"What's Attention Got to do With it?"

by Sherine Aboelezz

"Man, I wish for just one evening I could go out without the hijab," I’ve thought to myself on some occasions. And as I’ve realized from many sisters, this statement isn’t very alien to most hijabis. Likewise, I don’t doubt that brothers share similar thoughts in wanting to trim their beards at times. Unfortunately, during the periods that we want to “show off what we got,” our insecurities rise to their fatal peaks. We begin to question our notion of self-beauty, and wonder if compromising ourselves would ultimately lead us to a higher self-esteem. So why is it that we have these urges to compromise ourselves and lose our deen? It’s actually quite simple. Besides the fact that we are human, we live in a society that emphasizes the use of others to define our own worth. In other words, the more attention people give us, the more we actually feel special and valuable. Have you ever noticed that most fashion advertisements advocate personal fulfillment through stimulating someone else’s desires? Subliminal messaging can have a very powerful affect on the consumer mind—both the knowledgeable and the ignorant. Unfortunately, an individual that feels he/she lacks the requirements to stimulate others (i.e. through fashionable clothes, hair, jewelry, style, etc.) ultimately develops a fractured sense of self worth. In other words, he/she tends to feel “less beautiful” when he/she is not constantly turning heads.

However, my dear brothers and sisters, we must come to understand that our value does not stem from outside attention. Moreover, as a wise Muslim poet once eloquently stated, “We are valuable because we were created by God.” For example, a Van Gogh painting would hold much inherent value because a brilliant artist had painted it. His painting would sell for thousands of dollars regardless of its color, style, or technique.
This publication contains the name of God, please respect it. Nasihah welcomes submissions and articles from everybody. Articles may be edited for content and length at the editors’ discretion. Submit all articles to alnasihah@yahoo.com The opinions expressed in Nasihah are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily represent that of ISRU or the staff of Nasihah.

During Ramadan: "Every action of the son of Adam is given manifold reward, each good deed receiving then times its like, up to seven hundred times. Allah the Most High said, 'Except for fasting, for it is for Me and I will give recompense for it, he leaves off his desires and his food for Me.' for the fasting person there are two times of joy; a time when he breaks his fast and a time of joy when he meets his Lord, and the smell coming from the mouth of the fasting person is better with Allah than the smell of musk.” (Al-Bukhari)

Taraweeh Prayer:
Taraweeh prayer will Insha’Allah start following the Fard Rakah of Isha Prayer led by Sheikh Yusuf Islahi. Isha prayer will start promptly at 8:00pm Insha’Allah. Upon conclusion of the Taraweeh Prayer, a commentary about the Ayah recited will be delivered by Imam Abu Bakr in English followed by Tafseer by Shaikh Yusuf Islahi.

I’tikaf:
Observing I’tikaf is Sunnat Mu’akkadah Kifayah. Insha’Allah the neighboring community will make arrangements for Suhoor and Iftar. MCMC will make arrangements for those willing to offer I’tikaf and inform the management in advance.

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I pray this message finds each and every one of you in their highest state of Iman, and the best of health. I pray Allah (SWT) blesses this Ummah, and allows the truth to prevail while educating the ignorant. I also pray for peace and blessings to be on our dearest, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). As we approach the midpoint of this semester, it is time for us to question ourselves and evaluate our actions as Muslims. We must question our effectiveness in spreading the message of Islam to our fellow Muslims and non-Muslims on campus. For the Muslims, have we been asking people to come pray with us, come join us at the ISRU meeting, come to our halalqat, and so on. For the non-Muslims, have we been the best examples of Muslims on campus. If we sport a beard or a hijab, are we walking every step thinking, “I am representing more than just ISRU, but an entire religion.” Let us question ourselves and re-think our responsibilities as a da’ie in this school, country, and in the world.

At Rutgers, let’s help each other by joining various committees and showing the entire school how connected we are as a group. We are at a peak time for giving da’wah, a time where the minds of our potential Muslims are filled with inquiries and uncertainties. A time where our sincerity, and actions need to be at their optimum level. This is a time for the nur from our faces to outshine everything and let Islam glow. We are in a position where people are thirsting for knowledge of this beautiful Deen, and are listening with complete attentiveness.

Let us not allow this opportunity to go to waste, and be active in our pursuit for the Islamic cause. We need to step up to the challenge and yearm for the possible benefits, which may flourish, only by the effort we show. Struggles should be expected, so don’t feel discouraged if you are approached with negativity, or apathy. If you are not facing struggles while being a da’ie, then rethink your intentions and your goals. Struggles only come to those who have sincerity and strong desire. It is the heart that will guide the believer to the non-believer, and the heart needs to be constantly purified. Open the veins of the heart by constantly remembering Allah (SWT) and doing righteous actions. Remember it is Allah (SWT) who will change the faith of the people, and not you. I hope to see an increase in activism at Rutgers and am anxious to see the Muslims standing tall and proud all across campus.

May Allah (swt) give us success in all our endeavors, and let the light of Islam glisten from our faces. Ameen.

“Light upon Light! Allah guides whom He wills to His Light: Allah sets forth parables for men, and Allah is the Knower of all things.” (Quran 24:35)

Aamir Abdul-Ghani
Amir of ISRU

As-salaamu alaikum...

The following is a very brief summary of Imam Ghazali’s “On the Duties of Brotherhood” which is only a short section of his voluminous work “The Revival of the Religious Sciences.” I think it goes without saying that the lessons in this book apply to sisterhood just as much as brotherhood. Imam Ghazali divides the Duties of Brotherhood into eight: the material duty, the duty of helping, the duty of silence of the tongue, the duty of speaking out, the duty of forgiveness, the duty of praying for your brother, the duty of loyalty, the duty of relief from discomfort. Insha’allah I will attempt to cover the first three duties in this issue.

The first duty is the material duty. The brotherhood of two brothers “is only complete when they are comrades in a single enterprise. In a sense the two are like one person.” If your brother is the same person as you it means your possessions are his and that you should treat him as you would treat yourself. “There were those who would shun the fellowship of a man who used the expression ‘my shoe’, thereby attributing it to himself.”

Three degrees of sharing are mentioned in the chapter. The first is placing your brother at the level of your servant, meaning you provide for him from your leftovers. However, this cannot truly be considered brotherhood. The second is to place your brother at your own level, giving him whatever you would give yourself. The third, and highest degree is to “prefer your brother to yourself and set his need before your own.” Insha’allah this is what we should all strive to achieve.

The following are two stories that beautifully illustrate fulfilling the highest degree of the material duties. “Ali son of al-Husayn (ra) said to a man, ‘Does one of you put his hand in the pocket or purse of his brother an take what he needs without permission?’” The man replied “No.” To which Ali replied, “Then you are not brothers!”

The second story: “Tradition tells that Masruq owed a heavy debt. His brother Khaythama was also in debt, so Masruq went and paid off Khaythama’s debt without his knowledge, and Khaythama went and paid off Masruq’s debt without his knowledge.” The chapter concludes by mentioning the importance of taking care of your brother’s family when he cannot provide for them whether it’s because of a lack of money, his absence, or his death.

“The second duty is to render personal aid in the satisfaction of needs, attending to them without waiting to be asked, and giving them priority over private needs.” As with the previous duty there are different degrees of fulfillment. For example, to answer the need of your brother when he requests help, but to do so grudgingly has some reward but leaves much to be desired. Better yet is to answer the brothers call but to do so happily and willingly. Even better than that is to attend to your brothers need without him even asking. One should constantly ask his brother if needs anything or constantly judge his needs and rush to answer them.

“Your brother’s need ought to be like your own, or even more important than your own. You should be on the watch for times of need, not neglecting his situation any more than you would your own. You should see that he does not have to ask, nor reveal his need to appeal for help. Rather should you attend to it as if you did not know that you had done so. You should not see yourself as having earned any right by virtue of what you have done, but rather count it a blessing that he accepts your effort on his behalf and your attention to his affair.” Finally, we are reminded that “Atha said: Seek out your brothers after three occasions. If they are sick, visit them. If they are busy, help them. If they have forgotten, remind them.”

The third duty is an extremely important one, silence of the tongue. “As for silence, the tongue should not mention a brother’s faults in his absence or presence. Rather should you feign ignorance. You should not contradict him when he talks, nor dispute nor argue with him. You should not pray and quiz him about his affairs. On seeing him in the street or about some business, you should not start a conversation about the object or your coming and going, nor ask him about his, for perhaps it will be troublesome for him to discuss it, or he may have to lie about it.”

Spreading the faults of a brother or even his family is slander. Allah (SWT) helps a believer to hide his misdeeds so why should humans be different. We are taught to treat our brother as we would treat ourselves, and none of us would expose our own faults. The only explanation for someone who exposes the faults of another is that the person must be filled with “rancor and envy.” Not only should our tongue be silent, but so too should our hearts be silent. We should always try to think the best of our brothers and put a spin on what we see him do. “Ibn al-Mubarak said: The believer tries to find excuses for another is that the person must be filled with “rancor and envy.” Not only should our tongue be silent, but so too should our hearts be silent. We should always try to think the best of our brothers and put a spin on what we see him do. “Ibn al-Mubarak said: The believer tries to find excuses for
by Sara Elhadidy

A couple of weeks ago, I was in a line waiting to buy something at CVS. It was a really long line, and there was only one cash register open. As you can imagine, everyone was getting frustrated, including an elderly woman who was right behind me in line. When my turn finally came, I decided to let the old lady go in front of me, so I smiled at her and told her to go ahead. She looked at me in a hesitant way, as if she hadn’t expected the friendly offer to come out of me, a “muhajaba” Muslim, of all people. I nodded at her and told her to go ahead in front of me. While she was being rung up, she asked me how I put on my hijab. I showed her where I pin it and how I put it on so it looks the way it looks. By this time, the whole line was listening to our conversation. Then someone else from the line asked me if I had to only cover my hair, or what exactly I had to do. I explained that not only must I cover my hair, but my whole body, and that hijab does not just entail dress, but manner as well. Then this person asked me if hijab was a cultural or religious requirement. I explained to the whole line that I am a Muslim and that because I am a Muslim woman I am required to wear the hijab. Then someone asked me why some Muslim women don’t wear it, and I had to explain to them, which led them to ask if I feel oppressed. Of course, I explained to them that hijab makes me feel free and honored and respected.

At this point in our conversation, we had gathered a large group and it was my turn in line, but the old woman did not leave. The next words that came out of her mouth hit me like a lightning bolt. “Wow. You are such a respectable, down to earth, young woman. Why do they say Muslims are these horrible people? You are nothing like I thought you would be when I first saw you. God bless you, dear.” I thanked her and walked out of the store in a daze. What did she think I would be like? Horrible? Why would I be horrible? I realized that at this time, with the events that are happening, stereotypes are being created and perpetuated. I also realized that the average American does not know what Islam really is, much less can see the beauty of our religion. At this time, people are looking to find out and hear about Islam from any source. Muslims today are under a magnifying glass. It is true that someone who wants to find out about a religion should go to the scriptures of that religion (in this case The Holy Quran and the Hadith) instead of looking at the followers of the religion. Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world, and most people will get all of their information about our glorious religion from the Muslims; how we act with each other is the first step to changing anyone’s stereotype of us. We need to change ourselves into becoming a better Muslim. We need to go out of our way to educate ourselves about our religion in all aspects. Whether it is seerah, history, Quran, Hadith, Aqueedah, or any of the numerous aspects of Islam, we need to keep on learning and seeking knowledge of what we do not know. Our biggest weapon against anyone is our knowledge of Allah the almighty, our beloved Prophet (SAWS) our brilliant religion, and ourselves. Seeking knowledge is the first step to changing ourselves. Using your knowledge is the next step, and it is definitely harder. To change yourself into a better Muslim is to be a “Muhajir”. The prophet (SAWS) said that a Muhajir, or a migrant, is he who "migrates" from what Allah has forbidden to an area of halal, from misguidance to guidance. This is a struggle within ourselves that will be greatly rewarded by Allah inshaa allah.

Secondly, we must have adaab, or good manner. Every Muslim person is a walking “Da’wah shield.” We are all portraying Islam. We are all representing our religion and our Prophet (SAWS). Therefore, we must show people, by acting with kindness, grace, modesty, and intelligence, what a Muslim really is. We must follow the teachings of our Prophet (SAWS) regarding how we should act towards others, believers and non-believers. For example, simple acts of kindness such as smiling at others, holding doors, letting people cross while you are driving, and other easy but kind actions can go a long way. The Prophet (SAWS) said that smiling in the face of your brother is Sadaquah, or charity. This shows that something that takes so little effort can mean so much. When spreading the message, we should be kind but firm. We cannot let threats scare us, nor should we be afraid of consequences. Nothing should stop us from doing our duty. We should never try to “sell” Islam, only explain it as it is, sticking with the Quran and Sunnah. The beauty of Islam sells itself. We should work to make the beauty of the Muslim Ummah sell itself as well. We need to be united and stand together and help each other out. By showing the world that we are strong and kind people who cross while you are driving, and other easy but kind actions can go a long way. The Prophet (SAWS) said that smiling in the face of your brother is Sadaquah, or charity. This shows that something that takes so little effort can mean so much. When spreading the message, we should be kind but firm. We cannot let threats scare us, nor should we be afraid of consequences. Nothing should stop us from doing our duty. We should never try to “sell” Islam, only explain it as it is, sticking with the Quran and Sunnah. The beauty of Islam sells itself. We should work to make the beauty of the Muslim Ummah sell itself as well. We need to be united and stand together and help each other out. By showing the world that we are strong and kind people who
people, we are helping break stereotypes so people can get past them and look at the real Islam. Once we can get people to do that, then we have done a lot of the work.

My experience at CVS and many other experiences after that have made me realize what an important responsibility we have as the youth of our Ummah at this time. I decided to share with my sisters and brothers my experience to illustrate to them how we can all make a difference. The Prophet (SAWS) tells us to inform about [the prophet (SAWS)] if only an aayah, or a verse from the Holy Quran. If every Muslim does this, imagine how many more people will know the truth about Islam. I pray that we all can make a difference and that Allah strengthens our Iman and our unity and perpetuates Islam across the world.

The Attack on America changed everything and this is what I have spent the best of words, as prescribed in the Holy Quran. to the people in the kindest of manner and with all the love and compassion that we can muster. There have been repeated statements linking the religion of Islam with peace and other positive media coverage geared towards explaining the fundamental tenants of the religion, I personally do not think that the backlash against Muslims was as negative as it could have been. Still I will not contest that there are probably many Americans who still hold deep prejudices against Muslims and consider the Attack on America a direct result of the teachings of Islam and this is where I reach a stumbling point. Living in this country for my whole life, I have seen a very slow but gradual improvement in the image of Muslims that live in this country. The Attack on America changed everything and this is what I have spent weeks on end thinking about.

To say that a couple of months will completely eliminate any form of aggression towards Muslims is foolish. What this country has experienced in the past weeks is a loss of innocence. We hear about wars raging in other countries, but I must naively admit that I never thought that it would come to this. When I asked friends what they experienced when they saw the plane hit the second Twin Tower, they replied that the picture was completely surreal. The tragedy of September 11th will forever be imprinted on the hearts of Americans everywhere. The soul of the American people is wounded, and it will take a long period of time before it can recover. What does this mean for Muslims? Muslims now more than ever have to educate individuals about true Islam. I say true Islam because I am certain that there are people who parallel the doings of the attack to the definition of an Islamic Jihad. There are many different perspectives of what Islam is and what it is not. The more Americans learn about Islam the quicker they will begin to recover. What is also equally important is that Muslims begin to show the other people living in this country the meaning of Islam through their actions and their character. This is what my thinking led up to. There is only so much that can be said through the media and other forms of public communication. The most important and beneficial thing that Muslims everywhere can do is to spread the true message of Islam, which is in its most simplistic meaning, is just peace and submission to the will of Allah.

by Sarah Khurshid

Even with the September 11th Attack on America in hindsight, most Muslims have very quickly realized that it will take a long time for their image to improve. Partly due to President Bush’s repeated statements linking the religion of Islam with peace and other positive media coverage geared towards explaining the fundamental tenants of the religion, I personally do not think that the backlash against Muslims was as negative as it could have been. Still I will not contest that there are probably many Americans who still hold deep prejudices against Muslims and consider the Attack on America a direct result of the teachings of Islam and this is where I reach a stumbling point. Living in this country for my whole life, I have seen a very slow but gradual improvement in the image of Muslims that live in this country. The Attack on America changed everything and this is what I have spent weeks on end thinking about.

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by Asif Ahmed

Brothers and Sisters, the time for Da’wah is now. With the tragedies that hit New York and Washington (as well as Pennsylvania) recently, the focus and attention of the world is on the Middle East and, more importantly, on the Muslims.

Whether or not there is any basis for this added attention, we are being criticized while our religion and way of life is scrutinized to the most minor of details. There have been comments made that our entire religion is based on violence, with the intent to convert others by the use of the “sword.” Americans are now calling on the President to seek and destroy not only the alleged perpetrators of this attack, but also everyone else whom is/was ever suspected of such behavior, regardless of their location. We as Muslims do not condone such acts of violence on the innocent civilian population, and want just as much as anyone else for those who take part in such acts to be punished accordingly. The media, however, has not helped us in projecting this viewpoint, and we cannot sit back during this time and act like the victim.

While the country in general remains uneducated about the true meaning of Islam, mainly because of our own shortcomings, the academic environment that we live in and are greatly involved with, Rutgers University, seems to be as curious as ever about Islam. This is an opportunity that we cannot pass up, because for far too long, we have been stereotyped as something we are not. We have periodically tried to spread the word of Islam, but most were uninterested. In the past weeks, however, many requests have been made for Muslims to come and speak about Islam and its views on this tragedy, at various forums, rallies, and other venues. Never before have people actually requested US to come to their events to speak about OUR views. And the fact that others are approaching Muslims shows that there is some real interest concerning this issue. We have taken part in many vigils in and around the school, as well as many other efforts that have to do with the attacks. I just heard a story a few days ago about a sister, who while standing in a line at a store overheard two students commending the Muslims for their show of support in this time of crisis. And recently, a few students came up to me, thinking that I was a Muslim, to praise the Muslims on campus for their support. One student was extremely pleased with the Islamic Society’s flyer (the flyer, along with inviting the people to the meeting, also condemned the acts of terrorism that had taken place the day before) and said that it was greatly needed at this time. The students that came up to me with smiles on their faces, genuinely seemed to care. These are just two of the stories that I have heard of, but there are probably many more.

By the grace of Allah (SWT), it seems that our efforts are having an effect on the people. Students, if nothing else, are learning more about Islam, and breaking down their own misconceptions of our religion as taught to them by the media. We should thank Allah for his mercy and generosity, and at the same time, guard ourselves from the trap of contentment. We should never think that our efforts are enough, and should strive to do even better to please Allah and his beloved Muhammad (PBUH). It is only with this intention that our past actions and good deeds will be accepted, as well as anything that we do in the future. I pray that Allah blesses each and every one of you for your support in this effort, and pray that he empowers you to go out and give da’wah to the people in the kindest of manner and with the best of words, as prescribed in the Holy Quran.
For his brother stands in his own shoes and the pair are like one person, different only in body.” The Prophet (saw) said, “All sessions are confidential bar three: that in which blood is shed unlawfully, that in which unlawful sexual intercourse takes place, and that in which property is unlawfully used.” A man was asked how he keeps a secret and he replied, “I hide it, and hide the fact that I am hiding it.”

Finally, silence of the tongue also means abstaining from “contention” (argument). “In general the only motive for contention is to display intellectual superiority and to belittle one’s opponent by showing up his ignorance. This amounts to arrogance, contempt, hurtfulness, and the insulting charge of folly and ignorance.” Ibn Abbas relates that the Prophet (saw) said, “Do not dispute with your brother, do not mock him, and do not go back on your promise to him.” Even if you know you are correct, arguing should be avoided. The Prophet (saw) said, “If a man gives up contention when he is in the wrong, a house will be built for him within the Garden of Paradise; but if a man gives up contention even when he is in the right, a house will be built for him in the loftiest part of the Garden.” The early believers were so opposed to contention that they “frowned on questioning altogether,” the following story is evidence. “Abu Sulayman al-Darani said: I once had a brother in Iraq. I would go to him when times were bad and say, ‘Give me some of your money.’ He would throw me his purse for me to take what I wanted. Then one day I came to him and said, ‘I need something.’ He asked, ‘How much do you want?’ And so the sweetness of brotherhood left my heart.”

Insha’Allah we’ll all try to implement these lessons from Imam Ghazali. We are facing at time when it may be difficult for some people to practice their religion because they fear condemnation and rejection by the society. A strong brotherhood and sisterhood will help those people and all of us through this trial. Furthermore, a strong brotherhood and sisterhood here at Rutgers will help us realize the rest of our goals for the year.

Please try to strengthen your bonds with those people you already consider your brothers and sisters. More importantly, please try to reach out and form new bonds with those you always overlooked. I pray that stories of brotherhood, like those mentioned above, will come out of Rutgers one day.

Insha’allah Allah(SWT) will give us success in this endeavour.

Umer Dasti
Co-Vice President

Asalaamu alaikum brothers and sisters.

Insha’Allah I pray that this will be an excellent year for us at Rutgers—a chance to give da’waa and learn more about our own deen in the process. Through our events, our lectures, and our time together, we can hope to become closer to each other and closer to Allah(SWT).

Tammy Elmansoury
Co-Vice President

As Co-Secretary of ISRU, I, Aisha Mahmood, work with my fellow shura members to organize meetings and events as a supplement to the Islamic awareness of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. With this in mind, the shura anticipates a productive academic year Insha’Allah. In order to best execute our plans we rely on and open ourselves to your thoughts and suggestions. Most importantly, it is necessary that the sisters feel comfortable in approaching your sister shura members for help of any kind Insha’Allah. With collaboration and communication, Insha’Allah the Rutgers Muslim community can thrive at its best!

Aisha Mahmood
Co-Secretary

Br. Asif Ahmed was unavailable to provide a statement.

Asif Ahmed
Co-Secretary

As salaamu alaikum my fellow Muslim brothers and sisters at Rutgers University. When it comes to Islamic knowledge, I am definitely not the scholar (nor do I claim to be the scholar), but permit me to express my advice to all the Muslims and also to myself. This nation as a whole is going through a lot nowadays. We look around and all we see is oppression, suffering, hatred, violence, and ignorance. I’m sure we all think to ourselves, “what can I do about this?” What can we do about this?

Upon reading the Quran one day (in the order of revelation), I read the first line stopped and thought to myself I just said a mouthful. “Read! In the name of your Lord who has created [all things]!” (Al-'Alaq:1). Allah (SWT) has commanded us very clearly in his very first commandment to the Prophet (PBUH) to read and increase our knowledge. This is what we can do at times like this. We need to read, learn, and once we have done that we need to educate those who have not read, or cannot read. However, we must read in the name of Allah (SWT). And I would like to encourage all of you to read, gather a diverse amount of reading material, and just read. Take a break from you usual books of computer science or computer engineering or whatever it may be. Then pick up a book about the Deen, or another deen, or one that has no deen at all. Learn to be diverse in your reading—perhaps an essay by Henry David Thoreau or Ralph Waldo Emerson, maybe a scientific journal, maybe the Shahnamah of Firdausi or The Analects of Confucius. But whatever it is that you read, make sure focus and
of the capital by the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, a loose coalition of mostly minority Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras, puts Pakistan in a difficult position. It puts a hostile group in power just next door, with the potential to create unrest along Pakistan’s western border or, team up with India. Conversely, the fall of the mostly-Pashtun Taliban has created feelings of bitterness and betrayal among ethnic Pashtuns, who dominate Afghanistan as well as the frontier tribal areas of Pakistan.

In Egypt...
Nov. 21st:
Cairo- Muslims are forbidden from delivering Osama Bin Laden to the U.S., not even in return for the fortunes of the whole world explained professor of Islamic Jurisprudence at Al-Azhar University, Aly Gomaa. “Once a Muslim is proved guilty of committing a sin or a crime, the September 11 attacks for example, he should be tried, according to the solid evidence against him, before a Muslim judge,” he explained.

Nov. 25th:
Cairo- Some 100 Arab intellectuals will meet at the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo to argue against the idea there is a conflict of civilizations. The meeting aims at defining a general framework for an Arab plan of action regarding a dialogue on civilization. The theme of the conference is “The Dialogue of Civilizations: An Exchange, Not a Conflict.” The conference is expected to adopt recommendations on means of dealing with attempts to distort Arab culture and Islamic civilization.

In Russia...
Nov. 23rd:
Moscow- Russia has moved into diplomatic high gear ahead of next week’s United Nations sponsored talks on power-sharing in Afghanistan, seeking to keep its Northern Alliance allies at the heart of a future government purged of the Taliban. A high-level Russian delegation has been in Kabul to make sure Moscow’s interests are not forgotten which includes defense, interior and emergency ministry officials and has begun to discuss the reopening of Russia’s embassy.

In Belgium...
Nov. 22nd:
Brussels- Hardline Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his predecessor, Ehud Barak, are among 15 Israelis named in a new case brought in Belgium by six Palestinian fathers of children killed during the Intifada.

http://www.islam-online.net

In Washington...
Nov. 11th:
Washington- The United States will slow down the visa process for young men from Arab and Muslim nations so it can search for evidence of terrorist activities. Investigators also hope to interview 5,000 people already in the country from such nations. The FBI will check the names of visa applicants from more than 20 Arab and Muslim countries and advise the State Department.

“http://ad.doubleclick.net/jump/sf.gate/newsdr-3x4-news_ar_topban-jav-480x60-480find-3542?”
try to understand what is behind these writings.
I definitely encourage all of you, and above all myself, to read, learn, and then educate. Knowledge is all around us and can be found in any sort of writing whether Islamic or un-Islamic. The Prophet (PBUH) has commanded us to pursue knowledge even if we must travel to China to attain it. I believe that this was a huge key for our ancestors when they built so beautiful an Islamic nation that was premier in science, mathematics, art, and literature. This, unquestionably, can be a huge key for us now. This is my advice. Thank you all for taking time to read.

As salaamu alaikum.

Tariq Hussain
Co-Treasurer

Asalamu Alaikum my fellow brothers and sisters.
I was asked by Nasihah to write up my “goals” for ISRU in a few sentences. However, for some reason, this task is one of the most complicated tasks I’ve been asked to accomplish. I am incapable of completing this task, because I realize that “my goals” cannot be sought out if the goals of ISRU constituents are not in sync with mine. Additionally, “my goals” should not be sought out if they are not in sync with Allah’s (SWT) will (obviously). For this reason, I’ve decided that my only goal for this year is to try to foster an atmosphere that assists Muslims in understanding themselves within the realm of Allah’s ultimate goal. Many of us can sit there and explain the “path of Islam,” yet we are incapable of specifying our own location on that path. Let us step out of our daily routines, and attempt to give meaning to our experiences. Most of us are students in an institute of knowledge. However, there is no point to our acquired knowledge if we do not convert that knowledge into wisdom. We must ALL use this time on earth to understand our purpose, worth, and collective goals as an Ummah. Only when that is done can we succeed secularly and spiritually.

Sherine Aboelezz
Co-Treasurer

Allah, who is infinitely greater than Van Gogh, creates his creatures with an even more apparently inherent value. He creates us in a myriad of different colors, shapes, and sizes. And an individual especially a sincere Muslim, upholds extreme worth solely on the basis that Allah created him. We often forget that innate beauty was sculpted into each and every one of us.

As salaamu alaikum.

Tariq Hussain
Co-Treasurer

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The story of an Awakening

by Talal Sarawani

This is a story of an awakening.

"So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith" (Al-E-Imran, 003.139. translated by Yusuf Ali.

His name is Ali Qadr Sheikh, and it has been six years.

Six years and counting.

Six years and the test persists; the suffering continues.

But he is a different man now. His eyes are open.

There he was, one year ago, at his brother's wedding, putting on the act of a normal person. All happy, no sad.

He had hit bottom, and couldn't summon up the courage to tell anyone.

He couldn't count the times he wished everyone would disappear.

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle said, "If Allah wants to do good to somebody, He afflicts him with trials."(Bukhari)

He recalls those nights, those endless nights, when the whispers began.

Those ungodly whispers.

"C'mon, it's hopeless, no one can help you now."

"It's useless now. No one can help you anymore".

His eyes remained closed, and the whispers continued.

He remembers the crying, the hopelessness.

He remembers asking Him for relief over and over and over.

That relief never came, and his eyes remained closed.

He left that time, that space, and found himself here, in this room,

where he spent his days.

He felt worthless, and so he not once approached his sister-in-law.

What would a person as wonderful as she, want to do with a person as useless as he?

The whispers had done their work well.

Then, one day, she came into the room.

This was an especially bad day for Ali, as he found himself in the dark of his room, sitting on the floor, in the far corner.

"Ali? Are you okay?"

What should he answer? He struggled to get it out.

"Yeah... I'm alright."

She took a few steps toward him, and sat on the floor, directly in front of him.

"You know, it's been a month that I've been in this house,

and I know less about you now, than I did before. Something must be wrong,

Ali. Did Muhammad get angry at you?".

"No, no..."

He prayed that all his problems would go away just so that he could face her and speak to her.

"Okay fine, if you wont tell me, I'm going to sit right here until someone does."

And so Laila sat there, and just started talking to Ali.

She told him about their first meeting, and they avoided each other, as they didn't know what to do about the way they felt.

He had heard this all from Muhammad before, but it was a story worth hearing again.

Laila talked, and Ali listened to her.

He listened, and wished he could speak back to her.

"Ali...", she said with the caring voice of a sister, "...what's wrong?"

A tear formed in Ali's eye. That tear was pushed out by another, and he could no longer control it.

Laila moved right next to Ali, knowing that she should just let him release all that has been building up inside him.

"Just let it out, it's ok."

"I'm so sorry, bhabhi, I'm so sorry.".

"What are you apologizing for? You have done no wrong, okay.".

"I'm sorry for the way I am. I'm sorry for being so...nothing."

"Is that what you think? Don't you know how much we care about you?"

"Don't say things like that.".

"Then why am I like this? Why am I like this?"

"Ali... You know, when Allah makes you go through something like this, there is a reason behind it."

From that day forth, Laila became a regular source of fulfillment for Ali.

She was always there...that sister he needed. That friend he needed.

Ali's test went through its ups and downs. But he didn't let go this time.

He stayed with his family at all times.

follow on page 12
I remember being in high school and learning about Islam. That is halal, that is haram. This is right, that is wrong, he is right, he is wrong. That's not allowed, this is not allowed, you're not allowed to this; I would think to myself, “What the heck IS allowed!” Needless to say I realize now that I was proud to be a Muslim, but I wasn't really happy to be one, astagfurallah. Sadly, this is the case of Muslims today, not just in America but also all over the world. Yes, the passion is there, but passion without intellect is not far from madness. Why else would Muslims be found in clubs, bars, etc.? Why else would Muslims try/do alcohol and drugs? The obvious answer is… lack of education. Fine, then why don’t Muslims learn their deen or better yet why don’t they have the urge to? Let’s flip to a different scene, let’s talk about the Muslims that try to practice and have some knowledge, and let me assume for arguments sake that I qualified (inshallah) for this category during my years at college. I had fun being Muslim, and I loved to hang out with the brothers. Yet, if you scratched the surface, I felt as though I was merely a frat boy that prayed, went to Islamic lectures, and would occasionally read the Quran. I still would watch movies fondly, watch hours of T.V. and listen to all kinds of music.

Why was there a wall in front of me and why couldn’t I go through it. I’ve read of basking in the glory of Allah (SWT) of singing the praises of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), but where my mind wanted to go, why couldn’t my heart follow? The answer came with a dive into a sea of knowledge; I went to a 3-week deen intensive called “the Rihla”. I still remember the first day when Sheikh Yaqubi said, “You are on the shore of a vast ocean…”. It was a crash course on Islam, both in the physical and metaphysical sense. I was thinking things that I never thought I would think, I was saying things that I never thought I would say, I was DOING things I thought I would never do. More importantly, I felt alive! There was a rush my mind and soul were feeling; it was as though someone had jump-started my heart, Alhamdulilah!!!! I always heard about Islam uplifting humanity, and for the first time of my 22-year existence, I felt it!!!!! I had gotten an insignificant-micro taste of what the Sahaba (R) had felt, and I want more! All our lives I feel the vast majority of Muslims and non-Muslims have been had, bamboozled, ripped off, and cut off from their rightful heritage, from Islam, from true happiness, from Allah (SWT) and the Prophet (PBUH). So what did I exactly learn? I rather pray that the reader of this article takes time to re-examine his or her life, and find out what is this revival in traditional Islam all about.

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**Blessings of Diversity In Islam**

by Amani Elsawah

On November 9th, the sisters’ activities committee (headed by Saima Siddiqui and I, Amani Elsawah) on November 9th, we asked sisters to participate in our cultural dinner so that we could learn about and appreciate each other’s cultures more. As Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’an: “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)…”

(Surah al-Hujarat, 49:13)

We are diversified in our cultures but unified in our religion, and we must see that to better understand each other. Continuing in our appreciation of diversity is our Sisters’ Iftar on November 25th, entitled: “Sisters’ Ramadan Night: Blessings of Diversity within Islam”. We asked sisters to come and speak about the diversity in their lives and the goodness it can bring within Islam and the Muslim Ummah. We have also started a project for the “Eid Display” to be put up by the fireside lounge wall and Masha’Allah, Saima Siddiqui has coordinated the layout for the display and has been working hard along with some very dedicated people to make it a source of Da’wah. We thank Allah (SWT) for helping us make this semester a success and thank all those who helped us. Jazak’Allah Khairun.
ISLAMIC MYSTICISM

by Sameer Ali

Some philosophies believe in the existence of a fourth dimension, a plane where the human soul is in direct contact with Divine entities. In the Abrahamic traditions, mystical and spiritual orders have been established around this concept. One can find Kabbalah within Judaism, monks within Christianity, and gnostics (‘urafa) in Islam. Islamic mysticism believes in the concept of fana’illah (annihilation in the Divine) through rigorous spiritual practices. The ‘Urafa experience another dimension of reality which leads them to God through spiritual elevation.

Within the science of Islamic gnostic, there are three types of spiritual personalities. A believer can be a worshipping (‘abid), an ascetic (zahid), and finally a gnostic (‘arif). A proper worshipper must fulfill all the exoteric requirements of the Shariah for his worship to be deemed ‘acceptable’; an ascetic must be a proper worshipper and lead a life style of self-denial; and a gnostic must contain in him all the qualities of worship (‘ibadah), ascetics (zohd), and gnosis (irfan). Through worship and ascetic practices man reaches the level of gnostic when he comes face to face with the True Reality (al-haqiq). Then he must tread the path (tariqah) where he faces five separate levels of existence, and after which he finally achieves self-annihilation (fana fil’lah).

Sheykh Javed Tabrizi has described “three revelations” of attaining spiritual expansion through practices. A believer must follow the Shariah too the fullest extent, then he must follow on the seerah (path) of the Prophet and the Imams, and finally, he must see the world through the eyes of the Quran. He says that the external abiding of the Shariah leads to a creation of an exoteric state within the believer. Outwardly he follows the external aspects (shariah zahiri) of the Shariah and this produces an inner tranquility within him (tariqah batini). From this stage he ‘evolves’ to follow the ascetic life style of the Prophet and Imams (‘Aimma), who were the closest persons to God on this earth. Then he reaches a plateau where the Word of God (the Quran) becomes the eyes with which he sees the world, and with which he accepts eternal life and sees God everywhere. The mystics consider this as ‘death’ or ‘annihilation’ as ‘nothing remains of us as drops and we join the ocean that is God’.

A few great historical examples of some such saints would be Mansoor Hallaj, Fariduddin Attar, the much-celebrated Moulvi Jalaluddin Rumi, Khwaja Hafiz Shirazi, and so on. They are considered to be the saints of God and their teachings are taken as guides and examples for those who want to get closer to God. Islamic lands are rich with graves of such saints, from North Africa to India and South East Asia. There are men that I have seen who walk the earth living in God and see through Him. A Gnostic once said “I lived among people for 30 years, and they thought I was with them, but I was living in God”. There is a certain presence that lives with the saints (‘awliya) and touches the people that visit them.

UNIFY OR DESTROY?

by Alya Khan

When life gets frustrating, or “useless”, or just plain hard, what do we do? Most of us turn to Allah for guidance and support. Though most of us may do this and though most of us may pray the same prayer, fast the same fast, or perform the same Hajj, why is the foundation of Islam deteriorating? Unity, a term we may be able to define as is actually a term we do not fully understand. We do not fully understand this reason being we do not employ this term in Islam. Just following the basic “rituals” of Islam is simply not enough for Islam to flourish. Just because Islam may be the fastest growing religion in the world does not necessarily mean it is due to our credit, it is all within Allah’s will. Though the quantity of Muslims may rise, what about the quality? To criticize Islam’s stance among non-Muslims, to complain about how Islam is not truly known, is our fault. Reason being is that Muslims have left behind their fellow brothers and sisters in order to pursue worldly gains. Thus we ignore the call to come together to pass on the true meaning of Islam. No excuse can be made for the image of Islam in the western culture simply because Muslims worldwide have yet to come together as did the Muslims over 1400 years ago. “And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah’s favor on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make his signs clear to you: that ye may be guided.” (Quran 3:103)

Unity is of not just a means to strengthen Islam’s essence but a means to fortify our hearts. With love and peace towards other Muslims,
He would not let himself be alone, and so the whispers stopped. He read, he studied, and he believed.

Muhammad, Laila, and his parents, all saw a change.

Through the next few months, Ali became less conscious of what other people said or didn't say, and he began to seek his reason for living. He began studying on his own.

Why is he a Muslim? What is it for him to be a Muslim? Why should he not despair?

The studying made him come to a realization; he was a Muslim. A member of what is the greatest Ummmah on Earth. He found nothing but perfection in Islam.

For that person who keeps his eyes open, and his heart clean, Islam is the only Way.

Ali had come this realization on his own terms, and so he found his Iman. The going still got rough, but he maintained his Iman, and kept himself from faltering.

That winter, Muhammad and Laila were set to visit back home, and they asked Ali to come along with them. He agreed, but only if he paid his own way, and also because he wanted to visit that one place he had never visited.

That one place where he would find calm and peace. That one place where it was just him, and no one else.

And so the three of them arrived home, and found themselves among family once again. Ali went straight to his grandmother and grandfather, as the last visit left him with a feeling of just how precious they were to him. Everyone was happy to see Ali happy. They knew what he went through, and were all glad that it no longer affected him as before. The next day, the three of them were to go to the home of Laila's parents. Ali awoke to pray his Fajr, and decided to stay awake and have a chat with his grandfather. He felt a smile constantly creeping across his face that morning, and was unable to figure out why.