bakr's response, he got up to leave.

Abu Bakr was surprised. He asked the Prophet, "Why are you leaving, O Prophet, are you angry

with me?"

The Prophet said: "When the man was insulting you, an angel came down from Heaven, and the angel was answering on your behalf. But when you took revenge, a devil came down. I did not want to be in the companionship of the devil, therefore I got up to leave." (Source: *Sunan Abu Dawud*)

This incident from the life of the Prophet tells us that whenever we are faced with a provocative situation we have an opportunity to seek the companionship of angels. We should therefore refrain from giving a negative response lest we drive the angels away and lose their companionship.

A person who is completely free of negative thoughts will develop himself into a positive personality in the fullest sense of the word. This is the easiest way to win the companionship of angels. With the companionship of angels a person will be able to lead a spiritual life and follow a path that leads directly to Paradise.

## Problems are Temporary

We all face difficulties and challenges in life. Some of these are serious in nature, but I am sure you would agree that most of them are not life-threatening. Today I will be sharing with you a real-life story of difficulties and challenges that inspires a person to the core. It is the story of the expedition to the Antarctic led by Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton. It is a story of one of the most astonishing feats of exploration and human courage ever recorded.

This expedition was so dangerous that it can only be understood by the advertisement given by Sir Ernest Shackleton himself. It said: "Men Wanted: For hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition

in case of success."

So, in 1914 Sir Ernest Shackleton and a crew of 27 men set sail for the South Atlantic to cross the Antarctic overland. However, their expedition failed and Shackleton with his group of 27 men were literally stranded on ice. Apparently, they had no hope of survival. They remained on the floating ice for six months and spent the next four months on Elephant Island before they were rescued.

The expedition failed to accomplish its intended objective, but it became recognized instead as an epic feat of endurance.

Now the question is: How did the miraculous escape of the members of the expedition come about? The answer lies in their confidence that

their situation was only temporary.

This miraculous formula is applicable not only to Shackleton and his crew but to every single man and woman. We often face serious difficulties, such as at home or at work. The simple formula for facing these challenges successfully is to remember that one's problem is temporary and not permanent. It is a law of nature that no difficulty goes on and on forever.

The only thing that can create a serious problem for you is to lose your patience. So, remain patient. And wait for God's help. It is on its way!

**(Rajat Malhotra is a member of the New Delhi-based Centre for Peace and Spirituality. He can be contacted on [info@cpsglobal.org](mailto:info@cpsglobal.org))**

## UPDATE

### UN Chief Warns World Cannot Afford Another War Amid U.S.-Iran tensions

Amid U.S.-Iran tensions United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said he would continue his active engagement to de-escalate tensions and avert full-scale war, which the "world cannot afford." Guterres said it is "our common duty to make every effort to avoid a war in the Gulf that the world cannot afford. We



must not forget the terrible human suffering caused by war. As always,

ordinary people pay the highest price," Guterres said.

Guterres stressed in a tweet that Peace is our most precious value. It is the product of hard work and we must never take it for granted. He said he is encouraged by signs that the escalating conflict in the Gulf may be subsiding. The world cannot afford another war.

## Make Time For Remembering God

**"Those that remember Me in their heart, I remember them in My heart; and those that remember Me in a gathering (i.e. that make mention of Me), I remember them (i.e. make mention of them) in a gathering better than theirs."**

In today's world, it's easy to get swept up in the routine of a busy schedule. Sometimes, it's even difficult to find the time to eat, let alone spare a thought for God. But there are ways to find and make the time. There is a word that is attributed to the remembrance of God, and that is *Zikr*. It's a word that when translated into English essentially means *the remembrance of God*, either silently in the heart, or in the heart and by words.

Many of us do remember God especially in times of despair to ask for help or in good times to be thankful, but what about all of the other times? What about the in between times when we are on the go? To remember God, you just have to have some time. So, when you are waiting in traffic, standing in a queue, parked outside the school waiting for your child or even gardening, you can say with awareness short phrases like *Alhamdulillah* ('All praise be to

God') and *Allahu Akbar* ('God is the Greatest') or 'Thank You, God'.

Positive remembrance of God brings about a sense of being thankful and appreciative of all He has done for us. By being aware of the glory of God in everything it can even prevent negativity or even depression. It helps to find the good in the bad, the positive in the negative, and the opportunities in the problems. Even more than that, it will purify your heart just by simply remembering God so He remembers you in this life and the next. Do take the opportunity to lift your spiritual status and increase your faith by the remembrance of God.

Find the time in your busy schedule for the remembrance of God.

**"Those men and women who engage much in Allah's praise for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a Great Reward"**  
~ *Qur'an 33:35*

## Never Belittle Any Good Deed

It's wonderful how God counts good deeds! Even a smile is considered a good deed. Doing good in our daily life is the core of Islamic ethics. And as trustees in God's earth, it's essential for human beings to make the earth a better place by becoming ourselves better persons. This certainly helps to shape our personality and our purpose in this life.

It's our good deeds that grow with us and follow us even after we die; it's our good deeds that will benefit us in this life and in the hereafter; and it's the thing by which we win the pleasure of our Lord.

Our good deeds can be as simple as a smile. Doing good

deeds is for everyone, for the rich and the poor, for the young and the elder, for the sick and the healthy, for the capable and incapable. So there is no excuse! No good deed is actually small. Every good deed done with a big heart is never lost. Even by your smile you can bring happiness to someone's heart without your knowing.

We never know what deed by which God may forgive us our sins; our deeds may seem small and trivial, but they're of great reward. So never delay any good deed. You see a branch of a tree in the middle of the street, don't hesitate to remove it. Say a good word to someone, fulfill their needs, ease their pain: maybe this will grant you God's forgiveness.

## Calming the Mind

Staying quiet isn't an easy task for everyone and what one can do if their mind wanders off to terrains that are harmful and toxic; do lots of *zikr* which helps in regaining the mental balance and removes the necessity to overindulge in conversations.

## Teachers as Transmitters of Values

By Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz

The Quran (96:2-4) says: 'Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.'

Here, God is expressing some attributes of His that He is the Most Bountiful One and that He taught man what the latter didn't know. To teach humanity the use of the pen is one of the signs of God, and teaching is one of God's attributes. From this you can appreciate the importance of a teacher and how noble a teacher's vocation is. At the same time, this vocation comes with great responsibility. It is such a delicate task! If a teacher doesn't teach properly, a child may completely lose interest in studies. If a teacher is very stern and strict, a child may develop deep-seated fears that can accompany him for the rest of his life. If a teacher isn't friendly or forbids questioning, a child may drop out of school and in that way ruin not just his own life but that of several coming generations as well. And for this, the teacher will have to share in the sin.

On the other hand, if a teacher inspires a student and helps him become a good person, she earns *sawab* or Divine blessings. In that sense, there is no better investment for a teacher. What is much more important for a teacher is not his students' examination scores but what sort of person they turn out to be because of their schooling. If a teacher fails in his role in enabling a child to become a good human being, he has failed as a teacher even if the student scores high marks in his examinations.

God has blessed every human being with the capacity to know different things. How people turn out to be depends partly on their environment, including on what sort of teachers they may have had. A crucial question to ask here is how teachers and the educational process can bring



out the inner potential of children that God has blessed them with. Herein lies the importance of values in education.

The role of a teacher shouldn't be limited simply to teaching this or that subject. There are some values which are necessary for social wellbeing that teachers must seek to inculcate in their students besides engaging in formal classroom teaching. This is really crucial for the very future of humanity. Teachers will touch the hearts of their students when they teach them not just this or that subject but, much more than that, if they teach them how to live.

In their role as conveyers of certain values, teachers must help children develop respect for all people, irrespective of religion, class, caste or whatever. God, in the Quran (17:70), says:

'We have honoured the children of Adam, and have borne them on the land and the sea, given them for sustenance things which are good and pure; and exalted them above many of Our creatures.'

This verse suggests that all human beings all the children of Adam must be honoured, no matter how different they may be from oneself in terms of ethnicity, religion, economic class and so on. Respecting the dignity of others also includes respecting their feelings and their right to their ideology or faith, even if it be very different from one's own. Respecting others in this way is a Quranic commandment that is as binding on us as are *namaz* and *zakat*. This means that even if someone talks against my religion, I must not insult him. I cannot

disrespect someone who is different from me in terms of religion or ideology if I call myself a Muslim. From a young age children should be taught to accept and respect differences and teachers can play a major role here. Imagine if an entire society follows this principle, can there be any conflict?

The Quran (6:108) lays down: 'Do not revile those [beings] whom they invoke instead of God, lest they, in their hostility, revile God out of ignorance.' This is another commandment of God. We need to respect other people and their right to their faith or belief system. We should not hurt their religious feelings. This is something that teachers need to help students learn from a young age.

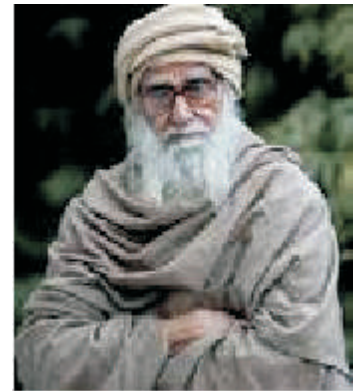
'Repel evil with what is best', the Quran (23:96) instructs us. What this commandment reflects is yet another value that teachers should help students imbibe. If we reply to evil with evil, we go against the Quran. The best way to repel evil is with good.

In preparing young minds to be able to flourish in terms of social relations, teachers can draw on another Quranic teaching: 'Each community has its own direction in which it turns: vie, then, with one another in doing good works.' This suggests the importance of doing good to others. God also instructs us, 'Tell My servants that they should always say what is best.' It is an absolute commandment. No matter what provocation one might face, no matter how badly someone may speak about you or even your religion, one must always 'say what is best' if one is a Muslim, i.e. someone who has truly submitted to God. If I am a Muslim, this is binding on me. Children need to be taught this by their teachers.

Yet another such verse (16:90) tells us 'God commands justice, kindness and giving their [due to] near relatives, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and transgression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed!' Here, the importance of justice is underlined. Teachers need to help students understand the importance of practising justice in terms also of their present and future relations and roles as children, as students, as neighbours, as fathers or mothers, as citizens. They need to develop the awareness that justice is part of obedience to God.

## Zero-Defect Universe

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



Some decades ago, the concept of 'zero-defect management' was propounded. A lot of literature was produced on the subject and considerable research was conducted on the issue. The concept spread rapidly in parts of the West and major efforts were made to try to implement it. However, despite much effort, it came to be accepted that 'zero-defect management' isn't at all possible in human affairs. It proved to be a failure!

But at around the same time as 'zero-defect management' in human affairs proved to be a failure, scientific research was proving that the system of nature that operates throughout the universe is based precisely on the principle of 'zero-defect management'. To take just one instance, the stars and the planets move in perfect precision. So, if you want to know at what time the sun will rise tomorrow and at what time it will set, you can get the exact information today itself so accurate is the motion of Earth around the sun!

So, on the one hand, the idea of 'zero-defect management' in the human world proved itself to be a complete flop while, on the other hand, in the natural world it was shown that 'zero-defect management' operates fully and in a perfect manner! So perfect is this management of the non-human world that we can know today itself that on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025 in New Delhi, sunrise will be at 05:56 am and sunset at 18:46 pm!

One can get accurate information of sunrise and sunset for any other place in the world, too, well in advance. In just the same way, the rest of the natural world is working in perfect order, as science reveals. Through various scientific disciplines we can get the information we want regarding such phenomenon for the distant past as well as the distant future, and this information will be accurate, without any change.

Now, reflect on the fact that this material world is functioning under the management of the Creator. From its very inception it has been operating on the principle of 'zero-defect management'. In contrast to this is the human world, where man makes plans but things are always subject to change, modification and failure. For instance, an industrialist conceives a project, but no matter how hard he may try, he cannot implement the project in a zero-defect manner.

As they say, it is in comparison that we understand. Compare God's way of managing things with man's way. The Divine management that orders phenomenon in the non-human world is completely zero-defect. In contrast, human management is necessarily flawed, in some way or the other. From various verses of the Quran we gain inspiration to reflect on the difference between the two. This comparative study tells us there is a basic difference between them. In the human world, despite all our efforts, there is and can be no zero-defect management: it is simply impossible. In contrast, in the natural world established and managed by God, zero-defect management prevails fully and throughout, and with complete accuracy.

When we reflect on this difference we realise that there is a Creator of this universe, who is All-Powerful and Perfect. The difference between man's world and the physical world, the world of the exact sciences, is a firm evidence of God's existence. As the Quran (67:3-4) tells us:

He created seven heavens one above the other in layers. You will not find any flaw in the creation of the Gracious One. Then look once again: can you see any flaw? Then look again and again. Your gaze will come back to you confused and exhausted.

Elsewhere, the Quran (50:6) says:

Have they not observed the sky above them and marked how We have built it and adorned it, leaving no flaws in it

This modern discovery of the system of the universe being flawless is proving one attribute of God to be true, and that is, in the words of the Quran: "God: there is no deity save Him, the Living, the Eternal One. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him." (2:255).

(Noted Islamic scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan heads the New Delhi-based Centre for Peace and Spirituality. For more details, see [www.cpsglobal.org](http://www.cpsglobal.org))

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## Sikh Man Donates Land For Building Mosque

**PURKAZI (MUZAFFAR NAGAR)** A Sikh family in Purkazi, a Muslim dominated town of Muzaffarnagar district, set an example of communal harmony recently by donating a piece of land to the Muslim community for the construction of a mosque. Amid sore memories of communal riots of Muzaffarnagar in 2013, this gesture came as 'soothing news' for many who still emphasised on the need for reviving harmony among different communities here. Purkazi town has only one Sikh family whose head is septuagenarian Sukhpal Singh Bedi. He handed over the letter of ownership of the land (100 yards) to Purkazi Nagar panchayat chairman Zaheer Farouqi during the auspicious month of the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji.

"What could be more auspicious than the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji to do this seva? (he refuses to call it donation and refers to it as seva)," asked Bedi. "Guru Nanak never treated people as Hindus, Muslims or other communities. For him, all were human and service to humanity is true service to Wahe Guru," he emphasized. One being asked why this 'seva' for a mosque, he

replied: "Purkazi is a Muslim dominated town and I have approximately one acre land in the middle of the town where we are developing a colony. It is surrounded by Muslims. Therefore, I decided to give 100 yards land for the construction of a mosque so that people could come and offer namaz in a mosque close to their homes."

The Purkazi block has 5,000 to 6,000 Sikhs, but in Purkazi town Bedi's family is the only Sikh family. Sukhpal Bedi said: "I was born and brought up here. In the past 70 years this area never witnessed any disturbance, even during the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013. We want to keep this harmony intact for our coming generations."

Purkazi nagar panchayat chairman Zaheer Farouqi said: "Bediji has set an example of communal harmony and he is an ideal for everyone in the town." This is not the first time when he has extended support for a social cause. Farouqi recalled that last year funds were raised for purchase of furniture for the government school and Bedi was the first person to donate Rs 20,000 and assured for more, if required. The first women's gym

was established by the nagar panchayat in the town and it was inaugurated earlier this month. Farouqi said Bediji took responsibility of paying the gym fees for six poor women till they wanted to continue.

Bedi has a garment shop in the town and his two sons do their small business to earn their livelihood. He also has a daughter. Farouqi said that Bedi, along with other members of the Sikh community, handed him the letter for ownership of the land and hoped that a mosque would be built on it soon. He said even women of the Sikh community asked him to invite them during construction so that they could do 'seva'.

In 2013, Muzaffarnagar witnessed communal riots that killed more than 60 people while over 50,000 were rendered homeless. Thousands of them didn't return to their native villages and began their lives from scratch in colonies established for them (commonly known as colonies of 'Danga Peedit'). Many mosques in the villages are still lying abandoned while a few were damaged during the violence.

(Extracted from [hindustantimes.com](http://hindustantimes.com))

## CAA is Fundamentally Discriminatory

In a press briefing issued in December 2019, Jeremy Laurence, Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has raised several concerns about the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), calling it "fundamentally discriminatory." The brief reads, "We are concerned that India's new Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 is fundamentally discriminatory in nature." It goes on to enumerate the various international statutes that could be violated if India continues to back the CAA. It says, "The amended law would appear to undermine the commitment to equality before the law enshrined in India's constitution and India's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to which India is a State party, which prohibit discrimination based on racial, ethnic or religious grounds."

The brief reminds India of its own prior commitment to upholding rights of migrants saying, "Just 12

months ago India endorsed the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration, which commits States to respond to the needs of migrants in situations of vulnerability, avoiding arbitrary detention and collective expulsions and ensuring that all migration governance measures are human rights-based."

Concerns have also been raised about violence leading to deaths and injuries at anti-CAA protests. The brief says, "... we are concerned at reports that two people have died and many including police officers have been injured in the Indian states of Assam and Tripura as people protest against the Act. We call on the authorities to respect the right to peaceful assembly, and to abide by international norms and standards on the use of force when responding to protests. All sides should refrain from resorting to violence."

(For details, see [sabrangindia.in](http://sabrangindia.in))

## Grant citizenship to migrants of all religions: Christian Forum

An ecumenical body representing all Christian denominations in Karnataka on January 9 urged the federal government to grant citizenship to illegal migrants not on the basis of their religions but on the merit of each individual case. "We wish to reiterate the statement made by the Archbishop of Bombay, Oswald Cardinal Gracias, who is the head of the Catholic Church in India, on December 27 regarding CAA that there is a danger of polarization of people along religious lines, which is very harmful for the country," says a memorandum from the All Karnataka United Christian Forum for Human Rights. Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore, president of the forum, told reporters that copies of the memorandum have been presented to the president and prime minister through the Karnataka governor.



Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore

At the same time, the forum appealed to all to maintain peace and harmony and not to take recourse to violent methods to fight their cause. "Religion should never be the criterion for

citizenship of a country. Nor is violence a solution when there is a difference of opinion," the forum asserts. It urged the federal government to dialogue with those opposing the Act, and comes to "an agreement about the way forward with justice, equity and fairness. There is no harm in backtracking or changing course if this is necessary for the good of the country and our people."

The forum assured the national leaders that Christians will continue to work for the betterment of all citizens and help build the nation based on equality, justice and fairness. It also expressed its solidarity with those discriminated on the basis of religion and assured them Christians' support and fellowship.

(Extracted from [mattersindia.com](http://mattersindia.com))

## Roll back CAA exercise, Christian women ask government

**New Delhi:** The Indian Christian Women Movement (ICWM) on January 9 urged the federal government to roll back the "unwanted exercise" of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens NRC and focus on "real issues affecting" the country. "In the stubborn insistence to go ahead with the NRC and CAA, we see nothing but a strategy to divert the attention of the people from the real issues and the development agenda," the ecumenical body says

in its letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The movement asks why the NRC and CAA are so important to the ruling disposition when the economy of the country is in a shambles. It lists increasing unemployment, rising prices and fall in production as the major issues of the country. "India is lagging far behind in the recently announced Human Development Index, the Gender Index and many other measures that are important indicators of growth as a nation

state," the letter points out. The movement also expresses its "deep concern" over waves of violence being unleashed in university campus and the "divisive factors tearing apart" India's secular and inclusive social fabric. It finds the aggressive enforcement of CAA and NRC as subtle moves to turn the country into a mono-cultural and mono-religious state.

(For details, see <http://mattersindia.com/2020/01/roll-back-cao-exercise-christian-women-ask-government/>)

## Thousands join multi-prayer programme in Delhi against citizenship law

People of different faiths came together on January 12 to participate in a "sarva dharma sambhava" – a multi-faith prayer ceremony – at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh, where anti-citizenship law protesters had been demonstrating. The inter-faith ceremony had a traditional Hindu-style "hawan" and chants of Sikh

"kirtan." The participants read out the Preamble of the Indian Constitution and took an oath to preserve its "socialist, secular" values.

"Scriptures from the Gita, the Bible, the Quran were read and Gurbani held. Then the Preamble of the Constitution was also read

out by people from varying faiths who are supporting this movement," Syed Taseer Ahmed, one of the organizers of the protest, told news agency PTI. The crowd swelled to thousands by evening.

(Extracted from [mattersindia.com](http://mattersindia.com))

By Nigar

Recently, I was fortunate to meet a spiritual coach, who had organised a spiritual retreat. Taking us through his personal journey, he stated he was always happy. It wasn't that he did not face day-to-day challenges as all of us do. But, he chose to be happy irrespective of what brickbats or hardships he faced.

According to the teacher, at one time, he was very fond of a certain type of *dosa* that was available at a particular restaurant. If he was travelling by this restaurant and he could not stop by, he would get upset. But as years went by, his spiritual insights helped him to overcome the agitation. Even if he craved for the *dosa* and did not get to eat it, he would let the matter go. From a little thing like a *dosa* to various other desires that we may nurture, the art lies in letting go and letting things be. This brings contentment.

Whatever I could grasp from this spiritual coach can be put in a nutshell as the 'Art of Contentment.' For someone like me, who is used to a cup of hot filter coffee in the morning (one of the most joyous moments for me) not able to access coffee in some

circumstances would at one time make me feel sad or deprived. But over the days, I got so used to drinking tea or non-filter coffee that the 'suffering' I went through in my mind simply vanished. I chose to let it be, and this made me content.

Imbibing contentment in one's life happens through experiences. No book or workshop can give us that gift. One can choose to be happy, irrespective of whether you get or do not get your favourite *dosa* or filter coffee!

In life, we often get stuck with petty issues of wants, aspirations, ambitions, plans or dreams. But God is the biggest planner. So, if we surrender to His will, then there is no pain of losing out if we don't get this or that.

While I personally have to practise what I am saying here, I also like to share this particular

# The Art of Contentment

## From Dosa to Filter Coffee, Your Provision Lies With God!



verse from the Holy Quran 'Allah enlarges, or grants by strict measure, the sustenance which He gives to whomsoever He pleases. The worldly rejoice in the life of this world: But the life of this world is but little comfort in the Hereafter.'

(Surah Ar-Raad, 26)

Reflecting on this verse makes one realise that our life is in control of the Almighty. That is the biggest motivation to remain happy always. Gratitude to the Almighty for what we have in our lives is the key to contentment.

The retreat did a world of good for me! The teacher's discussion about the ignorance of reality, the purpose of human life, God-realisation and so on resonated with me deeply. One reason was that he seemed to walk the talk and live it out in his daily life. After having seen money, fame and fortune and realising that

obtaining these was not the purpose God had brought him to the world, he underwent a transformation, shutting down his business and setting off on a search to discover himself. After intense study, including of various religions, he realised that knowledge about religions is just the kindergarten step, while going beyond conventional religiosity to enter the spiritual realm is like passing on to university.

At the retreat, the teacher generously shared his own experiences and personal spiritual journey with a small group of participants. Minus any intellectual jargon, he sought to help us open our hearts to question 'Who am I?' in a very simple manner.

The faith I believe in endorses moderation and the middle path. One need not renounce the world to attain God. What one has to renounce is the ego and the obsession with 'I', 'Me' and 'Mine' that work as an obstacle to connecting with God through the heart. The teacher brought this out very nicely at the retreat, and at the end of it I felt I had been in the presence of a really wise person!

**In life, we often get stuck with petty issues of wants, aspirations, ambitions, plans or dreams. But God is the biggest planner. So, if we surrender to His will, then there is no pain of losing out if we don't get this or that.**

◀ Page 1

## Promoting Interfaith Understanding

I noticed the happiness being expressed by these women because of being inside a mosque and sitting in an area which was otherwise thought to be reserved only for Muslim men. Some women were wearing western-style wear. The organizers had earlier made it clear that everything was allowed except shorts. Children could be seen playing inside the mosque. Senior citizens were seated on chairs, while the younger crowd preferred the carpet.

As soon as I entered the mosque, I was given a plate full of refreshments and a bag full of books on Islam, along with a notepad and a designer pen with 'Visit My Mosque Day 2020 Rahmath Group' printed on it.

The talk began with an explanation of the basic structure of the mosque, followed by a demonstration of *namaz*. Women were given a separate demonstration of the *namaz*. Ayat ul-Kursi and Surah Ikhlas were recited and their meanings explained to the audiences. Some *hadiths* regarding humanity were also elaborated upon and a copy of the Quran was passed on to visitors who read a verse and then a visually-challenged *hafiz* would read the complete verse.

I noticed during the Q&A session that visitors had a lot of questions. Most of the questions came in from the women's side. Some of the questions raised were about the



time required to complete *namaz*, why Muslims refer to Allah as 'He' if 'He' is formless, the difference between a *dargah* and a mosque, the concept of jihad, and why women are not generally allowed inside mosques. Curious visitors wrote down questions and passed them to the speaker but were disappointed as all of them could not be answered due to lack of time.

The interfaith audience was receptive and open to learning about Islam. They listened with rapt attention, asked a lot of questions and were careful not to offend anybody. Before the Zuhur prayer, there was a spiritual meditation session, followed by the Zuhur *namaz* and lunch. Visitors witnessed the *namaz* and were served both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food.

The initiative by the group and the mosque committee was a very welcome step in fostering understanding amongst people, at a time when the country which is being divided along communal lines. Muslims ought to become more active in such efforts to promote interfaith interaction and

understanding. Through such events as was recently organized in this mosque in Bangalore, people of other faiths can learn about Islam directly from Islamic scholars rather than getting biased and prejudiced information from third-party sources who have little or no authentic knowledge or connection with Islam. I hope that more such events are organized, in mosques in other parts of the country too.

Although the event was organized well, I feel that there is always room for improvement in anything that we do. This being the first such event for the general public, Rahmath Group could reflect as to how this effort could be made better and conducted on a larger scale. And just as this interfaith initiative sought to help people of other faiths get a better and more appreciative understanding of Islam, Muslims should also seek to develop a better and more appreciative understanding of other faiths.

**(The author is a Bangalore-based freelance writer. He can be contacted on farooqi.haris@gmail.com)**

## Goa Church Holds Public Protest Against CAA



### Anti-CAA protest in Goa

**Margao:** Hundreds of people from various religions attended a protest meet organized by the Church against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population register (NPR) in Margao, Goa's commercial capital. "It is our common conviction that these measures are unconstitutional and therefore, unacceptable. The government must listen to the voice of the people and withdraw the act," Father Savio Fernandes, executive secretary of the Council of Social Justice and Peace, one of the organizers explained the purpose of the January 24 protest.

The Goa unit of the National Confederation for Human Rights and the Concerned Citizens for Democracy collaborated with the Church group.

Speakers were unanimous that the main purpose of the federal government in enacting the citizenship law was to divide the people of India. "We thank our government for helping us to come together as one family irrespective of our religion," they said.

Father Fernandes aid the CAA and NRC are "literally shaking the foundations of India's existence as a pluralistic, multi-faith society where all citizens are supposed to be equal before the law."

The amended citizenship law, the priest added, would undermine the commitment to equality before the law enshrined in India's constitution.

**(Extracted from mattersindia.com)**

The pleasant December winter in Bangalore welcomed 40 participants to the School of Ancient Wisdom for the 6<sup>th</sup> Discover Yourself Train the Trainers Workshop, anchored and organised by Dr. Sadathullah Khan, editor of 'Islamic Voice'.

Coffee, tea and tasty biscuits awaited the participants as they arrived from different places in India and abroad. Shabbir Ahmed from Mumbai had meticulously co-ordinated the logistics, making everyone feel very well cared for. Some sisters from Kolkata generously brought along original Bengali rosogollas. Not to be forgotten were the delicious melting-in-the-mouth biscuits brought by a participant from Hyderabad. And Yasmin Mehtab from Kolkata arrived a few days after the workshop started, carrying with her a yummy cake!

The introductory session was, to put it simply, mind-blowing. Participants were given name tags and had to add a positive adjective to their name, starting with the first letter of the name. This was a wonderful exercise in self-reflection. Some of us had to search google to get their adjectives!

The days of coaching and guidance by Sadathullah Khan opened up our hearts, helping us reflect on our own lives. It stirred the conscience, tugged at the heart strings as each of us related to our 'issues'...incompleteness, grudges, past baggage, and so on. We realised, through Sadath

## The Magic of Discover Yourself TT6!

**We were from different backgrounds and different places and many of us were meeting for the first time ever. Yet, in just a few days' time, we all became like one big family, sharing our joys and sorrows, our life-stories and our challenges together. That was the magic created by the 6<sup>th</sup> Discover Yourself Train the Trainers Workshop held in Bangalore recently!**



By Nigar

Bhai's coaching, that life is actually empty and meaningless. It is simply a series of happenings, which we attribute meaning to. By giving negative meanings and interpretations to things, small or big, that happen in our lives, we end up making life difficult for ourselves and others. So the next time, you wish or greet someone and he or she does not respond, so what should you do? Just accept it as a

happening, a part of things as they are, without attributing any negative meaning to it! The same tool needs to be applied to different situations that we may encounter in our daily lives. That's a great recipe to be at peace.

How most of us overwork our minds and don't really give it a proper rest! Sadath Bhai underlined the need to shift our focus from the mind and

connection to our beautiful hearts instead. Connecting to Almighty Allah through our hearts can help us grow spiritually. It can also help us understand Islam as a way of life rather than a set of rituals done mechanically.

Understanding ourselves and our lives in the humorous and

light-hearted way suggested by Sadath Bhai took off many blinkers from our eyes. We need to keep shutting off the negative prompters that threaten to pop into our minds every now and then. So, the next time some anxiety, fear, apprehension, doubt, negative feelings grip you, just say 'Shut Up' to these fellows!

One of the highlights of the workshop was our visit to a beautiful plot of land in the wilderness that Sadath Bhai hopes to develop as a sort of spiritual retreat centre. We had great fun, 'grown-ups' behaving somewhat like children once again! We had a delicious lunch and trekked up the rocks, feeling the fresh breeze, a truly rejuvenating experience.

Sharing meals and praying together, bonding through fun-filled moments as well as listening to participants share their troubles and challenges these are some of the memories many of us will treasure. Parting from the big family of more than 40 was a heart-wrenching experience. But, hopefully, we returned to our destinations energetically enthused with positive intentions of creating our futures and handling our lives by connecting to the heart!

A very big thank you to Sadath Bhai and to each one of the participants!

## Practices Learnt from DYS TT 2019

By Md. Giasuddin Mondal

### 1. LANGUAGE/DECLARATION

• We assume **OUR PERCEPTION** and **INTERPRETATION** as the **ULTIMATE TRUTH** or **REALITY**

• Sometimes what we say about our children, creates his/her future – therefore, we must check our words before uttering.

• If we submit to what is happening to us as the will of Allah and show our gratitude (Shukr) it strengthens our Iman. On the other hand, if we deny and complain about what is happening to us and remain ungrateful (Nashukr) to Allah for everything then it leads our way to Kuffar

**2. LIFE IS EMPTY AND MEANINGLESS WITHOUT THE LOVE OF ALLAH** – If we seek the love of Allah, nothing can stop us and we get Sakeena (Tranquility).

**3. QAREEN** always tries to pull us down to our past. He incites humans with waswas (evil

suggestion) and misguides us. He advocates nothing, but evil and vice.

**4. All human beings are connected to Allah through ROOH, hence, even a small effort towards good deed means a lot to our Almighty**

**5. INTEGRITY:** The quality of being **HONEST** to **OTHERS** is **IMAN**

**6. OCCURRING :** Our **ACTION** is the result of that moment as **WHO WE WERE** and all the

**CONSEQUENCES** that we face is the result of our **ACTION**

**PERCEPTION** is the lens

through which we see **“OUR REALITY”**, that is from our background and not from the background of **‘LA’ (NOTHINGNESS)**

**8. The distinction between GOOD and EVIL lies in our HEART**

(Giasuddin works with the Al-Ameen Mission, Kolkata)

1. Be in the present
2. Come from the background of 'La' (Nothingness)
3. Treat/ See people as human beings
4. Submit your body and mind to connect with Allah

## Getting the Context Aligned!

By Khandakar Mahiul Haque

I have attended four Discover Yourself Workshops by Sadath Sir so far, and three Train-the-Trainer Workshops! In January 2016, I attended the Workshop as part of the Al-Ameen Mission team. This was followed by the Workshops in 2017, 2018 and 2019. My wife and our two kids attended the Workshop in October 2019. One of my children was just seven months then!

My father was a medical doctor and I was the youngest among the three brothers. When he fell sick, he began to worry a lot. This affected me as I used to wonder why, being a doctor, he was worrying about his sickness. When my father passed away, my mind became blank and I lost meaning in my life.

I was married and had a family, yet I wondered why I was living, what was my purpose in life?

These questions bothered me a lot. But after attending the DYS three-day Workshops, I began to see clearly the meaning of my life. When my younger child was born, there were some complications and I was told to take the baby to another hospital as there was no intensive care unit in the hospital where my baby was born. You can imagine my anxiety. Because of God's grace and the workshop insights I got, I was able to handle this emergency, accept it as a reality and do the best I could. Later in life too, when I faced challenging situations or times when I would become angry, the Workshop techniques came to good use.

After attending the DYS TT 6 I must confess that Sadath Sir has aligned me to the context and now I know I will Insha Allah lead a life of peace. I wish to introduce the Discover Yourself Workshop to friends from diverse faith backgrounds too in future.

• Recently, God blessed me with the opportunity of participating in the Discover Yourself Train-the-Trainers workshop, which was held in Bangalore in from 21-30 December 2019. Among the many things that I liked about the workshop were that it aimed at being transformative, rather than merely informative; it entailed a lot of sharing, rather than being a monologue; that even though it discussed many 'serious' issues, there was much fun and joy and laughter; and that there was much personal bonding between the participants, many of who were perhaps meeting each other for the very first time!

• I gained a lot of insights through this workshop, for which I express my thanks to Sadath Sahib and the workshop participants. Here are some of my learnings/reflections:

• One must have a clear idea of the purpose of human life, of why God created us and sent us to spend this brief time on Earth. This understanding is absolutely necessary in order to lead a truly meaningful/purposeful life and to spend each moment in the best possible manner.

• Manifesting the attributes of God in our being and through our actions and dealings is a very helpful way to understand what a truly meaningful life is about. For instance, God is forgiving, and so we must be forgiving. God is loving, and so we must be loving. God is generous, so we must be generous.

• Life in this world is temporary. After we drop the physical body, we continue to live. The consciousness of the reality of life after physical death is essential in order to lead a truly meaningful life, including in setting our priorities, handling challenges and saving ourselves from getting consumed by the world.

• The past is past and cannot be undone. While we may not be able to forget the past, we should not let ourselves be imprisoned by it. In order to get over bitter memories of the past we need to forgive those who have (or who we think have) wronged us, at the same time as we must request those whom we have wronged for forgiveness.

• It is said that everything that happens, happens ultimately for our own good. If we have had some bitter experiences in the past, one way to overcome the pain is to reflect on these experiences and try to discern what good we have actually gained from them, which we may not have been aware of before. In this way, we can come to see these experiences as blessings, rather than as a curse. We can come to realize that they were vital for our own inner/spiritual growth.

• Our past can be seen as a valuable learning resource. We can

## 6th DYS Leadership Training Workshop - Learning Lessons



creatively relate to the past by drawing lessons from it. We can learn from our past mistakes so that we do not make them again. In this way, relating positively to what we thought were the negative experiences of the past can help us grow.

• We make our own future by the way we relate to the past and handle the present. So, live in the present and do not fret about the future. Live moment-by-moment, day-by-day and plan your future.

• BBeing the sort of person we truly are is more important than doing. Our doing should emerge from and reflect our being. What is important is not so much what we do or know or believe, but, rather, who we are as a person.

• We need to accept reality just as it is. This also means that we need to accept people as they are (even though we may not approve of everything about them).

• We need to focus on transforming our own selves, instead of hankering after trying to change others. If we are truly transformed people, it will automatically touch other people's lives.

• We are created as pure beings, but curtains come to be placed over this as we grow older. Spiritual growth simply means lifting these curtains so that our real, pure self once again emerges and we become just as we were when we were born. We need to become like little children in this way, children who are still rooted in their true being.

• Repel evil with good. Love is the only effective antidote to hate.

• Love is the most important value, and the highest form of love is love for God. A life lived in the best possible way is a life that is infused with the love of God.

• We should love God for God's

### By Qalamdar

sake alone, not for fear of hell or greed for heaven or other such motives.

• God wants us to be loving and joyful. Hence, true religiosity/spirituality makes us loving and joyful. If a certain understanding of religion drives people to become glum, grim, gloomy, depressed, fearful, self-righteous, judgmental, hateful, aggressive, cruel, egocentric, spiteful, vengeful, etc., it is definitely not authentic religion. It is, in fact, the very opposite of true religion.

• Prayer should be an expression of the love of God. If one is infused with love for God, prayer will not be regarded as a burden.

• Worship of God is not simply the performance of certain ritual actions or muttering certain words mechanically. Every action of ours can become worship of God if infused with the love of God and done for God's sake and as service to God. In this way, all our 'mundane' actions can also become acts of worship.

• True religiosity/spirituality is grounded in ethics. It is one's ethical life that counts, not the mere performance of rituals.

• A values-based approach to religion can help us appreciate the common points of various Divinely-inspired religious paths, including a shared ethical core. These paths might differ in terms of external form, ritual and dogma, but there is a great deal in common in terms of their ethics.

• Given this, a values-based approach to religion can help us work for promoting understanding, goodwill and harmony between people who follow, or claim to follow, different religious traditions, which is a great

necessity today.

• Submit to the Divine Will. 'Thy will be done, not mine'. *Khuda-rukhi zindagi*, not *khud-rukhi zindagi*.

• God-oriented life, not self-oriented life.

• If done with the right intention, service to God's creatures (including non-human species, such as plants and animals, as well as the natural environment) can be service to God.

• By engaging in the service of

others, we can expand our circle of concern beyond ourselves and our families. As a result of this, we may find that we are no longer so affected by challenges that earlier may have consumed a lot of our energy and caused us much pain (such as, for instance, challenges within the family unit). The more concerned we are about larger issues affecting the rest of creation, the less concerned we will be about our own 'problems'.

• One good way to get our attention off our own selves and our 'problems' is to serve others. That way, our 'problems' may come to be seen as less severe. In serving others with the right intention, we receive blessings, which can help reduce the severity of our own 'problems'.

• Relate with every other person as a fellow human being, above and beyond all labels invented by society.

• Spending time with God-conscious souls is a real blessing and is vital for one's spiritual growth.

• Spiritual companionship is a precious treasure.

• Try to spend at least some hours a day in silence.

• Each word we utter is the consumption of valuable energy, so why waste energy on useless chatter?

• Set apart some time every day (maybe 20-30 minutes) to listen to the inner voice and write down in a notebook what you think this voice is telling you.

## DISCOVER YOURSELF!

'Personality & Leadership Development Workshop based on Spiritual Quotient'

### DISCOVER YOURSELF WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Human Psychology based on Quran & Hadith

#### 1. Discover Yourself in Al Muminah School

(Mira Road, Mumbai) MN

Date: 4th & 5th Feb 2020

Timing: 7:30 AM to 1:30 PM

Venue: Al Muminah School, Wing-B, Deepak Hospital Rd, Medetiya Nagar, Queen's Park, Mira Road East, Mira Bhayandar, Maharashtra 401105

#### 2. Discover Yourself in Surat (Gujarat)

Date: 7th, 8th, 9th Feb 2020

Venue: SPB Hall, 1st Floor, Samruddhi Building, 4th Floor, Dutch Garden Rd, Nanpura, Surat, Gujarat 395001.

Fee: 1500 for 3 days; including tea and lunch

Contact for Registration:

Dr Ashraf Master - 9374722322;

Rubina Master - 9427113993

Email: ashrafmaster1@gmail.com

Email: dysworkshop@gmail.com

For more Info visit: [www.discoveryyourself.in](http://www.discoveryyourself.in)

# A Muslim Vision to Spread Inter-Community Goodwill

With about 1.9 billion followers (2019), almost a quarter of earth's population, Islam is the second-largest and the fastest-growing religion in the world. Islam is a religion of peace and preaches love, compassion, and respect for all other faiths and their adherents. According to Islam, Muslims are meant to simply be conveyers of the message of peace and love and the Unity of God, and it is not their responsibility to take it upon themselves if someone accepts or rejects this message. The principal duty of Muslims is only to share the message of the Unity of God and the way of life that this implies.

Today, if the image of Islam has been tarnished and it is looked upon as a religion which preaches intolerance and violence, it is many of those who call themselves followers of the faith many 'Muslims' themselves who, through their own wrong actions, have spoilt the image of Islam. They are responsible for the negative image of Islam globally.

Here are some practical things that Muslims could do to promote harmony, goodwill and understanding between Muslims and people of other faiths:

1. Muslims should understand that we are living in a plural society,

and so we must know how to get along harmoniously with people of other faiths. In a multi-religious country like India, if the cow is considered sacred by Hindus, Muslims ought to respect the sentiments of their Hindu brothers and sisters. The Constitution of India, which upholds pluralism, has to be understood well by each and every citizen of the country, including Muslims. Muslims should work towards establishing peace and justice, respect all faiths and also respect the laws of the country. It is the duty of Muslims, like all other citizens, to work for the general good of the society.

2. Muslims should seek to understand and follow the Charter of Medina of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which is a beautiful illustration of respect for religious pluralism. All Muslims, including children, should be educated about the gems of this Charter, which is all about respecting people of other faiths and their rights. They should remember that humility and respect for each other are the keys to peace and the happiness of

**We need balanced Muslim religious scholars who can interpret Islam and its relation to contemporary issues in a meaningful and positive way.**

By K. Rahman Khan

humanity.

3. We need balanced Muslim

**We Muslims of this country have chosen to live here as its citizens. India is our home. So, when Muslims are citizens of India, they must follow the etiquette required to relate harmoniously with people of different faiths, abstain from conflicts with other communities and work hard so that they excel in every field.**

religious scholars who can interpret Islam and its relation to contemporary issues in a meaningful and positive way.

4. Muslims should participate actively in all fields of national endeavour, striving to put to rest memories of an unhappy past. Secular parties should assist them in this effort and make redressal of Muslims grievances part of a wider campaign for eradication of social wrongs and economic deprivation.

5. Muslims should be pro-active in practical efforts to promote mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue and thus



work for a culture of peace;

We Muslims of this country have chosen to live here as its citizens. India is our home. So, when Muslims are citizens of India, they must follow the etiquette required to relate harmoniously with people of different faiths, abstain from conflicts with other communities and work hard so that they excel in every field. That way, they can come out of the shell of victimhood and engage in useful service towards the wider society and humanity. Muslims should stop creating a mountain out of a molehill over different issues and learn to live amicably with their co-citizens. If they live in peace and harmony with others and think of and contribute to the country's welfare, they will, God willing, receive the goodwill and respect of others.

(The author is a former Member of Parliament)

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By Qalamdar

A soft-spoken, unassuming man with a glowing face who radiates love, peace and kindness: that's one way to describe 61 year-old Mohammad Nurul Islam Middya.

Nurul Islam is one of the pioneers of an educational renaissance among the Muslims of West Bengal. He was born in 1959 in Khalatpur, in what was then a remote village in West Bengal's Howrah district, located some 60 kilometres from Kolkata. He studied in the local village school. In 1976, when he was in the 10<sup>th</sup> standard, a man in the village set up a *madrasa* and selected young Nurul Islam as its secretary. That was the beginning of his future mission of educational reform.

Nurul Islam was pained by the general educational marginalisation of the Muslims of West Bengal. Following the Partition in 1947, many economically well-off families from this part of Bengal shifted to what is now Bangladesh. The bulk of the Muslims who remained in West Bengal were socially, economically and educationally marginalised. Although they accounted for more than a fourth of the state's population, their representation in sectors like government service and business was very low. Nurul Islam believed that education was the key to the development of the community.

As a student at the Maulana Azad College in Kolkata, Nurul Islam's interest in working for the educational progress of the marginalised Muslims of West Bengal received a further impetus when he came in touch with a professor of the college from

## How Just One Person Can Make a Big Difference!



Nurul Islam



The main campus of Ai-Ameen Mission at village Khalatpur

whom he came to know about Sri Ramakrishna and the Ramakrishna Mission, whose institute of culture he used to frequent. He was impressed by the selfless service of monks of the Ramakrishna Mission. He appreciated their social engagement, including their work in the educational field, combining secular education with spiritual and value-based education. He developed the idea of a similar sort of mission among the Muslims of West Bengal. And so, in the mid-1980s was born the Al-Ameen Mission. 'Al-Ameen' means 'The Trustworthy', a term by which the people of Mecca used to refer the Prophet Muhammad even before he received the first revelation.

Starting with a single school (located in the village of Khalatpur) with only seven students, the Al-Ameen Mission gradually turned into a veritable

social movement. It now has some 70 schools, located in almost every district of West Bengal and some in nearby states such as Jharkhand, Bihar and Tripura. All of the institutes are residential. They aim at providing modern education with moral values in a fully residential system where students from various strata of society stay and learn together. In addition to the residential schools there are more than 25 day-schools. Almost all the schools run by the Al-Ameen Group have Bengali as the medium of instruction and follow the West Bengal state curriculum, although there is a move towards adopting English as the medium in some of the schools.

Setting up these schools is not an end in itself, Nurul Islam explains. Rather, they are intended to help students join the educational 'mainstream'. And his vision for the schools is not simply to help children get 'good' scores and land up with a 'good' job. 'Man is the

most eminent among all of God's creatures,' he explains, adding, 'Through proper education, children's talents should be nurtured so that they become better human beings—good people, who serve others and lead a peaceful life and help spread peace in the country and in the world.'

So far, almost 23,000 students have passed out from the Al-Ameen Mission's residential institutes. At present, the total student strength is around 17,000. Many students come from economically vulnerable Muslim families. A substantial number of seats are reserved for orphans and meritorious students of very poor families. The fee structure is calibrated according to the financial capacity of the students' families. Presently, some 25% of the students pay fees ranging from 0 to 25% and so enjoy 75 to 100% subsidy, which is met from *zakat* funds. Some 40% of the students pay fees ranging from 26 to 60% of the total fees and receive

between 40 to 74% subsidy, which is met from public donations.

The dedicated efforts of Nurul Islam and his team have had a remarkable impact on the overall conditions of the Muslims of West Bengal. Over the years, numerous Al-Ameen students have excelled in academics and have gone on to take up a range of careers in India and abroad. If today Muslims in West Bengal have a considerably better representation in government services and many professions than some decades ago, much of the credit for that goes to Al-Ameen Mission, whose schools have produced a large number of doctors, engineers, government officials and other such professionals. Many of the alumni maintain a close relation with their alma mater, supporting it financially in order to help it carry on with its mission.

From its humble beginnings with one little school several decades ago, the Al-Ameen Mission has come a long way. It must not have been all smooth sailing though. What about the hurdles that it must have had to contend with? 'Facing obstacles is a blessing (*rehmat*) from God,' Nurul Islam explains. 'Success lies within a problem. It is won by passing through obstacles', he adds.

Nurul Islam's efforts over the decades have won for him numerous awards and widespread recognition. His inspiring story is a powerful reminder of how just one well-intentioned person can make a major difference in the lives of literally tens of thousands of people!

(For more information about the Al-Ameen Mission, please see their website [www.alameenmission.org](http://www.alameenmission.org))



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## Mysuru Gets Its First Ever Muslim Woman Mayor

For the first time in its 158-year history, the Mysuru Municipal Corporation has a Muslim woman mayor Tasneem. According to the Indian Express, Tasneem is also the youngest ever mayor of the city. She is 31.

Tasneem has lived all her life in Mysuru's Meena Bazaar area, and has been the corporator for the area since 2013. She replaced her uncle, three-time corporator Alhaj Naseeruddin Babu, as the Congress candidate from the ward after it was earmarked for women. In 2018, she contested again on a Janata Dal (Secular) ticket and



won. Tasneem told the Indian Express that she is making efforts to ensure that Mysuru retains its "cleanest city" tag. "Even though we ended up third on the list of cleanest cities in the 2019 rankings, we are now working towards securing the coveted top spot on the list. With the dedicated service of our

pourakarmikas, officers across all levels and with the help of our residents, we are confident of winning the 'Cleanest City' tag this time. This is my priority as of now."

Born as the third child to tailor Munnavar Pasha and homemaker Tahseen Banu, Tasneem is a former student of Maharani's Science College for Women in Mysore. The youngest Mayor of Mysore is a mother to two Syeda Rumani, a Class 8 student, and Syed Uwaiz, a Class 2 student. Her husband Syed Samiulla is a hand-embroidery worker who runs a business establishment in Meena Bazaar.

## Honouring Moroccan King Who Helped Save Jews

The line to enter New York City's B'nai Jeshurun synagogue recently went around the block. But the 700 people who crowded the sidewalk on West 88th street weren't there for services. They came to celebrate a king a Moroccan king, to be exact. The ceremony, organized by the KIVUNIM: The Institute for World Jewish Studies as part of their three-day 10th anniversary conference, celebrated the creation of The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Rabbi Abraham Heschel Award and its first recipient, the late King Mohammed V of Morocco, who protected the country's 250,000 Jews from the occupying Vichy French forces and the Nazis during World War II.

In the early 1940s, Morocco was still a French protectorate controlled by the pro-Vichy government. When, in 1941, the occupying forces attempted to enact legislation discriminating against Jews, the king only 32 years old at the time refused. Thanks to the strong decision of the sovereign, the Moroccan Jewish community was neither detained nor deported or murdered in concentration camps, said Serge Berdugo, secretary general of the Jewish communities of Morocco and ambassador-at-large. "All Moroccans, Jews or Muslims, enjoyed his full protection", he remarked. This award, Berdugo



(Mohammed V of Morocco)

continued, represents the American Jewish community's "recognition of the deep convictions, the moral approach and brave policy," of the late Moroccan ruler, who died in 1961.

Princess Lalla Hasna, Mohammed V's granddaughter and sister to Morocco's King Mohammed VI (and wearing a caftan of Jewish embroidery), accepted the award. KIVUNIM alumni also presented the princess with a *khata* scarf of the Buddhist tradition, given to the organization by the Dalai Lama.

Andre Azoulay, a Jewish advisor to the king, read out an official speech on his behalf. "Speaking to you as 2015 draws to a close, I am sure you realize that my understanding

of the honor bestowed on the Kingdom of Morocco tonight is more than a mere reminder of an exemplary page of history written more than 70 years ago," he said. "Today, we need, more than ever, to ponder the lessons and relevance of this part of history in order to stand up more forcefully to the deadly aberrations of those who are hijacking our cultures, our faiths and our civilizations. We are living at a time and in a world in which the collective imagination of our societies is too often impaired, not to say poisoned, by regression and archaism. By capitalizing on the depth and resilience of the legacy left by my revered grandfather His Majesty Mohammed V, we can, together, set out to recover the lost expanses of reason and mutual respect which have vanished from many parts of the world."

Rabbi Gad Bouskila of Brooklyn's Netivot Israel Congregation opened the festivities with a traditional Moroccan prayer for the king. B'nai Jeshurun's Rabbi Jose Rolando Matalon then joined Imam Id Youssef Hassan of Farouk Mosque in reciting a blessing of peace. A joint concert of Jewish and Arabic music by David Broza and Mira Awad wrapped up the celebration.

## Muslim and Jewish youth groups unite to serve

Young women from the Muslim group Gathering Angels and the Bat Mitzvah group from Temple Beth Ora organized a care package and lunch service for people in Edmonton, Canada, recently "I really want to teach these girls that our job in this world pretty much is to serve others," said Nesrine Merhi-Tarrabain, the leader of the Gathering Angels. She said that she has been encouraging her girls to volunteer for several years and recently got a call from a local Jewish temple to suggest a collaboration.

"I thought that would be a great opportunity. First of all, getting them to go out and volunteer and do something meaningful, and the other thing... would be to get

to know other kids from the wider Edmonton community," said Gila Caine, the rabbi at Temple Beth Ora.

About two dozen teens participated around a dozen from each group. "When it comes down to helping others, we should put our differences aside, and truly just bring out our humanity in us. We should really serve others for that reason," said Merhi-Tarrabain. She said that many of the girls in the group donated some of their own money to buy supplies for care packages.



Rabbi Gila Caine (L) and Nesrine Merhi-Tarrabain

Nour Tarrabain, 16, said that the experience of volunteering with another religious group has helped give her a new perspective. "It's been very eye-opening," she said. "Two completely different groups and religions coming together and doing the perfect thing: giving back to the community and just helping one another."

## USA: Brave Muslim Teen

A Muslim teenager from Brooklyn showed amazing bravery after he saw an Orthodox Jewish woman get punched by a man on the subway. He helped police catch the suspect. It wasn't until 31-year-old Rayvon Jones got off the B68 bus agitated and belligerent, that 17-year-old Ahmed realized that he was standing up to a guy nearly a foot taller and twice his age.

But none of that mattered at the time. He was just doing the right thing.

"She was dressed, like religiously, you could just tell she was Jewish, and I'm Muslim. And people were just confused like, you just helped a Jewish lady, like wow, it has nothing to do with the fact that she's Jewish, I just helped a lady,"

Ahmed said.

Ahmed was riding the Q-train in Brooklyn in the night when he says he saw Jones smack an Orthodox Jewish woman in the face who was sitting near him. "He just hit her, and when I looked at her she was bleeding, there was blood all over her face. Her glasses were on the floor, her stuff was all scattered, and she was just crying. She was on the phone and was like, 'Why would he do this?'" Ahmed said.

The Muslim teen, whose family is from the Sudan, says he followed Jones about five blocks from the Newkirk Plaza Subway Station, first on foot and then in a car with an Orthodox Jewish man who offered to help in the chase. They spotted Jones hop and called the police, who arrested him.

## London Mosque Hosts Inspiring Interfaith Drive



mankind," a 'Faiths Forum' spokesperson said. "Similarly, in Jewish scripture 'therefore, Adam [from whom all humanity descended] was created singly, to teach us that whoever destroys a single life' is considered by Scripture to have destroyed the whole

A mosque in Golders Green, in the London Borough of Barnet, hosted an interfaith blood donation drive recently to save lives and encourage religious communities to work together. 'Faiths Forum', who organized the event, said it was pleased to welcome people from the local community to the Golders Green Mosque for an open-door event for the first time. "There is a verse in the Qur'an which states 'whoever saves one life, it is as if he has saved the whole of

world and whoever saves a single life is considered by Scripture to have saved the whole world."

This is not the first time for the Golders Green mosque to organize a blood donation drive. In November 2017, shortly after the Islamic Centre was set up in Golders Green, members of the Muslim community turned up at Golders Green United Synagogue in order to donate blood for Mitzvah Day.

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## Unlettered

**"It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger of their own, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest error."**

(Al-Jum'ah (The Congregation) - Chapter 62: Verse 2)

Some of these words are very interesting. God is mentioned in the third person, because the ignorant, Arabs did not know Him. As there was no "He" in their minds, God first emphasizes the darkness of their nature, their great distance from Him, and indicates that they cannot be addressed directly by Him.

Then God calls them *unlettered*. They were not all illiterate, but they had no knowledge of God and the Messenger. The word *among* shows that the Messenger was one of them, but only in the sense of being unlettered. Being chosen by God, he could not possibly belong to the Age of Ignorance. However, he had to be unlettered so that God would teach him what he needed



explaining the Quran and the universe to them, and showing them in minute detail how to lead a balanced and exemplary life in every sphere of activity.

The sentence *although they had been, before, in manifest error* indicates that God would purify and educate them even though they had gone astray. He did all of this through an unlettered Messenger and by teaching them the Quran. Throughout history and even today, this Book has met the needs of countless brilliant scientists, scholars, and saints.

(Compiled From: "The Messenger of God: Muhammad" - Fethullah Gulen, pp. 183, 184)

to know. God would remove him from his people, educate him, and make him a teacher for all unlettered people.

The phrases *to recite to them His signs and to purify them* point out that he teaches them about the meanings of the Quran and of creation in a gradual manner, and informs them how to strive for spiritual perfection. He guides them to higher ranks by

## HADITH ILLUMINATES THE HEART

### Seek the Good in Everyone

We must recognise that every person who believes in Allah and in His Messenger cannot be devoid of some inborn good, however evil his practice may be. **Involvement in major transgressions does not**

**uproot a person's iman unless the transgressor deliberately defies Allah and scorns His commands.** We have to heed the *Sunnah* of the Prophet who used to treat wrongdoers as a physician would treat a patient, not as a policeman would treat a criminal. He was very kind to them and always listened to their problems.

The following example illustrates this point: a Qurayshi adolescent once came upon the Prophet and asked permission to fornicate. The Prophet's Companions were so outraged by the young man's request that they rushed to punish him, but the Prophet's attitude was totally



not approve of it for their mothers'. Then the Prophet repeatedly asked the young man whether he would approve of it for his daughter, sister, or aunt? Each time the young man answered 'No,' and each time the

Prophet added that '[Other] people would not approve of it for theirs'. He then held the young man's hand and said: 'May Allah forgive his [the young man's] sins, purify his heart, and fortify him [against such desires]' (Ahmad and Tabarani).

The Prophet's sympathetic attitude clearly indicates a gesture of goodwill, a conviction that **inborn goodness of the human self outweighs the elements of evil which could only be transient.**

(Source: Islam: The Way of Revival, "The Ethics of Dawaa and Dialogue" - Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, pp. 224, 225)

**"We have to heed the Sunnah of the Prophet who used to treat wrongdoers as a physician would treat a patient, not as a policeman would treat a criminal."**

different. Calm and compose, he asked the young man to come closer to him and asked: 'Would you approve of it [fornication] for your mother?' The young man replied: 'No'. The Prophet said: '[Other] people also would

## VIEWES

### Muslim Leaders Must Invest In People, Not Wars: Marina Mahathir



Marina Mahathir, the daughter of Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, says Muslim leaders must focus on education and health instead of war and strife. An activist and writer, she is a member of the Sisters in Islam (SIS), an NGO, and has been a vocal critic of what she calls the "Arabisation" of Malay culture, particularly under the influence of oil-rich Saudi Arabia. 62-year-old Marina says it's time for Muslims to confront the problems that stem from a rigid interpretation of religion, something which powerful men have used for their own gain.

Malaysia, an island country, known for its ethnic diversity, serene beaches and colonial-era architecture, stands out in the Muslim world for its economic progress - its top export are integrated circuits, and Kuala Lumpur has stayed clear from conflicts that have bogged down other Muslim nations in the Middle East. In an interview with TRT World, Marina shared her views:

**Q: Tell us about Sisters in Islam? Are you its founder?**

A: No, I'm not its founder. I was a supporter for a long time, but I actually joined in 2009. Sisters in Islam was founded 30 years ago. It was an initiative of Muslim women, journalists, lawyers and academics who were part a debate around a law that would ban domestic violence. A lot of men said such a law can't be introduced because religion

allowed them to beat their wives. But the women who were part of Sisters in Islam were puzzled because they found it hard to believe that God would allow female believers to be beaten up. These women did their own research and contacted scholars. They figured that there were many interpretations of the Ayat 4:34, which talks about hitting and there's no consensus on what it means. Also, the hitting part comes at the end of a long list of ways on how to solve (domestic) conflicts.

That opened up the debate and the law was finally adopted in 1994 - making Malaysia the first Muslim country to have a Domestic Violence Act.

**Q: What do you think about the rise in Islamophobia?**

A: We complain about Islamophobia, but we are not really doing much to end that stereotyping and prejudice by behaving the way we do. Islamophobia is terrible, but I don't think we are entirely not at fault. We can't complain about it and at the same time keep our people illiterate, impoverished and bombing the hell out of each other. Muslim leaders must focus on their people, and spend money on health and education instead of on weapons they buy from the west. If I put my feminist hat on for a while, then I think all these countries are ruled by men, and they have their egos that need to be stroked, and that's it.

(Extracted from trtworld.com)

**"The strong man is not the good wrestler; the strong man is only the one who controls himself when he is angry."**

Sahih Al Bukhari

## Teachers as Transmitters of Values

A good teacher is not simply someone who knows a lot about his subject and can deliver a good lecture. She must also be able to motivate her students, using different methods, so that they can understand what she wants to convey. A good teacher does not just deliver what she wants to communicate to her students but delivers it well, so that the students can properly comprehend her message. This is actually a practice or *sunnat* of God.

The Quran (2:260) describes a conversation between God and the Prophet Abraham which has great relevance with regard to the educational process.

"When Abraham said, "Show me, my Lord, how You revive the dead!" God said, "Do you not believe?" Abraham answered, "Yes, indeed I do believe, but just to reassure my heart." Then God said, "Take four birds, and train them to come back to you. Then place them separately on each hilltop, and call them: they will come flying to you. Know that God is almighty and wise."

Here, the Prophet Abraham asks God to show him how He brings the dead back to life, and God

responds by asking him if he doesn't believe. Abraham replies that he does believe but he still wants satisfaction of the heart. Then God tells him about the four birds and what to do with them.

There is a very important message for us here. The Prophet Abraham asks God a question. God doesn't forbid this or consider it a crime. Instead, God accepts the question and answers it, with the help of a practical illustration or example (of the birds).

There is a very significant point to consider here. If one can ask God a question, then one can ask anyone a question, including one's teachers. The above Quranic verse shows the true attitude of Islam with regard to questioning, something that is markedly absent among many Muslim societies today, who insist on unquestioning, blind conformity. When the Prophet Abraham asked God a question, God didn't get angry or say that he has lost his faith, unlike what some Muslims do today when it comes to religious matters.

One test of a good teacher is whether he or she encourages

questioning. Teachers should never discourage the questions of their students even if they themselves don't know the answer because children's minds grow through questioning. Forbidding questioning is like breaking someone's legs and then insisting that he run in a race.

A good teacher encourages her students to ask questions because questioning is a practice or *sunnat* of the Prophet Abraham, who asked God a question because he wanted to be convinced. And God, the greatest Teacher, recognised the importance of satisfying the heart of Abraham and appropriately replied to his question. God replied by providing an example that satisfied Abraham.

Following the *sunnat* of God described above, a good teacher should satisfy his students with the help of examples to make an issue clear. If teachers teach in this way, they will earn the love and respect of their students and a big place in their hearts.

**(Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz has written extensively on Islam and on science-related issues. He can be contacted on maparvaiz@gmail.com)**

## READER'S SPACE

### Spread Your Smile

**By Firdos Tarannum**

It was a busy day for me. I was heading towards my home when, all of a sudden, a girl stopped me. She seemed to be around 7 years old. She wished me with a handshake. Although I was tired and in a foul mood, I wished her back, putting on a fake smile. But her smile was so infectious that I brightened up. I gave her a piece of chocolate that I had with me.

Some days later, the girl came up to me, this time with a group of her friends. She wanted to show her friends that that I was the teacher who had shared with her a bit of chocolate! I was pleasantly surprised.

"I will never forget you teacher",

the girl said. I knew that she said this not because of the chocolate as such but, rather, because of the smile I gave her while sharing the chocolate with her.

Till today, the girl comes to wish me with her brightest smile.

So, no matter what happens in our life and no matter how difficult things sometimes may seem to get, do please try to smile. It costs us nothing to share a little smile with others, while it benefits everyone around perhaps us the most!

**(Firdos Tarannum is pursuing her degree course at SKDS College, Sindhanur, and also teaches at Holy Family School, Sindhanur)**



## HEALTH TALK

### Free Homeo Clinic in Bangalore

**All common ailments like colds, coughs, fever, minor injuries, etc. can be easily dealt with by just keeping a few homeo remedies at hand.**

**By Salma Mashood**

Health is a choice it is a gift you can choose to give yourself. It is important, therefore, to consciously adopt a healthy lifestyle.

As rational, thinking human beings, it is our duty to take care of ourselves first before we try to help others. By looking within, you can easily make out what could have upset you. It may be the food that you ate yesterday or the stress that has built up in your mind on account of having to finish a lot of work in a short time. Just look for the cause. Giving yourself some quiet time will save you many miles on your road to health. You are NOT being selfish if you do that you are actually making yourself a better person, a good human being!

Many, many self-help methods exist today which can be easily tapped upon to accomplish your goal. Homeopathy is one such healing method. The little pills are easy to take, and work equally well on human beings, young or old. All common ailments like colds, coughs, fever, minor injuries, etc. can be easily dealt with by just keeping a few homeo

remedies at hand.

One major advantage of alternative medicine is that there are no side effects in case the medicine does not help you, it will not harm you either. It is also extremely cost effective your entire family can regain their health without having to spend a fortune on doctors and hospitals.

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## BOOK SHELF

### Little Book with Loads of Wisdom

#### BOOKSHELF

**Kitab al Sidq/The Book of Truthfulness**

**By Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz**

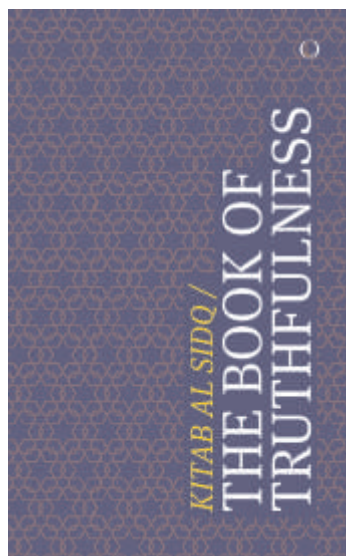
**Translated by Arthur John Arberry**

**Published by Other Books, Calicut, Kerala (www.otherbooksonline.com)**

**Price: Rs 140**

**Pages: 113**

Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz was a ninth century Muslim mystic whose *Kitab al-Sidq* is a widely known Sufi treatise, popularised in the English speaking world chiefly through its translation by Arthur John Arberry. The importance of this treatise lies in the fact that it is the earliest systematic presentation of the theory of Sufi experience written by a practising Sufi. This insightful and deeply inspiring work has had innumerable prints and critical editions ever since it appeared in translation in 1937. The Calicut-based publishing house Other Books deserves kudos for bringing brought out this Indian edition of Arberry's



translation.

Al-Kharraz was one of the best known of the Baghdad school of Sufis which flourished in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Little is known of his actual life. This text now is the

sole surviving work of al-Kharazz, although considerable fragments of his sayings and writings are preserved in the various Sufi compendia.

Beginning with the idea of *sidq* or truthfulness, the author develops his theme to include the 'stations' of fear, hope, trust, love, shame, longing and intimacy, all of which the mystic must pass on his path to God. The constant insistence on the experience of the prophets and men of piety is most remarkable.

The book is small in size and handy to carry. The language in the initial chapters may seem tough for some, but gradually as one goes deep into the book, the essence unfolds. It is a useful read for lovers of the wisdom of the Sufis that is so much needed in today's fragmented, disturbed world.





By Haris F. Farooqi

There is a famous saying in Urdu, which says *Ibaadat sey jannat milti hai, khidmat sey Khuda milta hai*. It translates as 'Through worship one obtains Paradise. Through service one obtains God.' I tried searching the Internet to find out the source of this phrase but could not find it. But I did find a lot of writings about serving. The person who serves others with the right intention is also considered by God to be in a state of worship.

Serving the creations of God does not only mean serving through parting with money. There are so many things that you can give other than money in order to serve others. Every day, people around us, and society as a whole, face a lot of problems. You can serve them by addressing some of those problems. Service to humanity has many different forms. Each individual has their style of thinking and their own perspectives, based on which they can serve and help others.

Even so-called small acts of kindness directed towards others can be service. To give your seat in a bus, to an old person is service. To help a visually-challenged person cross the road is service. To

## Service Begins At Home

**Serving the creations of God should be made a compulsory subject in every school and college and students must have practical sessions on this.**

**There is an opportunity to serve, every day, everywhere!**

remove an obstruction from a road is service. To educate the uneducated is service. To help people get clarity about an important issue is service. To truthfully advise those who ask for your advice is service; To help people with directions when they are in a new place is a service. To teach a useful skill to someone is a service. To feed animals and birds is a service. To feed a hungry person is a service. To water a thirsty plant is a service. To smile at and speak to someone when they are depressed is a service.

When I was at school, I noticed a general atmosphere of each student being pushed to try to be 'Number 1'. If somebody came out as 'Number 2' the only question he/she would be asked by both parents and teachers would be: "Who is No. 1? What did he/she do to become Number 1? Don't say sorry, try harder next time!"

Back then, my teachers used to call this 'healthy competition', but now the people around me call it cut-throat competition! I actually see the same competition going around me all the time. We are always focused on competing



with each other and trying to become 'Number 1', and not Number 2. We seem to think that only one person can be Number 1 and that two or more people can never share the same position. One's success or failure is measured in comparison with a neighbour's success or failure. We have lost our humanity, and our only context has become to compete with each other. Things have fallen to such depths that, sometimes, winning is seen as making sure others fail!

Once the context of service is lost, we become animals, fiercely competing with each other. And when that happens we lose complete sight of the purpose of human life, the purpose God created us for.

Serving the creations of God should be made a compulsory subject in every school and college. Students must have practical sessions on these, just like they have practical sessions for their science classes. Serving also does not have to be done only by an NGO.

Rather, each person, in their individual capacity, can and should serve others.

It is common to have to face challenges while serving others. God will definitely test us if we are true in our claims of belief. The crux here is to not drop out. We must be tolerant of other people's mistakes and take precautions for not just ours but other's mistakes as well. Conflicts may arise while we serve people. There will be misunderstandings, miscommunication and difficult situations, but a believer is always patient and persistent in his quest to please God.

As the old saying goes, 'Charity begins at home'. I believe the same about service. Service begins at home. It starts right with our parents, our siblings, our home-help, our cousins, our extended family, our spouses, children, our neighbors, the religious places that we pray in, the roads we take to our workplaces, the places where we work, our offices, shops, markets and all the people we meet. There is an opportunity to serve, every day, everywhere!

**(Haris Farooqi is a Bangalore based freelance writer and can be reached at farooqi.harish@gmail.com)**

### LIVING ISLAM

## God's Control

**Hudhayfah reports:** 'When the Prophet wanted to sleep, he would say: "It is in Your name, my Lord, that I die and live". When he woke up from sleep, he would say: "Praise be to God Who has given us life after he has caused us to die, and to Him we all return." (Bukhari, Ibn Majah)

We note here that the Prophet (peace be upon him) compares

sleep to death and waking up to coming back to life. This is a point the Prophet stressed many times. It is indeed accurate, because when we go to sleep, we lose consciousness of everything around us, in the same way a dead person is unconscious of what goes on next to him. Waking up is a return to activity and full control of one's senses.

This comparison is also stated in the Quran, when God says that He gathers people's souls when they die, but those who are not dead, He gathers their souls when they sleep. He then keeps with Him those who died and releases the others for a specified time. (39: 42) To acknowledge this is to acknowledge God's control of our lives and that death is as near to us as the next time we go to sleep.

## MANUU To Hold National Urdu Science Congress

**Hyderabad:** Maulana Azad National Urdu University's Centre for Promotion of Knowledge in Urdu (CPKU) and School of Sciences is organizing the National Urdu Science Congress on February 25 and 26. The Congress is being organized for scientists, authors, translators, teachers and those interested in writing and promoting science in the Urdu language. According to Dr. Abid

Moiz, Convener of the Congress, the topic of the congress is "Promotion of Science" in Urdu language. Interested people can send their papers. The word limit of the entire paper can be between 2,500 to 3,000 words in the Urdu language. The papers should be emailed at nusc2017@gmail.com. The limit of the abstract is 400 to 500 words and the last date for submission of papers is February

15. However abstracts of papers can be sent in advance.

For more information the following persons may be contacted: Dr. Abid Moiz (9502044291). Co-convenors Dr. H. Aleem Basha (9849098620) and Dr. Maqbool Ahmed (9440366462)

(Extracted from twocircles.net)

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(Tirmidhi)

"AND YOUR LORD HAD SAID :  
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[QS:40:60]

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## Kerala Mosque Hosts Hindu Wedding

**Alappuzha:** In a rare wedding ceremony held in a mosque, a Hindu couple tied the nuptial knot and exchanged vows in Kerala's Alappuzha on January 19. The marriage hosted by the Cheruvally Muslim Jamaat mosque near Alappuzha, was held according to Hindu rituals in front of a lighted traditional lamp, with guests from both the communities.

The bride, Anju, and the groom, Sarath, exchanged garlands and performed rituals in the presence of a priest at the mosque premises, which was decked up for the rare occasion signifying communal

amity. A vegetarian sadya (meal) was also held at the premises.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan took to Facebook to congratulate the young couple and said the state has always upheld and showcased such beautiful examples of religious harmony. The wedding was held at a time when a concerted attempt was being made to divide people in the name of religion, Mr Vijayan said conveying his wishes to the couple, their families and the mosque committee. "Kerala is one and we will stay united," he said and shared a photograph of the

wedding ceremony.

Since the bride hailed from a poor economic background, Anju's mother had sought help from the mosque committee to conduct the wedding, which they readily agreed. The mosque committee also gifted 10 sovereigns of gold and Rs 2 lakh to the bride as a wedding gift. The marriage was held as per Hindu rituals. Food for around 1,000 people was also arranged, Nujumudeen Alummoottil, secretary of Cheruvally Jamaat committee said.

(Taken from mattersindia.com)

## Sikh Farmers Come To Cheer Shaheen Bagh Women, Cook Langar

Thousands of women holding protests in ShaheenBagh against the citizenship law, had some unexpected company: A group of Sikh men, part of a farmers' union, who came all the way from Punjab. Turning up on the road, they found themselves a corner under a pedestrian overbridge and started unpacking cooking gas and stove, huge utensils reminiscent of festive catering, and sacks of provisions.



Within an hour, a langar the traditional community kitchen of Sikhs was up and running. "We have come here to show solidarity

against the Citizenship Bill," one of them said, underscoring that they were against the "divisive politics" of the government.

The visitors who came to cheer the women on, said they were from two districts of Punjab and the women of their family have accompanied them. As the men started on the cooking, the women found space beside the thousands on a sit-down protest on the other corner.

## Kolkata Christians Protest CAA, NRC



Christians belonging to various denominations in Kolkata protested against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the proposed nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC). The protest rally started from St. Paul's Cathedral and culminated at the Gandhi statue on Mayo Road, 1.5 km north. "The CAA is against the very spirit of our Constitution and infringes upon the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of India to its citizens irrespective of caste, creed and religion. We express our sincerest solidarity with every citizen and resident in different states of India as we are united in our diversity as one united India," said Father Rodney.

The protest rally was taken out under the joint banner of BangiyaChristiyaPariseba and Bengal Christian Council. The protesters held placards that read "No division among people," "We are all children of Jesus" and "No

CAA." They also chanted hymns in English and Bengali. "We only wanted to drive home the message that all are equal and we should not discriminate between religions and communities," said the principal of a renowned missionary school. Besides several Christian priests, many religious leaders from other communities also turned up to support the cause.

"We are noticing that some groups are giving open calls to eliminate the religious minorities and convert our democratic, sovereign and secular India into a so-called 'Hindu state'. Minorities feel insecure by such oppressive calls by those fanatic groups," added Father Rodney.

The participants of the rally placed three demands forward – withdrawal of the CAA, stoppage of NRC and ensure the safety of minorities.

(Extracted from mattersindia.com)

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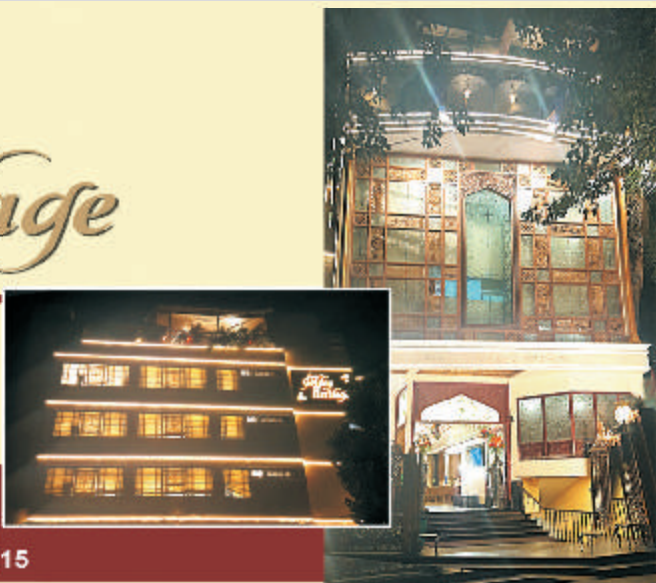
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# UAE Least Corrupt Muslim Country, Somalia Most Corrupt

The 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International (TI) ranked 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, drawing on 13 expert assessments and surveys of business executives. It used a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). The top countries were New Zealand and Denmark with scores of 87 each, followed by Finland (86), Singapore (85), Sweden (85) and Switzerland (85). The bottom countries were Somalia, South Sudan and Syria with scores of 9, 12 and 13, respectively. These



second place on the "Muslim list" was Qatar which scored 62 points. With a score of 53, Saudi Arabia improved by four points since last year. However, its score does not reflect

its dismal human rights record and severe restrictions on journalists, political activists and other citizens, said Transparency International. Many conflict-torn Muslim countries ranked near the bottom of the list, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Libya and Somalia. Such low scores indicate that bribery, stealing of public funds, and profiteering by authorities is an everyday fact of life in these countries, said Transparency International.

countries are closely followed by Yemen (15), Venezuela (16), Sudan (16), Equatorial Guinea (16) and Afghanistan (16). Western Europe and the EU was the highest scoring region with an average of 66/100, while Sub-Saharan Africa was the lowest scoring region with 32 points. With a score of 71 the United Arab Emirates was the best Muslim performer, and it even ranked ahead of countries such as the United States and France. In

second place on the "Muslim list" was Qatar which scored 62 points. With a score of 53, Saudi Arabia improved by four points since last year. However, its score does not reflect

## Merry the Bird and Two Little Kids

By Niggy

Dolcy and Chinku, brother and sister, lived in a little cottage in a forested campus, far away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Every morning, they set off to walk around a big room called the 'Meditation Hall' in the campus, which was used by the grownups for prayers.

One cold morning, as the children were taking their usual morning walk, Chinku suddenly heard a chirping sound and the flapping of wings coming from the hall. Peeping inside, lo and behold, she spotted a little brown bird. 'Dolcy, come soon! There's a bird that has got trapped inside,' Chinku called out. She felt very sad for the poor little things and wanted that it be able to fly out of the hall very soon.

'Oh, I wonder how the baby got in', said Dolcy trying very hard to open the huge door of the hall.

The children joined together to open the door but they couldn't. It was an old-fashioned door that was just too heavy for the little children to push open.

Chinku and Dolcy then went to call Tona, the cook, to open the door so that the bird could fly away.

As Tona managed to heave the



door open, Merry (as Chinku christened the bird) hopped onto a shelf near the door and looked about, as if wondering what to do next. Now, Dolcy loved to ask questions, and so he went up to Merry and asked him all sorts of questions, like where he was from, why he had come there, how old he was, how many siblings he had, where he lived and things like that!

Merry smiled at Dolcy and Chinku, swinging his little head this way and that way, as if to say 'Hey kids! I was thirsty and spotted a water-pot inside the meditation hall and flew in when the door was wide open. Not noticing that I was inside, someone shut the door after a while, and that's how I got stuck inside. Thank you so much children for your help, and now I can fly away, back to my nest in the trees. God bless you lots for your kind deed!'

Then, spreading her little wings, Merry took a deep breath and flew out of the meditation hall. Dolcy and Chinku excitedly waved their little hands about to bid goodbye to her, pleased with the good deed they had done early in the morning.

## King Faisal Prize Winners 2020

**Riyadh:** The 2020 King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam has been awarded to The Makkah Document. The Makkah Document was issued by the Makkah conference organized by the Muslim World League. The document is a historic constitution that enshrines the values of coexistence among the followers of various religions, cultures, and sects in a bid to achieve peace among the diverse communities of human society. The document was awarded the prize in recognition for being a historic constitution that enshrines the values of



coexistence among the followers of various religions, cultures, and sects in a bid to achieve peace among the diverse communities of human society. The document was approved by 1200 Muslim figures from 109 countries hailing from different Islamic schools and sects.

Dr. Mohammed Hashem Ghosheh from Jordan, former professor at Al-Quds University, was announced winner of the prize for Islamic Studies for his work on the topic of Jerusalem's Islamic heritage. The prize for Arabic language and literature under the

theme "Arabic Language Studies in Other Languages" was given to Dr. Michael Carter, an Australian professor at the University of Sydney. Dr. Stuart Holland Orkin, an American professor at the Faculty of Medicine at Harvard University, was granted the prize in Medicine for his work on haemoglobin diseases. The prize for Science was awarded to Dr. Xiaodong Wang at the National Institute of Biological Sciences in Beijing. He was given the award for his pioneering discoveries that led to changes in understanding the functions and death of adult cells, contributing to the development of treatments and drugs so as to resist life-threatening diseases.



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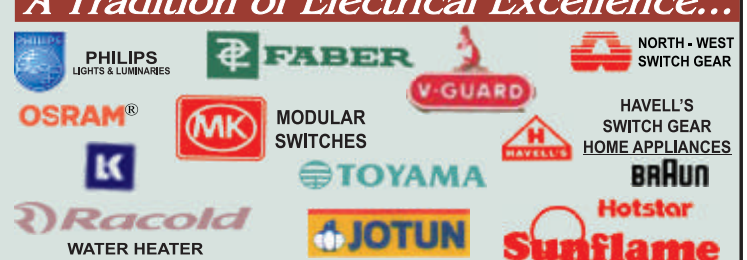
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