

Reflections

Myfyrdodau

Βετλιοειοη2

Volume 1, Issue 2

June 2011

Opening Message from the Secretary General:

Praise be to God and peace and blessings be upon His prophet Muhammad (SAW) and all the prophets He has sent.

It has been an exciting three months for Wales, with the referendum, the Assembly election and the Census. The Muslim Council of Wales has conducted a poll finding that 67% of Welsh Muslims cast their vote in the referendum and around 69% in the Assembly election - over and above the national average. This reflects the changing attitude of the Muslim community and their increasingly active participation in civic society. The Muslim Council of Wales is delighted to have been a part of this positive change within the Welsh Muslim community.

The Muslim Council of Wales is a non-partisan organization, and while we actively supported the Yes campaign, we encouraged the community to vote whichever political party they preferred.

We look forward to continued working with the Welsh Government.

Saleem Kidwai



Inside this issue:

Special Recognition: Sheikh Sa'eed Hassan	2
Special Edition: In the Spotlight - War on Terror—The Obama Years	4
Reflections on Elections: Welsh Assembly Elections, May 5th 2011	5
MCW Event Feature: Speaking Faith to Faith	6
MCW Book Review: The Dragon and the Crescent, Grahame Davies	7
A New MCW Initiative: ADFYWIAD	8
End Note	10

Letter from the Editor:

Alhumdulillah, we have now brought to you the 2nd edition of Reflections, 3 months after the 1st edition was released and a lot has progressed since then. In the last edition, we highlighted a new MCW initiative, "ADFYWIAD" and the start of one of its projects "iLead Wales". The launch of this project saw many budding youngsters with great visions and aspirations for their community come to the forefront. The aim of iLead is to help and empower these youngsters, equipping with the essential knowledge and skills to help lead their communities and transform their visions into reality. After a gruelling application and selection process, we now have an enthusiastic, inspiring and passionate bunch of youth enrolled on both iLead programmes. We pray this project goes from strength to strength and it is of benefit to all enrolled, being able to work together to become the Ummah we desperately need. Through this edition, we also reflect on the elections that took place in May and review our past and future activities.

We must remember that Allah, the Most Perfect,

Most High has made the Believers a mercy and helpers towards each other. Which is why the Messenger of Allāh sallallahu alayhi wa sallam said: "The example of the Believers in their mutual love and mercy is like the example of a body. If one part feels pain, then all of it is affected by sickness and fever." - [Bukhari, Muslim]

To end, the community lost a true icon and role model recently, Sheikh Sa'eed Hassan Ismail, an Imam who spent over half a century in service to Allah and his community. May Allah (SWT) have mercy on his soul and grant him a high station in Jannah. Ameen. His dedication and passion towards the Ummah is truly inspiring and his obituary in this edition makes us reflect to always strive with sincerity and patience to do good always.

We pray this edition of Reflections is an insightful read. If you would like to contribute to future editions of the newsletter, please feel free to get in touch with us at: info@muslimcouncilwales.org

Saira Chaudhry

Broadway House, Broadway, Cardiff, CF24 1PU Tel: 029 2034 4555 Fax: 029 2049 2860
Website: muslimcouncilwales.org E-mail: info@muslimcouncilwales.org

Editor:

Saira Chaudhry

Designer:

Suffiya Hasan

Contributors:

Abdul Azim Ahmed

Moazzam Javed

Acknowledgement:

Saleem Kidwai

An Obituary for Sheikh Sa'eed Hassan Isma'il

May Allah (SWT) have mercy on his soul, forgive him for his sins, and grant him a high station in Jannah. Ameen.

Sheikh Sa'eed Ismail was born in South Shields in 1930, to a Yemeni seafaring father and an English mother (who converted to Islam). His father was killed when his ship was torpedoed by a German submarine in the Bristol Channel at the opening of World War II. Shortly afterwards, the spiritual leader of the Yemeni community in Cardiff at the time, Sheikh Hassan Ismail, was told about the nine-year old fatherless boy while visiting the Yemenis living in South Shields. Having met him, he recognised the piety and good character of the young boy, and asked his mother if he could bring him back to Cardiff, to teach him about Islam. Initially reluctant, she eventually agreed, and the young Sheikh Sa'eed arrived in Cardiff in 1940.

Educated in Cardiff through his early teenage years, he then went with his foster father to Yemen at the age of 16 to receive his religious training and education, returning back to Cardiff in 1950. But when his foster father, Sheikh Hassan Ismail, returned to Yemen on a permanent basis in 1956, Sheikh Sa'eed assumed spiritual leadership of the community. He continued to act as its figurehead for the rest of his life, despite poor health in his later years.

Throughout his working life, Sheikh Sa'eed combined night-shift factory work as a welder, with his religious duties during the day.

He never received any payment for his work in the mosque, reflecting the spirit of self-sacrifice and dedication with which he served the Muslim community of Cardiff for over more than five decades. Many Muslims in Cardiff will remember him very warmly not only as their religious teacher, but as the person who conducted their marriages, buried their dead, taught their children how to read the Qur'an, healed their disputes, and acted as their advocate and guide.

But alongside his religious role, he was a well-known local figurehead in civil society, and was the first Welsh Muslim to serve as a chaplain to a civic leader, this being Paddy Kitson, former Chairman of South Glamorgan County Council.

Under Sheikh Sa'eed's leadership, the South Wales Islamic Centre was constructed on Alice Street in Butetown in 1984, and is one of the few purpose-built mosques in Cardiff. Its location and architecture means that it has always been a popular place for school groups and visitors from all sections of society, and Sheikh Sa'eed's lilting Geordie/Cardiff accent, warm welcome, and easy-going demeanour will no doubt be fondly remembered by many.

Because of the longevity of his leadership, and his link to one of the most important and formative periods in the history of Muslim settlement in Britain, Sheikh Sa'eed had been interviewed and profiled extensively

over the years, in academic studies, and in the media. But despite his prominence and significance, he nevertheless continued to exhibit the Islamic virtues of humility and generosity to all.

In a series of interviews conducted in 2009, Sheikh Sa'eed reflected on his life, his faith, and on his long memories of living in Cardiff. His accounts ranged across his love of Wales and his enjoyment of a "Sunday dinner, potatoes and cabbage", through to his regard for the religious knowledge of the scholars he met in Yemen as a young man. Across the twists and turns of his life however, his Islamic faith remained central, and in many ways, his whole philosophy of life is summed up in the following interview extract:

"Thanks to God I am a good Muslim, or I try to be, with the best of my ability. And I don't want anything else. That's good enough for me. Riches, it comes and goes. Health? Comes and goes. But faith, it's not easy to obtain, not easy to obtain, but once you've got it, you've got to make it stay there. And faith is here in the heart".

Sheikh Sa'eed is survived by his wife and three children (2 daughters and a son), and 8 grandchildren. His passing marks the loss of an iconic figure in the history of Muslims in Wales, and in Britain as a whole.

Recounting a conversation with Sheikh Sa'eed Hassan Isma'il

"Thanks to God I am a good Muslim, or I try to be, with the best of my ability. And I don't want anything else. That's good enough for me. Riches, it comes and goes. Health? Comes and goes. But faith, it's not easy to obtain, not easy to obtain, but once you've got it, you've got to make it stay there. And faith is here in the heart"

Narrated by Sheikh Zane Abdo – a touching account

A grand opportunity to have a conversation like this with Sheikh Sa'eed Hassan Isma'il, whilst sitting in the office of the mosque together, me and him, just two weeks before the day of this Friday Khutbah.

I asked the question 'What would you like me to say to the people for 'when' the time comes...'

The answer given by Sheikh Sa'eed:

'...I have done my duty as a Muslim for 80 years

I didn't see it as anything but a duty ... nothing special

There's no other way in life

I didn't do it for money ...no money, I worked all my life, I didn't ask for money

I worked hard ...wielder by trade

As far as I'm concerned I did my duty

People years later appreciated what I had done

I don't want a prize... that's not what I am getting out of it ...it's Allah's reward, then that's it otherwise

Ask ikhwaan, the people, to make al-Faatiha for me



Don't spend money on me, reading the al-Faatiha – that's enough

I pray for the Hidaya of the youth – (guidance)

I have done mistakes – what you do is written down

Tawba (repentance) – it gets rid of it you see (your mistakes). Allah's will to forgive... that's why we enter Paradise... that's the Tawfiq of Allah (success for you)

Ya Allah forgive me.. Ya Allah forgive me.. Ya Allah forgive me..

It's not too late...on your death bed you have time

Once you die you've lost your chance, that's it, it's gone

I have lots of regrets... I did some things wrong

I tried my best to worship Him

I've done good and made mistakes

The good marks wipe out the bad marks

As long as you can walk and talk you still have a chance before your death bed

Allah gives us a lot of opportunities, a lot of rope

Allah wants to forgive us, but He wants us to make the move."

Ask for Tawbah – (repent)

Make du'aa for me and pray for me...'



Special Edition:
In the Spotlight

War on Terror – The Obama Years
11 June '11

“Cageprisoners Ltd is a human rights organisation that exists solely to raise awareness of the plight of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and other detainees held as part of the War on Terror”

On Saturday 11th June, Cageprisoners will be hosting a fundraising dinner in Cardiff, supported by the Muslim Council of Wales.

Cageprisoners is a non-profit human rights organisation based in Britain but that works internationally, dedicated to defending one of the basic values; of innocent until proven guilty. The organisation lobbies and campaigns on behalf of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay (and other places too) where due process, fair trials and recognition of international human rights is suspended.

The Muslim Council of Wales was pleased to support the fundraiser. It believes that organisations such as Cageprisoners are essential to functioning societies.

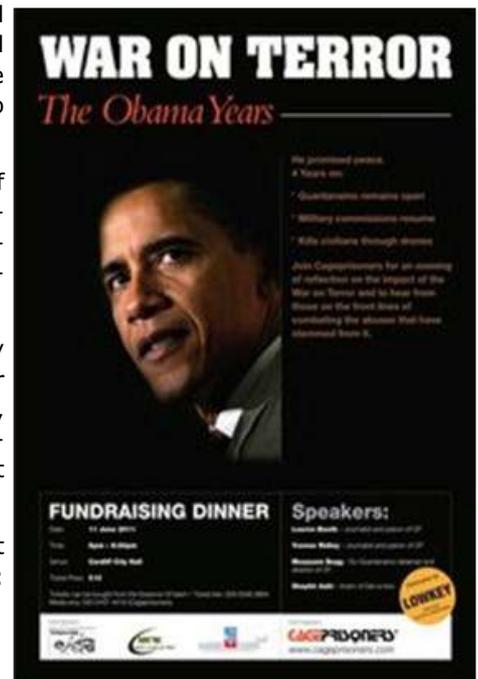
Cageprisoners also has a long standing precedent in British Muslim history. Abdullah Quilliam, a Liverpoolian convert to Islam in the Victoria era and a successful lawyer, was known for defending accused criminals that otherwise could not afford representation in the courts. He earned himself a reputation for acting on behalf of clients on trial for vicious murders and crimes, yet he did so proudly. Quilliam considered it his religious duty to ensure justice was done, and justice required an adequate defence for those accused of heinous crimes. He was also a key individual responsible for ending the death penalty in

the UK, having campaigned against it his whole life and once proudly boasting he had only once lost a client to the death penalty.

Quilliam was a scholar of Islam, a lawyer by profession, and a dedicated philanthropist. His legacy is followed by Cageprisoners.

The fundraiser on Saturday 11th June will bring together prominent public speakers, local scholars and performing talent that will highlight the work of Cageprisoners.

For more information, visit the Cageprisoners website: <http://cageprisoners.com>



CAGEPRISONERS FACT BOX:

Vision

To see a return to the respect of those fundamental norms which transcend religion, societies and political theories. It is the vision of Cageprisoners that abuse of individuals and demonization of societies be eradicated completely and that respect for human rights is unequivocally promoted globally.

Mission

To improve the circumstances and situation of political detainees worldwide, specifically those interned as a result of the War on Terror and its side campaigns.

Principles

Cageprisoners is not an advocacy organisation and consequentially does not seek to make representations on behalf of individuals in courts of law. However, the organisation seeks to highlight individual cases in order to draw attention to entire classes of detainees due to a dearth of resources.

Welsh Assembly Elections...

...5th May '11

Reflection on Elections

*“The leader of a people is their servant”
– Prophet Muhammad (SAW)*



On May 5th 2011 the Welsh people elected their representatives in the Assembly. A new Welsh Government is poised to govern for the next five years, leading Wales well into the 21st century.

The Muslim Council of Wales would like to offer congratulations to all newly elected Assembly Members, and prays that they will help make Wales a strong, more vibrant, more open society.

The National Assembly have many challenges to face. Unemployment is a reality many people in Wales face, starting a vicious cycle of deprivation that is difficult to break. Education standards in Wales unfortunately are still lagging behind European counterparts. There is also a troubling rise in hate crimes and Islamophobia both in Wales and Britain more generally.

The Muslim Council of Wales however believes the solutions to these problems can be achieved through unity, openness and cooperation on all levels. It is needed both at the grass-roots, with cultural and religious communities working together to tackle societal problems. It also needed at the political level, with parties and politicians willing to work together for the people of Wales, and not to descend into petty tribalism that can jar the political process.

The Muslim Council of Wales looks forward to working with both new and old Assembly Members over the next five years.

“The leader of a people is their servant” - Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

FACT BOX:

- The National Assembly for Wales election 2011 was the most recent election for the National Assembly. The poll was held on Thursday, 5 May 2011 and decided the incumbency for all the assembly's seats.
- The election resulted in gains for the incumbent Welsh Labour Party, which gained four seats compared to the previous election and now has 30 seats, exactly half of the Assembly.
- The Welsh Conservatives emerged as the largest opposition party with 14 seats, a net gain of two.
- The junior party in the government coalition, the nationalist Plaid Cymru, suffered a drop in its vote and now has 11 seats.
- The Welsh Liberal Democrats lost significantly in the popular vote and now has 4 seats.

Speaking Faith to Faith...

...2nd April 2011

"Muslims and Christians make up over half the world's population, and Islam and Christianity have a long and glorious history"

– Saleem Kidwai (MCW)

The Muslim Council of Wales, along with the Islam-UK, was proud to host two leading religious figures in the United Kingdom for a Christian-Muslim event addressing the role of faith in the modern world. Imam Yunus Dudhwala and Archbishop Emeritus Kevin McDonald discussed the importance of faith in addressing modern problems and modern lives.

The event took place on the 2nd April in Cardiff University and was attended by over 350 Muslims and Christians, including leading figures from the University and the respective religions.

The Most Revd Archbishop Emeritus of Southwark, Kevin McDonald is one of Britain's most senior Catholic thinkers and leaders. With a long



history of serving his congregation locally and nationally, first as Bishop and later as Archbishop; The Most Rev Kevin McDonald offered his thoughts on faith in changing and modern environment, identifying both the danger of militant secularism and hope offered by interfaith initiatives.

Imam Yunus Dudhwala is a graduate of Dar ul-Uloom Bury, one of the prestigious Islamic learning institutes UK and of Al-Azhar University. He is also the most Senior Muslim Chaplain in the United Kingdom, working as a Multifaith Manager in Newham University Hospital. Yunus Dudhwala was also recently chosen as the NHS Employee of the Year. Imam Dudhwala reflected on his own experiences as a Chaplain working with different faiths and different peoples. He noted how faith takes on greater importance

in the life-and-death context of the hospital, and how spirituality and faith in God is not diminishing amongst people in his own experience.

Saleem Kidwai, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Wales, commented that "the event illuminated the way in which faith plays a part in the fabric of our society, and what it can offer to believer and atheist alike". He continued "Wales is currently at a crossroads, with a strong Yes vote in the referendum and recent Assembly elections. This event is an important time to start thinking about the kind of Wales we want to live in. Imam Yunus and the Archbishop offered us many gems of wisdom in how faith plays a role in society that is constructive and inspiring."

Saleem Kidwai concluded by saying that "Muslims and Christians make up over half the world's population, and Islam and Christianity have a long and glorious history. Interfaith events like this give us an opportunity to learn, challenge ourselves and a forge a new future!"



The Dragon and the Crescent by Grahame Davies

MCW Book
Review

The Dragon and the Crescent is an impressive and important new book published by Grahame Davies, already a prolific author on religion and Wales, as well as a poet and broadcaster.

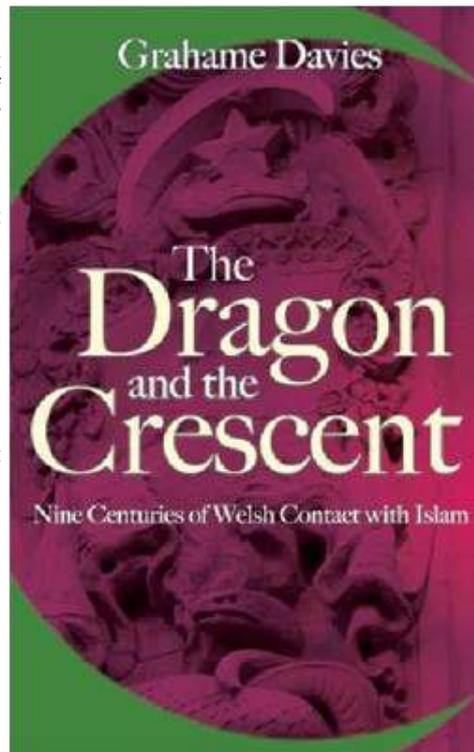
In the early twenty-first century, the relationship between the West and Islam has, due to recent political events, become the subject of intense study, curiosity and tension. But to understand contemporary anxieties, we need to trace their historical roots. The Dragon and the Crescent does this for one small European nation, revealing for the first time, the full and surprising story of the Welsh relationship with Islam.

Grahame Davies work spans nine centuries, and explores the images of Muslims and Islam in Welsh literature. The book was officially launched on the 10th May in the Senedd, Cardiff Bay. A fitting location considering the Bay's historic Muslim community. The title of the book is an interesting story itself.

side of the entrance. On the right hand side, slightly above the front gate is the depiction of the crescent and the star and a dragon crouched just below it. Very little is known about this small engraving, but almost certainly it is a reference to

Islam, a religion that has been in contact with Wales since at least the eighth century.

The depiction of Muslims in Welsh literature is not always positive, something Grahame Davies is frank and honest about. Perceptions of Muslims is often negative. It is relationship framed by the Crusades, religious competition and of competing empires. However, there are more positive portrayals in the inti-



"This is a fully annotated work of scholarship as well as an always readable, sometimes exciting book that opens out a previously neglected aspect of Welsh - and British - culture over more than 400 pages"

– Steve Dube, Western Mail

Many of us will have walked into City Hall in Cardiff, admiring its architecture and engravings. Perhaps most of us however have never noticed an engraving on the

mate relationships formed between the crew of ships; Grahame believes the shared perils of seafaring helped create bonds of friendship. The book ends by look-



ing at a new genre of literature; writing about Islam and Muslims by Welsh Muslims.

The book is a gift to those who desire a deeper understanding of the relationship between Islam and Wales.

The story may not always be a positive one, but it ultimately gives us hope. Despite the conflicts and prejudices of history, the future relationship of Islam and Wales is yet to be written and lies in the hands of us all.

Steve Dube from the Western Mail describes the book as "a fully annotated work of scholarship as well as an always readable, sometimes exciting book that opens out a previously neglected aspect of Welsh - and British - culture over more than 400 pages"

The Dragon and the Crescent can be purchased from Seren Books.

<http://www.serenbooks.com/book/the-dragon-and-the-crescent/9781854115577>

A New MCW Initiative



In the last edition of the newsletter, we brought to you a new Muslim Council of Wales initiative called ADFYWIAD, which stands for "Advisory Directorate for Youth, Women and Imams Active Development" and is also the Welsh word for "Revival". ADFYWIAD hopes to deliver capacity building and leadership skills to mosques, as well as women and the youth, within the Muslim community in Wales. It aims to engage and empower individuals and groups of youth, women and Imams in different skill areas required for the successful running of any project or organisation.

One such initiative developed by ADFYWIAD includes iLead Wales which stands for "Islamic Leadership Education and Development Wales" and whose primary strategy is to train and develop a team of competent youth in leadership and project management.

On 26th February 2011, iLead Wales was launched at the Future Inn Hotel. The main aim of the launch event was to give the general public, especially the youth a taste of the actual iLead programme, encouraging them to get involved and enrol. With over 50 attendants and a full day programme including group activities and workshops, the launch event was a great success being well received by

both trainers and attendees alike.

The morning programme involved a group activity where attendees were asked to work in groups and identify visions, challenges and opportunities



for their community. The main idea behind this activity was to get the youth thinking on how they can improve the community at large and how the iLead Wales course would help them to achieve their visions for the community. An example of such a vision identified by the youth was "to make the Muslim community become a role model for the wider society in every aspect of life in Wales". Another such example included "more integration between the Muslim community and other faiths".

The afternoon programme involved the delivery of three workshops by highly qualified professionals. The Leadership workshop was delivered by Tafazal, the managing director of Muslim Youth skills. The Media workshop was delivered by Elin

Wyn, a BBC Journalist for 24 years with a lot of experience of radio and television news. The public speaking workshop was delivered by Shahid Akmal, the managing director of Exquisitus LTD.

Feedback showed the attendees were extremely satisfied with the overall launch event, workshops and trainers delivering the workshops, enjoying the practical side of delivery. Elin Wyn, one of the trainers commented that "the event was a good introduction to the iLead programme and its purpose. The venue and layout were both excellent. The turnout was also great and the wide age range made the workshops more stimulating with the younger participants being particularly enthusiastic, which was very encouraging."



With great interest in the iLead Wales programme, following the launch event, many applications were received for both the community challenges programme aimed at those aged between 13-16 and the main training programme aimed at those aged 16+. After reviewing all applications, interviews were conducted. However, the interviews were designed to not just determine more about the character, experience and commitment levels of all those that applied

but also to be a learning experience in itself especially for the younger age candidates who had limited or no experience at interviews.

“Once I met all the candidates I was awe-struck by the passion, aspirations, determination and raw potential of everyone I met!”

– Mohammed Alomgir Ahmed (iLead Wales)

Mohammed Alomgir Ahmed, who was initially drafted in to interview the younger group and ended up joining the iLead Wales team commented “When I was approached to help with the interview process for the iLEAD junior programme, I felt it would be a great way to use my professional experience to give back to the community although I had no intentions of getting further involved. However, once I met all the candidates I was awe-struck by the passion, aspirations, determination and raw potential of everyone I met! I remembered back to when I was their age and thought how useful a little guidance and push in the right direction along with real business and management skills would have helped me

and developed – self development, engagement with the wider community and leadership.

Delegates will also be taught and offered to complete an ILM (Institute in Leadership and Management) Level award 2, 3 or 5 depending on age and experience. Alaa Khundakji, responsible for the iLead Wales project explains that “ILM is an internationally known institute providing leadership and management qualifications. We decided to join forces with ILM to give all delegates, especially the younger group, a head start in life and equip them with essential leadership knowledge and skills that they can utilise in the workplace as well as within the

Wales programme. Renad Khundakji, a delegate on the community challenges programme, presented “we would like to develop on personal, project management communication and stress management skills whilst also being able to work together as a team to tackle problems within our community”



“We aim to expand the iLead programme throughout the whole of Wales, to become an accredited and recognised leadership training programme in Wales”

– Alaa Khundakji (iLead Wales)

achieve my goals so I asked how else I can help. I am now fully engrossed in the junior community challenges programme and loving every minute of it. The kids inspire and motivate me to work harder on the project as do the course co-ordinators like Alaa and Saira who spend so much of their free time to make everything happen on the back end!”

Following the selection process, 17 candidates are now enrolled onto the community challenges programme and 36 are enrolled onto the main training programme. Both programmes have been set to follow a broad structure over a year where three core areas will be taught

community. Although this is a pilot year, we aim to expand the iLead programme throughout the whole of Wales, to become an accredited and recognised leadership training programme in Wales.”

Both programmes have officially commenced resulting in great initial feedback. The first community challenges session, based on self development was held on Sunday 8th May at Cardiff University where delegates learnt about SWOT Analysis, time management and Tawakkul – trust in Allah (SWT). A group task was also assigned where delegates were asked to discuss skills they would like to develop throughout the iLead

The first main training programme session based on the inner dimensions of a leader was held on Saturday 21st May at County Hall where the first two personal development sessions focused on the urge to do good and repentance. The aims of these sessions are to develop the spiritual need within delegates to lead whilst also focusing on the main interpersonal skills required in leadership. These sessions will continue fortnightly throughout June leading up to a weekend retreat at the end of June where delegates will experience a full weekend of intense training and team building activities.

The programme will run throughout the whole year. Furthermore, with it being the pilot year, improvements will constantly be made to streamline the programme for future years.

Taste of a river.....

The messenger of God upon him be peace and blessings has said "The true emigrant is the one who abandons evil and the true warrior is the one who fights passion." This profound statement explains the fundamentals of religion being split into two categories; the first of which requires one to abstain in acts of disobedience and the second is to carry out acts of obedience and servitude of God the Most High. However this challenge is by no means easy. A constant dilemma that Muslims in the west face is the compatibility of religious duties and the western lifestyle. It can be difficult to prayer the Friday prayer in a mosque when your committed, to a rigid routine at work. Striving to achieve the maximum benefit from the day itself is a dream most people cannot envision, In fact one could quite persuasively argue that we are struggling to make the best out of a bad situation. Brothers are intimidated into trimming their beards for interviews, and sisters may feel marginalized by their headscarf. In the chaotic hassles of the modern world it is important to find a balance

It is imperative that we take lessons from our history, learn the teachings of our beloved prophet and implement them in such a way that we have constant attachment and feel remorseful when they are missed.

The journey begins with the desire to change, an honest seeking, to become a better person and yearning to submit towards God. The sincerity of the seeker will result in them being found, for God has said in his hadith al-Qudsi:

"O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it."

However it is not sufficient for one to yearn change and not act for it. Begin to know your religion and your Lord, study in the meadows of paradise within

the circles of knowledge then purify yourself with this knowledge through implementation.

Imam Malik alleged: "He who practices Purification without learning Sacred Law corrupts his faith, while he who learns Sacred Law without practicing purification corrupts himself. Only he who combines the two proves true."

We should never forget that knowledge, is a means to an end and not the end objective itself. The student of knowledge should be like a fruit bearing tree that only becomes more humbled by the fruit it bears.

"All humans are dead except those who have knowledge; and all those who have knowledge are asleep, except those who do good deeds; and those who do good deeds are deceived, except those who are sincere and those who are sincere are always in a state of worry." [Imam Shaf'i]

Be reflective and question your intentions constantly for the path to attain eternal felicity, a purified soul and proximity to God is only for the sincere, this is the ultimate struggle of a slave in obedience to God.

The harder we strive to improve our deficiencies, the better the environment around us will become, we will even find it pleasurable to pray throughout the last third of the night, or to wake for the dawn prayer, finding our tongues moister in remembrance of God, even a lighter step on the way to walk.

The key is to be grateful with whatever we have, and understand if God wanted he could have given us much less. Being content within our situation is an art that every Muslim should practise.

There will always be challenges and trials in holding firm to this religion but that trial is needed to prove ourselves to God who mentions: "It is He who created death and life to test you, to see which of you is best in Good deed." [Surah Mulk]

JazakAllahu khairun

"Our problem is one of spirituality. If a man comes to speak to me about the reforms to be undertaken in the Muslim world, about political strategies and of great geo-strategic plans, my first question to him would be whether he performed the dawn prayer (al-fajr) in its proper time" - Tariq Ramadan