

10th Anniversary
Community Welfare and Development



SRI LANKAN MAJLIS - QATAR

2001 - 2011

Symposium 2011



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10th Year Anniversary

SLMQ

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Message

I convey my best wishes to the members of the Sri Lanka Majlis Qatar on the occasion of staging the annual Symposium.

The members of the SLMQ have in the past, engaged in many activities collectively to foster goodwill among the Sri Lanka expatriates living in Qatar.

I am sure the Symposium will bring the members and well wishers together and enhance their knowledge. I wish the members of the Majlis every success in their endeavours.

Jayantha Palipane

23.11.2011



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*In the name of Allah The Most Gracious
and The Most Merciful*

It is indeed a great privilege and honour for me to issue this message, on the occasion of the Symposium 2011 and on the occasion of Majlis reaching the milestone of 10 years in community service. I extend warm greetings to all our members, present and the past, on this happy occasion. This accomplishment would have been far from reality if not for the unconditional support we have been enjoying from many quarters namely, our Patrons, staff of Sri Lankan Embassy, sponsors, well wishers and our committed membership, present and the past. The path of ten years had not always been rosy.

As a founder member of this Association I have witnessed the Majlis grow from strength to strength since its inception. During the same period, our host nation State of Qatar, has witnessed mammoth economic growth and development. Finding time for community service was the biggest challenge. Also, we experienced decline in our revenue while costs increased significantly. Despite of all these, with the grace of Almighty Allah, we were able to stage most of our annual events while adding new events too.

The path ahead will not be easy but for more challenging. I appeal for wider participation from the membership to take Majlis forward to greater heights. We need new visionaries and leaders with a view to have new activities added to our calendar and to have more frequent gatherings for the membership. Majlis should also focus on the enormous opportunities ahead of our country, with megaprojects being undertaken by the State of Qatar.

On behalf of the entire Majlis membership I express my heartfelt gratitude to all our sponsors and well wishers for supporting the Majlis' cause and look forward to your continued support. I wish to thank Dr. Mohamad Abdalla for accepting our invitation as the keynote speaker for this evening.

I pray that Almighty Allah accept our sincere efforts and guide us in the straight path.

Mohamed Mansoor
President , Sri Lankan Majlis- Qatar (SLMQ)

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*In the name of Allah The Most Gracious
and The Most Merciful*

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of SLMQ – a key milestone since its establishment to cater for the religious, social and community needs of the Sri Lankan Muslim community residing in the State of Qatar, as well as for the Muslim community in Sri Lanka.

SLMQ's 10th year witnessed three major milestones, which will shape SLMQ's future road ahead.

- Firstly, the SLMQ and Sri Lanka Islamic Center (SLIC) Quran Classes, which hitherto has been operating independently, was merged into a single entity with both SLMQ and SLIC having joint responsibility for its financing and operation. The joint Quran Class now boasts a student population of around 200 and staff numbering around 12, with administrative support from a full-time Principal and other volunteers.
- Secondly, Al Huda Foundation – which provides higher education scholarships for needy Muslims students in Sri Lanka – was formally affiliated with the SLMQ. This is key initiative to further strengthen the educational objectives of SLMQ.
- Thirdly, SLMQ's bi-lingual Organizational Profile which highlights the SLMQ role, objectives and activities was produced. This key document will further serve to promote SLMQ objectives, particularly seeking funds, and cementing partnerships with other organizations both in Qatar and Sri Lanka.

As in previous years, SLMQ also helped to organize and stage a number of annual events and activities including: Independence Day Competitions; Public Bayans Programs (Dr Abdul Fatah and Dr Bilal Philips); Ifthar Programs; EID Prayers; Eid Fiesta; and for the first time, a joint Quran Class Annual Prize-Giving Day.

Cont...



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In addition, this year witnessed the staging of the 'Sisters Day' event – a fun-filled day of activities that were planned and organized by the sisters for the sisters.

Furthermore, SLMQ joined hands with various organizations in Qatar to plan and implement a number of events and projects including: EID-Al-Adha Prayer and Ijtima (SLIC); and Ramadan Ifthar Program in association with the Qatar Ministry of Interior.

Financing and support for community projects in Sri Lanka was also a key feature of the 2011 SLMQ Calendar. Specifically, financing for the Sewing Machines Project (organized in conjunction with the Young Women's Muslim Association in Sri Lanka); and a Flood Relief collection organized in conjunction with SLIC.

Reflecting on the last decade, no doubt SLMQ's journey had been very successful, achieving a spectrum of religious, social and community objectives along the way. Whilst there is goodwill to replicate this success into the next decade, there are a number of challenges that SLMQ needs to navigate. For instance: securing permanent premises for hosting SLMQ events and activities; ensuring a sustainable financing source; and finally, encouraging and mobilizing SLMQ members to play an active role in SLMQ's affairs and activities. With these thoughts in mind, Insha-Allah, we look forward to SLMQ furthering its goals and objectives, whilst ensuring that it serves with distinction and purpose the needs of both the Sri Lankan Muslim Community in Qatar and in Sri Lanka.

Dr Fikreth Shuaib
General Secretary - SLMQ

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OBJECTIVES

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Educational and Religious Activities

- Skill development programs
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- Competitions for children and adults
- Quran & Islam Teachings
- Haj & Umrah pilgrimages

Charitable Activities

- Scholarships for needy students
- Janaza assistance
- Assistance to needy families
- Charity bazaars

Social and Welfare Activities

- Sports events
- Eid celebrations
- Family gatherings/picnics
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Membership

All Sri Lankan Muslim families resident in Qatar are eligible to apply for membership by filling an application form available with Executive Committee members. For further information, please contact Email: info@slmq.org / Website: www.slmq.org



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MILESTONES

- First executive committee meeting was held - December 2001
- SLMQ constitution was launched- February 2002
- The first umrah pilgrimage program was conducted - 2002
- SLMQ Quran Class commenced - March 2002
- First ifthar program was held- January 2002
- First Symposium was held – May 2002
- First Annual General Meeting was held - 2003
- Scholarship programs for students in Sri Lanka was launched – 2006
- SLMQ's Colombo Branch was established- 2006
- First SLMQ newsletter was circulated - 2008
- SLMQ website was launched - December 2009
- Merging of SLMQ and SLIC Quran Classes – March 2011
- Al Huda Association affiliates with SLMQ – June 2011



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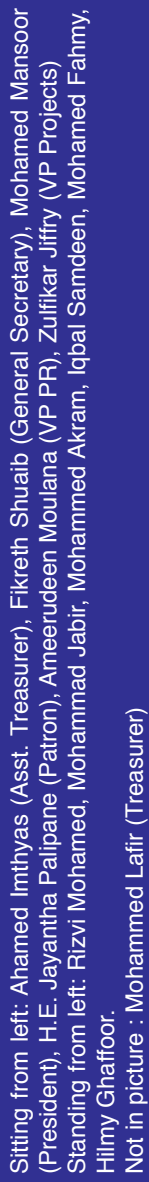
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Sisters' Talent Day

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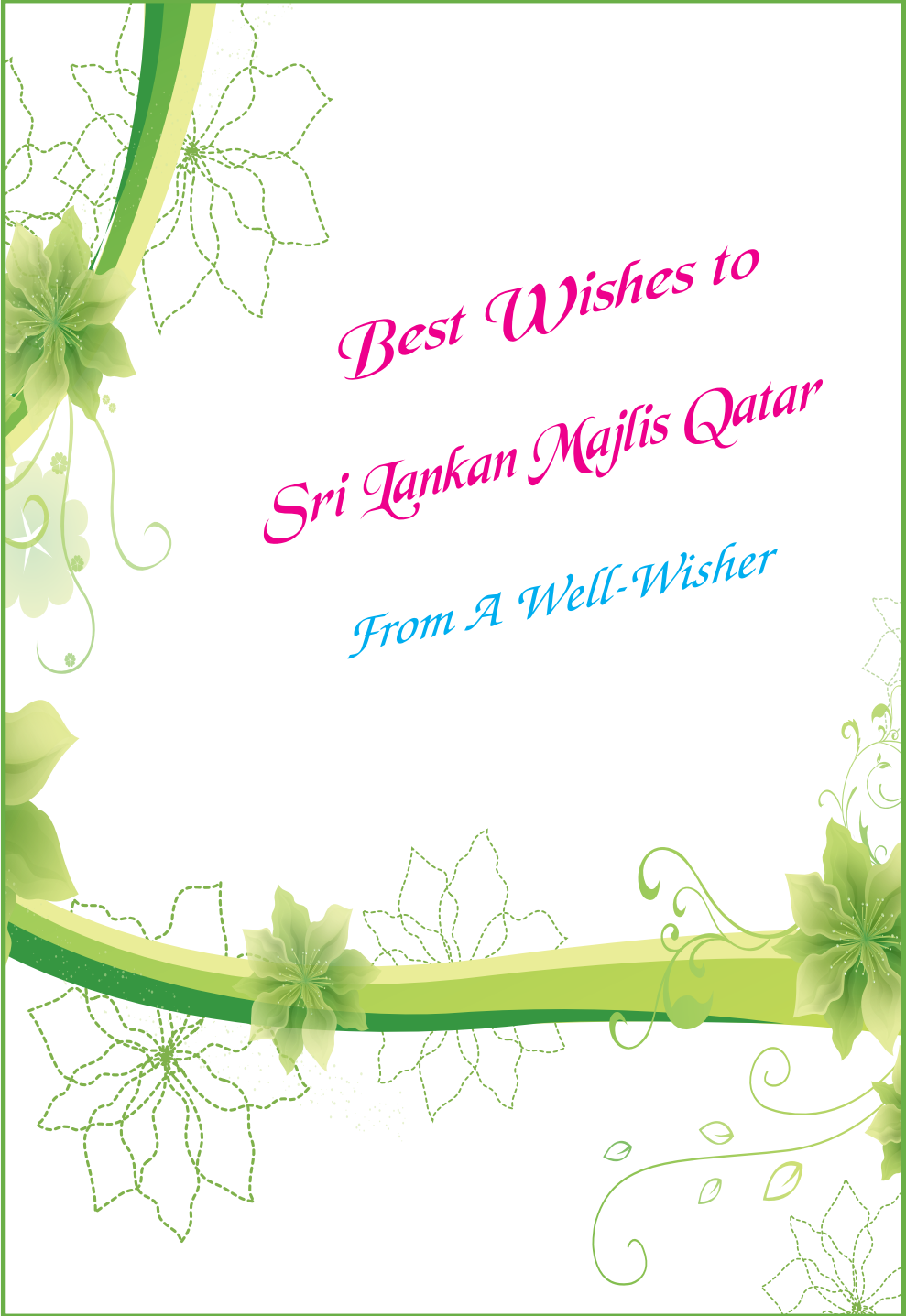


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Islamic Studies Course for Children A joint initiative of SLMQ and SLIC

One of the objectives of establishing the SLMQ was to respond to the need for Quranic and Islamic studies amongst the Sri Lankan Muslim children living in Qatar. Hence, the SLMQ Quran Class was established in 2002 with a handful of students.

With a further significant increase of the Sri Lankan Muslim expatriates over the last few years, the Sri Lankan Islamic Center (SLIC) also set up a Quran class for children in 2006 at its premises with around 40 students, that grew to 125 by February 2011.

March 2011 marked a key milestone in the history of both SLMQ and SLIC when both Quran Classes were merged. This resulted in the pooling of resources, teachers and the adaption of a uniform and structured curriculum.

Presently, the merged Quran Class boasts a student population close to 200. The Quran Class operates from the premises of Shantiniketan Indian School – the premises where the SLMQ Class initially started in 2002. The Quran Class is managed by a dedicated Principal, and ably supported by an administrative assistant and active volunteers.

Based on age and ability, the students are enrolled into 5 levels at the Quran Class. The medium of instruction is English, and the subjects taught include: *Hifl, Thajweed, Aqeeda, Seerah, Hadeeth* and other aspects of Islamic Studies. The subjects and topics taught are periodically assessed through monthly and biennial exams, quiz competitions, and other creative works. Annual student competitions are also held in the fields of: *Qirath, Hifl, Adhan*, Arabic Handwriting, Arabic and English *Nasheed*, and Islamic Speech. Student efforts are recognized and acknowledged at the Annual Prize Giving Day Ceremony.

Finally, the main objective of the Quran Class is to train the students to recite Quran with Tajweed rules, and to produce students who are Islamically knowledgeable, and more importantly demonstrate good behavior and conduct in line with Islamic values, ethics and moral principles.



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Al Huda Foundation (An Affiliate of Sri Lankan Majlis Qatar)

Al Huda Foundation was established in November 2006 by a group of Sri Lankan professionals residing in the State of Qatar. Al Huda Foundation was formed with the primary objective to uplift the education of disadvantaged Muslim students in Sri Lanka. The organization is dedicated and determined to help these needy and talented students by providing them with much-needed financial assistance to continue their higher education. Initially commencing with a handful of members, Alhamdulillah, the Foundation has grown steadily in size and content during the past five years with current membership strength of 75 active members.

The Foundation is managed by a qualified team of professionals who are elected among its members annually. The Foundation is governed by a Charter, which provides the framework for all its activities. The filtering of applications, and the decision to award scholarship for the chosen applicant, is performed by an Evaluation Committee consisting of individuals with the relevant professional background. The evaluation committee prepares bi-annual student performance reports to assess the progress of the beneficiaries and these are tabled at the monthly meetings.

The Foundation currently provides scholarships for more than 50 students across major educational streams including commerce and finance, medicine, Islamic studies, engineering and the arts. By the grace of Allah, a large number of recipient students have successfully completed their higher education through the Foundation's scholarship program. The scholarship recipients who have proven themselves are now self-sufficient, and are in turn helping the Sri Lankan society at large.



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Collective Responsibility – An Islamic Perspective

Islam stresses heavily on the concept of ummah and collective responsibility. In a famous, sound tradition Prophet Muhammad stated that the Muslim ummah is like one body, if one part of this body is in pain then the rest of the body feels that pain. Likewise, the concept of jama'ah is emphasised in Islam, hence the value of praying in a congregation is greater than one that is performed individually.

However, what is often forgotten and neglected is the very important fact that concept of ummah or a jama'ah require a group of individuals to be effected. They are the building blocks of any community and if these individuals are weak, or fail to carry their responsibilities, then surely the entire community will suffer. Essentially, a change begins at the individual level, as Allah Ta'al declares: 'Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves' (13:11). This Quranic imperative seems to have been missed by most of us. The imperative "until they change what is within themselves" is found in two places in the Qur'an: in al-Anfā (8:53) and in al-Ra'd (13:11), and discusses a change from better to worse. It expresses that Allah will not remove a bounty that He has bestowed on a people until they transgress and disobey.

The emphasis is on the basic and essential condition that any reform must come from within. Reform does not simply mean a change of physical appearance and performance of some physical acts of worship, but more importantly a transformation from within that leads to achieving a salim or sound heart. Therefore, reform starts deep within the individual and then stretches out to the vastness surrounding him. Many people, contrary to this fact, target their surroundings without dealing with themselves first. Their feelings of historical power and glory continue to be an obstacle to their understanding, defining, and determining their priorities.

The individual therefore constitutes an essential part of his/her community. Individual responsibility, however, varies from person to person depending on one's status in society, knowledge and expertise. For example, some individuals help create societies and make their mark in history. In spite of the need to deal with themselves first, we find a good number of Muslims preoccupied with general concerns and global problems at the expense of dealing with their own deficiencies. They think about the affairs of Muslims around the world and neglect the matters affecting them in their own countries, in their own institutions, and in their own homes.

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A collective self-examination is necessary in order to reform ourselves and our societies. This reformation does not mean seclusion from societyāfor monasticism has been declared forbidden in Islam.

Reformation means being involved at the micro and macro levels. This requires a substantial paradigm shift in attitudes, and a recognition that a change will not occur simply through outward conformity to the sacred law but by proceeding from a genuine realignment of the soul, and a genuine and conscious involvement in the affairs of our most immediate communities. This is what makes us an *ummah*.

As we endeavour to reform ourselves at the personal level, we must also by virtue of being Muslims be involved in helping those around us reform themselves. This is the meaning of da'wa. This entails our involvement in building community capacity in order to provide the necessary Islamic environment, education and skills for community members, and more importantly for our children. This ultimately requires sacrifices to be made, financially, physically and otherwise. It is those who are given the *tawfeeq* to do so that are considered successful before Allah Ta'al.



Associate Professor Mohamad Abdalla
B Science (Hons), PhD (Islamic Science)

Associate Professor Mohamad Abdalla is the Founding Director of the Griffith Islamic Research Unit (GIRU), Brisbane, Australia; Director of the Queensland node of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies, Australia's leading Islamic studies centre, a multi-million dollar centre funded by the Australian Federal Government; Senior Research Fellow at the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance, Griffith University, one of the premier research centres in Australia; Associate Investigator with Australia's first Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security, with a \$25 million budget over the period 2008 - 2012; and Convenor and Senior Lecturer of subjects including: Islamic Law in a Changing World, Great Texts of Islam and Islam and The Making of Europe. Additionally, he was the Chairperson of the Queensland Government Muslim Community Reference Group (MCRG), an advisory group to the Queensland State Government; Vice-president and spokesperson for the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), Australia's leading Islamic religious organisation; and Acting Imam of the Kuraby mosque in Brisbane, Australia.



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Individual Rewards Through Community Service and Welfare

This brief article highlights the various areas and conditions to engage in community service and welfare activities.

In today's increasingly so-called modern and fast-paced world, individuals tend to confine themselves in individual responsibilities and generally shy away from engaging in community service and welfare activities. Little do we realize the importance of community service, let alone the foregone opportunities to accumulate righteous deeds and attain the pleasure of Allah (swt).

The importance of engaging oneself in community service and welfare has been vividly encapsulated in the following verse of the Glorious Quran. In Surah Al-Baqarah (177) Allah (swt) states: 'It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask; and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayers and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God fearing'.

Complementing the above Quranic verse is a number of well-known Sunnah which reinforces the concept of community service and welfare. For instance, it was reported in Bukhari that the Prophet (pbuh) stated: 'What actions are most excellent? To gladden the heart of human beings; to feed the hungry; to help the afflicted; to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful; and to remove the sufferings of the injured.'

Derived from Quranic injunctions and the Sunnah, the various areas and conditions to engage in community service and welfare activities include, but not limited to, the following.

- Categories of Community Services – There is a range of community services activities that one can engage in. These include: dawah (conveying the message of Islam); providing shelter; clothes; education and scholarships; self-employment and entrepreneurial skills; schools, Madrasas and libraries; Masjids; clinics and hospitals; basic facilities (eg. water, sanitation, waste management, local roads); counseling services (marriages, divorces, career guidance); Shariah-compliant microfinance loans; amongst others.

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- Recipients of Community Services – As mentioned above in the Quranic verse, the categories of recipients of community service may include, but not limited to, the following, the poor; hungry; destitute; needy; unemployed; widows; orphans; travellers; relatives; neighbours; bonded servants and slaves; the oppressed and those facing injustice; the sick and the disabled. Finally, intended recipients include both Muslims and Non-Muslims alike, with the latter paving the path for Dawah, whilst the former reinforces Ihsaan.
- Instruments of Community Service Delivery – To ensure that the categories of community service are delivered to the intended recipients, the following instruments are used: dispensing wealth through zakat and sadaqah (charity); spending valued time; donating resources and materials (eg. clothes, and tools and machinery required for employment); good behavior and conduct (eg. planting a tree, sowing a seed, removing obstacles/harm, smiling); using professional skills (eg. doctors providing medical services, journalists writing Islamic articles and IT professionals maintaining Islamic websites).

In some instances, individuals alone are not in a position to effect such services, hence the need to form both formal and informal community groups and organizations. Today, there are a number of active community organizations who operate at various levels (global to local) that provide and/or facilitate these services.

To sum up, the objectives of engaging in community service are two-fold. Firstly, to ensure that the social and welfare needs of the intended recipients are addressed, thus helping to relieve both the financial and social stresses of everyday life. Secondly, to ensure that these activities are undertaken only for the pleasure of Allah (swt), with a view to gaining His rewards both in this life and the Hereafter.

We are reminded by the Prophet (pbuh) in a Sunnah narrated by Abu Huraira and reported in Muslim which states: 'Whosoever removes some difficulty of a believer in this world, Allah shall remove some difficulty from him on the Day of Judgment. Whosoever provides some comfort to the sufferer, Allah shall provide him comfort here and in the hereafter. Whosoever covers someone's faults here, Allah shall cover his faults here and in the hereafter. As long as a person is busy helping his brother, Allah keeps helping him'.

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The Need of the Hour: For Muslims Everywhere

The principle and act of coming together as a community in righteousness and obedience to Allah is a clear and undisputable principle of faith. The general acts of worship, like prayer, fasting, the pilgrimage, and the 'Id prayers, are all practical examples of this fact.

The Glorious Quran emphasizes this in the most profound manner, when Allah says "And hold fast to the rope of Allah, all of you together, and do not be divided - (Surah Al-Imran, 3:103)

The advice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) on this matter can be found in many Hadith. Possibly, the most well known of these is: (Allah is pleased with three things for you...(among them) that you hold fast, all together, to the rope of Allah and do not become divided amongst yourselves) (Muslim)

This is the plain truth that every Muslim is cognizant of. The problem, or rather challenge, is to put this truth into practice. Many of our brethren have a lot of zeal for their religion and a strong desire for unity, but they lack the ability to translate this desire into a practical reality. Such people - though they may lament the disunity of the Muslims and hope ardently for their coming together - usually seek to unite people based on their own perspectives, opinions, and choices, a task which is impossible for them to achieve. They should, however, realize that it had not been possible to get the people united behind those who were far superior to themselves. So how can they ever be so presumptuous to expect all the people to unite around them?

What is needed is a framework that accommodates differences of opinion while uniting the people around the true basic principles of Islam, not around the opinions and interpretations of a specific individual or group.

People can never come together unless they can learn to tolerate differences of opinion. Even prophets differed with each other. Look at the story of Musa and his brother Haroon (Musa and Haroon, peace be upon them) when Musa left him to take charge of the people while he went to speak with his Lord. Musa (peace be upon him) instructed his brother, saying: (Act on my behalf among the people. Do right and follow not the way of those who do mischief) (Surah Al-A`raf, 7:142)

But after Musa had departed, the Israelites made a calf for worship. When Musa (peace be upon him) returned and saw what the Israelites had done, he became angry. (He threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the hair of his head and dragged him towards him) (Surah Al-A`raf, 7:150)

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The SLMQ is a platform where members of the Sri Lankan community get a chance to meet and socialize with others of the same community residing in Qatar; where families bond and establish lifelong friendships/ relationships. The gatherings organized by the SLMQ provide members with the opportunity to interact, share interests with and gain knowledge from others, whilst maintaining an Islamic environment. I especially enjoy the annual event of talent competition which is a golden opportunity for ladies to display their talents in the fields of cookery, sewing, embroidery and other such areas. I wish the SLMQ all success and sincerely pray that it will continue to grow and progress in uniting the Sri Lankan Muslim community in Qatar.

Mrs. Shameem Rikaz

The Srilankan Majlis Qatar (SLMQ) renders a tremendous service to the Srilankan Muslim community in Qatar. They organize events such as the Eid Fiesta, bayans, ifthar, competitions, etc. The Eid get together is a much anticipated event by the kids as they get to take part in various sports/games and win trophies. Further it enhances unity and kinship among the families here and fills the void of not being among family members back home.

Mrs. Nabila Riyaz

My family and I have enjoyed being part of the SLMQ since 2001. From the former founder President Br. Ikram Thowfeeq to the current president Br. Mohammed Mansour, the SLMQ has always been the one community group that has welcomed us warmly into the "Sri Lankan Muslim Family in Doha". We have immensely enjoyed all the family activities, acquired valuable Islamic knowledge from the Islamic Lectures and Quiz programs, and achieved a great sense of contentment in participating in the fundraising campaigns for worthy causes. May Allah bestow the best of his blessings and I wish all success for SLMQ for future years.

Ms. Surayya Hazari

It is a privilege to drop in a few lines for this great and historic occasion on celebrating 10 Years of SLMQ. It was a life time opportunity to be working along with an elite group of members while being at EXCO and as general member for a common goal in helping the community in Sri Lanka and Qatar. One of the great experience like to share was when we all got together to help the TSUNAMI victims in Sri Lanka. The team effort and enthusiasm shown by our brothers to assist our fellow countryman at that needy hour cannot be described in few words.

Mr. Saif Marikkar

Cont...

Musa then rebuked Haroon on his decision to stay with the Israelites. Haroon's overriding concern was for maintaining the unity of the Israelites until Musa (peace be upon him) returned and decided upon the next course of action. During that time, Haroon did his utmost to advise them. Here we have two Prophets disagreeing on how to deal with difficult and unforeseen circumstances.

Therefore, it is not right for a person who Allah has guided to strive and excel in a certain activity to belittle the work engaged in by others. Allah refers to such behaviour when He says: (And they forgot about a good portion of the Message that was sent to them) (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:13)

No single individual can encompass all aspects of Islamic Law and all the requirements of Muslim society. Every Muslim is needed to work with one another as a collective responsibility, each fulfilling his or her duty to achieve a common goal. Forgetting or ignoring the relevance of activities and duties other than those in which we ourselves are engaged is a cause of enmity and hatred.

Regarding this verse in Surah Ma'idah Ibn Taymiyah writes:

Allah informed them - the People of the Scripture - about their forgetfulness of what was sent to them, referring to their abandoning some of the works that they were commanded to perform. This was a cause for hatred and enmity to spread among them.

This is exactly what is happening between us today. For example: we find people engaging in disputes with regard to the principles of their faith as well as many secondary matters, and like the scholars and worshipers who resemble the Jews and Christians, each tells the other that they have nothing to stand upon. Allah says: "The Jews say the Christians have nothing to stand upon and the Christians say the Jews have nothing to stand upon yet they profess to follow the same Book." (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:13)

As with any community the prevalence of different sects, groups and movements is common among the Muslim ummah. The objective of these groups must be to adopt different ways to achieve a common goal. They should strive to work in ways that their efforts are in balance, consistent and mutually supportive, not haphazard, and contradictory.

May Allah in his utmost Mercy guide us all to the Straight Path!

References: Excerpts from "Unity of Purpose, Not Uniformity of Opinion"
written by Sheikh Salman A Oadah on www.onislam.net

Allahamdulillah I am proud and privileged to be involved with the Srilankan Majlis in Qatar. Majlis has grown immensely over the past 10 years, because of their team work, support, dedication and contribution towards the society.

This organization has always rendered a great service to all the members and to the community of Srilankans living in Qatar. The Srilankan Majlis has brought people together as one family and has also played a great role in their endeavors to charity, education, cultural, religious activities which has also created an Islamic atmosphere for youngsters, and uplifted the society as well as capable of doing more. I am very grateful for all their hard work and commitments.

Looking back in the past 10 years the Majlis has experienced change and as well as rapid development. I am happy that the SLMQ is here today striving for excellence. I wish them all the very best in their future endeavors.

Abdul Halik Hilaly

We, very much like SLMQ because they organize Quran classes, conducting Eid Fiesta every year, Ifthar Programs, Eid prayers and various other Islamic and Educational functions. Through these functions I have found many good friends and we are all enjoying and gaining knowledge. These functions make our brothers come together and discuss upon Islamic matters and gather many points and views from other people. So far, SLMQ have invited many Islamic scholars to deliver some valuable speeches to the members.

Mohammed Abrar

The sri lankan who are new to qatar will come to know that this organization has no flaws. Those who are in need, will be helped, The feeling of their deeds, will be felt, any one who feels lost will be guided, so do not be scared or feel frightened, because slmq will give you a helping hand, the slmq guides us towards unity, surely, we all will receive a lot of affection, allah bless this wonderful organization.

Rukhsar Rizly

When my family & I arrived in Doha in 2006, we naturally felt alienated by the new environment and the exposure to people of different backgrounds. When we were introduced to The Sri Lankan Majlis in Qatar, not only did we meet more people of the same culture, but we were also able to interact on a social & religious level, because of the organisation of Islamic speeches & programs such as cookery competitions. We are able to feel more at home, yet enjoy the blessings of this new environment, thanks to every organiser of an SLMQ event & every individual family, without whom the Sri Lankan Majlis in Qatar would not be complete. There is only one word to describe how glorious it is watching our community grow & strengthen their bond- Subhanallah!

Sara Shiraz

Islamic Movements in Sri Lanka

In the last few decades, post-Independence Sri Lanka witnessed the formation of numerous Islamic associations that promoted educational, social and cultural activities in the Muslim community. Some of these movements have and continues to be in the forefront, working at the macro level of the Muslim community, while others concentrate more at the grass root level.

The Moors Islamic Cultural Home (M.I.C.H) - This was one the pioneering organizations that was formed by dedicated and service-oriented Muslims in 1944 to deal with religious matters, education, economic and the social aspects of the Moor community. It was established by founding fathers Sir Razik Fareed, WM Hassim, AIL Marikar, ALM Lafir & AH Macan Markar. Since then, the M.I.C.H has emerged as a focal point for religious, social, educational and cultural activities. The contribution made in all these fields has been of immense value to the Sri Lankan Muslims community.

The All Ceylon YMMA Conference, which is primarily comprised of youth and youth serving community- based organization, was founded in 1950 with 17 YMMA Branches coming under one umbrella under the distinguished leadership of Dr. A. M. A. Azeez as Founder National President with Lafir Cassim as the Founder National General Secretary. The main areas of the YMMA Conference with its 102 branches all over Sri Lanka are Education, Socio-Economic Development, National Integration, Leadership Training and Health Care.

During the same period, a number of contemporary Islamic revitalization movements with origins in the south Asian subcontinent had also taken root within Sri Lanka. The most notable of these were *Tabligh Jamaat* and *Jamaat-e-Islam* due to their phenomenal growth within the Sri Lankan Muslim population.

Other smaller groups also gained momentum such as *Tawheed Jamaat* that is promoting the ideology of Tawheed (monotheism). Salafi is one such organization that places a particular emphasis on Tawheed. It has established many mosques in Sri Lanka as they believe, based on scriptural evidence that widespread Muslim practices in Sri Lanka are shirk (Polytheistic). The organization helps its members and those who associated with them to develop sustainable livelihood and also engaged in community and social services.

Tabligh Jamaat originated in 1926 in North India by Moulana Ilyas and was quick to spread its roots in Sri Lanka. The aim of Tabligh Jamaat is to: renew Muslim society by uniting them in embracing the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

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The movement gained a very high level of acceptance in a relatively short period of time. Its methodology and principles were frowned upon by many educated Muslims as there was minimal endorsement of socio Economic goals. Rather the main emphasis was that Muslims need to refine their Eeman (faith) by spending most of the time in the masjid. The Tabligh Jamaat, disperses door-to-door missionary teams urging lapsed Muslims to resume their daily prayers, have become a familiar sight in Muslim neighbourhoods. Today, Tabligh Jamaat has deeply integrated within society its day to day activities with Shura (consultation) council now managing and administering majority of Sri Lankan mosques. There are also an increasing number of educated Muslim professionals and intellectuals who are able to balance their social and cultural activities with the religious commitment demanded by this movement.

Jamaat-e-Islam was founded in 1941 by Moulana Abul A'la Maududi, in the then British India, and later it grew in Pakistan as a movement to promote Islamic values and practices. It is not simply a religious or political group but encourages Muslims to take Islam as a complete way of life. In Sri Lanka, it is confined to religious, social, educational and cultural activities. Evening and weekend study groups organized by the Jamaat-e-Islam are aimed at a more educated middle-class Muslim audience who desire a deeper and more detailed understanding of the Quran and Hadith. It has also established Madrasa (school) for religious and secular education and participates in the economic uplifting of society. Furthermore, Jamaat-e-Islam plays an active role in aiding relief operations of disasters such as flood, tsunami etc. Its student movement forms a major contributing arm of the organization.

Both of these movements have now matured to emphasize unity in the Muslim Ummah and have accepted the religious obligation of unity in diversity. The theological governing body in Sri Lanka now consists of learned members from both movements and work together to iron out any differences among the followers of these movements.

Currently, there are many Islamic organizations that are engaged in the welfare of Sri Lankan Muslims. MFCD (Muslim Foundation for Culture and Development) is one such organization. It is a humanitarian and development agency incorporated in Parliament and registered as a national Non-Governmental Organization. It was formally established in 2001 and has made a significant contribution to humanitarian and development initiatives in Sri Lanka through its development projects and disaster relief interventions.

Article by Nakeeb Issadeen - SLMQ member.



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