

# Muslim Mums

## Welcome!

Salaam Alaykum

In this issue we have focused on the Holy Quran. As mums we strive to teach our children about the best of everything. But what of our Holy book? Do we really strive to convey and teach the true nature of this divine book so that they may grow up understanding and cherishing the Quran?

In his final will and testament Imam Ali (as) instructs his children: 'Remain attached to the Quran. Nobody should surpass you on being intent on it or more sincere in implementing it.'

*Small Things Make Big Muslims - Tips for instilling Islam in your children.*

This edition, we have focused on making the Quran a part of your child's daily routine. We have chosen 5 short segments of ayahs which can be practically applied around the house. There are various ways in which you can explain these. They may be stuck up in appropriate places around the house as constant reminders. One mum relayed how she would weave an elaborate story with the ayah as

the punch line or they can just be added as part of our conversations with them. You will be amazed at the benefits. Not only does it introduce the Quran to them at a different level than what they are used but it also teaches them through practical ways to constantly keep Allah and what pleases him in their minds.

(In the bathroom)

وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ

Sura Tawba, Ayah 108 "And Allah loves those who become pure and clean."

This is a good ayah when they do not want to be interrupted with the chore of showering. 'Which one of you wants to be loved by Allah because He loves those who are clean?' What usually follows is a race to the bathroom!

(On the washing machine)

وَتَيَابِغِكَ فَطَهَّرْ

Sura Mudathir, Ayah 4 "And purify your clothes."

Especially helpful when they want to wear the same favourite top day in day out!

(On the clothes cupboard)

خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ



Sura A'raf, Ayah 31 "Put on your nice things at every place of worship." How often is there a tug of war when deciding what to wear to mosque? 'With my son it is wanting to wear the sporty socks that just do not go with the black trousers. Explaining and teaching this ayah makes it something that Allah will be pleased with and not 'mummy not letting me wear what I want!'

(In the kitchen)

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا

Sura A'raf, Ayah 31 "Eat and drink but do not waste." Often this ayah will motivate them to finish that last bite simply because it is what will make Allah happy.

(Where you pray)

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

Sura Taha, Ayah 14 "And establish prayer for my remembrance." Good for when you want to encourage them to pray gently and not forcefully.

Source: "Lessons from the Quran Colouring Book"

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## Growing Feet

Providing parents with “Pearls of Wisdom” (Islamic and Secular) through the growing years

### **PREGNANCY – Making the Decision**

(Extracted from What to Expect when Expecting, by Eisenberg, Murkoff and Hathaway)

Women have more options in childbirth today than ever before. And with the exception of certain emergency situations, the decision of whether or not to have medication during labour and delivery will be largely yours. To try and make the best possible decision, for you and your baby:

- Discuss the topic of pain relief and anaesthesia with your practitioner long before labour begins. Find out what kinds of drugs or procedures are available and what side effects may be experienced by mother and/or child.
- Recognise that, although childbirth is a natural experience that many women can go through without medication, it is not supposed to be a trial by ordeal or a test of bravery, strength, or endurance. The

pain of childbirth has been described as the most intense in the human experience. Medical technology has given women the option of relief. Not only is this an acceptable option, it is, in certain cases, the preferred one.

- Keep in mind that taking childbirth medication entails both risks and benefits and should only be used when the benefits outweigh the risks.
- Don't make up and close your mind in advance. Though it's okay to theorise what might be best for you under certain circumstances, it's impossible to predict what kind of labour and delivery you'll have.
- If during labour you feel you need medication, discuss it with your midwife or doctor. But don't insist on it immediately. Try holding out 15 minutes or so and putting that time to the best possible use – concentrating on your relaxation or breathing. You may find that with a little more support you can handle the pain or that the progress you have made in that time gives you the will to go on without help. If however you find that you need the relief as much or even more, ask for it – and don't feel guilty. If of course, your doctor decides that you need medication immediately,

for your sake or your baby's, waiting may not be advisable.

- Remember that your well-being and that of your baby are your number one priority, not some pre-conceived, idealised childbirth scenario. All decisions should be made with that priority in mind.

### **INFANCY (0-12 Months) – Today's Slower babies**

(Extracted from What to Expect in the First Year, by Murkoff, Eisenberg and Hathaway)

Something you should definitely keep in mind when your compulsion to compare gets the best of you (and it will): babies today are developing later in some major gross motor skill categories than they used to. Not because they're less naturally precocious, but because they're spending less time on their tummies. Putting babies to sleep on their backs dramatically reduces the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), but it also temporarily slows motor development. With little opportunity to practise those skills babies used to practise on their tummies (such as rolling over and crawling), more babies are accomplishing these skills later.

Many are even skipping the crawling stage entirely. Though this slowdown isn't considered significant developmentally (and skipping the crawling phase is never a problem unless a baby is skipping other developmental milestones as well, such as



rolling over, sitting up, and so on), parents can help their babies along by making sure they spend plenty of supervised playtime on their bellies from an early age. (Parents who wait too long to flip their babies at playtime will find that their babies balk at this unaccustomed position.) So remember: Back to sleep, tummy to play.

## **THE TODDLER YEARS – Keeping Your Cool**

(Mainly based on “What to Expect – the Toddler Years”, by Eisenberg, Murkoff and Hathaway)

Nobody is cool, calm and collected all of the time – particularly when there’s a toddler in the house. But since frequent parental tantrums are not good for you or your toddler, it’s a good idea to try some simple strategies to help minimise the possibility of such explosions. These will be covered over four issues, Inshallah.

Part 1:

- Steer away from stress on ‘danger days’. Blow-ups are much more likely on days when your toddler is whiny, overtired and cranky; when you’ve got problems at work; when you’ve had a fight with your spouse, your mother, your best friend; when you’re experiencing PMS; when the washing machine’s given out in the middle of a load and the repair person can’t make it until next week. When you’ve had ‘one of those days’, try to avoid activities that are likely to add to the stress (a trip to the shoe shop, for example). Instead, take time for an activity or outing that promises to be relaxing for both of you (a trip to the park or watching a video with your feet up).
- Choose your issues carefully. Instead of squaring off with your toddler over every question, save the showdowns for really important matters. As your toddler comes to realise the innate fairness of this policy (grown-ups don’t always get their way), he or she will feel less

compelled to argue every point. This will reduce blow-ups on both sides and make it easier for you to hold your ground when necessary.

- Take a time-out. When you feel you’re about to boil over, step away from the situation for a few minutes. Count to ten (or a hundred, if you need to), take a couple of deep breaths (or use the breathing exercises you learned in childbirth classes), do a meditation, think about something pleasant, repeat over and over to yourself a phrase you find comforting (such as ‘I am calm and serene’) – until you’ve stopped simmering. Do not, however, leave your toddler alone while you regain your composure.

## **THE OLDER YEARS – Love Languages (Part 2 – Quality Time)**

(Based on “The Five Love Languages” by Gary Chapman)

This issue, we will focus on the third love language that children may have.

Receiving Gifts:

Many parents and grandparents speak the language of gifts excessively. In fact, when one visits the toy stores, one wonders if parents believe that is the only language of love. If parents have the money, they tend to buy many gifts for their children. Some parents believe, that is the best way to show love. Some parents try to do for their children what their parents were unable to do for them. They buy things they wish they had as a child. But unless that is the primary love language of the child, gifts may mean little emotionally to the child.



The parent has good intentions, but he/she is not meeting the emotional needs of the child by giving gifts. If the gifts you give are quickly laid aside, if the child seldom says “thank you,” if the child does not take care of the gifts that you have given, if she does not prize those gifts, chances are “Receiving Gifts” is not her primary love language. If, on the other hand, your child responds to you with much thanksgiving, if she shows others how wonderful you are for buying the gift, if she takes care of the gift, if she puts it in a place of prominence in her room and keeps it polished, if she plays with it often over an extended period of time, then perhaps “Receiving Gifts” is her primary love language.

What if you have such a child but you cannot afford many gifts? Remember, it’s not the quality or cost of the gift; it is the “thought that counts.” Many gifts can be handmade, and sometimes the child appreciates that gift more than an expensive, manufactured gift. In fact, younger children will often play with a box more than the toy that came in it. You can also find discarded toys and refinish them. The process of refinishing can become a project for both parent and child. You need not have lots of money to provide gifts for your child.

## Feature

# Changing the way we recite the Quran

By Tahera Kassamali, Canada



### Our Present Situation

One of the strengths of our community is the emphasis on reciting the Holy Quran. From a young age our children are taught the Adaab of recitation, proper Makhraj and pronunciation of letters, rules of Tajweed, etc. Madrasahs and Islamic Schools teach it as part of the curriculum. Our gatherings usually begin with a recitation from the Quran. The recitation of certain Surahs is usually a part of our daily schedule and many of us will take time to recite, or at least listen to the recitation of, particular Surahs often. Familiarisation with good recitation is undoubtedly an asset of the members of our community.

What we lack however is a deeper appreciation of the contents of the Quran. Most of us do not go beyond recitation, or sometimes the translation. We read the Quran in a shallow and unfeeling manner, often remaining unmoved by the depths of the truth in the verses. This is not only because we do not understand the Arabic. Even if we read the translation, we fail to respond as we should. This coldness to the Quran is very common. It is

as though we have never read the verse which says: *The believers are only those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, and when His signs are recited to them, their faith increases . . . (8:2)*

What prevents us from increasing in faith when we recite the Quran, from being emotionally and spiritually affected by it? Why are our hearts not overcome with awe when we recite, although Allah says: *Had We revealed this Quran to a mountain, you would have seen it bowing, crumble, out of the fear of Allah? (59:21)*

Why do we not visualise what the Quran tells us, as is the quality of the Muttaqeen?

*During the night they are standing on their feet, reading portions of the Qur'an, and reciting it in a well measured way, creating through it grief for themselves, and seeking by it a cure for their ailments. If they come across a verse creating eagerness (for Paradise) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly . . . and when they come across a verse which contains fear (of Hell) they bend the ears of their hearts towards it and feel as though the sounds of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears. (Nahjul Balagha, Khutba 193)*

### Looking For Answers

To answer these questions we must probe deep into ourselves, into our attitude towards the Quran, our motives for reciting it, and the habits that we have formed over the years. What do we think of before we begin reciting the Quran, as we are reciting it, and after we complete reciting it? What is it that creates this barrier to a heartfelt appreciation and reaction to the Quran? The following points could help us in the quest for some answers.

1) Recitation of the Quran is often ritualistic, rather than intrinsically motivated. We recite it because we feel we should, not because we

want to. We focus on the thawab and merits of a particular Sura and are eager to complete it so we do not miss the benefits of that Sura.

2) We overlook the fact that God is talking to each of us in the Quran. We think of it as a book of general guidance, with specific historical causes of revelation. We forget that it is also a personal book of guidance, something that we can apply to daily situations in life. We don't see it as a cure for our emotional and spiritual diseases, a balm for our pain and an energiser when our spirits are failing.

3) We are not familiar with much of the beauty within the Quran. We have not read with reflection the beautiful passages which talk about the wonders of creation, about the qualities of special believers, about relationships in society, about the nature of man . . . etc. What a difference it would make if we paused at these verses and took them to heart, instead of passing over them as we try to complete a Sura or a Juz'.

Have we ever pondered over the following verses, wondered at the depth of meaning in them, absorbed them, thought over them, remembered them often, applied them . . .? If we did we would be awestruck at the magnificence of the Qur'an:

*He sends down water from the cloud, then water courses flow (with water) according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam . . . thus does Allah compare Truth and Falsehood; as for the foam, it passes away as a worthless thing, but that which profits the people, it stays on the earth. Thus does Allah set forth parables. (13:17)*

*Have you not considered how Allah sets forth a parable of a pleasant word being like a pleasant tree, whose root is firm, and whose branches are in the sky, yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its Lord?*

*And Allah sets forth parables for mankind that they may be mindful.*  
(14: 24-25)

These and many other verses of the Quran revive the spirit and mind. They cause us to stop and think deeply, correct our perspectives and improve ourselves. But this change for the better will only happen if we change the way we recite the Quran.

### **A Shift In Our Attitude**

To create this change in our community we need to change the way Quran is recited in our homes. We need to learn, and to teach our children, the correct way of recitation which is not the just correct verbal and physical etiquette but also the mental, emotional and spiritual etiquette of reciting the Quran. This includes:

- a) Pondering over the Quran  
*Will they not reflect over the Quran or are there locks on their hearts.*  
(47: 24 )
- b) Deriving spirituality and peace from the Quran  
*Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah, surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest.* (13:28)

- c) Being touched emotionally by the Quran  
*Say, believe in it or don't believe in it surely those who were given the knowledge before it, fall down on their faces making Sajdah when it is recited to them and they say Glory be to our Lord! Most surely the promise of our Lord will be fulfilled, and they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases their humility.*  
(17: 107 – 109)

- d) Responding to the questions that God asks us in the Quran  
For example when Quran says: *Which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?* (55:16), say: None of your bounties, my Lord, do I deny.

### **Some Practical Guidelines**

To achieve these Adaab we could try to begin some effective habits regarding the Quran.

- 1) Each member of the family should have his/her own copy of the Quran with translation. They can make notes in that Quran, underline and highlight verses, check certain words etc. It can become a useful asset in gaining more familiarity with the contents of the Quran.
- 2) Recite the Quran in a non-ritualistic manner. It is not always necessary to recite a complete Sura, or to recite in order. Take any passage from the Quran and read it a few times. Ponder over it, discuss it, check the Tafsir if possible. Think about it at particular moments in life when it can be applied. Talk about it at home.
- 3) Choose selected verses to memorise and apply them to daily situations. For example, the verses about anger, about back-biting, about making peace between believers . . . should be

memorised and then recited at the times when these situations arise. Go over verses which talk about the bird, rain, fruits, animals, alternation of night and day . . . etc. and memorise them. How great it would be to be able to recite a verse about the bird when we see a bird in the sky, or to think about the verse on rain when it begins to rain. This will assist us in understanding and applying the Quran to our lives.

- 4) Discuss verses of Quran that you hear from lectures and majlis. Check the verses when you get home and talk about it on the dinner table. This creates a familiarity with various verses of the Quran. A Quran calendar can also be useful towards this. A new verse for each day of the year helps everyone in the family to become aware of various verses of the Quran.

- 5) Encourage the use of Quranic verses in article writing, Madrasah work, school work where applicable. Substantiate facts with truths from the Quran and help children understand that the Quran is a comprehensive book that covers all aspects of life.

These and other habits developed at home will help create an understanding of the Quran that goes beyond mere recitation. A gradual shift in our attitude towards the Quran may help our community become like the people Allah talks so highly about: *O you who believe! if any from among you turns back from his Faith, soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love and who will love Him, humble with the believers, mighty against the disbelievers, fighting in the way of Allah, not afraid of the reproaches of those who find fault. That is the grace of Allah, which He will bestow on whom He pleases.* (5:54)

May the Almighty help us receive the Grace to make the Quran a book that is alive for us, that speaks to us and guides our daily lives.





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## *Out of Interest*

### **Pre and Post Natal Yoga**

By Shamim Walji

As discussed in the last issue, yoga has a profound effect on our physical and mental wellbeing; any yoga posture that stimulates the pelvic region will also regenerate the sexual organs and promote general health to aid healthy conception.

Stress can be an influencing factor in a couple not being able to conceive. Yoga also focuses on providing stress relief and relaxation in order to balance the body, hormones, and emotions. With this balance in place, the body will be more conducive to conception. Regular practicing of yoga can tone and strengthen muscles that support your reproductive organs. At the same time it increases your blood circulation, allowing vital nutrients and oxygen to reach your reproductive system.

To have a healthy baby is every mother's dream and yoga helps you do just that. A smooth pregnancy as well as a natural childbirth is just some of the benefits of yoga. But more importantly, it does wonders on the physical and mental development of the foetus. Yoga is also beneficial because it helps you to breathe and relax, which in turn can help you adjust to the physical demands of the labour and have a birth with minimum strain. Yoga can also help to prevent classic

problems associated with childbirth such as back pains, fatigue, etc.

Whether you decide to take Pre and Post Natal classes or do your practice at home, be aware of some dos and don'ts as below.

#### **Safety Guidelines in Practicing Yoga**

**1st Trimester:** You probably don't have many restrictions this early in your pregnancy, but remember to drink lots of water before, during, and after yoga to keep your body hydrated all the time. Breathe deeply and evenly as you stretch. If you are a pro at yoga, recognise and accept that your regime will be different. Avoid trying to progress or develop your suppleness too much.

**2nd Trimester:** You need to take more caution due to your loose joints. Also, your slowly expanding size will now affect your sense of balance. Remember to sink into any yoga position slowly and carefully to avoid injury. Take your time if you have to and don't overdo it. If you can't breathe smoothly and evenly, you are going a little too far.

**3rd Trimester:** You are probably feeling less graceful now that your abdomen is bigger, so perform standing poses with your heel to the wall or use a chair for support to avoid losing your balance. During labour and going through the pain, the body has a tendency to shut and tighten, which may delay the birthing process and cause stress to the mother and the baby.

Learning the breathing techniques of yoga and doing them properly will ensure that you can ward off whatever fear you have of pain or childbirth itself. You will find yourself more serene and in control of your response to pain and relaxing between contractions, preserving your energy for when it is really needed.

Yoga has a definite and highly useful place in the postnatal period as well. It is a gentle but effective form of recuperative exercises. It is advisable to start after six weeks of birth. It strengthens the pelvic floor and abdominal muscles as well as aiding general body tone. During pregnancy, Islam recommends attention towards the baby one is carrying through recitation of Quran, good thoughts and deeds. This takes a priority over other seemingly important things in life. Interestingly, yoga advocates being non-judgemental, honest, ego-free, non-violent and having a light hearted approach. These are all traditional yogic principles which are still emphasized in yoga way of life.



## Adult Book Review



An Enlightening Commentary into “The Light of the Holy Quran”  
Compiled by: Ayatollah Sayyid Kamili Faghih and Imani and A Group of Muslim Scholars. Published by: Amir –Ul-Mu’mineen Ali (a.s) Library  
Volumes: 1-14 (Sura Fateha – Sura Ahzab) and 2 Volumes of (Sura Insan-Sura Naas)

Often we sincerely desire to ponder deeply about verses of the Quran but do not know where to begin. This is when we need to refer to the books of Tafseer. The above Shia tafseer is detailed yet very concise and has been laid out in a simplistic manner. Each Sura is divided into Sections and each of the sections has a specific theme. The contents page lists each section and the accompanying verses which relate to that theme. It also gives further details of the topics in that particular verse and so we can refer to a particular subject by just looking at the contents page.

The verses in Arabic are laid out clearly with the English translation shown under the group of verses. Each verse or a group of verse has a commentary. In some instances; the occasion of revelation is also mentioned. Where some verses require further discussion, the compiler explains under a separate Explanations heading. Thus for example under the verses of fasting, topics such as “Fasting and its Social and Hygienic Effects”, “Fasting in Former Religions” and “Ramadhan, the Transcendent Month” are all discussed under the Explanations section.

The text of these verses and, also, the traditions and narrations from the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) or Ahlul-Bait (A.S.) are printed in English in bolder type than the running commentary in order to distinguish them.

This tafseer is a great first step towards getting familiar / acquainted with the Quran. It is detailed but easy to understand. It can be used on a frequent basis (not too heavy) but also if you need to research particular verses or chapters. The way in which this Tafseer has been compiled means that it can be used by both the older and younger members of the family.

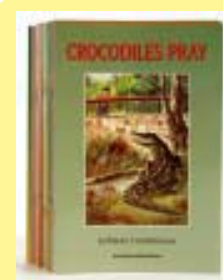
Books of Tafseer are an eternal investment and to be desired for in every household.

## Children's Book Review

Children's Stories by Uthman Hutchinson

At present the only one of its kind amongst Islamic literature, the series is a collection of 36 short stories grouped by reading levels, Levels one through to six correspond to the American school grading system (ages 6-11 years). This series is based on an American Muslim family living in a small city. The parents, their three school-aged children and their friends from America, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Malaysia form the characters of the series.

These stories will entertain and delight. Aimed at giving a true picture of Muslim practice and culture as they exist in a contemporary setting, they somehow never lose sight of their audience. The stories address a child's experiences and concerns with insight and humour. Whatever one's background, this series will be of great value and pleasure to teachers, parents and children alike.



A list of the series follows:

Grade 1 – Crocodile Pray, Miswak, First fast, The Axe, Snowed in, Bad Day and Good Day

Grade 2 – Jamal's Jam, The Attic, Bismillah, Tomatoes, Gone Fishing and Finders Keepers

Grade 3 – Muffins, Muffins, Applesauce and The Squirrel

Grade 3 – Blueberries, Blueberries, Blueberries II and The Promise

Grade 4 – Chicken Pox, Chicken Pox, Great Grandpa's Story and Great Grandpa's Story II

Grade 4 – The Cave, The Cave, Big Business and The Lost Bus

Grade 5 – In Anger, In Anger, Fajr Trouble, What's in a Name, The Vandals, The Vandals II and The Guest

Grade 6 – The New Kind, The New Kid, The New Kid II, Grandma's Death, The Showdown, TV or Not and Precious.

## Relatives Corner Dadima's Story

Our parents and grandparents reflect on the years that have gone by and speak about it like it was a distant dream. They talk about the 'good old days' where a loaf of bread would cost 10p, how families worked together to make things work and how having 10 children to compliment their families was the norm. But just how better off were they in the past?

We interviewed Rubab bai Haji, an 84 year old great grandmother. She started out her life in Dodoma, got married in Dar-es-Salaam, travelled across Africa with her salesman husband and has now settled in Canada with her son. We asked her



a few simple questions including, what was life like living as a big family? What role did your family play in your children's upbringing? How has life changed? and finally which life is better?

Modern in her views of the current Western society she told the following story:

When I was young and not married we used to hang out in the local yard and play 'Tikri' (hopscotch) with our friends – there were seven of us and now we are left with two living. There was no sense of boys and girls being separate we all played together. Education wasn't about getting the best grades or coming first in class – it was simply about going to school.

I then got married, becoming the eldest daughter in law, leaving behind the 'Tikri' to play housewife to my husband and his family. There were many of us in the house so there was a lot of work to do. We all had cooking turns and those that weren't cooking were looking after the children of the cooks. Cooking wasn't about putting a bowl, spoon and cereal for breakfast it was about puris, parathas for breakfast, a fully cooked lunch, followed by a light, but freshly prepared dinner. Eating dinner was a social event; we would all gather on a mat on the floor and of us would sit with all the children and feed them with our hands.

Years went by and everyone dispersed into their own lives.

But the crux came when the elders of the family passed away leaving behind us youngsters to hold the fort. We moved into our own house as did the others and I would say 'chakra parigya' (the roof fell from the house).

Life went on and we travelled from town to town, the children got educated wherever we lived, and as they grew older we sent them to England for further studies. There were no phone calls to call them to find out how they were, we just got a letter once in a while and if someone was visiting England we would get the 'samachar' (news). Once my children had settled into their lives I travelled visiting them now and again but my base was my home town Dar-es-salaam where I lived comfortably enjoying the mosque and revisiting my friends.

Nowadays, I see my grandchildren locked up in their room studying instead of cooking lunch at home! We start our day eating breakfast at restaurants. I have to say my favourite phrase now – time is money, life is busy! We have become a culture of mixed marriages, mixed food, mixed religions in fact we are all mixed up.

God has made me a 'free bird' with very little responsibility. In fact, nowadays, all I do is travel and enjoy life with my children, grandchildren and my great grandchildren.

So are we better off? We'll I would say 'badhu sarkhu che' (we are the same), I still enjoy my life whatever the situation but I've learnt to adapt to whatever Allah has blessed us with. If you learnt to adapt you don't dwell on the past but look at the fruits that have been sown for the future.



## Personal Moments A Different Kind of Marriage

By Salma Hooshmand

Yes, it was an arranged marriage. Kind of. Compared to today's standards, at least. Nearly thirteen years ago, my East-African Khoja parents allowed me to spend one hour talking to my "khistgaar" as they say in Farsi, "the one who is making a proposal." I had seen him before, but never spoken to him. Needless to say, I was nervous... We covered various topics in that one hour; we exchanged religious ideologies, thoughts on raising children, our goals in life. I realised that he is a kind, intelligent man, who can make me laugh. Within a week, I had made my decision. It didn't even occur to me to ask for more meetings, to "get to know him better"—there just didn't seem to be anything more to discuss. My parents approved of him, I liked his manners, I felt comfortable in his company... I said "yes"!

The first inkling that the differences in our cultural backgrounds might cause issues struck almost immediately, while planning the wedding. I thought I had preemptively tackled any possible issues by smartly declaring that I would wear a white wedding gown for one occasion (a dream I had secretly harbored since childhood) and an Indian shararah for a another occasion. If only it were that simple. Iranian culture and Khoja culture, I would soon learn, are as different as chelo kabab and biryani. There are differences in everything from how soon the wedding should take place to the bride's etiquette during the wedding ceremony. During the nine months we were

engaged, I learned a lot about my husband-to-be, and even more about Iranian culture. He, also, was educated in Khoja culture. However, I strongly believe that a greater influence on our personalities' than where our parents come from is our "family culture". The way your future spouse was raised, the dynamics of family life, the daily routines; these are differences that all couples need to reconcile with, regardless of their cultural or national ties. Marriage, to an extent, is a culture shock for everyone; as I look back on those early days, it is difficult to pinpoint which issues that were overcome stemmed from our cultural backgrounds or our family backgrounds. So, the wedding took place simply, in spite of the complications in its planning. Except for a few of the guests wondering why the bride was so serious; and others wondering why the groom's family refused candy to be placed into their mouths by the in-laws, it was as normal as any typical wedding. And so, our lives together began. As the years pass by, we become closer to each other, and culture has become a blessing, rather than a point of contention. Many people wonder, what type of food do you eat? Do your children wear ethnic outfits? What language do your children speak? What holidays do you celebrate? They ask these questions very gravely, as though the response is paramount to the meaningfulness of our lives. "We eat all types of food," I answer, "Mexican, Chinese, American, Indian and Iranian—I try to cook healthy food for my family. My daughter likes



spicy food, my son prefers milder food...yes, my children wear shalwar khameez occasionally, so does my husband. The children speak English mostly, but they also speak Farsi; my own Gujrati was weak, and I haven't been able to teach them much. I believe that anyone who has the opportunity to learn multiple languages should take it, and I am lucky that I have learned Farsi. We celebrate Islamic holidays..." Clothes, foods, even holidays—these are not the elements that bring meaning into one's life. In a world with shrinking boundaries, the ability to perceive from other points of view and empathise with our fellow human beings is what is most valued. Our children's life experience is priceless; they have the benefit of being exposed to two rich cultures, plus their own distinctively blended culture. More importantly, they have gained a unique insight on life and broad outlook on the world.

Marrying someone from a different culture is not as alien as it once was; there are many couples from various backgrounds who make the decision to not only face the challenges, but also benefit from the blessings of their differences. Life is complicated, but when I remember that initial one-hour encounter with my future husband, I realise that it's actually as simple as a few common goals, and the ability to laugh together.

## Travel Focus Recession proof holidays (well almost!)

You're probably really tired of turning on the news and listening to the grumpy financiers talking about the economic downturn aka 'the credit crunch'. And you've probably had conversations with your husbands, children and friends on how you have to give up the luxuries of life. One thing you won't need to give up is travel – read our guide to find out how to make your money stretch when booking holidays.

### British Brilliance

Ask your friends and relatives about Dubai, Dar-es-Salaam, or Doha and they'll be able to tell you for hours on end what a wonderful holiday they had. Ask them about the West County, Wye Valley or Wales they'll smile and nod their head like a novice and talk about a school field trip to Stevenage they experienced many years ago. But record numbers of people are expected to holiday at home this summer boosting the British tourist economy. Here are some suggestions.

### Isle of Wight

[www.islandbreaks.co.uk](http://www.islandbreaks.co.uk)

If you're visiting family in Portsmouth its worth hopping on the ferry to the Isle of Wight. With its stunning scenery and serenity, setting foot on the island feels like another world, it has clifftops where you can view the beach



below and lookout for miles. Children will love the clean water and sandy beaches. Don't miss Queen Victoria's favorite seaside home, the magnificent Osborne House, the flamingo park and opportunities to wind sail, wind surf and paraglide.

New Forest, Hampshire  
[www.thenewforest.co.uk](http://www.thenewforest.co.uk)

If beach relaxation isn't your cup of tea then perhaps adventuring through New Forest is a more appealing. Start by taking a car journey through the forest. This is a delightful, stress-free animal spotting drive, with plenty of opportunities to see the famous ponies at close quarters and perhaps a few deer. As you would imagine the New Forest is a paradise for walkers and cyclists alike with miles of splendid walks and traffic free cycle routes. Tourists to New Forest recommend the New Forest safari, a visit to the motor museum at Beaulieu, a journey back in time to the historical village of Buckler's Hard and there are plenty of activities like fishing, cycling and quad-biking for you to enjoy.

### Stratford-Upon-Avon

[www.stratford-upon-avon.co.uk](http://www.stratford-upon-avon.co.uk)

If you find all the walking too energetic then drive up to Warwickshire and experience Shakespeare's County – Stratford-Upon-Avon. Set in the beautiful countryside on the banks of River Avon, Stratford-Upon-Avon is a picturesque town where you can wonder round aimlessly. Obviously, the main attraction here is Shakespeare's houses and the parks and

gardens on the banks of the river Avon.

Cheap flights and hotels Fare comparison sites have come into their own during the recession. Leave [lastminute.com](http://lastminute.com) and [Expedia.co.uk](http://Expedia.co.uk) behind and cut the cost of your holiday with by trawling through some alternative websites.

[www.Kayak.com](http://www.Kayak.com) scans the web for low-cost flights, comparing the majority of the world's budget and full-fare airlines along with [www.Skyscanner.net](http://www.Skyscanner.net). Both also fare tracker service which lets you choose your route and wait for the best prices to pop up.

The Flight Checker at [www.moneysavingexpert.com](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com) allows you to choose your destination first and find the cheapest dates for you to fly. It's particularly good for cheap travel around Europe. Also check out [www.flycheapo.com](http://www.flycheapo.com), [www.who-flies-where.com](http://www.who-flies-where.com) and [www.attitudetravel.com](http://www.attitudetravel.com). However, be prepared to spend some time searching for that perfect destination and the right time!

If you're looking for bargain hotel rooms around the world leave behind Lateroom and Hotelclub and try [www.trivago.co.uk](http://www.trivago.co.uk). They are known for their cheap accommodation. And if you don't find what you're looking for at Trivago try [www.hotelly.com](http://www.hotelly.com) where you can see videos of your room before you book. If you're looking for a specific hotel then try [www.Hotelscombined.com](http://www.Hotelscombined.com).

And finally....after all this research I found flights to Barcelona on Ryanair and 4\* accommodation on hotelly for 2 adults and 1 child for under £250.00. So once I finish writing this article I shall be packing my bags and catching a plane for my short break.

# Personal and Spiritual Development

## Mothers as Leaders

By Aarifa Suleman, Dubai, UAE

I believe that mothers are born leaders and the well being of every family is directly related to the way in which she leads it. A mother can make her home a haven for her children and her family depending on how she leads.

Today, we are bringing up a generation that is remarkably different from past generations. As mothers, I believe we must strive to uphold the core values that were taught to us by our parents and grandparents if we are to successfully lead our families on the path of light as taught to us by the Ahlul Bayt.

And it is this path, the path of the Ahlul Bayt that is our greatest advantage and tool as mothers today. To take as a lesson from the page of the Ahlul Bayt, Imam Ali has said the following on leadership:

“Whoever wants to be a leader should educate himself before others; Before preaching to others, he should first practice himself.”

We learn from this hadith that our biggest challenge is not only to teach Islam and its principles to our children but it is in fact to practice everything that we preach and claim to believe to the best of our ability. When we are able to bring our actions to this level the effectiveness of our leadership within our home will multiply and its effect will be manifest in our children.

It is very easy for us to blame the 21st century

Leadership can be thought of as a capacity to define oneself to others that clarifies and expands a vision of the future.

Edwin H. Friedman

environment for its negative impact on our children. However the era that we live in is an era of choices and the choices that our children make on the outside are often the result of foundations that are learnt on the inside. In order to ensure that our children make steadfast decisions that are in accord with the straight path it is necessary that we as parents educate ourselves with as much knowledge of every kind, Islamic and secular so that we can be their source of guidance.

I once read in a parenting book that “children are often exaggerated versions of their parents,” and this is something that I have personally observed time and time again! It means that any time we have a vice, it appears as an exaggerated version in them and any time we have a good quality it also appears in an exaggerated form in them. As parents we are their foremost role models and because we are closest to them, our actions, deeds, virtues and knowledge carry a large weight in their upbringing and consequent future.

Imam Hassan (as) says in one hadith that “good akhlaq with people is the height of intelligence.” Therefore, instilling in our children the art of giving in every form, humility, manners, and in general teaching them to

celebrate in everyone’s humanity is one of our primary responsibilities. As mothers, we must strive to make our homes a haven for anyone who resides within.

I have homeschooled my three kids for the past six years and it has given me an excellent opportunity to know my kids better and tap their maximum potential. Although it is a great responsibility on my shoulders, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to balance my childrens’ Islamic and secular education. For example when we were learning about governing a country we studied a khutba of Imam Ali (as) from Nahjul Balagha. The khutba contained the advice from the Imam to Malik e Ashtar when he was appointed the ruler of Egypt. This type of practical implementation is what can drive home the beauty of Islamic principles and their relevance in this day and age to our children. With a little extra time and effort, such connections are possible even if your children are not homeschooled.

May the Almighty help us all to lead a life which is totally submissive to Allah. May he also help us to keep the light of Ahlul Bayt and his teaching alive.





## Food Focus

### Kids' Snack and Lunches

Thinking of what to give our children for lunch is usually one of those things that mums are constantly sighing over – well, no more! 'Healthy Eating - Kids' Snacks & Lunches' is full of fresh ideas for school lunches, after-school snacks your children can make themselves, as well as meals that will appeal to the fussiest young eater. Here's one of our favourites:

### Pitta Nachos

Serves 1

- 1 small wholemeal pita bread
- 1 small tomato, chopped
- 1 spring onion, chopped
- 130g can corn kernels
- ¼ cup grated low-fat cheese

1. Preheat oven to moderate 180°C. Split pita bread in half, and cut into triangles roughly the size of corn chips. Arrange pita chips on an oven tray, and cook for about 7 minutes, or until crunchy. Remove from oven tray; allow to cool.
2. In a small bowl, combine tomato and spring onion. Drain corn into a strainer, and rinse under running water for 1 minute. Drain well and add to tomato mixture.
3. Preheat grill. Place pita chips on a bread-and-butter plate. Sprinkle grated cheese over chips. Put under grill and cook until cheese has melted. Remove from grill, pile tomato mixture onto centre of chips, and serve immediately.

## Product Review

Sanyo Xacti HD700 (Around £180.00)

You may find yourself complaining that you have to take a camera and a video camera wherever you go but Sanyo have mastered the art of combining the two with their Sanyo Xacti range. There's quite a few of them but recently we bought the Xacti HD700.

Equipped with 720p HD movie recording functionality and a 7.1 Megapixel still image camera, this all in one is elegantly stylish and has an extremely slim body.

I'm used to carrying round a camera in my purse all the time to record the treasured moments and this has been replaced by my Sanyo Xacti which slightly bigger than a camera and the same weight.

Sanyo Xacti cameras are based on the keyword 'Connect', a concept of recording and then connecting them straight to a PC, hard drive or DVD to share the golden moments from everyday and saving them for the future. This means even your grandma can download the pictures to view them.

The camera is fairly frugal when it comes to memory and battery. Being an SD camera it'll also take SDHC cards. I have an 8gb card in mine and it's good for just under 2 hours of HD footage, as is the battery, so it works out quite well really.



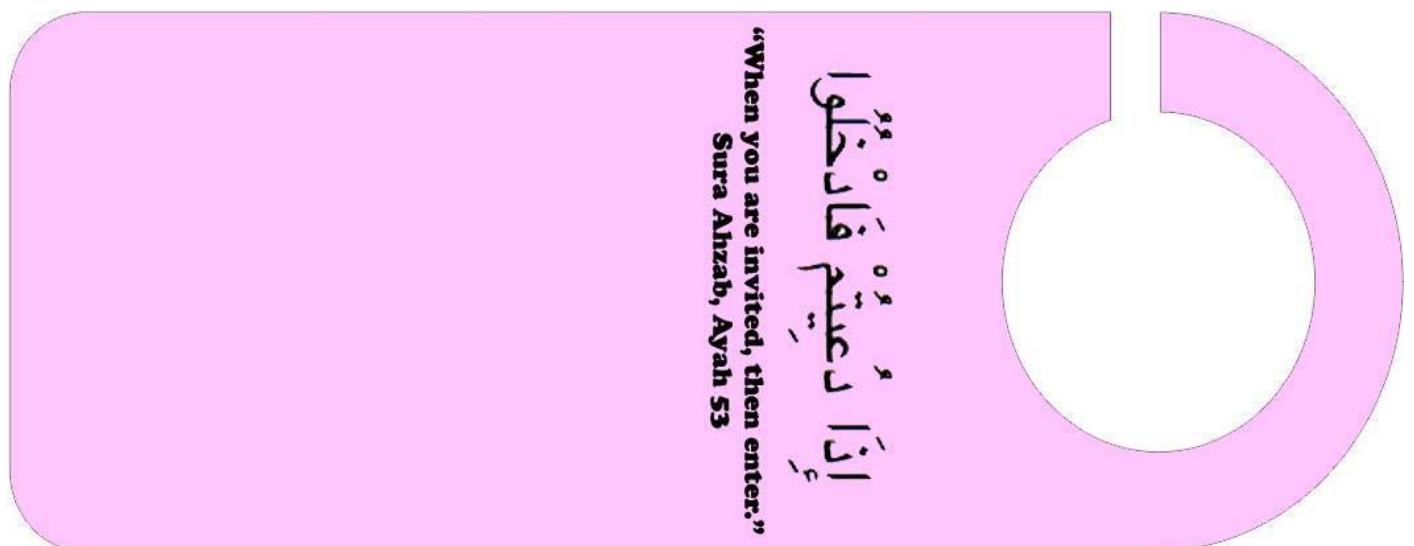
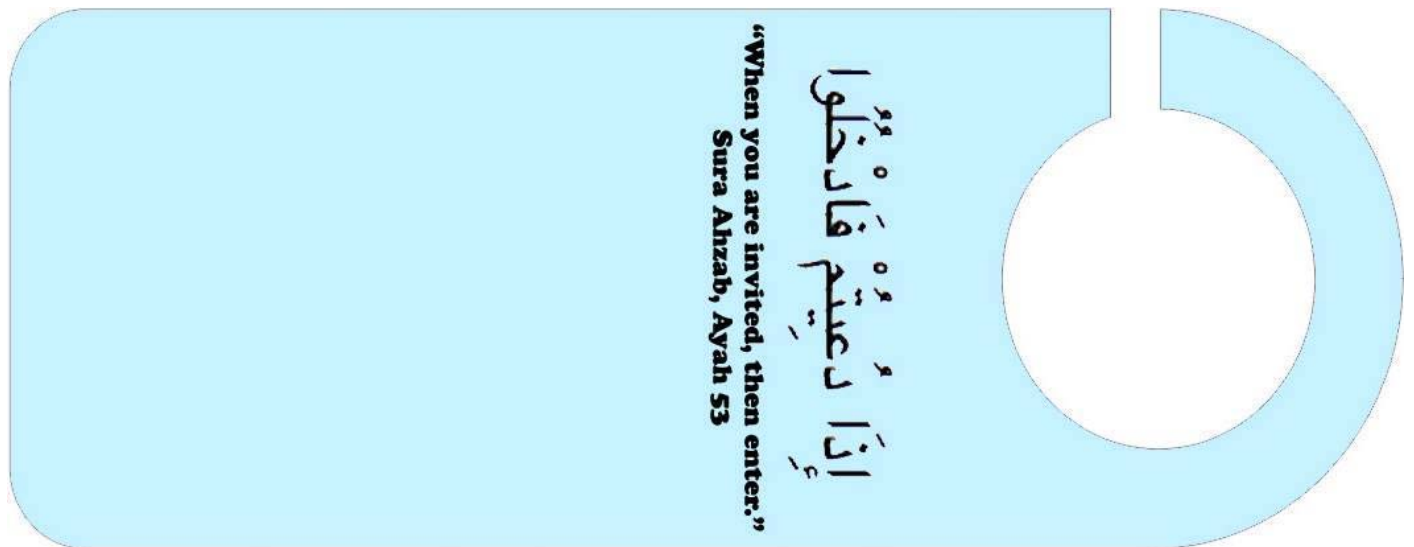
## Kid's page

### You will need:

- Strong card/foam sheets
- Glue
- Scissors
- Self adhesive foam letters
- Craft accessories (buy from pound shop or any craft shop like hobby craft)
- Old magazines/birthday cards

### Instructions:

- Cut out the door hanger template and draw around the template on strong brightly coloured card or foam sheets.
- Cut the door hanger shape out of the card or foam sheet.
- Cut out the Qur'an ayat and translation from the template and stick it on to your door hanger.
- Decorate the door hanger however you like. Use the foam letters to write your name. You can cut out pictures from magazines or old birthday cards and stick them on too. Be as creative as you like. Use craft accessories like gems, sequins and glitter to jazz up your hanger.



## Children's Writing Competition

Last issue, we asked your children to pick one personality from the Heroes of Kerbala, and write about them. Alhamdulillah, we had some excellent entries! Although it was very hard, the judges have picked the following winning entries:

Ages 5-7

Hazrat Abbas (as) by Abbasali Gulamhussein (6 yrs)

I am going to write about Hazrat Abbas. He was the flag bearer of Imam Husayn's army. On the day of Ashura the children were thirsty and Bibi Sakina asked her best uncle to get water from the river Furat. Imam Husayn said yes but said leave your sword with me. He reached the river but did not drink a drop because he knew the children and Imam were thirsty. When he was returning the enemies started to throw arrows and they cut off both his hands. Hazrat Abbas held the mashk with his teeth. A man hit him on his head, all the water dropped and he fell off his horse. I have learnt 3 things from Hazrat Abbas. When you are thirsty or want something you always have to think about other people first. Also if somebody wants you to help them and it's a dangerous thing to do you always have to be brave and try your best. Also you must always respect and listen to your Imam like if Imam e Zamana will ask me to come and fight with him I will never say no.

Ages 8-10

Hazrat Abbas (as) by Alijawad Ladak (8yrs old)

Hazrat Abbas (as) was a very kind person. He was a great defence and very brave. When Hazrat Abbas (as) saw that even though no one was allowed to get water, Hazrat Abbas was brave to go and try to get water for Bibi Sakina and the children. I feel so brave when I hear this, I think no matter how hard something is I would always try to save Islam. He was very patient and the greatest person that I have ever known. Did you know he even gave up his hands for the sake of saving Islam? I have learnt from one of the lectures that his arms will be replaced by special fantastic wings. He is one great true Muslim. When he went running to get water, he was really ready and killed 80 people. He has the "mashk" of water when soon his left arm was shot. His soul said keep going. When his right hand was cut off he held the "mashk" with his teeth and when finally they shot an arrow in his eye he fell to the ground and called for Imam Hussein. Imam Hussein went rushing to him and Hazrat Abbas said "My Master, Fee Amaanillah." Imam Hussein said please call me your brother and Hazrat Abbas said "Khuda Hafiz."

All the bravery Hazrat Abbas (as) has really helped me. I remember when I was younger my dad and mum went for Hajj and my nanima and nanabapa looked after us. When my parents came back from Hajj I fell ill and my condition was not very good with all the pain I had, and that's when I remembered Hazrat Abbas' bravery which really helped me to hand on to the pain. I recited "Ash Shaafi" as many times as I could, and I was saying "Assalaamu Alayka Ya Abul Fadhlil Abbas" and asked him to help me feel well again and he listened to me and Alhamdulillah here I am today.



Heroes  
of  
Kerbala

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