

***DA'WAH: MUSLIM WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
SOCIETY THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL AND
RELIGIOUS EFFORTS***

Submitted by
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in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor in
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Culture, Faculty of Humanities
at the
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DEDICATION

When a research investigation requires different aspects to be examined and must be of a standard worthy of being called a thesis, peer review plays a crucial role. Shireen Sabat with her meticulousness, rigour and criticism helped in many ways including as a “debriefing” after the interview sessions. She made valuable suggestions that expanded the “confined” group of research participants to include their students. The relationship with someone like Shireen goes beyond a marital one. The word “wife” in a patriarchal society does not usually express genuine friendship; a person who in her own right can show candour as a researcher; have a professional approach to a study and provide motivation, in spite of her busy schedule as a devoted mother, an educator, a psychologist and a researcher.

To Shireen I am indebted in so many ways and for showing me so many paths. To her and all women I humbly dedicate this work. May Allah find it worthy of acceptance and forgive me my errors, for all good comes from Allah, the Exalted, the Mighty.

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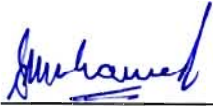
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DECLARATION

Da'wah: Muslim Women's contribution to the reconstruction of the South African Society through entrepreneurial and religious efforts

I, Sayed Iqbal Mohamed, hereby declare that this dissertation submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Doctor in Philosophy (School of Religion and Social Transformation), represents my original work and has not been previously used in any way or submitted to this or any other university.



Signature



Date

ABSTRACT

This dissertation, “Muslim Women’s contribution to the reconstruction of the South African Society through entrepreneurial and religious efforts”, is to place on the South African agenda an understanding and appreciation of unsung heroines. Changes at grassroots level by a marginalised group always have profound impact on society.

What is it to be a *woman*, committed to a *way of life*, engaged in *transmitting* a set of values related thereto, *empowering* other women and living as a *minority* in a *patriarchal* society that is undergoing rapid socio-political transformation and being an integral part of it? As Muslim women, the *ummah* (Muslim community) is directed by male interpretations of the Islamic text. What are women’s responses to a worldview imposed on them? All these are different challenges, each in itself a marginalized component. The aim is to identify Muslim women and their contribution through *da‘wah* to the reconstruction of the South African society within these challenges.

The research participants are not Islamic scholars; their methodologies are not traditional and narrow but embedded in the humanistic ideals and ethics of the Qur’ān and the authentic *Sunnah*. Their *da‘wah* work includes instilling self-worth, spiritual and family values, socio-economic intervention and economic empowerment. Their contributions have been significant and profound in a nascent democracy.

To get a “glimpse” into their lives and arduous activities it was necessary to hear their voices; to let them speak. Qualitative research methodology through narratives and life history in context was used.

Allāh did not create one voice for humankind but many voices for one humankind and through diversity expects people to exercise their freedom to live in unity. One can see, feel and verify this as it resonates through the work of each *dā'iyah*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

All praise belongs to Allāh who has provided guidance for all of humankind! All thanks to the most Compassionate, the most Merciful who blessed us with one humanity through the Prophets and Messengers, upon whom we invoke Allāh's blessings and salutations of peace.

My supervisor, Professor Abul Fadl Mohsin Ebrahim encouraged me to pursue my studies. His humbleness has always inspired me and his confidence in me helped me through this research dissertation. I am indebted to him.

The research participants, each one of them, were magnanimous in allowing me to intrude into their lives. The five main participants, Dadoo, Hassim, Mulla, Moolla and Wood are women and except for one man, all secondary participants were women. I am honoured that as a male researcher they entrusted me with providing windows of opportunities to examine their lives in context. They therefore truly share in the co-authorship of this study. May Allāh reward them for all their work and enable them to meander successfully through the paths they chose.

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Loshni Naidoo and Pretty-Rose Gumede for their painstaking help with typing certain aspects of this research and for assisting me with transcribing the interviews. To them, I am sincerely grateful and may Allāh grant them reward for their for patience and time.

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Most of all, my sincere thanks to the National Research Foundation (NRF), Pretoria who made this study possible through the financial support so generously given.

TRANSLITERATION / TRANSCRIPT

As far as possible the researcher has followed the transcription system used by Haywood and Nahmad (1976). Reproduced here is a table denoting the Arabic alphabets and the relevant transcription.

Names of the letters	Transcription	Names of the letters	Transcription
أَلِفْ 'alif	ā	سَادْ ṣād	ṣ
بَاءْ bā'	b	دَادْ dād	d
تَاءْ tā'	t	طَاءْ ṭā'	ṭ
ثَاءْ thā'	th	زَاءْ zā'	z
جِيمْ jīm	j	عَيْنْ ain	ع'
هَاءْ hā'	h	غَيْنْ ghain	gh
خَاءْ khā'	kh	فَاءْ fā'	f
دَالْ dāl	d	قَافْ qāf	q
ذَالْ dhāl	dh	كَافْ kāf	k
رَاءْ rā'	r	لَامْ lām	l
زَايْ zāy	z	مِيمْ mīm	m
سَيْنْ sīn	s	نُونْ nūn	n
شَيْنْ shīn	sh	هَاءْ hā'	h
		وَاوْ wāw	w (ū, aw, au)
		يَاءْ yā'	y (ī, ay, ai)
		هَمْزَة hamza	'

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“As long as we do not address the question of gender, gender relations and power in the Muslim world, all our protestations and appeals to universal justice will seem hollow and mere lip-service. By addressing the inequality within us, we perform the Jihad Akbar (greater struggle) of self-critique and self-questioning which has been at the heart of the Islamic practice for so long. Only then can we commit ourselves to the other struggle to correct the wrongs of the world around us.”

Noor, F. A. (2003:331)

This chapter looks at

- 1.1. Background to the study
- 1.2. Outline of the Chapters
- 1.3. Reference List / Bibliography

1.1. Background to the study

- 1.1.1 General critique and comments: women, men and the many worldviews

The contribution of the women interviewed in this study is more than a record of their storied lives. It is a concise narrative of the lives in context of noble and courageous Muslim women who as sagacious critics have made significant changes in the lives of others and in their own, in spite of the fact that they are women. A woman is still a second class citizen, occupying a lower status; a sexualised object in the discursive languages of the conservatives. A woman is compared to a man, she being half the man, he being the standard from which to judge, similar to the apartheid concept of “non-whites” when people were

compared, classified and judged perniciously against the standard of a so-called superior class, “white ethnic group”.

The injustice a woman faces is perhaps encapsulated in the notion that she can never be better than even the worse man on earth. In the patriarchal discourse, she was created from a part of man that was crooked¹. Society - the global village, belongs to men who have conferred some recognition to women by “allowing” them to hold a job, to have a semblance of economic status and independence². Yet, as Mazrui (1997) proposes, women’s full participation in economic activities may be one method of reducing men’s greed and together, women and men, can achieve economic surplus.

What is therefore different about Muslim women? This study does not conclude nor imply in any way that being Muslim sets one apart from others as a better human being. It is also apartheid the way certain Muslims refer to people of other faiths and beliefs as “non-Muslims” or worse still, “*ghayr qawm*” (literally, other than people / non-humans). There is not a single instance in the Qur’ān to these references or from the authentic records of Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace). One would not find reference by the researcher to “non-Muslims”. Equally significant is the participants’ progressive Islamic worldviews, converging and mediating their multi-contextual roles, which is affirmed by their non display of “situational identities” or a “fossilized”³ sense of cultural identity such as “Indian-Muslims”, “Coloured / Malay-Muslims” or “African / Zulu-Muslims”.

There are therefore multi contexts in which the participants are situated. They are **women** who are part of a small **Muslim minority** in **South Africa** engaged in *da‘wah*. South African society and the world Muslim community (*ummah*) are

¹ According to Kvam, et, al. (1999) the Qur’ān “never speaks of a rib nor does it ever say that Eve was inferior to Adam” (p. 5), or subordinate to him (p 157); “it never assigns primary culpability for this downfall to the first woman (Q.7:20f; 20:121)” (p 157).

² For example, Bangladesh, (Kabeer 1994).

³ Arora, K. (2006: 220).

powerful patriarchal determinants, “institutionalised” as a global hegemonic ideology. This study will show that Muslim women in the South African context face the many challenges as women and how they engage against the discriminatory status they share with women locally and globally. Muslim women have to confront authoritarian definition of their worldviews and how they can interact within this narrow definition, supposedly sanctioned by the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* (the practice, statements of Prophet Muḥammad⁴) as researched and codified into the *Shari’ah* (Islamic law) by men who consider it fixed (Hassan no date).

The negative view of Muslim women scholars and activists struggling to reshape and direct the soul of Muslim societies are strong at grassroots level. The masses are inseparably linked to the conservative interpretation of male scholars. The power wielded by the ‘*ulamā*’ and different religious and the intra-relationship groups, influence behaviour of individuals. “Lionel Caplan has suggested that to understand religious behaviour we must focus upon power relations between groups” (Gardner 1999:54).

In South Africa, similar misogynistic praxis determines the status of women who subscribe to other faiths or creeds. One may argue that Christian women or those women who belong to the Jewish or Hindu faiths or indigenous religions are also subjugated. Religious scriptures are invoked to control women’s position in society under the authority of men. Greenberg’s (1987) proposal is to confront tradition and community without denigration, to give expression to “full equality in matters of mind, spirit and deed” (p 21). She believes that this necessitates re-examination of tradition, the sources and sacred text such as the Torah, Talmud, centuries of rabbinic interpretation, haggadic and halachic epistemology, ethical and legal concepts and codes.

⁴ صلى الله عليه وسلم - God bless him and grant him peace

In Catholicism, Ware (1987) points out that male hierarchy is symbolised by male constructs so that mother Church, motherland⁵ and queen are all ruled by men. Feminist discourse in exposing gender bias and prejudice is met with denial, trivialisation and fear by the communities. Historically, the Church's response to issues led to schisms. Ware believes that one can be a Catholic feminist and still be faithful by challenging the sexist structures and teachings. "For those of us who are feminist, the case is clear: God is not sexist but the church – in its institutional structures as well as many of its teachings – is. If we are to be faithful, we must challenge those structures and those teachings at every turn. We are not less Catholic but more Catholic for doing so" (p 39).

The argument of the Reformed Church is similar to those of the '*ulamā*' (Islamic; religious scholars) in that men and women are equal before God and any restriction on women is due to divine wisdom. The National Synod of the Reformed Church in 2003 reaffirmed its position that women are not allowed to assume leadership role in the Church. "The Reformed Church bases its decision regarding women's position within the church on the following two texts in the Bible:

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet (1 Timothy 2:11-12), and the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)," de la Harpe, van der Walt, et al (2003:42).

The Qur'ān for Muslims is Divine revelation and is the only comprehensive book that provides basic principles for human activity and social change. A human

⁵ Compare the etymology of the Arabic word *ummah*, the (world) Muslim community, which is feminine (but the community itself is male dominated).

being is discoursed in a holistic construct with the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) exemplifying the basic Qur’anic principles of human activity and interaction. The question is whose interpretation of the Qur’ān and whose *Sunnah* and under what authority do Muslim men believe they have the right or mandate to impose their versions of Islam?

This study is not about a feminist methodology or reproaching or “demonising” Muslim men. It is an objective evaluation of how Muslim women have been undermined by the parochialisation of the Islamic texts (the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* being the fundamental sources of Islam) and its misogynistic interpretations and praxis within which definitions, interpretations and worldview(s) the research participants find themselves.

In other respects, Muslim women share with all South African women discrimination structured on an entrenched definition and systematic subjugation by men that includes male Afrikaners, and men belonging to the Jewish, Hindu and indigenous religions, who in addition to the oppressive treatment of women, continue to amplify their hegemonistic conceptualisation of a worldview for women. “South African Muslims do not only represent diverse national origins, but also diverse socio-economic categories” (Dangor, 2006a:1) and as a multicultural and “multiracial” society, the participants in this research come from diverse “ethnic” backgrounds and therefore in many respects, share common worldviews that include those imposed by men, by tribal customs, by Muslim men, colonialists and by the Afrikaner architects of apartheid.

African women have also been subjected to customary and colonialist discriminatory practices. The ‘urf or local customs and practices are determinants for women’s space and role in all communities and the challenges to economic privileges, political power bases and conflicting roles that emerge. Mazrui (1997) argues that cultural traditions “in matters of gender are among the most obstinate and impervious to change” (p 6). Western feminist discourses have also

influenced African women regarding legal rights, socio-economic and political status. Govender (1999) states that Black women in South Africa are faced with traditional (sexist) norms and western feminist ideal of gender equality.

Haddad (1998) states that Muslims always considered female sexuality as potent “with a predilection to create havoc and chaos in the male” (p 17) for which reason she must be controlled to ensure order and stability in society. In South Africa as in other parts of the world and particularly within the *ummah*, women’s “piety” is prescribed, adjudicated and judged especially by the ‘*ulamā*’.

The latter, who preface their interminable discourses with the clichéd phrase that there is no priesthood in Islam⁶, consider Muslim women God-fearing or God-conscious when they are attired “appropriately”, conduct public activities under the guardianship of male relatives and avoid “intermingling” with men⁷. Outwardly, Muslim women have to live in the image created of them by Muslim men. Any deviation from the restrictive roles assigned to them is pestiferous influence of impiety.

“O most pernicious woman” in Shakespeare’s words is the “unbridled seductress” and “vile woman” who creates *fitnah* or sexual incitement in the pious vocabulary of the certain Muslim men and the conservative ‘*ulamā*’. Saleem’s (1993) depiction of a woman in the new world order is one who dresses strictly according to the Islamic code (wearing a *hijāb*). He asserts that this is a woman’s way of showing gratitude to God for the favours conferred on her in the form of an exalted status and many rights. She is shameless without the *hijāb*, immodest and not respected.

⁶ Islamic *Sunnī* religious culture often state that there is no church in Islam and no one therefore embodies God’s divine authority (El Fadl 2001), in *Shi’ism* the imām is the embodiment of such authority.

⁷ “To claim that a woman visiting her husband’s grave, a woman raising her voice in prayer, a woman driving a car or a woman travelling unaccompanied by a male is bound to create intolerable seductions, strikes me as morally problematic. If men are so morally weak, why should women suffer? And doesn’t this assumed moral weakness run contrary to the assumption that men should be the heads of the family and the leaders of society because they are of a stronger and more enduring constitution?” (El Fadl 2001:269-270).

The Mujlisul-Ulama's (1992) pious woman is one who tolerates her husband for failing to observe her rights (p 1); responds immediately to his glance to satisfy him sexually (p 8); observes "*purdah* for the voice"⁸- protects her voice from males (p 9); obedient to her husband who is superior in rank and is a ruler (p 12); is not permitted to drive because this act destroys her modesty and she needs to conceal herself by staying at home (p 18); is an unhappy person and deprived of her husband's love if she makes obstinate demands about her rights (19); she is deceptive and scheming (p 58). According to the *fatwā* or legal edict of the Saudi Arabian government's official religious body, the Permanent Council for Scientific Research and Legal Opinions, a wife must endure patiently her husband's abuse and maltreatment but her insults, cursing and being ungrateful to him will lead to hell where women would be in the majority and her driving leads to promiscuity that would undermine all of society (El Fadl 2001).

"The reality remains that it is not necessarily the principles of religion itself that are discriminatory but rather the interpretation thereof by the men in power. This is evident from the fact that at the national synod sitting of the Reformed Church during 2003 men took the decision not to allow women in certain positions in the church and in both the other two mainstream religions discussed, men are also the main decision makers. This is a problem that needs to be addressed with sensitivity and circumspection. It should however be done, how difficult and contentious it might be, as discrimination against women will continue unabated if religious beliefs, which form the basis of culture in most societies, are not changed to ensure the equality of women also in the religious realm," de la Harpe, van der Walt et al (2003:61).

The participants in this study see themselves fulfilling their Islamic duties as required of them by Allāh and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet's normative behaviour towards humanity. Democracy in South Africa is also about deconstructing the

⁸ *Purdah* is referred to as *ḥayā'* or modesty: the shame of the Muslim woman (refer to *Purdah, "haya" modesty: the shame of the Muslim woman* (no date), publisher not stated, printed by Impress, Durban, South Africa).

evils of a divided society and reconstructing a multicultural / pluralistic value system. According to Cassimjee (1993) “the South African society reflects a heterogeneous society, which makes legal pluralism inevitable,” (p 102).

The participants’ concern and involvement in uplifting the socio-economic condition, re-affirms in people their human dignity and dispels decades of systematic suspicion and division, particularly rooted in the notion of the “other” (black and white, Indian and coloured; superimposing one’s religion and culture). While they do not subscribe to a feminist modality or belong to any group, their work demonstrates them to be egalitarian, entrepreneurial and successful. Their courage and dedication are underpinned by their commitment to Islam; *their* understanding and interpretation of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*, *their* sense of belonging to the South African society and most importantly, *their* worldviews. This is perhaps summed up by one of the principal participants, Hassim, for whom orthodox beliefs hinder women’s *da’wah* activities. She believes that the stereotyping of women precludes them from being heard because “men tend to undermine or ignore the strong influence that women bring” (Agenda 2004:50).

1.2 Outline of the Chapters

The thesis is divided into two sections, Part One and Part Two, both with five chapters each. The introductory chapter (Chapter 1) provides a brief overview of the study. It deals with the background to the study, the aims and objectives and outline of the chapters. Chapter 2 deals with the theoretical background and literature review. The literature reviewed extends to the different contexts within which the research is grounded. The research participants are Muslim women involved in *da’wah* and their dedication is a challenge to the misoneistic⁹ views of the conservative ‘*ulamā*’, the Christian proselytisers, modern and post modernistic discourses. These women perceive their roles as one of fulfilling the commands of Allāh (God).

⁹ Refer to Waite, G. (1996:202), Pannell, S. (2002:1).

They are spiritual guides, mentors and counsellors, civic activists, social engineers with entrepreneurial skills- all these are contained in the word “*dā‘iyah*”¹⁰ or “*da‘wah* workers”. To present a record of their work does not require a dissertation if one were to merely see them as Muslims doing *da‘wah*. This research therefore looks at a broader definition of *da‘wah* and the different methodologies. The literature reviewed includes feminist discourses, emerging democratic values in South African society and Muslim minorities. *Da‘wah* is discussed in Chapter 3 where a wider definition is postulated.

To understand the *da‘wah* of the research participants and their relationship within society, narratives and live history methodology was used so that we see their lives in context through their lenses. The methodology is discussed in Chapter 4. The fact that the research participants are women, Muslim women-living in South Africa as part of a minority community situated within a patriarchal society; all these coexistent paradigms and multiple contexts are evaluated and discussed critically in Chapter 5.

Having dealt with the hypothesis of the broader definition and concept of *da‘wah*, discussed the methodology to be used and grounded the wide context of the research participants, Part Two, (chapters 6 to 9) proceeds with the narratives of the lives of each *dā‘iyah*. A few women and men were chosen “randomly” whose lives were impacted on directly by the research participants. They are secondary research participants whose stories are also recorded by the same methodology used in this research for the [main or principal] research participants.

Chapter 7 is titled “conventional / traditional” *da‘wah* with the interviews conducted with Hafsa Moolla and Maryam Wood (main participants), Shenaaz Muslim and Ayesha (Minnie) Makhoba as the secondary participants respectively. In Chapter 8, community *da‘wah*, Waradia Mulla is the main participant and Kagango and Abdallah are the secondary participants. The other main participant

¹⁰ A person engaged in *da‘wah* (داعية); pl *du‘āh*

is Soraya Hassim, and Yusuf is the secondary participant. Suraya Dadoo is the main participant whose interview is recorded in Chapter 9 as *da'wah* through the media. Chapter 10 is the concluding chapter.

Appendices contain documents: photographic records, news articles and relevant information the participants shared as auxiliary features of the interviews which are interrelated to their storied lives. These are discussed or referred to in the critical evaluation of each participant's interviews.

1.3 Reference list / Bibliography

"In most conventions of scholarship a reference list cites sources that are explicitly used in research text while a bibliography more generally lists writings that may have informed the work but that have not necessarily been cited verbatim or peripherally in the text itself. The former notes the exact sources; the latter acknowledges the more general influences. The bibliography is usually far more ranging in scope and traces, by its very nature, a kind of intellectual journey" (Cole and Knowles 2000:61). In spite of this, the reference / bibliographical list were explicitly used in this research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

"We can insist on asking, along with 'Ali Shari'ti, 'Whose Islam? Whose lives and interest are being advanced by our understanding and interpretation of Islam?'"

Esack (2003:93)

2.1. INTRODUCTION

There is abundant literature on *da'wah* and about the activities of Muslim men (*du'āh*) involved in *da'wah* in many countries but very little information is available about Muslim women (*du'āh*) engaged in this field. Most literature and research studies conceptualise *da'wah* activities within an organised framework and broadly categorise institutions or organisations into two groups: proselytism among people of other faiths and propagation among Muslims (Haron 2005). Where individuals are engaged in *da'wah*, they are exclusively males (Haron 1992; Dangor 2006b).

The South African situation is similarly reflected in academic studies and literary discourses with little or no record of women's participation as *du'āh* in society. There is no documented information of the research participants' activities except for some media articles of particular events and activities or a cursory reference in some media of two participants.

The fact that they are women, this study investigates the debates in the *ummah* about Muslim women and how the participants have used *da'wah* to achieve their goals. Their *da'wah* work is recorded through their "eyes" and in their "words" by using the life story method. It is their storied lives that provide an introduction to the challenges they face as women as they contribute to the reconstruction of the South African society. Their contributions and how it affects individuals and

society are discussed in this study, critically evaluated after each interview and a collective analysis is undertaken in the concluding chapter.

Rashid al-Ghannushi considers it necessary for Muslim women to be involved in *da'wah* with Muslims and the world. He views women as crucial actors “not only in implementing a kind of moral rearmament, a moral jihad to create a virtuous society, but also as workers for a political agenda that refuses to participate any longer in subservience to the foreigner” (in Haddad 1998:19-20).

This study had to review literature on women's status globally and in South Africa, Muslim women within the *ummah* and within the South African context. Literature review included the traditionalist / conservative laws that marginalised women; what reconstruction meant in South Africa with specific reference to the role of women. Also reviewed was the methodological technique in this qualitative research, grounded in narrative inquiry. Through narrative, the research participants were able to externalise their feelings, attitudes and worldviews; provide an insight to their narrative identities and “indicate which elements of those experiences are most significant” (Elliott 2005:5).

2.2. Narrative Inquiry- Life Story Method: Why this Methodology?

Narrative inquiry which uses narratives and life history in context research methodology is creating a newer awareness whereby studies are not subjected to abstract methodological and theoretical debates (Plummer 2001). The importance of this methodology in this study is pivotal to the understanding of the qualitative research that allows the experiences of the interviewees to be revealed as active human agents in social life.

While Chapter 4 contextualises this methodology in detail a few salient points are noted here. There is growing acceptance of this “new” methodology in education, law and the social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, historical psychology and constructionist psychology. Lieblich et al (1998) in

discussing narrative research, write that its use or analysis of narrative materials is used in both basic and applied research. They define narrative research as an investigation of any research question, narratives as the research object and the study of the philosophy and methodology. Narrative according to Elliott (2005) is used in wide range of different substantive fields across the social sciences; for Lieblich et al (1998) its methodologies are a significant repertoire of social sciences.

This “new” methodology was used by Dante, Milton, Voltaire and other philosophers and writers in their fiction as effective life story methods to communicate their views. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s record in his own words of his travels (travelogue) in the 14th century was groundbreaking in narrative history. He takes his readers to different countries, connects them to his own life and to that of the diverse cultural, political and socioeconomic conditions of many countries with vibrancy. It is a powerful life story method by which ibn Baṭṭūṭa gives descriptive account according to Gibb, by “introducing to a wider circle of English readers one of the most remarkable travellers of his own age or any age” (1929: 15).

Ibn Khaldūn, a cotemporary of ibn Baṭṭūṭa, as a sociologist and historian also used narrative as the method of writing about the philosophy of history (Ibn Khaldun 1967). In his *kitāb al ‘ibar* (book of exemplars) he used mundane narratives and subjected “whatever evidence may be available to formal logical analysis” (Austen and Leiden 1996:24). As Elliott (2005) noted, that narratives can have their own implicit or explicit evaluative elements.

The life story method in this study is therefore an effective technique engaging the researcher and the participants. This research is not about presenting a correct or, *the* Correct interpretation of the Qur’ān and authentic *Sunnah* relating to women and the relationship between women, men and society. It examines critically the gender bias of the many epistemological interpretations and

“translations” of the Islamic texts and women’s approach to making the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*, as they see it, meaningful in their lives.

This research hopes to add to the genre of critical investigation and debates through qualitative research for readers (students, community workers, the working class, academics, ‘*ulamā*’ and the elite) to examine closely their realities, often projected as *the* Reality. As Cole and Knowles (2001) put it, “the potential that life history research has for understanding lives, be they individual or collective, rests not only in the intentions of individual researchers but also on the fundamental purposes and processes of life history inquiry methods and on the audience or readers as interpreters of the life history text” (p 11).

Thus, the researcher and participants collaborate through this qualitative research methodology to provide a narrative identity of each participant which is a departure from the concept of the self that is fixed and immutable in quantitative research. However, quantitative research is beginning to change its focus; especially longitudinal studies and multivariate analysis have incorporated narrative elements (Elliott 2005).

The words participants, principal participants, interviewees and research participants are used interchangeably. However, in using any one of these descriptive words or a combination, this research study recognised the fact that the research participants’ lives were to be intruded, scrutinised and that they themselves were aware of being the “spotlight” of focus through this intrusion. To allay their fears, anxiety and concerns, it was essential at the outset, to outline to the participants the purpose of the research. This allowed for the direction of the conversation (Cole and Knowles, 2001) creating an atmosphere of trust, so that the researcher and the participants could “converse” with little inhibition and with confidence.

Field notes were reduced to text and then given to the participants for them to review. Subsequent interviews were mostly tape recorded and transcribed painstakingly and at times a telephonic or face to face discussion ensued to clarify certain aspects of the interviews. Documents such as articles and photographs are part of the record of the achievement and challenges faced by the participants and a few have been included in this study under the relevant appendices.

2.3. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Reviewing literature provides a focused perspective of the area of study. It allows the researcher to do what an architect or project manager of a housing upgrade and redecoration project would do by way of a scoping exercise, project proposal and bill of quantities. One is required to focus on the basics, gather all the relevant information (data) and then review and analyse the data collected. Thereafter, a proposal is drafted that discusses a project plan: time frame, costs, stakeholders and benefits to both the project holder and the target group (framework). Once approved by the project holder, the project manager drafts a bill of quantities that includes detailed definition of the work to be undertaken, the project area, time-frames, costing, penalties for any unwarranted delay, type and quantity of material and the number of dwellings to be rehabilitated.

In the scoping exercise, project proposal and the formulation of the bill of quantities, the project manager is required to undertake a thorough review and analysis of existing information on similar projects that results in a “theory” to be used in the proposed project. This is followed up with interviews of the target group (household heads) to formulate a theoretical or conceptual framework. When the project is implemented, the project manager is involved with the contractor throughout the duration of the project.

The project manager cannot review all the work undertaken in similar projects. It is not usually possible, nor is it necessary to undertake such a mammoth task that

would delay the project and prevent the target group of benefiting in any meaningful way.

This thesis had to look at literature relevant to the study area and in the process, had to review, critique, compare and examine information (Cole and Knowles 2000). It was, of course, not possible to review all the literature, theories and research problem. Nor was it necessary for literature review to be “prefaced” or be “foundational” to putting up a structured research study. In fact, a simultaneous process of gathering information while conducting research investigation allowed for an infusion and interconnectedness. The one influenced the other, sharpening the focus, enhancing the lens of criticism, examination, and comparison.

2.3.1. Historical Background: Islamic Revivalism

Revivalism challenged customary traditions (un-Islamic practices) in the 18th century under the leaderships of several scholars in the Middle East, Africa and Asia that included Muḥammad ibn Abdal Wahhab (d 1792), Shaykh Jibril ibn 'Umar al-Aqdisi, Ḥajjī Miskīn, Aḥmad Brelwī and Ma Mingxin (1781). They propagated “moral community based on pristine Islam” (Mansurnoor 2005:46), rebelling against imperialism and to purge customary practices that was considered deviations. The revivalist movement gave rise to progressive / liberal Islam in the 19th century with Shāh Walīyullah (d. 1762) whose humanistic approach led to intellectual and scientific stimulation with emphasis on the need for education and *da'wah*. According to Kurzman (1998) Shāh Walīyullah was however still more of a revivalist.

The socio-economic, educational and political challenges, especially after World War II ushered in further reforms in Muslim countries. Progressive Islamic scholars however had advocated the need for overhauling aspects of the Shari'ah by adopting an introspective self-critical approach. The intellectual discourses called for re-evaluation and interpretation of the religious prescriptions that arose

from the subversion of the intent of the Islamic texts. There was a need for new responses, new thinking and new laws in tandem with the social, political and economic changes. Women as a marginalised group received attention to improve their unequal and unjust status from across the Muslim world in the writings of Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), Sayyid Ali Khan (d. 1898), Jamāl al dīn al Afghānī (d. 1897), Namik Kemal (1888) and Sir Muḥammad Iqbal (d. 1938). ‘Abduh, while maintaining the view that Islam was rational and practical believed that men were naturally charged with leadership and women were endowed with domestic affairs (Karmi, 1996).

2.3.2. Analysis of Terminologies, Social and Religious Constructs

2.3.2.1. Muslim women, feminism and Islam

In recent decades, Muslim women have asserted themselves as global stakeholders in redefining the Islamic discourses. Rifat Hassan, Asma Barlas, Amina Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmed are among the women writers, academics, social scientists, historians and activists whose works cogently contend for the re-interpretation of the Islamic texts. They have formulated their own hermeneutical models, challenging the patriarchal status of epistemology and religious methodology for a coherent approach to gender equality and social justice based on the Qur’ān and the authentic teachings and practice of the Prophet.

These women have been labelled by some as Islamic feminists but Barlas (2003) and Wadud (1999) for example, reject a feminist identity of their critique of the patriarchal praxis and the subsuming of the rights and status of women through the manipulation of the Islamic texts. Shaikh (2003) in her analysis of the feminists debate and development in contemporary global context, sees “feminist” as descriptive of Muslim women’s engagement to actively transform masculinist social structures based on their commitment to Islam and not an attack on Islam and Muslim culture. She believes that Islamic feminists have redefined feminist discourses allowing for an approach that is heterogeneous, recognising the particularity of

context and the multiple identities of women. “South African activist Shamima Shaikh employed the term Islamic feminism in her speeches and articles in the 1990s as did her sister and brother co-activists” (Badran 2002:2).

Mona Abul-Fadl concisely captures the developmental stages of feminism when she stated: “if at the turn of the century these were largely assumed as secular incursions, and by mid-century they had become the site of active contestation between secularizing and ‘religious’ currents, by century’s end the pattern was one of a growing assertiveness in which women are increasingly drawn as Muslims with legitimate voices entitled to articulate their interests, gendered and otherwise, as part of the ummah. While official bodies of ulama (like the Azhar), and major Islamist movements and organizations may continue to appropriate the authority to speak for women, or on their behalf, more and more Muslim women who actively identify with their faith and command the requisite organizational and intellectual skills are both resolved to speak for themselves and able to do so” Abul-Fadl, no date).

For Badran (2002) Islamic feminism is a global phenomenon with feminist discourses and hermeneutics transcending and destroying old binaries between "religious" and "secular" and between "East" and "West." For van Nieuwkerk (2003) Islamic feminism is a feminist discourse and practice, seeking rights and justice for both men and women, articulated within an Islamic paradigm. Islamic revivalism of the 17th and 18th centuries, within which Islamic feminism gained impetus, transcended geographical boundaries.

2.3.2.2. South African Muslims and Islamic Revivalism

The early Muslim settlers in South Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries were well informed of and educated in the revivalist and progressive movements and were part of the struggle against western hegemony and travelled from the 19th century to study abroad (Tayob 1999). The late 20th century South African Muslims were also connected to these reformative fervour and the “split between traditionalists

and modernists similar to differences evident elsewhere in Africa” (Quinn and Quinn 2003:23). The reform of Abduh and others are reflected in the gendered debates in post war literature and activism challenging traditional patterns of social stratification, family life and the status and role of women. Many studies detail the situation of women in the Muslim and Arab world and of Muslims as minority communities.

2.3.2.3. *Da‘wah*

Religious efforts are best understood as *da‘wah* and this concept had to be interrogated within a broad definition based on the Qur’ān, *Sunnah* and Islamic literature. The different views of Muslim women had to be investigated in literature by Muslim / Islamic feminists, Muslim women and men who have adopted the Qur’ān and authentic *Sunnah* as the basis of presenting Muslim women’s perspectives by their own reading and renditions of the Islamic texts.

2.3.2.4 *Sharī‘ah* and Authoritarian Methodologies

Muslims proclaim that Islam proffers universal values and is the panacea to the moral decay, socio-economic and political turmoil. Islam, it is argued, guarantees human rights since its democratic values and universal constructs are based on the immutable laws of God contained in the Qur’ān. God’s Words are protected by those “imbued with knowledge” the *‘ulamā’*, who are custodians and disseminators of the Truth.

Any dissent from the authoritative text and the *Sharī‘ah* is an aberration that is equated with challenging the “Truth”. The authoritarian methodologies in interpreting the Islamic texts and providing legal edicts particularly on and about women “corrupt the integrity of the Islamic texts” (El Fadl 2001:6). Women are therefore denied negotiative leverage; their voices muted and their humanity reduced to half that of men.

Women who are making their voices heard are generally viewed by male scholars, without justification, as modern (to be read as shameless) and reactionaries who are influenced by agent provocateurs (Westerners who want to corrupt Muslims). They are considered apostates (Eissa 1999), westoxicated (Tohidi 2002). In one response, the Islamic Republic of Iran considered outspoken woman's publication, Noushin Ahmadi-Khorasani's global women's calendar as encouraging and promoting the customs of pre-Islamic period, symbolising unworthy women and promiscuity (Tohidi 2002).

2.3.2.5. Minority Community

The literature on minority was a snapshot view of the minority vs majority concerns, challenges and redefinition, particularly in the global context of Muslims whose minority status is considered a religious one. More specifically, it examined the status, developmental activities and challenges of South African Muslims. There exists within the minority community itself, diversity of practices and divergent discourses since the early arrival of Muslims in South Africa, burgeoning into to a "multiplicity of Islamic expression" (Dangor 1997:141). In this diverse minority community, Muslim women constitute a marginalised group and Hassan (1987) considers them the largest and perhaps the most oppressed minority in the world" (p 97).

2.4. Integrating the Discussion of Terminologies, Social and Religious Constructs

In the interpretations and reinterpretations of the Islamic texts, Muslims are exercising a choice in the epistemological diversity and multivalued options which evidently abounds in classical *fiqh* literature (Islamic jurisprudence). The different juristic schools accepted and respected *Ikhilāf* -disagreement and diversity (El Fadl 2001) because of the "complexity of its [Qur'ān's] multilayered text whose total meaning is known only to its author" (Hassan 2002b:7). It is the patriarchal Islamists and religious scholars who impose a narrow vision of religion on people (Wyche 2004).

These discourses are contained in literature on and by women, particularly on feminism, Islamic feminism, gender and rights issues that have proliferated over the past few decades, dealing with contemporary challenges and past expositions and experiences. There appears to be unanimity for the need to revisit history and to critically and objectively examine religious texts and *fiqh* to separate clichés from Islamic issues relating to women and gender (Yamani, 1996). This study examines the profound engagement by prominent progressive scholars, women and men, to provide the context for the storied lives of the participants. The gendered debates are discussed in more detail in the succeeding chapters and interlinked throughout the study. The lives of Islamic feminists are interlocked so that Badran (2002) and Wadud (1999) can talk about the late Shamima Shaikh as a *dā'iyah* who in turn was able to relate to the experiences of Wadud when she came to South Africa. The lives of Muslim women go beyond a feminist ideology, it transcends religious barriers to express in practice the Qur'anic concepts of justice (*'adl*) and oneness of humanity.

In contrast, there is a paucity of literature on South African Muslim women and the few studies that are available vary in their approach, topic and scope. Literature that is available, do not examine the oppression and the demeaning roles of Muslim women and there is no focus on their contributions to social development and their progressive views. Shaikh (1997), Shaikh (1999), Jeenah (2001; 2006) and Esack (1997; 1999) are perhaps the most relevant to the women's rights discourse, debate and activism. They challenge the authoritarian interpretation of the Islamic texts but no South African women emerge in their own rights as an outspoken critique of the centuries of indoctrination and resistance to "acculturation", except for a few women like the late Shamima Shaikh and Sadia Shaykh.

Esack (1997) states that "reformist scholars all agree that the task of interpretation today must consider the time, location and an understanding of how tenets and directives respond to the contemporary context (p 60)." As a reformist, gender justice activist, Shamima Shaikh interpreted the Islamic texts to free women from

a dependent and bonded status and to live a life of a full dignified being alongside men in contemporary South African society and globally. The response of the ‘*ulamā*’ and certain Muslim men were confrontational, “despite so much Qur’anic evidence about the significance of women, gender reform in Muslim society has been most stubbornly resisted” (Wadud 1999:xiii). It is not surprising that the South African resistance to patriarchal polemics and sexism is known as “gender jihad” (Shaikh 1998, Shaikh 2003).

In South Africa, Islamic feminism is a recent development through vociferous public manifestation (Bux 2004; Jeena 2001) especially through the efforts of the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) and the Call of Islam. As the first national Muslim movement in South Africa, the MYM challenged apartheid segregation and included in its structures and programmes were African Muslims and women (Dangor 2003). It “confronted sensitive issues, such as responses to apartheid, the place of women, the type of education to be offered, contacts with the wider world of Islam in the Middle East and elsewhere, and opening Islam to membership from the black townships. The MYM deserves credit for being a focal point for virtually all of the political, educational, and social issues facing contemporary Islam in South Africa” (Quinn and Quinn 2003:138).

These forums are involved in the gender, pluralism and justice discourses and activism (Esack 1997; 1999) and have provided “women’s leadership, including *inter alia* questions of sermon, mosque attendance campaigns and gender egalitarian reformation of Muslim personal law” (Shaikh 2003:158). Esack (1997) equates freedom in South Africa with equality of men and women, and women’s freedom from oppressive social and familial conditions (240-41); empowering the marginalised and disempowering the powerful including religious groups (248); commitment to the struggle for justice, gender equality and the re-interpretation of Islam (261).

The challenge for Muslims as a minority, in Nadvi's (1989) analysis, is to preserve their Islamic identity and way of life "in terms of their religion, culture, education, political, economics, ethics and law" (p 73). Abedin (1980) discusses the need for developing a new conceptual approach that would break away from divisive notions of ethnicity and exclusive identity of superiority, the need to critically evaluate the causes of the predicaments and to work towards assimilation rooted in Islam. Not only numerical factors but also social position together with "race" defines minority (Ahmed 1998). In South Africa "race" was a value laden concept and still is, that pervades social interaction.

In South Africa, Muslims constitute a vibrant, organised community with a resurgence of Islamic activities (Dangor 1991). Substantial literature tends to focus on the special affinity of Muslims to the country, their established presence from early colonial period (1650s) through to apartheid (1960s) and into a democratic era that commenced in 1994. There is an intimate bond between the ruling African National Congress (ANC) government and Muslims, spanning about eight decades based on active participation against the colonising Anglo-Boer forces and the apartheid regime. An affinity between the ANC and the international Muslim liberation movements continue to impact on the local South African Muslim minority community.

In the post apartheid era, there are serious challenges facing Muslims as they mediate conflicting values between maintaining an Islamic identity and ethos and the South African constitutional reforms. These are articulated and manifested in various ways as progressive and conservative Muslims strive to coexist in a multicultural society. Just as there were Muslims who collaborated with the anti-democratic, racist regimes, there are those in democratic South Africa who iconoclastically articulate an isolationist policy.

"Colonialism and apartheid deeply affected the meanings of self, identity and community institutions" (Tayob 1999:137) and Muslims are still faced with the

many challenges as a minority community. The challenges to maintain their identity and resistance to assimilation with the majority / dominant group are examined by Randeree (1993). She does not critically assess or discuss women's status generally and specifically within the South Africa context. Where concerns are expressed about issues relating to marriage, divorce and education, these are within the conservative framework and more about maintaining the patriarchal status quo. Tayob (1993) offers a compelling insight into the vibrant history of Muslims, reformist / progressive Islam and the *khutbah* or Friday sermon as a discursive symbol, and located within these debates and discourses is the gendered space of women.

The struggle of Muslim women for justice and equality that are marginally discussed by Bux (2004) and Esack (1997; 1999) are analysed in much detail by Shaikh (1999) with an incisive focus on the movements and individuals by Jeena (2001). Shaikh's dissertation is about Muslim women asserting themselves in the public domain through Radio Islam operated by the conservative 'ulamā', participation on the Muslim Personal Board and gaining access as active participants to mosque space. According to Quinn and Quinn (2003) "women assumed a more equal status in that congregation than in others in Africa, worshipping on the main floor of the mosque and having their counsel actively sought in the body's deliberations" (p 23).

Shaikh examines the global "feminist" debate and women's access to mosque space, accessed separately or equally. In 1993 women attended *tarāwīh* (additional evening prayers) in Ramaḍān to claim their lawful space in the mosque in Fietas (Johannesburg). According to the Wikipedia (no date) this was one of the earliest reported cases of a woman imām in the West. In the Claremont mosque (Cape Town), Amina Wadud at the invitation of the *imām*, addressed the Friday congregation.

In both instances, men who perceived women's presence as an invasion of their space granted to them over centuries of traditional parochial custom ("laws") reacted negatively and some were hostile. The response of the '*ulamā*' was that women are assigned to be domesticated while men's prescriptive role entitled them to unrestricted public and mosque space. *Purdah* and *hijāb* were essential requirements, they argued, and under certain circumstances where women were "allowed" access to separate mosque space, separate ablution and toilet facilities had to be provided. "They believe that the intermingling of the sexes could lead to fitna in the community. This fitna can be controlled by ensuring that women conduct and dress themselves appropriately. Hence, they stress that the laws of *Purda* and *Hijab* need to be maintained," (Shaikh 1999:59).

The '*ulamā*' in Brits like those in Cape Town and Johannesburg, condemned as deviations the activities of the Muslim Youth Movement in the 1980s and Brits Mosque incident of the resurgent group of Muslims. Tayob (1999) records that "the Brits Mosque not only excluded women from the mosque grounds; its discursive practices also eliminated independent women's voices in the town" (p 142). While women attended mosque during the time of the Prophet it was the '*ulamā*' who later introduced restrictions: "In the centuries after the death of Muhammad, religious scholars increasingly cited a variety of reasons, from moral degeneration in society to women's tendency to be a source of temptation and social discord, to restrict both her presence in public life and in the mosque" (Esposito 1998:xiii).

In Durban, "Taking Islam to the People" (TIP) hold *Jumū'ah* prayers on the last Friday of every month in front of the eThekweni (Durban) city hall. Women and men share the "open air" *Jumū'ah* that initially met with negative response from the '*ulamā*'. TIP has also organised the first open-air family *Īd* prayer in 2003 at the Durban's North Beach with two lectures, one each by a male and a female (Wikipedia. no date). The conservative '*ulamā*' responded by distributing pamphlets and delivered lectures in the mosques, condemning the *fitnah* (social

discord). Families and friends were engaged in the debate about the “*fitnah*” and the following ‘*Īd*’ prayers showed a growing support for the open-air family *Sunnah*. The struggle of women to (re)gain their legitimate space in the mosque is associated with the orthopraxic response of the *ulamā*’. The “open air” *Jumū‘ah* and ‘*Īd*’ prayer are a public display of South African Muslim women and progressive men challenging the uncompromising male hegemony that attempts to have strict control over women’s space and movement through rigid interpretation of the Islamic texts and formulation of “laws”.

A sociological perspective investigating the nature and causes of marital breakdown among (80 respondents) Indian Muslims from the Durban Metropolitan area was undertaken by Khan (2001). Two aspects relevant to the historical gender - Muslim minority context relate to the clash between Islamic norms and values and the dominant secular political systems and ideologies. He believes that the ‘*ulamā*’ play a critical role in preserving Islamic values and are responsible for reviving the *Shari‘ah* laws that do not allow for any compromise except for the secondary sources (opinions, analogy, judgments and interpretations).

Khan recommends, in respect of the status of women, that all mosques be opened to women that would enable them to equal access to information around social, political and religious issues. Greater opportunities should be provided to ensure women’s participation in community-based and welfare organisations. “In this way, women will be in a position to work towards the eradication of the many social problems challenging the community with their male counterparts,” (p 302).

As for women and *da‘wah*, Dangor (2006b) mentions *da‘wah* efforts of the Islamic Propagation Centre and Abdur-Rahman Wright in his discussion about origins, struggles and achievements of Muslims in South Africa. Haron (1992) in evaluating *da‘wah* or what he refers to as [missionary] activities, in South Africa

states the need for investigation into *da'wah* as an organised institution prior to 1950. He provides a concise overview of *da'wah* activities and statistical data for the period 1952-1984 in the Cape with specific reference to areas of Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga (Langunya) listing of men as *da'wah* workers.

The earliest record of *da'wah* in Johannesburg according to Tayob (1999) was in 1958 by the youth organisation, the Islamic Progressive Society and in the 1970s by the Muslim Youth Movement. No woman is identified as being engaged in *da'wah* or reference made to women's *da'wah* activities in these literatures. Bangstad (2004) in his case study of the Muslim community of a township south of Cape Town, provides an incisive perspective on the role of class structures in religious authority and the emergence of multiple interpretative sources of religious discourses.

The challenge to religious hierarchies is poignantly examined, particularly the controversy surrounding the appointment of the *imām* (leader) of the mosque. There are several instances when Bangstad focuses on the prominent role acquired by women but the study is more about the contested role of the *imām* within a predominantly working class community than the significance of gendered roles.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The following combination of theoretical concepts emerge from the literature reviewed: -

Common Law: Throughout the history of Islam, a patriarchal common law has been imposed as the divine law. These laws have marginalised the status of women and their roles even where Muslims live as a minority community.

Muslim minorities and Islamic values: The struggle of Muslim minorities to retain Islamic values and express the Islamic ethos in dominant societies

Redefining the *ummah*: Debates between conservative and progressive Muslims, women and men, in re-defining and re-shaping the *ummah* and society.

Muslim women activism: Muslim women, a very small number, have played an active role for change globally and in South Africa, often at odds with the dominant male worldviews.

Hassim, one of the main participants in this research study, in an interview (Agenda 2004) mentioned the challenges she is faced with to sustain funding for her organisation in a male dominated environment. She says, “The community expects their women to exercise their religious and spiritual leadership from home. In public life religious and spiritual leadership is the domain of male. As a woman I have to prove myself in a man’s world and make lots of sacrifices” (p 49). The research participants are situated within the theoretical paradigms as women, as Muslims, as South Africans who are part of a minority community and as *da’wah* workers for change in social stratification, quality of family life, the religious and socio-economic status and role of women. These are their contributions in the rebuilding and reconstruction of the burgeoning democracy.

2.6. Key Questions to be answered in the Research

- 2.6.1. What contributions have been made by Muslim women in the reconstruction of the South African society?
- 2.6.2. Is there a broader definition of *da’wah* that includes the activities of the research participants who are not directly engaged in Islamic propagation?
- 2.6.3. What is the relationship between the research participants and religious scholars?
- 2.6.4. Are the research participants able to carry out their activities within the context of a patriarchal society?
- 2.6.5. Does this study confirm or refute work previously done in a related field or provide a new perspective?

2.7. Significance of the Study

This study hopes to make the following contribution: -

- It is expected that the narratives in life history research of Muslim women is a rare contribution in the qualitative approach to understanding lives in context.
- The research participants' account of their storied lives would be the first written record of their work.
- *Da'wah* is postulated and discussed in a wider context than the conventional notion.
- The main participants in this study are directly involved in reinforcing the democratic values of South Africa in helping individuals, families and communities in realising that they are full human beings. Their programmes and entrepreneurial strategies include empowering the poor and unemployed and instilling strong religious, moral and spiritual values through their own modalities. They are social agents for change for a better, just and equitable society.
- The research specifically focuses on Muslim women engaged in *da'wah* in South Africa and therefore fills the void in this area.

The following chapter examines the definition of *da'wah* and how the research participants' *da'wah* activism is situated within the reconstruction of the emerging democracy that has enabled them to become social agents for change.

CHAPTER 3

DA'WAH AND RECONSTRUCTION

“Muhammad maintained that he did not bring a new message from a new God but called people back to the one, true God and to a way of life that most of his contemporaries had forgotten or deviated from. Worship of Allah was not the evolutionary emergence of monotheism from polytheism but a return to a forgotten past, to the faith of the first monotheist, Abraham. The Prophet brought a revolution in the Arabian life, a reformation that sought to purify and redefine its way of life.

Esposito (1991:14)

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the definitions of *da'wah* and hopes to provide a wider definition than the conventional one. The research participants' work, their reconstruction and rebuilding efforts are predicated on both the “narrow” conventional definition as well as the broad definition argued for in this chapter. The hypothesis is that *da'wah* is not solely the invitation or the call to Islam (conventional definition) or what Ask and Tjomsland (1998) refer to as individual reform through preaching or missionary activity (Haron 1992).

3.2. Definitions

3.2.1. *Da'wah*

Da'wah literally means an invitation and in the Islamic context, it is to invite people to Allāh. It is defined as an invitation to join the faith (Engineer 2002), being integral to Islam and is the mission of *shahādah*¹¹ every Muslim is required to carry out (Murad, no date). It is an invitation in Islam that refers to proselytizing, the purpose is to call to God through the concept of *tawhīd* (monotheism - an uncompromising belief in the Oneness of God); to inform Muslims and others that involves more than dialogue and discussion through the steady engagement of living the message (Wikipedia). It includes the shunning

¹¹ To bear witness that Allāh is the only Creator and Muḥammad is Allāh's last messenger

of evil and promoting good which is an effective means of *da'wah* (Ad-da'wah 1983) which Usmani (1999) sees as an obligation undertaken by an individual with the collective duty being preaching and calling to Islam.

Esposito (1991) discusses the changing role of *da'wah* from a traditional propagationary one of 'the Call' to Islam to a diversified socio-religious grassroots movement transforming all sectors of society. "The growth, proliferation and increasing sophistication of the *dawa* movement will continue to foster a religious revivalism focussed primarily on producing better Muslims and a better society" (p 216).

3.2.2. "Revert" / Convert

The expression "revert" is a loaded concept referring to a person who adopts Islam as her or his way of life. It implies that a person has "returned" to the "original state" of her or his birth; a Muslim. "Convert" suggests a person who has renounced one set of beliefs or creed for another. In this thesis, the words revert and convert are used interchangeably together with "embrace" and "adopt" for a person who has become a Muslim. However, the word "revert" is used with reservation because the notion of reversion is premised on the interpretation of the Prophet's *ḥadīth* that every child is born in the state of *fiṭrah* but is indoctrinated or socialised by her or his parents.

According to Mohamed (1996) it has legal implication that all children are born pure, sinless and predisposed to the belief in one God and that all children will be in paradise. Said and Funk (2001) consider it a positive view of human nature in Islam with emphasis that the original human constitution (*fiṭrah*) is good and Muslim in character. *Fiṭrah* is translated as 'innocence', the state and a condition which all humans are born with (Hanson 2001:14 in Hussain 2004); free from the Christian concept of the original sin. Siddiqi (1980) defines it as the ability to perceive the Supreme Power that is innate in human nature; instinctive cognition, uncorrupted state that has a natural disposition.

The translators of the Qur'ān interpret *fiṭrah* (e.g. *Al-Rūm* 30:30) as “Islamic monotheism” (al Hilali and Khan 1995:744), “pattern on which He has made mankind” (Ali 2003:266), “nature upright – the nature (framed) by Allāh” (Picktall no date: 292). Ali’s (1920) interpretation is a “right state – nature made by Allāh” (p 794) while Asad (1980) refers to *fiṭrah* as instinctive cognition, intuitive ability to discern between right and wrong, to sense God’s existence and oneness, “a natural disposition God had instilled in man” (p 230). Abdel Haleem (2004) uses a similar phrase “disposition God had instilled in mankind” (p 258-9). The reference in *Al-Rūm* 30:30 is to all people who are created with a natural tendency to recognise the Oneness of Allāh; cognitively and spiritually predisposed to doing good.

Some find the term “revert Muslim” offensive because of its implication that all people are “unrealised” Muslims, unenlightened with long term negative consequences (Subang 2006). Implicit in the many interpretations by scholars, a “revert” returns to the state of a child – innocence, pure, good; an uncorrupted state with a natural pre-disposition – a Muslim. In this worldview, every other person is devoid of virtue or goodness or the potential of achieving paradise in the exegetical discourses of the scholars, contrary to the teachings of the Islamic texts. Also not supported by the Islamic texts is the suggestion that every Muslim is innocent, pure, good and uncorrupted.

There is not a single instance in the Qur'ān where a Muslim is associated with the above concepts nor is there any reference to *jannah* or paradise promised to a Muslim. In fact, the Qur'ān refers to responsibility entrusted to the *ummah* of inviting people to the Oneness Allāh, to righteous acts, justice and peace. There is a warning that should Muslims fail to observe the basic universal values they will be replaced with another group or people. In at least two instances it is stated in the Qur'ān that God does not change His grace and blessings bestowed on people (*Al-Anfāl* 8:53), nor does He change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (*Al-Ra'd* 13:11). Contrary to the common interpretation that

God will not intervene unless a person makes an effort to change for the better, the latter verse (*Al-Ra'd* 13:11) read with other verses on *fiṭrah* essentially refer to the condition in which God created and creates all people and that God does not change this condition of the beautiful mould or pattern formed unless people do so themselves.

3.3. Concept and Methodology

Inherent in the concept of “inviting” is the notion held by certain Muslims of the “superior us” and the “damned and condemned others”. A person who is invited to Islam will go to hell when she or he rejects the invitation. There are those who hold a view that, in spite of declining the invitation, it is Allāh who will decide the person’s fate in the hereafter. There are nuances and even extremities within the concept of *da‘wah* and its expression through different methodologies. The *Tabligh* Jama‘āt’s *da‘wah* is reforming Muslims while for the *Ḥizb al Tahrīr*, the Jordanian movement, it is the actualising of a reformed *ummah* leading to an Islamic state by waging war against a *kufṛ* society.

Any goodness or integrity in people is not considered morality or a universal value, unless the person is a Muslim because for a Muslim who follows the teachings of the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah*, *jannah* (paradise) is a *fait accompli*. The *Tabligh* Jamā‘at’s emphasis is also on good behaviour that is possible by following the fundamental teachings of Islam, especially the daily *ṣalāh* (“praying five times a day”), dressing in a certain way and other etiquettes. The behaviour that is moulded in Islam is likely to attract others to adopting the Islamic way of life.

The methods of *da‘wah* also vary as it is linked to the interpretations of the “actors” so that for the *Ḥizb al Tahrīr*, waging war is permissible while for the *Tabligh* Jamā‘at it is a calm door to door effort. Others use intellectual engagement with different strategies including what might be termed “extremes”

such as disparaging “the other” whose refusal to adopt Islam becomes the “damned and condemned other”.

3.4. *Da‘wah* in Contemporary and Historical Contexts and Islamic Texts

Let us briefly examine the definitions and conceptualisation of *da‘wah* within the contemporary and historical contexts and Islamic texts (Qur’ān and the authentic *Sunnah*)¹². Sheikh (in Islahi 1978) sees it as a highly technical method undertaken solely for the sake of Allāh; with *ḥikmah*; or wisdom (Mababaya 1998) that requires theory and methodology based on Qur’ān and the authentic *Sunnah*. Islahi (1978) contends that the present philosophy and method are incorrect and proposes theoretical and practical aspects in his fourteen chapters. Mababaya (1998) details the rationale of *da‘wah* and the characteristics (thirty four) of the *dā‘iyah*¹³. *Da‘wah* is commonly referred to as “the Call” because Prophet Muḥammad¹⁴ was commissioned to call people to submit themselves to God.

Inherent in the concept of an invitation is the right of the invitee to refuse, reject or accept an invitation. Can a person refuse or reject an invitation to Islam? How does a *dā‘iyah* relate to a person who rejects the invitation or when the invitee becomes hostile and abusive? When the invitation is rejected, what relationship is allowed to exist between the inviter and the invitee? What approach is to be used in *da‘wah*?

It is essential to look at how the Qur’ān elucidates certain terms and concepts that has a bearing on *da‘wah*. A few verses from the Qur’ān and the authentic *aḥādīth* (narrative reports of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muḥammad) will provide an overall view of the relationship before and after inviting a person to Islam, the methodology and social responsibilities. In as much as the Qur’ān uses specific words, phrases and terminology it is also specific about who is being addressed.

¹² The practice, statements of Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace)

¹³ A person engaged in *da‘wah*; pl. *du‘āh*

¹⁴ صلى الله عليه وسلم - God bless him and grant him peace

Believers: believing men / believing women, Muslims, Muslim women / Muslim men, Muslim community / global community; Christians, Jews, Sabians, the community of a Prophet, people in general.

Every person, whatever her or his belief is a *khalīfah* or representative or deputy of Allāh (*Al-Baqarah* 2:30); “and the promise of (spiritual) well-being of all humans who heed God’s guidance” (Stowasser 1994:27). Those who reject the message of Islam will be held accountable by God. However, *every* person lives by the will and mercy of Allāh who has allowed freedom of expression and worship even where the expression of such freedom goes against the fundamental Islamic belief of *tawhīd* or the oneness of Allāh to which all Prophets invited people. And, *every* person is treated justly for her or his action. The following verses of the Qur’ān confirms that all people are invited to submit themselves to Allāh but are granted the freedom to choose one’s faith; and, if a person does not accept Islam, justice, reward and mercy is not denied.

“Most certainly those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, anyone who believes in God and the Last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, neither shall they grieve” (*Al-Baqarah* 2:63).

“There is no coercion in religion. The right way has become distinct from error; whoever rejects evil and believes in God has grasped the most reliable handle (of faith) that never breaks. And God hears and knows all things” (*Al-Baqarah* 2:256).

“If it had been your Sustainer’s will, all who inhabit the earth would have believed, all of them! Will you (O Muḥammad), then compel people (against their will) to believe?” (*Al-Baqarah* 2:256).

“And (continue to) remind; for reminding certainly will benefit the believers” (*Al-Dhāriyāt* 51:55).

“Therefore remind them (O Muḥammad), for you are tasked to only exhort. You cannot compel them to believe. (*Al-Ghāshiyah* 88:21-22).

“And there are among people those who worship others besides God, whom they love as they should love God. But, those who believe are overflowing in their love for God. If only the unjust could see, behold, they would see the Penalty; that all power belongs to God, and God will strongly enforce the Penalty” (*Al-Baqarah* 2:165).

“God chooses for His mercy anyone whom He pleases and God possesses immeasurably enormous bounty and grace” (*Āl-‘Imrān* 3:74).

“...and God intends no injustice to any of His creation” (*Āl-‘Imrān* 3:108; also *Al-An‘ām* 6:131-132).

“Say: ‘I am forbidden to worship those whom you invoke besides God.’ Say: ‘I do not follow your vain desires, for then I would indeed have gone astray and I would not be one of the rightly guided’ ” (*Al-An‘ām* 6:56).

“Those whom God intends to guide, - such a person’s bosom is opened wide to surrendering one’s self willingly (to God); whomsoever God intends to leave straying, such a person’s bosom is left closed and constricted, as if such a person was climbing upwards to the skies. Thus, does God inflict penalty on those who refuse to believe” (*Al-An‘ām* 6:125).

“... for, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques wherein God’s name is abundantly remembered – would have been destroyed. And God will definitely help one who helps His cause, for truly, God is all-powerful, all-mighty” (*Al-Hajj* 22:40).

“On that Day when people will proceed in scattered groups that they may be shown their deeds; and so, whoever had done good equal to an atom’s weight shall see it then, and anyone who shall have done evil equal to an atom’s weight shall see it” (*Al-Zalzalah* 99:7-8).

The Qur’ān and *Sunnah* recognise diversity of belief with people constituting a single community: “All people are a single nation ...” (*Al-Baqarah* 2:213; also *Yūnus* 10:19). In spite of the diverse beliefs, creed and culture, and those who reject the message of monotheism, people are required to co-exist in harmony in a plural society or global village.

Narrated Jarīr bin ‘Abdullah Al-Bajalī: The Prophet said, “One who is not merciful to others, will not be treated mercifully” (Khan 1994).

Narrated ‘Amr bin Al-Aas: I heard the Prophet saying openly not secretly, “the family of so and so (i.e. Ṭālib) are not among my *auliya* (supporters and helpers). Most certainly, my *walī* (protector, supporter and helper) is Allāh and the righteous believing people. But they (that family) have kinship with me and I will be good and dutiful to them” (Khan 1994).

When the Prophet was asked to curse the polytheist, he said, “I have not been sent as one who curses; indeed, I have been sent only as a mercy” (Kandhlavi 1998:587).

“For, every community faces a direction of its own, of which God is the focal point. Therefore, strive with one another in doing good. Wherever you are, God will gather you all unto Himself; for verily God has the power to will anything” (*Al-Baqarah* 2:148).

“Say: ‘O my servants who believe, be ever conscious of your Sustainer! Good is the reward for those who persevere to do good in this world. God’s earth is spacious!’ Those who patiently persevere will truly receive their rewards in full, beyond all reckoning!” (*Al-Zumar* 39:10).

“Say: ‘O People of the earlier revelations! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we do not take human beings as lords and patrons other than God.’ And, if they then turn away, say: ‘bear witness that we are Muslims’ ” (*Āl-‘Imrān* 3:64).

Prophets and Messengers (God bless them and grant them peace) were raised from among their communities to guide, warn and invite people to believe in *tawhīd*, what is right and forbidding evil and to establish a just social order. Those who subscribe to their message similarly help each other in doing good deeds.

“And Messengers, We have mentioned to you previously and Messengers We have not mentioned to you, and God spoke directly to Moses.

Messengers (were sent) who gave good news as well as warnings, that people should have no plea against God after (the coming) of the Messengers; for God is All-Powerful, All-Wise” (*Al-Nisā’* 4:164-165).

“Say: ‘What thing is most weighty in evidence?’ Say: ‘God is witness between me and you; this Qur’ān has been revealed to me so that on its strength I might warn you and all whom it reaches. Can you possibly bear witness that besides God there are other deities?’ Say: ‘Nay, I cannot bear witness!’ Say: ‘But in truth He is the One God, and I truly am innocent of ascribing or joining others with Him’ ” (*Al-An‘ām* 6:19).

“Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures): in the Torah and the Gospel; for he enjoins them what is just and forbids them evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from impure things and releases them from their heavy burdens and removes from them the shackles that are upon them. So, it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him; it is they who will be successful” (*Al-A‘rāf* 7:157).

“The Believers, men and women, are protectors of one another: they enjoin the doing of good, and forbid evil, they observe regular prayers, practise regular charity, and obey God and his Apostle. On them will God bestow His mercy: for God is Exalted in power, the all Wise” (*Al-Tawbah* 9:71).

“By the Time (that passes by irretrievably through the ages), most certainly people are in loss, except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and advise in the mutual adherence to truth, and enjoin patience on each other in difficult times” (*Al-A‘şr* 103:1-3).

Respect must be shown to every one since each person is a dignified being (*Banī Isrā’īl* 17:70) and each person is a sanctified being (*Al-Mā'idah* 5:32; *Banī Isrā'īl*

17:33). The Prophets and Messengers were not insensitive, abusive or aggressive when they carried out their mission. They were kind, honest, forthright, compassionate, humane and unambiguous. The invitation is therefore undertaken with wisdom and beautiful teachings and debates, with kind words, forgiveness and a high standard of decorum.

“And do not argue with the people of earlier revelations, except in a most kindly manner; unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong, but (to such people) say, 'We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we surrender ourselves' ” (*Al-Ankabūt* 29:46).

Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) was asked to be patient and respect the dignity of those who harassed him:

“And patiently endure what people say, and avoid them with noble decorum” (*Al-Muzzammil* 73:10) and to leave Allāh to deal with the rejecters of the message of Islam (*Al-Muzzammil* 73:11-14).

The Qur’ān does not condemn people but their wrongful actions and does not condemn anyone by name except one person (Murad, no date). It recognises diversity (*Al-Mā'idah* 5:48), the equality of Prophethood (*Al-Nisā'* 4:150-1). The Qur'an does not demonise or condemn any religion; “it does not falsify any faith, Jewish, Christian or any other” (Engineer 2002). In the context of enmity towards and persecution of the Prophet and Muslims, they are informed by God that priests and monks, even though they did not accept the invitation to Islam, are humble and the closest in their expression of love towards the Muslims (*Al-Mā'idah* 5:82).

Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) invited people to Islam, corrected the behaviour of the Muslim and established a plural society where as head of state, he guaranteed and protected the right of the citizens, including Christians and Jews. *Da'wah* is therefore inviting to Islam, reminding Muslims to live the values of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and to engage in social and civic activities for the wellbeing of all people. Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) signed a contract with the citizens of Yathrib (Madīnah). He did not force anyone to accept Islam but guaranteed the right to freedom of religion and the rights of citizenship. He treated everyone with love and his invitation even to head of states was polite and dignified. He was compassionate to all people regardless of their attitude towards him and such compassion and love included animals.

“Tenderness of temperament is, of course, to be expected of the man, who is constantly reiterating that the path to God is by helping the orphans, relieving the needy and ransoming the slave. His sympathy and his love are not confined within narrow bounds, nor do they extend merely to his own fellow beings. His sympathy and his love embrace the whole of creation; the bird and the beast share in his pity. ‘Fear God,’ he has told his people, ‘with regard to animals, ride those that are fit to be ridden, and get off when they are tired. There is no beast on earth, nor bird that flies with its wings, but the same is a people like unto you-and unto Allah they shall all return.’ ” (Gaub 1962:183).

To summarise, a Muslim is required to invite others to Islam and remind fellow Muslims of their duty to Allāh and humanity. In expressing one's individuality through *tawḥīd* and adhering to it, a Muslim works with others to create a just society. Muslims engaged in *da'wah* have either taken cognisance of the above or have disregarded some of the principles. One can therefore group the different methodologies into the following broad categories with features of one category overlapping into the other category or categories.

3.5. Broad Categories of Methodologies

3.5.1 The Engagement through the Pen

Exchanging and clarifying Islamic beliefs, history and contemporary solutions by Muslim intellectuals. Within this approach are different “strategies” such as engaging in dialogues (Jamal Badawi), scriptural debates (Ahmed Deedat) and media specialists (Dadoo, main participant). The methodology of a dialogue differs substantially from person / group to person / group. Engineer’s (2002) dialogue is with Muslims and the “external other” without any attempt to influence or convert. Peace and harmonious relationship is paramount as these are based on the concept of *tawḥīd* (Oneness of Allāh), an all-inclusive concept that on a sociological level, results in the unity of humankind. Badawi, Murad and Engineer while their methodologies differ, believe in a plural society.

3.5.2. The Internal Reformers

Individuals or groups who believe that Muslims must practice Islam correctly so that their behaviour itself is a source of invitation to accept Islam. Each group has its own interpretation and worldview of “correctness”.

3.5.3. Internal-External Reformers

The Ṣūfīs who emphasise strong spiritual development and also have an all-inclusive approach in their interaction with people of other faiths and beliefs. The “aggressive” groups who aim to reform Muslims, the wider society and the world and the methodology at the extreme, use militant strategies. Militancy is justified on the basis of an Islamic society versus *kufṛ* (disbelief of God), rejecting any notion of a plural society.

3.5.4. The Grassroots Reformers

The research participants are involved in the narrow definition, concept and methods of *da‘wah* as well as *da‘wah* that tenders to the need of the people whether they are Muslims or chose not to be. They are engaged in a programme of selfless struggle for spiritual upliftment, social justice and economic

egalitarianism. They base their commitment firmly on the belief that the Qur'ān requires one to acknowledge that there is only one Creator, one humankind with divergent views living on an expansive earth that can cater for everyone's needs through collective sharing, nurturing and protecting the earth's resources and ecosystem.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVES AND LIVE HISTORY AS A VEHICLE FOR RESEARCH

“Research work can have profound social and political implications. As our moral responsibilities develop in our thinking, and as we progress in our careers, we find ourselves deeply expressing and considering, more than before, the moral dimensions and consequences of our work. In this regard, and because of the intimate relations typical of this work, life history researchers may be in a unique position to express morally bound action.”

Cole and Knowles (2001:47)

4.1. Introduction

Narrative based research and life history in context research methodology as opposed to using quantitative or statistical research was an appropriate methodology in this study. It was not possible to measure statically the work of the interviewees / research participants. This would have removed their integrity as human beings: “their lives, their experiences, their qualities as distinct human beings would have been lost by being reduced to bits of statistical information (Schostak 2005).

The quantitative research method in this study would not have allowed for a meaningful interpretation and discussion of the information of the lives of the participants. A set of questions would have elicited “incomplete” responses, and interpreting these would not have provided any valuable information; any depth into the lives of the participants. The structured questionnaire would have taken the following format: -

Do you work with a disadvantaged community? Yes [] No []

How do you help an individual or the community? (please tick the appropriate block)

- a) Food
- b) Clothing
- c) Money
- d) empowerment
- e) Other

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Please specify _____

Do you get support from Muslim scholars? Yes [] No []

Describe briefly your achievement.

What are your future plans?

- a) Retire
- b) Expand your work
- c) close down the organisation
- d) Other

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Please specify _____

How do you see yourself contributing towards reconstruction of the nascent South African democratic society?

How does a researcher analyse, interpret and discuss these responses? What significant contribution would be made to research if one were to interpret the data as follows?

Three women indicated that they did not get support from the 'ulamā', one stated that she would be retiring in two years (because of age, frustration or financial constraints?). All the subjects said that they had attained great success: 20% had converted about 500 people, 35% had 250 people embrace Islam and 45% between 150 to 200. Of the total converts, 45% received skills training, 30% were not interested in learning any skill and 25% entered tertiary institutions or completed a degree.

Two subjects felt that teaching life skills were the main contribution towards building a strong democracy while three said that family values they imparted to their students were the highlights of their achievements.

“On its own, research whose findings can be expressed in mathematical terms is unlikely to be sophisticated enough to sufficiently accommodate and account for the myriad differences that are involved” (Goodson and Sikes, 2001: x).

4.2. Narratives and Real Context of Lives

This study therefore had to be grounded in conversation (Cole 1991) so that the research interview was “conversational” not the business-like transaction” (Muchmore 2005) a quantitative approach would have generated. The interview itself would yield its own set of relevant questions in the journey of recording the life history research of each participant. This approach was sure to give rise to experiential information rather than a few “facts”; a window opening into aspects of the participants’ lives. They themselves opening the windows rather than the researcher rubbing his fingers in an attempt to demystify a single frosted pane.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) wrote: “People live stories, and in the telling of their stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities.”

Narratives allowed for the real context of lives of the interviewees and since narratives always refers to other contents and other narratives (Schostak 2005) it made it possible to understand and analyse their lives within a holistic framework; the context, symbolic and material. It provided a basis for a dialogue between the researcher and the participants to hear their stories in their own terms, from their perspectives (Jack 1999).

Certainly, their stories, any person’s, can never be exactly the way it occurred, experienced and lived. “Each stage in the telling, hearing and re-presenting of life stories and the work that is done in turning them into life histories can be seen as taking the account that bit further away from the life as lived. It can never be possible to tell, capture or present an actual life: any attempt will be mediated by language and by the interpretative frames through which it is both presented and made sense of” (Goodson and Sikes 2001:109).

What these interviews revealed is that each person through her live history placed in context has her own reality. In a sense, each person’s reality “competes” with and challenges the realities of society, patriarchy and the ‘*ulamā*’, classical, conservatives, extremists and modernists who present their realities as the only reality. It competed with and challenged the narrow conventional definition of *da‘wah* and the methodologies used.

It was difficult to remain an “outsider” during the interviews, to hold back participation. While allowing the research, the researcher and researched to interact, each in its, his and her own domain, a degree of objectivity underscored

each interview and the subsequent rendition of the field text. This close relationship between the participants and researcher essentially contributed to a more meaningful research. Plummer (2001) maintains that a close and intimate relationship with the subject is integral to life history research, more than any other research methodology. Cole and Knowles (2001) provide further clarity on such a relationship, “when we talk of care, sensitivity, and respect we are not talking about the theoretical; we are talking about the practical, the relational, and the very personal elements of a relationship between two human beings. We maintain that only theorizing about these or any element of the researching process has limited value. Rather, these are qualities that must be infused into the relationship” (p 43).

The fact that most of the participants were from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as was the researcher, had similar experiences, faced similar challenges, had similar stories to be told, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) put it, “storied lives on storied landscapes,” did not compromise this study. It required tremendous effort to listen and record the stories, how each interviewee composed her life, redefined it and of those she came into contact with, and how her life underwent redefinition and changes through interactions with the people she came into contact and worked with.

No researcher however, can claim neutrality since no one lives outside politics, religion and social construction. Feminists, male and feminist critics of feminism, critics of *da'wah* workers, of Muslim scholars, of researchers- all share one thing, they are all social beings. They use methods that are, for example, pro or anti racism, sexism, religion, politics, ethnocentrism, discrimination, fanaticism and pacifism. Mojab (2000) on methodologists states that even those of diverse persuasions, especially qualitative researchers acknowledge that “raw data” (scientific and non scientific facts) and direct experiences are mediated by one's subjectivity.

It would be dishonest therefore to claim “scientific objectivity”, especially in this research study. It was also necessary at the outset to disclose the aims and objectives of the research to the research participants, and when occasioned, to state my own views. “For us, as life history researchers, to claim objectivity, or to infer that we do not hold fast to particular personal theories about the human condition, is to act in bad faith with those whom we research. Such claims or inferences are neither morally responsible nor intellectually possible in work that delves onto humans’ lives. The professional is the personal. Researchers are first and foremost human. Does the obvious need stating?” (Cole and Knowles 2001:47).

4.3. Research Participants

The researcher knew four research participants – a pre-existing “friendship” spanning up to 30 years in the case of three of the participants. Three women had lost their husbands about the time he registered for his studies. He got to know two of the deceased well over the years and from the interviews it emerged that the deceased were companions who supported their wives, believing in their work and in them as individuals. The researcher met the participants on numerous occasions, sharing their concerns, getting a glimpse of the work they do and the hardships they experienced. Yet, the interview with each participant required the development of trust and confidence in tandem with cordial rapport.

While it was not difficult to establish a connection, the researcher was aware of several factors:-

- ❑ First, the researcher was a man, a Muslim man, asking questions about the life history in context of Muslim women.
- ❑ Second, the focus of the study was *da‘wah* which in itself was the domain of Muslim men with hermeneutic methodologies and orthopraxic set of laws developed by them.

- ❑ Third, whose “voice” and whose “silence” was he recording? Was it the voice of the participants that was going to be articulated or his? In investigating the “silence”, was he categorising the participants as the oppressed? Is this how each participant saw herself or was this the researcher’s preconceived views and his interpretation of the interviews? Opie (1992, cited in Wray-Bliss 2004, 104) sums up this crucial challenge by stating, “such a possibility raises the risk that the researcher appropriates the researched’s voice to reproduce his own particular critical ideology” or, appropriating to existing theories (Jack 1999).

The researcher did not know whether the research participants held such notions even though he constantly reminded himself of these concerns. In fact, the interviews progressed gently, gaining its own momentum of confidence, generating its own questions and developing trust through feedback and seeking of clarity on matters they were involved in. There were times he saw a glint in the participants’ eyes as they related their stories. He saw tears, felt their pain, shared their laughter, observed the tremendous passion they exuded for their “calling” or work and identified with the immense hope and enormous strength they displayed. It is what Jack (1999) refers to open listening, where we are attentive to how we are affected by the participant and her manner of relating it.

The researcher could relate with depth to what Cole and Knowles (2001) expressed of the mutual respect in engaging one self with the participant and the empathetic feelings: “This is not what we mean when we talk about care, sensitivity and respect. These qualities cannot be prescribed, strictly controlled, or intellectually applied; they must be authentically felt and lived. They emerge from engaging with self and other in mutually respectful ways. They reflect, perhaps always, the underlying self-applied principles that govern and guide a life. They are ethically imperative yet not ethically prescriptive. They are learned at a most fundamental level of human existence” (p 44).

In several instances, the researcher returned photographs having made extra copies (including colour copies) and even laminated these. These were done at the end of the interviews where the element of reciprocity or subtle manipulation was not the reason. It was a supportive gesture, and act of kindness, knowing the meagre resources of the participants. It was also one of many ways of saying that they were not mere subjects. Their willingness to talk, share vital information and allow him to take possession of precious documents - that he kept for several weeks, showed their trust in him. Yet, he also had to reflect again and again, that the interviews must be represented as research notwithstanding the relationship that developed between the researcher and the researched participants. As Goodson and Sikes (2001) put it, "This is not to say friendships cannot develop, but such friendships are separate and not usual, not least because frequently, as Martyn Hammersley indicates: 'What is involved in the process of self-disclosure [when used as a research strategy] is the presentation of those aspects of ones self and life that provide a bridge for building relationships with participants, and the suppression of those which constitute a possible barrier'" (p 95)."

4.4. Researcher

The researcher's views based on his own interpretation of the Qur'ān and authentic *Sunnah* shaped his understanding of and empathy for women for the injustice and oppression they have to endure. Such views evoked admiration for women who pursued careers with dignity and equanimity despite the hostile autocratic society. Again, he had to be mindful of *his* views, *his* understanding and *his* empathy and exercise caution not to replace the experiences of the participants, their struggle, criticisms, their voices and identities with his. He had to be disciplined not to superimpose his critical assessment of their silent voices that were being researched. LeCompte (1993 cited in Wray-Bliss 2004:104) observes, "by the very act in engaging in critical, emancipatory, empowering research, researchers take a particular ethical stance towards their informants, defining them as disempowered or oppressed, regardless of how the informants

define themselves.” I had to respect each participant’s feelings and “to honour her integrity and privacy and respect any stated preference not to speak about certain issues” (Jack 1999:3).

On several occasions each participant contacted the researcher having remembered something that they believed was important for his research, to give him photographs, to invite him to a function directly linked to their work or meet or even interview a student of theirs. It was advice and on-going interaction (Orr and Friesan 1999) between us that engendered persuasive trust. This in turn led to more insight as more stories unfolded. It was therefore not difficult to get the participants’ consent to have their storied lives as recorded and interpreted by the researcher to be validated by them (Gates, cited in Cole and Knowles 2001:155).

Several other difficulties he faced as a researcher were the tendency to provide support, the reluctance to break ties after the interviews and to ask questions in certain instances regarding apparent inconsistencies and anomalies in the stories told. The use of the phrase “non-Muslims” like the misinterpretations of the Islamic texts presented a dilemma, whether to correct the participants or to remain silent. In the transcriptions of the interview, there was a tendency to re-state the phrase “non-Muslims”. This would have meant substituting the researcher’s voice with theirs, superimposing his views and acting dishonestly. The researcher reminded himself of the methodology he had chosen and of Allāh’s Qur’anic command to act justly even if were against one’s self (*Al-Nisā’* 4:135) to render back trust (*Al-Nisā’* 4:58) and that every person will be confronted with her or his actions, good and bad, in the hereafter (*Āl-‘Imrān* 3:30).

The other major challenge was to provide a woman’s view through her perspective, her reality rather than read into the interviews a subjective rendition of the criticism against established patriarchal views, the methodology used in *da‘wah* and the different and divergent views by critiques of researchers involved in qualitative research. The differences within the social sciences as a whole are

no different from the struggles that exist among scholars dealing with feminism, patriarchy or Islam. According to Mojab (1997) “theoretical and methodological struggles are prominent in all disciplines especially in feminist studies” (p 6). As for patriarchal interpretation, it is not theologically determined but by the historical and cultural contexts (Roald. 1998). “...that just as there is no universal interpretation of Islam, there is no universal system of patriarchy” (El-Solh and Mabro 1994:4).

Marsot (1996) states that religion sets out guidelines for society to follow. “How society applies and interprets these guidelines is a function of economics, politics, social behaviour, demographics and culture; for these elements determine religious interpretations, otherwise how would we explain the different treatment of women at different epochs?” (p 33-34).

4.5. The Research Process

What was clearly evident as the data and information were recorded –stories lived and stories told, subsequent interviews with the same interviewee revealed changes and additions to the current storied lives. Each person’s life is in constant state of change, even of the most inactive life, and here were individuals who were actively involved in people’s lives, in their own, that of the communities and society as a whole. The changes and additions were not an alteration or modification of what was already told but what had happened between the intervals of the interviews. The periods between the intervals were by the nature of their work vigorous and dynamic.

The researcher intended using a tape recorder so that the field text could be later transcribed but he abandoned this method of inquiry during the initial interviews by opting to write down answers and responses to questions asked during the face to face interviews. This ensured spontaneity and took away anxiety, at least from what he could observe and gauge. A tape recorder would have heightened anxiety and would have contributed to the distraction of a mechanical device; yielding

guarded or stilted responses. This method also facilitated participation as he asked questions and questions of clarity that resulted in a dynamic research, researcher and researched interactions a tape recorder would have not have allowed or captured. Sessions were eventually recorded and the reaction to a tape recorder / digital recorder is discussed in part two.

The field notes were carefully written during the interviews and subsequently typed and where applicable, meticulously transcribed, avoiding reconstructing or reinterpreting the storied lives of the participants. These were then forwarded to the interviewees for their perusal and comments. They were returned absolutely unchanged except perhaps a spelling error or a date incorrectly captured. In one instance, the name of the body of Muslim scholars was deleted.

The interviews and interaction enhanced the researcher's own knowledge and also provided insight, to some extent, into the lives of the participants. Knowing about someone's life places one in a position of "power" and the researcher had to be guarded since "knowledge is power and knowing something about someone puts the researcher into a potentially powerful situation" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:91). How the researcher received the information, what he ought not to do with it and how to use it was a challenge. It was critical to distinguish between power and being empowered, between able to control and to be in a powerful position. He preferred to be humbled and enriched by the useful knowledge obtained. "Learning how someone else has dealt with the situations that we face can be extremely empowering because it provides a model, a way to proceed, which we can adopt, adapt or reject" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:101).

4.6. Narratives and Life History Research

How does this research differ from the growing critique of Muslim men and their interpretations of Islam? Feminists, modernists and a whole range of critics both inside and outside the *ummah* have written about "similar" topics, or so it would appear from a cursory glance. This research aims to look at the life history of the

participants in context, how their lives are lived, the relationship between life and context, the complexities involved, and the consequences that follow from the choices and decisions they make; consequences for the people they work with, their families, the *ummah* and the South African society. How does this impact on the lives of Muslim women, their contribution in the reconstructing not only of their lives but of South African society? How the *ummah* is affected and how Muslim women and their realities of Islam, of men and theirs are understood by others?

Cole and Knowles (2001) reflected this succinctly when they stated that “every in-depth exploration of an individual life-in context brings us that much closer to understanding the complexities of lives in communities” (p 11). Such understanding includes complexities of any person’s life and that of the *ummah*, which is made up of different and differing communities represented by a myriad of Muslims that result in many “Islams” and many realities that are denied or ignored by the ‘*ulamā*, Muslims and people in general.

Life history research was therefore the most appropriate methodology to gain an insight to the lives lived and re-lived by the participants on, between and beneath the “fault lines” created by men. Narratives would have captured as a still camera would, a narrow aspect of an individual’s life. Life history enabled to zoom in and out, to focus at different angles to give a kaleidoscope of images, both still shots and moving footages of the individual participants within a broad context.

We can better understand Muslim women’s struggle, difficulties, challenges and the hurdles they overcome or need to, by looking at the lives of the research participants in context. Initially it was intended to understand the lives of the participants through narratives. The limitation of the narrative method was that their lives, as they lived it, their space and time, the relationships: cultural, religious, economic and social- within the context of their activities as entrepreneurs and *da’wah* workers, could not be understood within an individual

method of enquiry. Their life history in context therefore provided a more comprehensive method. "... life stories and life histories can help people to understand their own and others lives, can validate choices, lifestyles and ways of being; can show how others have dealt with similar experiences, and so on" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:110).

It also became necessary that the researcher would have to engage the participants in more than one interview. He had some advantages in that he knew four participants, as mentioned previously. An advantage, because this was about a researcher who was a male who, in context, brought with it "baggage" perhaps in the minds of the participants. No matter how he empathised or genuinely identified with their difficulties, there were limitations, the most significant being the fact that he was not a woman and ever so careful not to put pressure to get information he needed to validate his research.

"As a researcher, one needs to stand or sit back, assess the situation, and make some decisions ... about how far to push [the participant to provide] the kind of information that is really going to inform the researcher ... There is, on the one hand, the need to respect the individual and to be sensitive to the individual's behaviour in relation to self-disclosure. And [there is the need to] allow time [for the] relationship to [form] and trust [to develop] so that over time, perhaps more self-disclosure will take place" (Ardra cited in Cole and Knowles 2001:38).

4.7. Secondary Research Participants

Later, it occurred to the researcher that the interviews with students of the research participants, those who adopted Islam or were assisted (e.g. refugees) would present a better understanding of the lives in transition. An interview with each student may reveal how they interfaced with society and how they may have contributed to changing the lives of people they came into contact with, including their teachers. The researcher was acutely aware that each interview may

introduce an element that would better inform his own worldview and challenge even his understanding of Islam, of women, men and children.

The interviews with Shenaaz Muslim, for example, showed how students interact with their teacher and mentor, have their own vision, are not blind followers and breathe new life into an established order. The interviews with the secondary participants also supported the knowledge imparted to them from the main participants or the caring relationships created through the *da'wah* activities in reconstructing the fragile democracy. These are discussed later after the contextualisation of the role and struggle of women in a patriarchal society in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN IN A PATRIARCHAL WORLD

And their Lord has accepted of them, and answered them, "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any one of you, male or female: ..."
Āl-‘Imrān 3:195

"What role do hadith play in daily life? My consultants said that the uneducated do not have much knowledge of the hadith but do what the ulama tell them"
Bennett (1998:198)

5.1. Introduction

This chapter looks at women in South Africa, the Qur’anic and *Sunnah* definition of women and how these differ from the definitions of women by men, jurists (classical, modern and post-modern), and feminists”. It looks at South African Muslim women as part of a “minority” with the research participants situated in all these contexts through their interconnectedness. Overall, there is a critical discussion about the formulation of the *Shari’ah* by Muslim jurists, necessary in the context of this research dissertation and that also hopes to contribute to the genre of debate. It is envisaged that some of the solutions the *ummah* could explore and pursue or is being pursued but with no tangible results at this point, include: -

- the need for consensus for establishing philosophy / philosophies and methodology / methodologies of *fiqh*
- Recognition that diversity exists and through the philosophy and methodology, diverse opinions, validated by the Qur’ān and authentic *Sunnah*, co-exists to strengthen the citizenship of Muslims of a country.

As for feminism, there are different schools that include western, secularists, Islamists and anti-Islamists, *Sunnī* and *Shī'ah*. Muslim women are not preoccupied with the *Sunnī-Shī'ah* divide as much as being all inclusive and united, notwithstanding the nuances in their strategies. This united voice is beginning to resonate through the global women's forum. This does not mean that women are not aware, differentiate, debate or critique their different approaches, methodologies and their worldviews. Jordan, O'Meara and Roy (2004) refer to Islamic feminism emerging as part of the Third World feminist movement. The latter defining a new role for feminism¹⁵ as opposed to Western feminists who espouse Eurocentric ideals and realities, with great emphasis upon male values; the male equated to the human being. Muslim women activists who have diverged from Western feminists have developed "their own perspective rooted in the faith and values of Islam, and they have been more effective precisely because of that" (Robinson 2004:22).

According to Haddad (1998), "Muslims increasingly challenge the assumption that the Western experience is the only legitimate analytical framework for assessing the role of women, or that the Western family must serve as the universal model. Many have decided that Western values are to be avoided at any cost" (p 23). The Islamic feminist movement has therefore formed two camps, the one operating, or existing within an Islamic framework and the other outside, with a secularist methodology. Despite the divergent approaches, even within these movements, a universal solidarity is developing, as Riffat Hassan maintains, "I believe that it is possible for persons of different religious, ideological or philosophical perspectives to work together in pursuit of the common good" (Hassan 2002b:14).

In South Africa, Islamic feminism is considered a recent development with vocal public expressions in the 1990s (Bux 2004; Jeena 2001). For Bux (2001:66)

¹⁵ In Nigeria, for example, social work, *sufism* (Islamic mysticism) and Qur'anic exegesis have been intertwined within the discourses of the Federation of Muslim Women Association to address and advance education, self-esteem and challenge western stereotyping (Strobel 1995).

feminism is a religious female and for Jeena (2006:9) it is the struggle of women (and men) for the emancipation of women through an ideology based on the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* that provides the ideals for gender relationships that enables the transformation and restructuring of society. There are also activists and academics like Asma Barlas and Amina Wadud who do not see themselves as feminists.

Barlas (2003) and Wadud (1999) reject a feminist identity of their critique of the patriarchal methodology and hermetic interpretation of the Islamic text. Shaikh (2003) in her analysis of the feminists debate and development in contemporary global context, sees “feminist” as descriptive of Muslim women’s engagement to actively transform masculinist social structures based on their commitment to Islam and not an attack on Islam and Muslim culture. She believes that Islamic feminists have redefined feminist discourses allowing for an approach that is heterogonous, recognising the particularity of context and the multiple identities of women.

It is beyond the scope of this research to examine the various movements and debates.

5.2. South African Women

The challenges facing women in South Africa and in the global village are many. For one, in the South African context a woman needs to see herself as an African. Second, she needs to challenge the stereotyped view that she is born to be subservient to men. Third, she needs to disregard the roles relegated to her by men. Fourth, she needs to go beyond child rearing to community healing in her role as an educator to empower others to integrate them into the new tapestry of cultures. These are but some of the challenges, the major challenge however, for all South Africans, for all Africans is “to decolonize the mind” (Shuda and Mauer, 2002).

Decolonising must also include eliminating from the psyche the concept of being a “South African-Other” or the “Other- South African”. The notion of being a South African of European decent, South African-Indian / Indian-South African or South African-Malay / Malay-South African is still very much part of the South African culture. This attitude together with the conservatism and patriarchy of Islam as the “right way” has slowed down the growth of Islam although Muslims played an active critical role in shaping South African politics and society since the seventeenth century.

The first group of Muslims landed as slaves (1652) at Table Bay in the Cape (Western Cape), others were brought to Natal about two hundred years later as indentured labourers (1860, 1868, 1874-1911), while the merchants or passenger Muslims came to Natal in 1870. As a minority, Muslims from India who settled in the provinces of Natal (KwaZulu Natal) and Transvaal (Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces) remained a closed community, not being assimilated into the dominant indigenous African culture. In 1873 and 1880 five hundred freed slaves, the Zanzibaris were brought to Durban (Esack 1997) which to this day “constitutes the smallest minority in South Africa,” (Mohamed 1998:1).

However, there were those who responded to the needs of people, among them were Shaykh Allie Vulle Aḥmad (Badsha Peer) who arrived with the first group of indentured labourers and Shaykh Ṣūfī Ṣāḥib who arrived in 1895. Both men attended to the spiritual needs of the Muslims, with Ṣūfī Ṣāḥib working with the poor, sick and the orphans and having mosques built throughout the colony (Khan 2001; Naidoo 2001).

The Muslims in the Cape on the other hand, intermarried (Dadoo 2003), propagated Islam and provided a vibrant alternative to the oppressive conditions of colonialism (Mason 1999). According to Mahida (1993) the first Muslims arrived in South Africa in 1652 while Naude (1992) and Khan (2001) provides 1658 as the date of the first free Muslims. The Mardyckers from Ambonya

(Moluccas) were free Muslims brought by the Dutch to secure their settlement (Meiring 2003). Then followed the freedom fighters who were exiled to the Cape, Walker (1990) indicates that the exiled Malay prisoners were brought into the country in 1667. These dates, in any event, show the entry of Islam to be in the mid 1600s and Muslims have therefore become an integral part of South Africa spanning about 350 years, having contributed to the socio-economic, religious and political dimensions. They enriched the South African society coming “from diverse regions of the world, each representing a distinct culture” (Dangor 1997:141).

Mason (1999) provides an objective analysis of the pivotal role of the Cape Muslims whose numbers grew from 1000 between the 17th and 18th centuries to 3000 in 1820 to 6400 in 1840, comprising one third of the city’s “coloured” population. Most “coloured” converts were slaves, free blacks, Prize Negroes, Khoi-khoi and ex-slaves of Asian and African descent. Whereas white colonialism practiced religious exclusivism; exploited, oppressed and degraded slaves; took away their rights and dignity as human beings and of the local blacks, Islam provided social and spiritual resurrection.

The oppressed, marginalised by the settler society, became one with fellow Muslims constituting a legitimate society regardless of race, class, status or ancestry. Dadoo (2003) states that Islam spread rapidly because of education, literacy, conversion, adoption, intermarriage and manumitting slaves. Islam therefore as practiced and expressed by the Cape Muslims “provided enslaved and oppressed converts with a way of understanding the secular world, of judging it, and of living with a measure of dignity within it” (Mason 1999: 18).

In the twentieth century, the struggle to change the political landscape of colonialism and apartheid brought together Muslim activists from the entire country as South Africans to end oppression. The political activists including Muslim activists suffered tremendously. These included (religious) scholars who

participated in the active resistance. Maulvi Cachalia and Maulvi Ismail Saloojee together with Yusuf Dadoo (d. 1983) transformed the Indian congresses into a mass based organisation (Meiring 2003, Dangor 2003). Amina Cachalia, Fatima Meer, Ebrahim Docrat, among others, as activists faced banning orders and detentions, confining them to their homes for many years.

Some like Suliman Saloojee (d. 1964), Imām Haroun (d. 1969), Ahmed Timol (d. 1971) and Dr. Ahmed Haffeejee (d. 1977) were killed in detention and Rick Turner (d. 1978) was assassinated. “Second, the South African Islamic community, despite its small numbers (504,000 members in 1996), produced some heroic and creative figures. Imām Abdullah Haron, a progressive imām, youth worker, and well-known preacher, was killed by the South African police in 1969. He became a martyr alongside Steve Biko” (Quinn and Quinn 2003:23).

In Education, Muslims contributed to schools and tertiary institutions. Kritzing (in Walker 1990) believes that the 1976 Soweto black youth uprising ushered in the fastest growth of Islam in the black community and according to Walker (1990), spreading in the 1980s to urban areas. Yet, in spite of the many contributions, and the many opportunities to spread the message of Islam, there exists the “Others and us” divide with Muslims limited in the space they have created. For Esack (1997) it is “a religious exclusivism, denying the potential for virtue in non-Islam,” (p 40). Muslims still constitute a small minority and in post-apartheid South Africa (from 1994) face challenges in an ever-increasing democratised state with its emphasis on human rights, non-sexism, gender and economic equality and empowerment.

As a minority, Muslims strive to protect their Islamic identity and values as a religious community (Nadvi 1989) without prejudice to their political identity with their national societies (Azzam 1980). Where the majority / dominant group in a society is secular, it tries to assimilate the minority through persistent education and ideological indoctrination (Brohi 1980). “The challenge for me as

well as the hundreds of other Muslim women madrasa educators is to transform the madrasa education system so as to contribute towards this goal of gradually educating our children to recognize the differences and to respect and accept the cultures and traditions of 'the other'. We therefore need to inculcate into our children, from a very young age, these values of respect for 'the other' as well as identifying the common values which are an important resource for nation building and the restructuring of the racially divided civil society in a new South Africa" (Omar 2000).

"The constitution writing process is well under way... As a tribute to the legions of women who navigated the path of fighting for justice before us, we ought to imprint in the supreme law of the land firm principles upholding the rights of women" President Mandela (1995). The African National Congress (ANC) led government has ensured a significant position for South African women in a democratic society, going beyond merely imprinting political enfranchisement and other rights.

At a political level the ANC's quota system to bring about gender equality has resulted in a large number of women parliamentarians: 32.8%, ranking the country eleventh globally and first in the Southern African Development Community (SABC News 2004). However, it was the women activists and women parliamentarians against difficult odds, who succeeded in the inclusion of equality clause, reproductive and socio-economic rights into the 1996 South African constitution (Hassim 2000).

Muslim women as South African citizens were given equal status to men for the first time in 1994 that changed their legal position of servitude and their individualities being subservient to men, colonial and Afrikaner ethos; as non-Christians and non-Whites, by the country's Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Bux (2004) sees the democratic changes providing for "the resurgence of Islamic religious ethos" (p 4). South

Africa as a secular state not only recognises religions but has established an active relationship of mutual concern between the state and religious organisations (Omar 1999).

For Islam to have a greater impact on the lives of South Africans, the '*ulamā*' centred worldview will have to change in a country that will not allow a conservative, male dominated gender apartheid. Gender equality is not a reality in many South African communities (Sprong 2002) and South African Muslim men have women-phobia according to Bux (2004) "that consistently seeks to exclude women from conferences, meetings, gatherings and even the mosques" (p 132).

Muslim women are not prepared to believe in the "pious but deadly lie" to borrow a phrase from Christina Landman (in Sprong 2002) that they are the weaker sex as portrayed in traditional¹⁶ Islam and therefore in need of "man's constant supervision, protection and domination" (Kusha 1990:58). Most men, because of their misconception of the Qur'anic references to women, e.g. that women should stay at home (*Al-Aḥzāb* 33:33), do not see the important role and responsibility of women as *da'wah* workers (Al-Hassan and Joan, no date).

Transforming constitutional guarantees into meaningful and relevant achievement is still a long way ahead for all stakeholders. It is not only the political will that is required but also people at grassroots level who have to make their contribution in transforming and nurturing the nascent democracy in different ways¹⁷. For Muslims and for all South Africans, there is the opportunity to reach out to all communities, to show respect 'to others' and to recognise each other's rights as a

¹⁶ Traditional Islam does not refer to the *Sunnah* but to "the sum total of other practices that entered Islam concomitant with Islam's process of internalization" (Kusha 1990:70).

¹⁷ The South African Constitutional Court dismissed Ahmed Raffik Omar's appeal to have a section of the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 that allowed for a suspended warrant against him to be declared unconstitutional and illegal. The decision in favour of his former wife Halima Joosab reaffirmed the right to protection for women who fear for their safety and health in an abusive marriage. (*Daily News* Tuesday November 8 2005).

South African of whatever religious or political affiliation. For Muslim women, there is a need to deconstruct the patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* that appear to be on a linear-like continuum, unchanged for almost fourteen centuries.

To understand the role of the research participants against the very brief background outlined above and other aspects referred to hereunder, it is necessary to contextualise their voices, their narratives. The participants are not mere subjects, in spite of the research interviews. They are Muslim women doing *da'wah* and their students, who having adopted Islam, live, breathe, act, interact, and express themselves in a patriarchal society; a society still divided. The social context is embedded in global patriarchy and the *ummah* is situated both in the global patriarchal ethos and “nurtured” within a male centred / dominated embryo.

The methodology used also historicises narratives of their experiences by identifying the socio-cultural and traditional interpretation, formulation and development of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) that has ‘masculinised’ the Qur’anic text, expressed and implemented as a male dominant worldview. What Mir-Hosseini refers to as “the non-historical approach to Islamic legal systems and a male-centred religious epistemology” (2001:3). Put another way, “...the major part of the epistemological crisis in Muslim jurisprudence over women’s issues is due to the blatant absence of female voice in Islamic legal discourse” (Sachedina 1999:4). However, just as women (middle class) are actively involved in social and political changes and discourses in the Middle East (Moghadam 1993) women in South Africa are moving towards the centre stage to effect changes.

5.3. The Qur'anic and *Sunnah* Definition of Women and the Contextualised Definitions of Jurists, “Feminists” and Women Activists Movements

5.3.1. Qur'ān and *Sunnah*

The Qur'ān cannot be reduced to narratives or a life history. It is neither a poem nor prose nor a record of the life of Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace). Yet, in the Qur'ān one will find narratives of an individual's life, including those of women. In fact, one of the chapters is titled “Women”; an entire chapter is named after the noble and pious Mary, the beloved mother of Jesus: ‘Maryam’, chapter 19 or other references to her, e.g., in the chapter of ‘The House of ‘Imran’, chapter 3. The wise and erudite lady, Bilqīs the queen of Sheba (*Al-Naml* 27:37-44) who had authority over her subjects, provides another example of a historical context of a woman's political leadership. The Qur'ān provides a wide context, a life history of the many Prophets (God bless them and grant them peace) and their communities.

It deals with the life history of the origin of life itself, of human life from a single soul (*nafs* –feminine gender) and its mate (*zawjahā*-masculine gender). The first verse of the chapter Women reads: “O People, be conscious of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul (*nafs*) and from it (for it) created its mate (*zawj* or, of the same kind)¹⁸ and from the two has spread a multitude of men and women” (*Al-Nisā*’ 4:1). It is a life history of a number of communities, their political history, social and moral progress or self-destruction. The Qur'ān is a guide that provides the different paths to the One Reality, allowing us the opportunity to reflect on the many examples given. It is also a record of embryological life, scientific enquiry into marine and other terrestrial lives.

¹⁸ According to Marsot (1996) the word *zawj* “accentuate the equality of both genders” (p 33). Wadud (1999) defines *zawj* as spouse, mate or group and states that conceptually it is neither masculine nor feminine and “is used in the Qur'an for plants (55:52) and animals (11:40), in additions to humans” (p 20).

The authentic *Sunnah* is replete with honour and status for women because the Qur'ān was personified by Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace). Esposito (1991) refers to the normative model behaviour of the Prophet and for Gibb the *aḥādīth* “serves as a mirror in which the growth and development of Islam as a way of life and the larger Islamic community are truly reflected...” (in Esposito 1991:82).

5.3.2. Qur'anic narratives of human history in context

The Qur'ān is God's revelation- not so much as revealing aspects of God, although this is part of it, as much as providing guidance. All of us through our own realities and the different paths we choose are given a map to achieve a successful, positive and self-fulfilling life. The Qur'ān draws our attention to be reflective by narrating the lives in context of certain people and communities. It challenges us to use our intellect critically (not to be passive recipients, even of Revelation), to be actively engaged in shaping our own reality and directing our own destiny. It informs us of the successes and failures of the past communities and the reasons thereto.

Since people live lives in a holistic framework, the Qur'ān outlines basic moral and ethical standards, both in context (of the time of Revelation) and for future generations. These include economic, political and social, familial and individual guidelines for harmonious interaction. It cuts across the human-made barriers of caste, creed, religion, geographical boundaries and even historical trajectories. The Qur'ān looks at narrative of human life history in context. In its wider approach, it looks at other lives and the interconnectedness between human life and an ever dynamic, creative meaningful, all loving Creator.

The Qur'ān and the life of the Prophet emphasise the need to respect all life and women are accorded great respect, their status is made equal before Allāh's laws with that of men. Women stand apart from and above the dogmatic beliefs of men and their society and there is no basis for the notion that men are the

custodians of women and Allāh's Revelation. Men do not have exclusive claim to being a *khalīfah*¹⁹ or Allāh's representative on earth (*Al-Baqarah* 2:30). Grammatically, the gender of the word *khalīfah* is feminine, and includes men and all people, irrespective of their beliefs (*Al-An'ām* 6:165; *Al-Naml* 27:62; *Al-Fāṭir* 35:39). The language of the Qur'ān regarding first creation is in fact gender-neutral (Eissa 1999) despite the gender implications of the nouns.

5.3.3. The struggle for confining the soul of women by classical and modern jurists

Unlike the orthodox '*ulamā*' and their orthopraxis in the mosque and public spaces, the Qur'anic text addresses itself to every person, women, men and children, considering each a dignified being. It recognises every individual's direct access to God. There is no priesthood in Islam but men continue to interpret the Qur'ān and have done so for approximately one thousand four hundred years, with masculine bias and "priestly" authority. "Growing up in an Islamic Sunni religious culture, one is frequently reminded by one's teachers that there is no church in Islam, and that no person, or set of persons, embodies God's Divine authority" (El Fadl 2001:9). For Jelloun (2002) what was specific about Islam as a great world civilisation and culture was the absence of priests, bishops, popes or any intermediaries between the believer and God.

The many laws derived from the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, by classical and modern jurists were the work of men, interpretation by men and implemented by men. One would be forgiven if one were to think that Islam is way of life by men for men based on Divine Revelation by a Creator who is a man. Hassan (1997) provides three theological assumptions for the patriarchal status of women that relates to Islam, Judaism and Christianity: ontologically, man was created first, second, woman caused the fall / expulsion from the garden of Eden and third, her existence is merely instrumental and not fundamental.

¹⁹ "regent, steward" (Bouma 1990:38); a successor, trustee, deputy, vicegerent (Abdel Haleem 2004).

When reading the Qur'ān and the authentic *Sunnah* outside the hermeneutic methodology of the conservative 'ulamā' reveals Islamic texts that speak to all creation. It is gender specific and the Revelation is from Allāh who is above gender discrimination, creed, caste or class and the recipient of the Revelation, Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) was instrumental in establishing a just social order. Barlas (2003) refers to the unreading of patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'ān that shows men and women to be different. "In fact," she argues, "as the Qur'ān makes clear, God shaped not only the language of Divine Discourse but also its context in light of women's concerns as they themselves expressed these during the process of revelation" (p 20).

Women know that they are different from men but that their difference in no way makes them inferior or denies them the right as dignified persons. Their difference does not give men the right to impose restrictions upon them. Men do not have the right nor are given the right to interpret the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* with gender bias and self acclaimed right to do so. "This is a Book, without doubt, for the guidance of those who are conscious of Allāh" (*Al-Baqarah* 2:2). Consciousness, fear of Allāh, fear being akin to love, piety and similar connotations emerge from the word "*muttaqī*" and is not confined to men. "Let there arise from among yourselves a group who will invite to what is right and forbid what is wrong, and, it is they who will be successful" (*Āl- 'Imrān* 3:104). Muslim scholars – men, interpret this verse as giving them [sole] authority to formulate laws, laws that often reduce the role of women to a glorified house wife, mother, sister, daughter. As Esposito (1998) confirms, "the status of women in Islam was profoundly affected not only by the fact that Islamic belief interacted with and was informed by diverse cultures, but also, and of equal importance, that the primary interpreters of Islamic law and tradition were men (religious scholars or *ulama*) from those cultures" (p xi-xii).

The poet Zia Gokulp summed up the treatment women are subjected to, in the following lines:

‘There is the woman, my mother, my sister, or my daughter: it is she who calls up the most sacred emotions from the depths of my life! There is my beloved, my sun, my moon and my star: it is she who makes me understand the poetry of life! How could the Holy Law of God regard these beautiful creatures as despicable beings? Surely there is an error in the interpretation of the Quran by the learned?

‘The foundation of the nation and the state is the family!

‘As long as the full worth of the woman is not realized, national life remains incomplete.

‘The upbringing of the family must correspond with justice:

‘Therefore equality is necessary in three things-in divorce, in separation, and in inheritance.

‘As long as the woman is counted half the man as regards inheritance and one-fourth of man in matrimony, neither the family nor the country will be elevated. For other rights we have opened national courts of justice;

‘The family, on the other hand, we have left in the hands of schools.

‘I do not know why we have left the woman in the lurch.

‘Does she not work for the land? Or, will she turn her needle into a sharp bayonet to tear off her right from our hands through a revolution?’ (Zia in Iqbal 1977: 161).

One cannot deny that Muslim women are not considered an independent individual with full rights. Amin (1863-1908) the Egyptian lawyer who championed the rights for women’s emancipation and who found support in his views from the grand *Muftī* Muḥammad Abdūh, states, “I do not think an objective reader will disagree when I say that a woman in the eyes of Muslims is an incomplete human being, or that a Muslim man thinks he has the right to dominate her or treat her accordingly: this is well attested” (Amin 1995:16).

5.3.4. Unlocking, Unblocking the doors of *Fiqh*

As we look through the corridors of history we need to focus not only on the epistemological interpretations of men but how these were influenced. Their interpretation was based on the assimilation of Islamic politics, *tafsīr* (Qur'anic interpretation / translation), history and culture of the Golden Age of Islam with the cross-cultural, trans-national and nondenominational ideologies of women of the Western Middle Ages. This led to the Qur'anic text to be confused with *tafsīr*, the latter being influenced by foreign culture and practices of the Middle Ages. Misogyny was one of the concepts that were assimilated into Islam, supposedly sanctioned by the Qur'ān (Barlas, 2003). It is not the Qur'anic text but cultural determinants that led to "discrimination against or maltreatment of women" (Horrie and Chippindale 2003:49).

The term *sharī'ah* is used frequently in the legal sense only after the 8th or 9th century *hijrah*. The *sharī'ah* evolved because of the changing circumstances but the conservative '*ulamā*' entrenched the concept of the *sharī'ah* being Divine in its totality and also being immutable. "Shari'ah is a situational not a transcendental law and must be creatively applied in the changed circumstances" (Engineer, 1992:9). Others like Audah (1978) is adamant that Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is not susceptible to change or substitution (p 24), is permanent (p 81) and that it is the ignorant and European educated Muslims that claim that Islamic law is derived "more from the views of the jurists than from the Qur'ān and the Traditions" (p 60).

Ibn Taymiyyah's (1268-1328) doctrine was that religious edicts (*aḥkām*) change according to changing times. Other scholars like Shāh Walīyullah (1702-1762) also held the view that *aḥkām* changes with circumstances and that the *Sharī'ah* is related or adapted to the nature of people and social changes. The '*ulamā*', according to Engineer (1992) are opposed to change when it relates to women's rights because of societies being male dominated. Yet the '*ulamā*' he argues, made changes, for instance, slavery was abolished even though the Qur'ān had

permitted it and the Prophet had not prohibited it. God's intention, recommendation, guidance and law (both normative and contextual) are not the same as men's interpretation that is usually based on prejudice.

As for the *Sunnah* relating to women, Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) was the champion of women's rights, reforming the prevailing conditions that allowed women to be treated as mere chattels, by recognising in law the right of women to inherit, the right to accept or refuse a marriage partner, the inalienable right to own property before, during and after marriage and to dispose of it as she chooses. He interacted with women who continued to maintain their independence in business and social affairs; consulted them in major decisions and showed them respect and accorded them utmost honour (Emerick 2002). In Africa, Strobel (1995) writes that Muslim law ensured basic rights and equality for women. "Indeed, Muslim women had greater legal rights than did married Western women in the nineteenth century, when a wife's legal identity was subsumed under her husband's" (p 109).

The Prophet instructed both women and men, female and male children to be treated equally with love and care. He made the acquisition of education mandatory on both male and female. His companions also championed the cause of women, treating them with dignity and respect. *Khalīfah* 'Umar who was the second political head of the Islamic state after the Prophet appointed a woman as a Minister during his rule (Yassine, 1984).²⁰

²⁰ Dangor (2001) refers to several women who were actively involved in education, government and politics: Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter lectured to his companions and was acclaimed for her knowledge of poetry, history and theology. Scholars and poets attended the Prophet's granddaughter Sukainah's literature and poetry "classes". Women excelled in medicine, music, literature, calligraphy and poetry as early as the 6th and 7th centuries. Shajarat al Darr in about 1249 defeated the French and captured King Louis and became the sultan of the Mamluk dynasty (Egypt) head of state and the arm forces. Arwa (queen Sayyidah) ruled the Yemeni Sulayhid dynasty for 40 years until her death in 1137. Several other prominent women are mentioned by Dangor. Sakr (undated) states that 'A'isha bint Sa'id ibn 'Abi Wāqas taught hadith to imām Mālik; Sayyida Nafisa, the Prophet's great grand daughter was imām Shāfi'ī's teacher. Khalīf 'Umar consulted with Shaffa whom he appointed as a market inspector.

“Islamic law makes no demand that women should confine themselves to household duties. In fact the early Muslim women were found in all walks of life. The first wife of the Prophet, mother of all his surviving children, was a businesswoman who hired him as an employee, and proposed marriage to him through a third party; women traded in the marketplace, and the Khalifah Umar, not normally noted for his liberal attitude to women, appointed a woman, Shaff'a Bint Abdullah, to supervise the market. Other women, like Laila al-Ghifariah, took part in battles, carrying water and nursing the wounded, some, like Suffiah bint Abdul Muttalib even fought and killed the enemies to protect themselves and the Prophet and like Umm Dhahhak bint Masoud were rewarded with booty in the same way as the men.

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari said that women can be appointed to a judicial position to adjudicate in all matters, although Abu Hanifah excluded them from such weighty decisions as those involving the serious punishments of hadd and qisas. Other jurists said that women could not be judges at all. The Qur'ān even speaks favourably of the Queen of Sheba and the way she consulted her advisors, who deferred to her good judgement on how to deal with the threat of invasion by the armies of Solomon...” (Prophet Muhammad: A Blessing for Mankind, 1998).

According to Hitti (1970) not much was recorded about the lives of the common people during the 'Abbasid period because the focus of Arab historians centred on the caliph's affairs and political happenings. A reconstruction from available source material shows that “the early 'Abbasid woman enjoyed the same measure of Home life liberty as her Umayyad sister; but toward the end of the tenth century, under the Buwayhids, the system of strict seclusion and absolute segregation of the sexes had become general. Not only do we read of women in the high circles of that early period achieving distinction and exercising influence in state affairs – such as al-Khayzuran, al-Mahdi's wife and al-Rashid's wife and al-Amin's mother; and Buran, al-Ma'mun's wife- but of Arab maidens going to war and commanding troops, composing poetry and competing with men in

literary pursuits or enlivening society with their wit, musical talent and vocal accomplishments. Such was ‘Ubaydah al-Tunburiyah (i.e. the pandore-lady), who won national fame in the days of al-Mu’tasim as a beauty, a singer and a musician” (p 333).

Women were also noted for taking active part in *aḥādīth*, with a great number having excelled in its transmission and its teaching. Outstanding historians and *muḥaddithūn* (compilers and scholars of *ḥādīth*) did not (or could not) ignore the *isnād* in which women held a significant position. Goldziher (1977) lists a number of women going back to women who were companions of the Prophet. Great Muslim historians and *muḥaddithūn* acknowledged women in their works, dedicated articles to them and travelled in search of women who taught *aḥādīth* and theology.

These included Abū Dharr of Harat; Abū Asākir (80 women in the chain of narrators were included in his work); ibn Khallikān; ibn Hajar al-Asqalānī and ibn Baṭṭūṭa. In Egypt, Goldziher says, “learned women gave ijazat to people listening to their lectures right up to the Ottoman conquest”; Imām Shāfi’ī attended the study group of Sayyida Nafisa in al Fustat in Egypt (the Ladies Islamic Circular 1980) he attended her classes even at the height of his fame ((El-Nimr, 1996). Karima bint Aḥmad holds the most eminent place in Bukhari’s collection of *aḥādīth* with “no transmitter of the Bukhari text could compete with her isnad” (Goldziher 1971: 366). Among the prominent Qur’anic scholars and small group of female imams was Umm Waraqa (Esposito 1998).

However, it is the legal science of *fiqh* with its own legal theories and methodology that has resulted in rules that are gender bias. The *Shari’ah* is God’s law as contained in the Qur’ān and practised by the Prophet but written onto it were laws by men who made extractions and extrapolations through *uṣūl al fiqh* (legal science) informed by contemporary socio-cultural and political norms of the *fuqahā’* (jurists). God does not discriminate and does not favour one gender

but treats all creations with love, compassion, justice and equality and Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) acted accordingly. In fact, all previous Prophets and Messengers (God bless them and grant them peace) acted under the guidance of the same Creator. “God created both men and women ‘for just purpose’ and that the relationship between them is one of equality, mutuality and cordiality” (Hassan 2002a:5).

Men in their application of legal theories and methodologies have discriminated and shown gender bias throughout history, ascribing to God or to God’s Messengers the superiority of men over women in the affairs of human life. They have enforced gendered roles because of their position in society, making Islam work from their perspectives, as (Shaikh 1997) puts it, “...those who are dominant in the Muslim community -those who hold the reigns of power” (p 5). “Islamic jurisprudence as an epistemology and as a methodology of inquiry has become dominated by authoritarian discourses” (El Fadl 2001:268). The imprint of the gendered roles, of a male superstructure, continues to be pervasive. The general belief is that the Islamic texts provide irrefutable evidence of the dissimilarity and hierarchical relationship between women and men (Hassan 1999). This superstructure according to Hassan is supported by a collective body of Jewish and Christian exegesis that most Muslims are unaware of.

Muslim jurists of the classical period, the Traditionalists like Abū Ḥanīfa, al Shafi’i, Malik and Ḥanbal and neo-Traditionalists of the early 20th century constructed and “de-constructed” Islamic law based on *their* interpretations of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. They were perceptive in not imposing their interpretations, as for instance, Imām Malik who did not allow Khalīfah al Maṣṣūr to adopt his al Muwaṭṭa’ as the uniform law because of different and diverse justice tradition that represented divine truth without an exclusive claim (El Fadl 2001). Their perceptions, knowledge of, and reaction to the social dynamics: the diverse cultural norms, myriad lifestyles, foreign ideologies, colonialism, shifting socio-economic and political paradigms, human rights and emerging feminist voices –

have informed the hermeneutical scrutiny of the Islamic texts and interpretations thereof.

These men acted out of devotion to the fundamental Islamic principle of “inviting to what is right and forbidding what is wrong”, and consequently, their thinking, rationale, methodology and hermeneutics used for the extraction of principles and its application resulted in solutions that were considered sacred. Sacred, because it was viewed as being immutable based on Allāh’s law. The sacredness of the immutable laws itself laid out an onerous and rigid procedure for interpreters of the sacred text.

It was no longer God talking directly to creation because the good men of law, the interpreters of the Islamic texts, the commentators and the writers, all veiled God’s words in attempting to make God’s laws more accessible for a just society. Pure speech (Revelation) and excellent conduct (*Sunnah*) were veiled by the interpretation of men and assimilated into men’s words and men’s law produced as the *Sharī’ah*. This law then determined and directed the pulse of the *ummah*; how to eat, the invalidity of *wuḍū* (cleanliness, ablution before prayer) / *ghusl* (taking a bath) due to a strand of hair being left dry, the preferable sleeping position, the length of one’s beard that qualified a person to lead the congregation in *ṣalāh* (prayer) to the highly developed epistemic discussions on philosophy, statehood and commercial contracts.

The status of women also required special attention but in many ways, their rights were already dealt with through their exclusion from mainstream activities such as leading congregational *ṣalāh*, participating in active socio-economic life and instituting divorce. “As for us, we still do not consider that women have the same status as men. Our minds are not prepared to grasp the obvious truth of woman’s humanity” (Amin 1995:14).

Muslim men discussed women's status within the context of pre-Islamic creed and prevailing conditions and formulated laws that they advanced as democratic. It was and still is, despite the "reforms", the laws of men, crafted painstakingly with a deep sense of *taqwā* to bring about order and justice. They conflated the subjective part of law that resulted from their reasoning and application with the objective (immutable) aspect of the Law (*Sharī'ah*) and presented to the *ummah* and the world, generation after generation with "The Law". Gender rights therefore could not have been a subject matter within this entrenched dogmatic approach.

Engineer (1992) puts forward the view that the concept of male superiority that was sociological and not theological that considered women weak and in need of protection. Restrictions were imposed within a feudalistic context of protecting the 'izzah (honour, inviolable feminine chastity). *Purdah* or veil became synonymous with the concept of 'izzah (honour) and the consequential seclusion of women. "Chastity is the norm while *purdah* was a contextual means to achieve it. A woman can protect her chastity without observing *purdah*" (Engineer, 1992:6). Amin (1995) found a similar attitude towards women and states in the context of a 'global' survey conducted in his time, "We should not base our opinion on unsubstantiated evidence, as do those who claim that whenever a woman sits with a man in one place for a few minutes she is no longer virtuous" (p 24).

5.4. Women's Rights' Movements

Women are challenging the centuries of oppression from different paradigms within the feminist discourse (Mojab 2001). Globalisation has brought the different strands of feminist voices into a more integrative and pluralistic platform transforming secularism, Islam and Western debates on women into a global women's rights movement (Tohidi 2002) united in ideals and arguments (Maumoon 1999).

Mojab (1997) maintains that one can commit oneself to studying women's rights, their lives and struggle without being committed to feminism. She herself however has maintained a strong feminist position and a critique of outstanding note on women's rights and the onslaught of male chauvinism and brutality against women.

There is no need to polarize a "faith position" and "women's rights" because Islam and feminism are not mutually exclusive, "Islam is in fact humanistic and just, not in need of any Western school of feminism to teach it about women" (Abou-Bakr, 2001:2). Although advocating this view, Abou-Bakr believes that it is necessary to qualify feminism with the words "Islamic" or "Muslim" because of the gender imbalance, social inequality and cultural bias.

Jordan, O'Meara and Roy (2004), American women who as part of their Peace Corps service spent two years in Africa living among and with Muslims provides a fascinating "insider" perspectives of their experiences. They lived in the Jordanian village of Mhai and a rural town of Tafilah respectively and Roy in Mamut Fana in Gambia. Their experiences changed their feminists' views, their lives, values and worldviews. According to them, "the opportunity to recognise the inherent power of femininity exists in Islam" (p 2) and that despite Muslim women being active in furthering the cause for women's emancipation they despise the feminist label because of its negative Western connotation.

Mabro (1996) in examining perceptions of western travellers and writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to Middle Eastern countries cites excerpts that depicted women with prejudice and bias that continues to be reflected in the media, journals and magazines into the 1990s. She believes that women are more vocal about their rights and societal roles and more women than men are receiving formal education in countries such as Libya, Jordan, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Lebanon although they still represent a small percentage in the employment sector.

Robinson (2004) says that while men have dominated and reinforced patriarchal dimensions of society, Westerners' image of misogyny is wrong. To the West, according to Mabro, women are symbols of under-development and the Islamists and Muslim governments view women as playing a traditional role. Even women who do not challenge the *sharī'ah* encoded traditional roles and who have internalised patriarchal thinking, especially those of the older generation Islamists, "at times they act in contrary ways" (Maumoon 1999: 278).

Abou-Bakr (2001) considers Islamic feminist discourse as a Qur'ān centred one free from the entangled web of legal schools, customs, traditions and existing socio-cultural realities of Muslim societies. "The main concern is understanding the pure and essential message of Islam and its spirit" (p 6) and as Maumoon (1999) states, "instead of the gender hierarchy ingrained in the technical, legal and doctrinal Islam" (p 277). Women who are making progress in all fields, especially through civil society organisations (CSOs) to bring about democratic reforms in the political and socio-economic spheres. Women are making their voices heard and despite the many setbacks, are being perceived as the engines for reforms in the Arab world (El-Shazli, 2002).

Others like Moghadam (2000) believe that the success for gender equality, emancipation and empowerment can be realised by a strong civil society whose government is not based on any religion but may include religious values like the ban on usury. "Religious belief should be respected and religious institutions should have a place in civil society, but religion should not dominate state and the law" (p11). She argues that Islamic feminists like secular feminists have ignored (e.g. in America) or failed to give attention to political and economic issues.

Moghadam is concerned about women reformists and activists who challenge the patriarchal system and the interpretation of the Islamic texts based on orthodoxy and misogyny by engaging in the interpretation themselves. She believes that confining one's self to the "correct" reading of the Qur'ān rather than embracing

universal standards will limit the impact of Islamic feminism or reinforce the legitimacy of the patriarchal system. It is very difficult, according to her, to win theological arguments because of the power of social force that determines the dominance of each interpretation. Sachedina (1999) argues that the non-existence of female voice in Islamic legal discourse over women's issues is the major reason for the present epistemological crisis in Muslim jurisprudence.

Abou-Bakr (2001) on the other hand, observes Islamic feminists as doing great work in reforming centuries of denial of women's rights and have contributed to Qur'anic / *aḥādīth* interpretations, civil rights, reproductive health, discrimination, violence and other socio-religious and economic reforms. "Muslim women scholars are making themselves the specialists now in order to balance a centuries-long tradition of male interpreters and scholars who had nothing to lose by emphasizing discriminating differences and glossing over egalitarian principles, or neglecting to extend these to wives, daughters, sisters and women colleagues in the work place" (p 4).

Gender stereotyping based on biased and selective interpretations by scholars (Eissa 1999) continues women's seclusion and violations of their rights. A woman in an abusive marriage cannot escape from the relationship because the annulment of marriage in terms of classical jurists (not the Qur'ān nor the Prophet) favours the husband. He is empowered to dissolve the marriage by simply stating "I divorce you" three times (according to the *ḥanafī* school), or, his permission is required for an annulment according to all legal schools that had given the husband one-sided privileges (Sachedina 1999). Men seemed to be conferred with a kind of catholic "priestly" powers.

"Islam treats women as autonomous intellectual beings. Traditional Islamic jurists do not. One can only remind them of 16:116: But say not-for any false thing that your tongues may put forth, -"This is lawful, and that is forbidden," so

as to ascribe false things to God. For those who ascribe false things to God will never prosper” (Eissa 1999:48).

The interpretations by men over the centuries have more than blurred the rights of women as a complete being. Often, it is the *Sunnah* that is used to justify the subjugation and criticise any emancipatory effort. Mernissi (1991) explains that the imāms and politicians in wanting to safeguard Muslims, strictly manage and supervise the past; in reality it is memory and history that is manipulated. “But up until now no one has ever really succeeded in banning access to memory and recollection. Memory and recollection are the dawn of pleasure; they speak the language of freedom and self-development. They tell us about a Prophet-lover who, in the middle of the desert, spoke in a strange language to his mother-tribe and his warrior-father. They tell us of a Prophet who spoke of absurd things: non-violence and equality. He spoke to an aristocracy fierce with pride and drunk with the power of the bow” (p 10).

5.5. Modern and Post-Modern Jurists and Political Dimensions

Islam is a powerful source that is playing itself out in every society as the tension between reformists (from conservative to liberal) and individuals at grassroots level attempt to entrench, re-define and mould the Islamisation or re-Islamisation of societies. The power and dynamism is strongest within gendered discourses and debates, as women struggle to establish their space as individuals within their own right, equal but different from men. Their equality outside the traditional male-dominated orthopraxy is guaranteed by the Qur’ān and authentic *Sunnah* (the Islamic texts).

In spite of recognising the dominant male interpretation and biased male version of Islam, most women acquiesce to it. “Women generally retain and accept traditional stereotypes. Women are more passionate about retaining tradition than men. We find women often just want to keep the peace. It’s in their family lives

and comes out in their wider lives. But they could change, and that's what we should attempt" (Shaikh 1997:18).

Women's difference is not based on any gender weakness or inferiority that in any event does not exist in the Qur'anic text²¹, but in attempting to re-claim their space. Their difference is also emphasised by the modalities they choose or create, adapt to or adopt, follow or reject in interpreting the authentic *Sunnah* and the Qur'ān. The phrase 'going back to the *Sunnah*' is encrusted with multiple meanings. To some, it is the providing of new interpretations of the Islamic texts to contemporary challenges.

Most Muslims however believe that the only way to change the present crises that have befallen the world and particularly the *ummah* is by re-modelling it on the "prototype" government of the four rightly guided political successors to the Prophet (*al Khulafā' al Rāshidūn*²²). The gendered response is to give impetus and legitimacy to the need for social transformation, justice and emancipation of women from patriarchy that includes re-interpreting the period of the *al Khulafā' al Rāshidūn*.

The reality is that most governments practice gender apartheid and women are segregated globally on the basis of religion (Mojab 2001). While the origin of a woman is the same as that of a man from a single source (*Al-Nisā'* 4:1; *Al-Zumar* 39:6; *Al-Hujurat* 49:13), the Qur'ān and the Prophet treat women and men differently because they are not same. The fact that they are treated differently does not mean that men are accorded a special status or as Barlas (2003) puts it "privileged".

²¹ The Qur'ānic account of the first woman is that she is not "inferior or subordinate to the first man" (Kvam et. al. 1999:8)

²² The four rightly guided successors, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī who are considered the (first) four legitimate political successors to the Prophet in *Sunnī* branch of Islam.

Modern jurists have reinterpreted aspects of the *Shari'ah* by contextualising the abuse of women's rights (e.g. in Pakistan, Justice Taqi Usmani). Egypt's attempts to reform family, personal and national laws have not yet granted women the right to full and equal citizenship. The "reforms" have not provided effective mechanism to protect women from abusive relationships, domestic violence and other discriminatory practices but women rights' groups are vocal and have provided safe houses for abused women as in the case of Egypt. Women are demanding equal pay and opportunities and child care facilities which are viewed as a foreign (Western) influence (Mojab 2001).

Some countries have initiated into their legal reforms, Malaysia for example, legal safeguards in marriage contracts that make it legally peremptory for a husband to seek permission from his first wife and be granted such permission to enter into a second marriage contract. Dangor (2001) refers to several countries where polygamy is regulated by law, such as Syria in 1953, Morocco, Iraq (1959), Pakistan (1961) and Egypt (1979) or abolished as in Turkey and Tunisia (1957). Modern jurists must be commended for recognising some of the God-given rights of women, but the interpretation and reinterpretation is still very much embedded in patriarchal modalities. It is still considered the prerogative of men; modern reformists who are experts in classical and post modernist thinking and jurisprudence.

Justice Taqi Usmani of Pakistan, in spite of his great depth of knowledge and one must accord him respect for his progressive views, assigns a restrictive role to women. It would appear that even progressive jurists and modern scholars still believe that it is theirs to assign and to confine, to define and redefine for women the context within which they can breathe, move and die. In fact, even in death a woman is not free from the "concocted" notions of what her fate is going to be in the grave and the hereafter.²³ "The human and religious rights of women cannot

²³ Among the many modern myths doing the rounds is the one of certain women's bodies being "transformed" into animals during the cleansing of their bodies for burial. These "changes" are

be 'granted,' 'given back,' or 'restored' because they were never ours to give –or take – in the first place. Muslim women *own* their God-given rights by the simple virtue of being human," (Safi 2003:11). For Mazrui (1991) "even in death there should surely be female empowerment" (p 18) since women bear the brunt of wars and make sacrifices for being patriots.

5.6. The "Multiplicity" of Islam

Islam is not monolithic (Esposito 2002; Dangor 2001) and its influence is multifaceted as is evident in Nigeria (Thomas-Emeagwali, 1994) with multiple Islamic voices, traditions and identities (Vahed and Jeppie 2004). Bangstad (2004) in his study of the changed circumstances of the religious authority of Muslims in Cape Town, refers to the multiplicity of local and global Islamic discourses. Islam is powerful and pervasive with the socio-economic conditions having changed the role of women from seclusion to public life as employees as in the case of Bangladesh, (Kabeer 1994).

It is the '*ulamā*' who play a decisive role in lifting the "curfew" on public life with certain imposed conditions but these are being challenged. Women hold leadership roles, e.g., in Hausa, Nigeria, there women Islamic scholars like Hajiya Maria Mai Tafsiri who is a specialist in Qur'anic exegeses; Hajiya Labara Karaba who heads the *ṣūfī* Qadiriyyah order and Hajiya Hauwa Adamu, a social worker who is part of the Society for the Support of Islam. In Sudan, an activist, Suad al-Fatih al-Badawi a member of the National Islamic Front serves in the People's Assembly and together with other women activists are involved in nation-building. (Strobel 1995).

In Iran, in spite of women's active participation in the struggle to establish a just democratic society, women are treated as second-class citizens. The debate

ascribed to the women having lived "un-Islamic" lives. However, no such story about the most "wicked" man has ever been part of the urban legend. Then there is the "rationale" about women restricted from cutting their hair because if they do, they will not be able to cover their bosoms in the grave. Since Islam provides a universal standard of principles, the question that arises from this reasoning is what happens to African women whose hair will never be long enough?

between women and the state underscores the difficulty of their rights under a constitution embedded in masculinity. While Azerbaijan has a secular constitution and an egalitarian legal system, women's voices are stifled by what Tohidi (2002) notes as the authoritarian men and the corrupt polity. In state elections held in November 2005 women with passports that had photographs of them in *hijāb* or wearing a headscarf were not allowed to vote (*Natal Mercury*, November 2, 2005).

In Saudi Arabia it is the autocratic male elite that have stamped the approval of confining women to a subordinate role. In countries where Muslims live as minorities, the '*ulamā*' reflect the different forms of the Muslim governments, often a multiplicity of Islam within a given country. One can therefore speak of many "Islams" (Islamic pluralism), Islam being interpreted in multiple ways (Jordan, O'Meara and Roy 2004) because of the cultural assimilations and varying social needs, different traditions and social realities. Even these differences and varying conditions are not static and require solutions, direction and modifications of rules and laws.

Despite the cultural differences and practices, the common declaration of faith and adherence to basic articles of faith binds Muslims (Khan 2001); "the common core of Islamic belief and practice remains" (Robinson 2004: 197). Muslims reflect these differences, the cultural, socio-economic and political differences and the shifting relationships within and between these. "Thus, the word Muslim tends to be used as a label which ignores a multitude of factors contributing to the definition of women's status in Muslim societies, both past and present"(El-Solh and Mabro 1994:4).

Accordingly, it is not possible to objectively understand the denial of women's God-given rights if the words "Islam" and "Muslim women" are loaded with prejudice and misconceptions. Women's rights differ from country to country, within a country and across the different masculinist and feminist worldviews. Some western feminists caricature Muslim women as the "Othered" object, non-Western; the

veil symbolising backwardness and inferiority. All Muslim women are depicted on a static timeline, as Woodlock (no date) criticises Western feminist critiques, who deny generations of time, cultures and countries that informs and forms the lives of Muslim women. The technique is to collapse centuries of history, the different views and struggles of women into one coded message: “Muslim women”. In the same way that the word “fundamentalism” conjures up an image of “militarist” Islam with force-conversion as its principle objective.

5.7. Concluding Remarks

Muslim women and societies are actively engaged for change howbeit for different reasons and informed by different perspectives. “No society can be immobile in the modern world. The process of change is of course a complex process and related to the prevailing conditions in a society. The principle of gender justice is very emphatic in Islam but it could not be realised in feudal societies in which Islam subsequently spread. And in the Islamic world the transformation from feudal to democratic society is far from complete and hence empowerment of people, particularly women remain incomplete. Gender justice again is a highly sensitive issue and while other changes may be more easily acceptable, the one related to women's empowerment will be very difficult to realise” (Engineer 2000).

Flexibility through *ijtihad* and not rigidity is needed that brought about a dynamic civilization. African societies and governments are examples of how Muslims in Africa adopted the realities of their time and adjusted their rule and interaction within and across societies with pragmatism (Robinson 2004). It is the conservative, dogmatic approach that is hindering progress. “In particular, conservative Islam will have to come to a searching encounter with the modern world especially if it wants to preserve the loyalty and capture the imagination of the younger generation. But then the history of Islam has shown that it has extraordinary powers of adaptation. It has succeeded in absorbing apparently incompatible philosophies and there are indications that the widespread Islamic

stagnation has come to an end with the approach of the seventies” (Naude, 1978:5).

While theoretically, the Muslim world view is linked to the Qur’ān, it is *ḥadīth* literature, *tafsir* and the *Sharī’ah* that had influenced this view through the borrowing of themes from Jewish and Christian sources – the non- Qur’anic notions (Kvam, et. al. 1999) of patriarchy. There is a critical need for a collective approach of deconstructing the patriarchal interpretations in the study of the Qur’anic text and *aḥādīth*. This will reaffirm that authority belongs to Allāh alone and is not the birthright of men, especially those who consider themselves learned, having authority and the sole conservative masculinist right to interpret the world view for Muslim women and for the entire *ummah*.

Dangor (2002) sees the need for gender equality and pluralism in the redefining of Muslim states. He maintains in his critical and concise analysis of democracy in the Muslim world that there is a need for the establishment of a contemporary political method and structure based on Islamic norms and values. This would accommodate the issues of full participation of all citizens, men and women, in the political and legislative bodies of the state.

For South African women and particularly Muslim women there are many challenges. New “converts” in any country are confronted “by personal, family and community misconceptions and misgivings” (When conversion leads to confrontation, December 22, 2002). In South Africa, given the history of colonialism and institutionalised apartheid, those who embrace Islam feel the need to be treated as equal by fellow Muslims and not as people who want hand-outs. They also face alienation in the townships, mocked and labelled “Indians” or “Malays” by family, friends and neighbours (Mokhethi 1998).

The emphasis on legal schools (*madhāhib*), ethnicity, class and social status potentially divide an already fissured society that needs nurturing in a nascent

democracy. Re-examination of the fundamental Islamic principles that takes into account contemporary realities and future needs are required to provide solutions to African societies (Hunwick 1996). The research participants therefore play a key role in the reconstruction and rebuilding of South Africa together with other women from diverse faiths, beliefs, creed, political and social movements.

PART TWO

CHAPTER 6

MUSLIM WOMEN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: THEIR STORIED LIVES AS DA'WAH WORKERS

"As researchers we have to be passionate about what we do; research questions have to come out of our own curiosities, our own passion to know, otherwise we will not be sustained. We have to follow who we are and continually challenge ourselves. This is what keeps us coming back to our research. We all have to do that. We can be true only to the participants with whom we work and to the inquiries in which we engage if we are passionate about it, if our research is very much linked with our own interests, our own curiosities. And, when we are morally charged to do the work, that passion and commitment is likely to be infused in the written text and other representations of experience"

Cole and Knowles 2001:53

6.1. Introduction

The interviews are divided into three chapters grouped as "conventional / traditional" *da'wah* (chapter 7), community *da'wah* (chapter 8) and *da'wah* through the media (chapter 9). The words "conventional / traditional" refers to the "Call" or missionary activity; the propagation of Islam inviting people to God through the concept of *tawhīd* (monotheism) and imparting knowledge to educate and empower individuals.

Community *da'wah* refers to community activists involved in social intervention and change motivated by the Islamic texts of serving people to alleviate hardship for the pleasure of God. Community *da'wah* activism incorporates "conventional / traditional" *da'wah*.

Da'wah through the media is specifically focussed on correcting misconceptions about Islam, challenging Islamaphobia and presenting a balanced view. Interrelated to all three types of *da'wah* is the entrepreneurial skills used by the research participants in their methodologies to achieve their objectives.

“Conventional / traditional” *da'wah* has Moolla and Wood as the main participants and their students as the secondary participants. Hassim and Mulla (main participants) and secondary participants form the focus of the chapter on community *da'wah*. Dadoo is the main participant in the chapter *da'wah* through the media.

Most of the activities of the “conventional / traditional” *da'wah* workers such as Moolla and Wood are structured in a more formal madrasah / school-based environment without the patriarchal methodology. The delineation into the above categories is not absolute because Hassim and Mulla as community activists are also directly involved in traditional *da'wah*. Moolla and Wood to a lesser extent also engage as community activists.

They all have several common definitive contexts within which they interact with their subjects (individuals, families, communities). They are, as discussed previously, Muslim women from a minority community facing patriarchal challenges, engaged in *da'wah* activities. *Da'wah* is defined with wider implications and nuances.

Muslims living as a minority are concerned about and work towards preserving, protecting and strengthening the Islamic identity of the *ummah* and to make it meaningful (Ali 1992; Randeree 1993; Ali 2000), and seek ways and means to survive during rapid political and social change as in the case of South Africa (Naude 1992). Muslims do not see Islam as a private, individual matter reduced

to a single culture or ethnic paradigm with division between belief and practice, state and religion (Yousif 2000).

As for being a marginal group, early Muslim jurists differed about the status of Muslims living as a minority thereby creating a binary vision (Hussain 2003b). Modern Muslim scholars are debating whether to “minoritise” themselves and thereby privatise and limit their interactions within a society or express one’s Muslim identity and Islamic ethos as citizens of their relevant countries. Looking at the research participants, they are Muslims, women - South African citizens who are active in *da‘wah* without creating divisions or practising exclusivism. They work with people who subscribe to different faiths, creed, culture and beliefs, treating each person as a dignified human being. Their *da‘wah* is, as Mazrui (1990) puts it, “two emancipations: the search for collective self-determination and the quest for individual fulfilment” (11).

While they are not Islamic scholars in the traditional sense, they have responded to the needs of people by exercising common sense Islamic principles based on the Qur’ān and the authentic *Sunnah*. Often, seeking answers from a body leads to confusion because a collective body “becomes concerned with its own authority and proclaims its correctness over others” (Badawi in Malik 2004). Badawi views individual scholars through their debates being closer in spirit of *fiqh* as they derive laws that are debated, accepted and synthesised.

However, in striving to maintain an Islamic identity, Muslims are not a homogenous group and in South Africa, sometimes deep divisions have resulted from linguistic, regional, class status, socio-economic inequalities and the allegiance to the different legal schools (Vahed 2000, Hansen, 2003). The research participants are an inseparable part of the Muslim minority with its diverse characteristics, contested spaces and the debate between interpretative authoritarianism and progressive expressions of Islam.

6.2. What is significant about the research participants?

They are women, Muslims of South Africa where women's role and activism are obscured by a patriarchal *ummah*²⁴ and chauvinistic social norms. As they mediate and negotiate a gendered role, an independent voice and a commanding identity in their engagement of *da'wah* within the matrix of political, religious and social challenges, they contribute to the democratic constitution of the country that provides opportunities for advancing women's rights.

As progressive Islamists, they act as a quietest and cultural force striving to protect and promote the religious identity of the *ummah* (Ali 2000) and actively contribute as South Africans to the reconstruction and re-building of the nation. Their record of accomplishment pre-dates the new democracy and their experiences and dedication is an asset in post-apartheid South Africa.

6.3. The Interviews, Research Participants and the Researcher

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) in their discussion of narrative inquiry wrote about the multiple "Is" in writing narratively, "one of which is "that of the narrative critic" (p 10). The subsequent critical evaluation of the narratives of the life history in context of the participants meant the research serving its purpose in a reconstructed narrative about the contributions of Muslim women in South Africa.

Where I have noticed a bias, I decided to gain clarity through subsequent interview(s). As for bias on my part, I abandoned that aspect of the research when I failed to reconcile information gained objectively with (prior) knowledge from another source that interfered with the interview process and interpretation of the data. I had to focus on the purpose of my research and through reflection, redirected my interview by blurring out the issues that affected me.

²⁴ This phrase is an oxymoron because patriarch is the opposite of the word *ummah*, which is derived from the word *umm*: mother, origin, source.

I decided to do one session at least, usually the last one, on tape with the five principal participants (Dadoo, Hassim, Mulla, Moolla and Wood) whom I interviewed as the main subjects of this study. I also changed the methods depending how (other) subsequent subjects responded to a mechanical device. Always aware, however, that recording cannot capture the full interview; it is not "the total and faithful representation of an interview" (Goodson and Sikes 2001:33).

Where to Interview?

I had to travel to different cities and to the homes and work places of most of the participants, to conduct the interviews. To ensure convenience, greater ease and reducing the interruption an interview causes, appointments had to be rescheduled questions had to be phrased that elicited spontaneous responses and great care was taken to listen avidly and beyond. "Life history is best suited to people who are able to listen attentively and beyond what is actually being said, and who can ask pertinent questions in a non-threatening way" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:20).

It was important that time and space was mutually agreed upon but favoured the participants. The actual space in which the interviews took place played a significant role. Participants were more relaxed at home and less formal. All the interviews with Hassim were conducted at her office but she was relaxed and not formal except when the last interview was recorded. As observed by Oztimur (2001) of life story method she used in her study of 12 Turkish women, my research participants also reflected and re-evaluated some aspects of their lives during their interviews and came "face to face" with some important events from their past" (p 4)

None of the participants were veiled but have always had their heads covered. In one instance, a student who was interviewed did not have her head covered but this did not make her less of a Muslim woman or provided a measurement of her

commitment or consciousness of Allāh ²⁵. She together with all the other participants were committed Muslims. It was evident that they were not willing to have their social roles dictated by society but it was their personalities, modesty, spirituality and commitment to Islamic values that determined their social interaction and re-defined their social roles.

They have negotiated gender roles through their *da'wah*, emerging as active social agents. As Oztimur (2001) puts it, "Women emerge as active agents who are neither the victims of definition by dominant ideologies or discourses, nor autonomous authors of self. They have the potential to resist or restate conflicting gender representations that may result in alternative constructions to previously existing, dominant discourses on gender. Everyday life relationships are changing as women negotiate with the tensions brought on through divergent dominant ideologies" (p 6).

6.4. Data sources

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) identify a number of methods of data collection in narrative inquiry. In this study it was possible to provide a narrative whole of the participants from the rich data sources that were available. The storied lives were narratively looked at from the following data sources: -

- 6.4.1. field notes based on personal, face-to-face interviews
- 6.4.2. recorded interviews
- 6.4.3. notes on observation during interviews and visits
- 6.4.4. interview transcripts
- 6.4.5. notes of telephonic conversations to clarify or elaborate aspects of the interviews
- 6.4.6. personal philosophies
- 6.4.7. use of metaphors

²⁵ "Children of Adam, We have given you garments to cover your nakedness and as adornment for you; the garment of God-consciousness is the best of all garments this is one of God's signs, so that people may take heed." *Al-A 'rāf* 7:27 [translation by Abdel Haleem 2004]

- 6.4.8. documents (photographs, news articles)
- 6.4.9. story telling that described an incident and sometimes the retelling of it
- 6.4.10. secondary participants

Photographs and Documentations

The interviews seem incomplete without photographs and documentations. I have appended these since they are an inseparable part of the participants' lives and consequently, of the research study. The research participants took great pride in presenting details relating to the photographs, discussing incidents around some of them and even journeying into the past with vivid recollections.

Most of the photographs were from the participants' file. The researcher took pictures of his own after the interviews or during informal discussions as was the case of Moolla and her students, at the Islamic Guidance (Durban) and Mulla at the refugee site in Philipe and residential quarters (Cape Town). On their own, these photographs have their personal storied lines as each subject in the photographs has her / his story but "... photographs do not simply call you to the past or provide routes of memory: they are themselves their own invented images that can be used to invent their stories" (Plummer 2001:66).

The power of a collaborative narratives between the researcher and the researched played itself through the interviews and also by photographic images captured by the researcher himself. The collaborative process of taking photographs by a male researcher of Muslim *du'āh* was a statement in itself against the conservative '*ulamā*' who consider photographs as being *ḥarām* (unlawful). According to the conservative '*ulamā*' its permissibility is allowed through the principle of *ḍārūriyah* (necessity makes lawful what is unlawful) as in the case of photographs required for identity books, passports and driving licence.

The research participants have not asked for recognition nor to have their praises sung, but have graciously allowed themselves to be interviewed so that their work can assist others in their contribution to rebuilding and reconstructing South African society. The storied lives narrated by the researched participants are “lives interpreted and made textual” (Goodson and Sikes, 2001:16).

Eck (1996) wrote that the voices of women are suppressed; they are not given much narrative space in history and theology. The narratives of the participants recorded in this study is one small measure of providing *that* space in a highly charged conservative ‘*ulamā*’-dominated minority community located within a patriarchal society. Their narratives were possible through trust, affection and assistance (Berman 1998) that were meticulously recorded.

The following three chapters are “snippets” of their lives and the transcript of the tape recorded interviews were formatted by using the Jeffersonian system. The speakers’ utterances (researcher and participant; main and secondary participants) were arranged in a vertical structuring, “in that utterances by different speakers are printed one below the other in order in which they were spoken” (Have 1999:89).

CHAPTER 7

“CONVENTIONAL / TRADITIONAL” DA‘WAH

“It is therefore important that Islamic feminists focus more attention on empirical research which allows women to speak for themselves about their experiences.”

Jeenah, N. (2001:123).

7.1. MOOLLA (MAIN PARTICIPANT)

Date of the interview: 15 March 2005

Place: Islamic Guidance, Overport, Durban

7.1.1. Background, Early Life and Community Involvement

Name: Hafsa (Narkedin) Moolla

Date of Birth: 1933

Place of Birth: Port Elizabeth

Established: Islamic Guidance

Background: Early Life

Mrs Hafsa Moolla was born in Port Elizabeth in 1933. Her father was a tailor from whom she acquired the passion for sewing. Moolla was one of five daughters. She completed her schooling (matriculation-grade 12) in Port Elizabeth where she also attended *madrasah* or Islamic school that took her beyond the basic and secondary levels. Her *ustādh* (teacher) included Ihsan Effendi and Abdurahman Johaardien.

Moolla came to Durban in 1958 and was a dress designer by profession, specialising in wedding gowns. She married Yacoob Moolla in 1969 and they lived in a rented apartment in Overport, a suburb in Durban. She said that as she

looks back she could confidently say to Allāh “thank you for 71 good years” because she was blessed with wonderful parents and a great husband.

Community Involvement

In 1976 Juleikha Jacobs who worked at the Hub stores approached Moolla for “help”, appealing to her to teach her to pray (perform *ṣalāh*, the five daily prayers). Moolla had Shaykh Jameel Jaardien’s book on *ṣalāh* with transliteration. That night, Moolla put the entire book onto audio-cassette, a step by step guide to learn how to perform the *ṣalāh*.

Moolla then gave Juleikha Jacobs the audio-cassette that enabled her within three months to learn the fundamentals of performing *ṣalāh*. The audio cassette revolutionised the gap that existed for working class women who needed to acquire basic knowledge of *ṣalāh* and other Islamic matters but did not have the time. The audio cassette technique for Moolla was a modern technology used by Ayatullah Khomeini that changed the minds and hearts of an entire nation in Iran. Khomeini who was living in exile in France used the audio-cassette that culminated in the revolution that replaced the Shāh’s autocratic rule with an Islamic democratic state. Moolla recalls how her audio-cassette became popular because women could take their “teacher” home with a transliterated manual.

Moolla’s flat became the focal point of her “revolution” and soon the demand for her tapes increased. Her husband told her to concentrate on the *da’wah* work she had started and supported her financially through his income. Sewing came to an end as a new chapter opened for Moolla that she felt passionate about as well. The flat was also a place for females who attended the *tarāwīḥ ṣalāh* in Ramaḍān so that they could leave their daughters at home if there were no facilities for females at the nearby mosques.

Islamic Guidance

In 2001 Moolla opened a centre, called 'Islamic Guidance' (refer to p 259 of Appendix One) which was a culmination of years of *da'wah* work that began in from her flat in 1976. She then went to the community in Newlands, north of Durban where she found many poor Muslims who needed money for food and to pay their monthly rentals. One of the children who received a doll from Mulla asked her if she were going to take it back. This simple question, Mulla explained, had a profound impact on her about the lives of the children from poor homes.

In Newlands, Moolla interacted with women who ran shebeens²⁶ (selling liquor from home) to eek out a living and was able to rehabilitate them through her programme. In 1979 she opened what she calls a *bayt ul māl*, an "institution" to help the poor through *zakāh*²⁷ she managed to secure from certain people. Ayesha Bibi Abdullah made her small Newlands house available to Moolla to carry out her *da'wah* work with women. Two years later, Bassa's who operated a business and were popularly associated with sheep farming, offered Moolla their *madrasah* (a school for Islamic classes) on Saturdays to operate her classes for women. She ran her Saturday classes from these premises for 14 years but due to circumstances, had to move out of Newlands.

Moolla was given a cellar in Bazely Road by Ghamiet Aysen who converted it into a *madrasah* from where she operated for a while. The trustees of the Sparks Road Masjid (mosque) made the top section of the *masjid* available to Moolla with the assurance that she could use the premises "forever". Aysen's place was small while the *masjid* was not suitable for the elderly. Thus began a drive to collect funds to build an Islamic Centre at the corner Booth and Essendene Roads in Overport. Construction work began in 2001 and the Centre was ready for

²⁶ A small establishment that sells alcoholic beverages illegally or without a licence, traditionally operating in the poorer regions of Ireland, Scotland and South Africa (Encarta dictionary; Barnhart and Barnhart 1992).

²⁷ *zakāh* (purity) is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is a compulsory tax levied annually on one's fixed proportion of income and capital that is distributed among the poor and used for certain needs

da'wah. Unfortunately, Moolla lost her husband a few months before the completion of the Centre. The death of Yacoob Moolla meant a loss of the best friend and support Moolla had.

Moolla intends retiring at the end of 2006 and devote her time to writing books, particularly poetry. Two students are under training to run the Centre and continue the *da'wah* started by Moolla in 1976.

The motto of the Islamic Guidance is: -

“Learn Islam”

“Teach Islam”

“Practice Islam”

Activities of the Islamic Guidance

1. Mumtaz Desai, one of her students runs afternoon *madrasah* classes
2. On Wednesday evenings, basic training and Qur’ān classes are conducted for senior students.
3. *Ḥajj* and *‘umrah* classes are run throughout the year.
4. Conversions are done throughout the year.
5. Women also attend *ghusl* (washing, bathing) classes and are given *janāzah* (funeral prayer) training.
6. The hall is hired out to the public for weddings and other functions, so that the income is used for the maintenance of the Islamic Guidance.

Present Activities (2005-2006)

Weekday Classes are held every Wednesday and the Centre provides various activities every Saturday for 160 female orphans from Inanda, Chatsworth, Marrianridge, Marrianhill and Phoenix (localities north and south of Durban).

7.1.2. TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEWS

Date of the interview: 20 April 2005

Place: Islamic Guidance, Overport, Durban

R – Researcher

M – Moolla

R *Bis-mi-Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, (in the name of Allāh, Full of Compassion, Ever Merciful).

I would like to record this session like I have with the other interviewees. I want to put this interview in your own words. To recap, my study looks at women like yourself who are involved in *da'wah* but are not known and don't want publicity.

Let us take a person who has accepted Islam, goes back to the family – and what really appealed to me was your approach, not the way Islam is generally interpreted. *Nabī* (Prophet) Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace) said honour your family even if they are not Muslims. You not only teach that but you live it by attending functions. Your behaviour must have made an impact on their lives. Are there incidents you can recall...

M Well there was a case, and I think it is good mentioning it. I converted a young woman and the mother was working at the Hypermarket. I used to go to the Hypermarket once a week and she called her daughter by the daughter's Muslim name. That shook me because with her being Catholic she was very much against the marriage. And then she said to me, 'You know Mrs. Moolla,' I came

to buy some stuff from her counter, and she said to me, 'I know you, you teach my daughter don't you?'

I asked, 'Who's your daughter?' She called the daughter's name by the Muslim name and then she says to me, 'I like the way my daughter was married before but the way she is married now, there is no abuse, the husband honours her and he honours me.' She says, 'I've got three sons in-law who are non-Muslim and I see them most of the time – drunk! My children come back with blue eyes, abused. I don't see this from my Muslim daughter.' So she says, 'I must thank you.' I said, 'no, no, no, not me. You must thank the *man* who is your son in-law. He's looking after her.'

She says, 'No, but my daughter tells me that it is the training she's getting from you that she takes home. And she reads up the notes that she makes when she's with you. I said, 'don't give me credit because the notes that I giving her is the life of Islam. They *way* of life!'

So she practices it at home and this man who is a born Muslim sees that this is how it should be done. Ok Iqbal, right? And this mother tells me, and the nice little cherry on the top is, in a joke, 'get me a nice Muslim husband!' She is a divorced woman, abused, ok. So she knows what it is and when she sees how her daughter is living, she couldn't believe it because she never had that life.

When she sees me she says, 'Aunty Hafsa!' and she waves at me, waves at me. And I say, 'How is your daughter?'

'O, Amina is fine, she's too beautiful!'

I always pray and hope that a good man comes into her life who will make her a Muslim. And then you know what she said, which was a remarkable thing? ‘When my daughter comes to pray at my house she says the photographs must be covered. She’s a Saturday afternoon visitor at my home, so I turn the photographs, the frames around so that she will not be disturbed with her prayer. But she never gave me the reason why?’ So I had to explain to her, you know.

This woman was interested because she saw her daughter’s happiness. I felt, I wish she could only speak for every body but it doesn’t apply to every body.

R I was reading an *ayah* (verse) in the Qur’ān that Allāh loves those who are just. In the context, the reference was to those who were invited to Islam by the Prophet but did not become Muslims but were not hostile towards the Muslims. How different from some Muslims who demonise others, especially those who do not accept Islam.

M Actually, we owed the Receiver of Revenue; we had to pay tax. And this girl comes here with a Muslim girl but she’s the head of the department. And I said O God, I don’t have that kind of money!’ She was sitting across (referring to the photographs of students on the wall) and she said, ‘Mrs Moolla, who are these children?’

I said, ‘they’re mine but I don’t have stretch marks to show.’ And she says this and that and the other. I said, ‘you know, we’re a non-profitable organisation, we have little tea parties, dinner parties to

make money. We sell books, we sell cakes and what have you and now you want to take all our wealth away.'

Do you know she spoke for us? She was so impressed with how we were looking after the poor. Did you know that we did not have to pay a cent? And I sent her a letter: 'People like you, we need people like you. You asked no questions, you didn't want to know what religion we were, you just did your duty. You felt you owed the poor when I said to you we were non-profitable.' Do you know, every Christmas she gets a card from me? I just felt, she saved us; she respects the way we are living. We don't want to convert the whole world! We have a lot of non-practising Muslims around us. We want people to love Islam for the sake of Islam.

We have a Chinese girl in our school. The only Chinese girl and when we enrolled her, she said, 'I know Buddhist, I atheist!' I said, 'ok!' Shenaaz Muslim took the liberty of 'phoning the Chinese embassy and we translated our *namāz* (prayer / *ṣalāh*) book into Chinese so that she could learn. She's now in her fourth *kalimah* (fourth article of faith). Couldn't speak a word of English and as far as she was concerned every second word she looked into her dictionary to get through to me. And I said to Allāh: 'This girl needs you Allāh, not me.' She doesn't know what a God is because she was never told. She was in a communist regime, Hong Kong, in a rural area where they had to have only one child. Remember? So when she came in, and I could see when she was going to say goodbye, very disciplined, she thanks me for doing this for her.

Our last night (for the year), breaking up, Shireen offered to bring food; it was very nice, I didn't prepare anything. I thought it was their night and they can do whatever they wanted to. But I said to

them I just want to give them a tiny message when they go home so that it can keep them mentally and spiritually occupied for the holidays because it helps me. I said, ‘Muḥammad ṣallallahu ‘alayhi wasallam (God’s bless him and grant him peace) saw a man passing and he said to a ṣaḥābī (a companion), ‘That man is a *jannatī* (destined for paradise)!’ On three occasions the man came pass and he said, ‘He’s a *jannatī*!’

One ṣaḥābī was curious and wanted to know what did this person do to deserve paradise. So he told this person that his father and he wanted to stay with him for the night, if that was ok with him. And he overstayed, stayed three nights. Then he says, ‘you know, the reason why I stayed was the Prophet said that you are a *jannatī*. What do you do that is so special?’ He said, ‘nothing! I go to the farm where I work the fields, you saw me reading my prayer, I see to my family.’ As the man was walking away from the house the host said, ‘is it perhaps when I go to sleep, I grudge nobody? My heart is clean; maybe that is why I was given the gift of being a *jannatī*.

Then three girls came to the desk and said, ‘this is a holiday gift to think about. We always, you know, complain our mothers-in-law say this; our fathers-in-law say that; they want my money because we earn big bucks,’ the one said. That little thing, the man was promised paradise because he did not grudge. Somebody will learn from this, somebody!

What gives me inspiration, I tell myself we are doing something that is working. It’s working, Iqbal. A woman ‘phones me all the way from Zurich, ‘Mrs Moolla, my name is so and so, I listen to your cassette, your tapes, and I want to tell you my three daughters, the teenagers, have finished their *ṣalāh* training.’ I don’t know her.

‘I’m sending you Swiss francs!’ I thought thank God; baby, we need it, I don’t care what franc it is, I don’t care if it is Frank Sinatra for all I care, but give it to us. When she said the three completed their training, I said to Yacoob, ‘hey Yacoob, this system is working man. We didn’t have to be there to teach the children.’ They took the book, they took the cassette without ever seeing the woman, their so-called teacher. She said it was the first Ramaḍān they could go to a mosque ‘take my three girls with me dressed in their *ḥijāb*’ and she says her husband was so proud. Her husband is Muslim.

You know, you have to ask yourself - I didn’t have that kind of training that this book is going to work, that this cassette is going to work. Allāh *subḥānahu wa ta ‘ālā* – and *all* credit goes to Allāh, because he instilled it in an ordinary housewife who used to make wedding gowns every now and again. And I have women here and this school is 29 years old, twenty-seven years with me; she’s the longest. If you stay with somebody twenty-seven years you’re not bound, you’re not married to that person, not a relation of yours. Such a person has gained love, picked out now and again for doing something wrong, but if they go out of here, they become spiritually strong.

Because, we are not in the habit of, number one, gossiping; I won’t allow it unless you do it behind my back and I would be very upset with you if I know you are not practicing what I am teaching you. That I feel – and I never asked a student in the twenty nine years, ‘did you pray your *fajr* (early morning prayer) this morning?’ It’s not my business. But you know what, there is a gift from Allāh, I feel it in my gut, that this one is drifting and I don’t know what it is but I will tell them, ‘lately you missed your *namāz* (prayer)?’ She will say to the other, ‘how did she know?’

We were talking one night of *murat* (image / photographs), you know, wearing figurines. I said, 'I love dolphins, I see them from my flats and I hear them making this sound, going to Umhlanga. I said because we love animals, we don't mind wearing earrings with dolphins on it. But this is forbidden, there is life you're depicting. Shenaaz Muslim²⁸ who is a teacher and she says there was a girl wearing earrings with dolphins on and she took it off when nobody was watching.

R Thank you for your time...

M I'm sorry I kept you away for so long. We have been very busy. The girls are married for eight to nine years and they join IG (Islamic Guidance), and we have a baby. Now I'll just give you an idea, one of our girls, single parent, found out that her husband was drunk and she kicked him out. I don't tell them to tell their husbands to leave, I just tell them how they can cope with a man who's taking drugs. *You can't!* You can't cope with the man because he steals money and what have you. Then her baby is born, she conceived before the man left and the child was born with a hole in the heart. She graduated last night. Iqbal, Shireen was here and I said (to the class), 'our young lady here, she has a little baby and make *du'ā'* (supplicate in prayer), which we are doing, has a hole in the heart. In spite of that, she did not neglect her Islamic guidance training. She's graduating tonight.'

R When does graduation take place?

M Once a year. They get their certificates. If the person is a quick learner, basic training takes a year, that means one Wednesday,

²⁸ Interviewed below

seven to nine. If they can fit themselves in. Sometimes they have commitments to their young babies and this is what makes this school unique. We hear the baby cry in the car, husband is in the car with the baby, we allow her to breast feed the baby and come back to the class to complete her lesson.

It also shows that there is a good man in the house, it shows that this girls is sacrificing, she knows if she gives her teacher her *sabak* (lessons). Now we have a new system (for mothers with young babies), give your *sabak* then go home. See to the baby who needs your milk. Our school caters for young women and we have to accommodate that otherwise we will have no staff in the hall. We are flexible and the man realises that she is graduating, feeding the baby, the child is not neglected. We are winning the hearts of the men.

We are keeping the entire family, when a child is born, we do the *aqīqah* (slaughter an animal in honour of a newborn), the child is going to school, we know about it. The child is going to high school, finished matric, we've got the names of the matriculants. 'My God, we did the *aqīqah* for this child!' The child is in matric and how the time went by. And, you know, Iqbal, what really took the life out of me, I could just look up and tell Allāh: 'You are really with us!'

We converted seven particular women one year in 1993. All seven went for *hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah). Ahmed Deedat came to visit me once and I told him about these seven women and he asked me how did I do it. I said, 'give credit to the Boss!' Coming back about the cherry on the top, these seven women- their children, seven, became *ḥāfīz al Qur'ān* (one who has memorised the entire Qur'ān). Who's behind it, the mother! The fathers are working, paying the

rentals, the 'phone, electricity. The mother sees that the child is up *fajr* time, dressed up and must go to the *imām*. It is not wasting time. It's not just about, 'let's see how beautiful you recite the Qur'ān, how you perform your *ṣalāh*?' We are moulding so that the product can go out of the school into her home and she is, as they say, a beacon in her house.

R Relationship with people who embraced Islam and when they are back with their families, back at work – and you mentioned one instance about the mother who was positive, are there problems and do you address the problems?

M We do, we do because if she has problems with her husband, the mother, her mother hears from her about the problems and she automatically responds, 'I told you so!' You took this "Sulaman" or this "Mohammedan" because as far as they are concerned, Islam is an Indian religion. That is something we must remember and one has to indoctrinate into that woman that Islam is not an Indian religion so that she can take it home to mummy.

Then I find that the mothers 'phone me: 'Mrs Moolla, my daughter is so and so, her Christian name is this and her Muslim name is that.'

I say, 'O yes, yes!'

'She's with me.'

I say, 'I'm glad she's with you and not staying with strangers. Because if she stays with strangers she could very easily lose her reputation but she's with you and you're her mother. You will see to it that she looks after her children. And I would like to tell you

something Mrs So and So, I know the name, try to help your daughter and son-in-law make up. Try and win him. Teach the children that the father is a good man so that when daddy comes for the weekend to take the children out, they'll say, 'but granny doesn't speak badly of you'.

The man is softened, the temper is gone. The night they were fighting and he threw her out or she walked out, tempers were raging, after a while everything comes down to normal. He questions the children, 'what does mummy do, what does granny say?'

'Granny says she would like you and mummy to get together.'

And you get the odd granny who says, 'You should have married the other boy, the one we were very happy about, your father and I.' The girl has conflict. She comes to me, she cries, 'my mother said I should have listened to her.'

I say, 'Mothers are usually right but you know what, mothers didn't know that you were going to have children. If you were a single woman, you can tell that Muslim boy to fly a kite! You can go back to your mummy but there are off-springs and you owe it to that child who never asked to be born, you and your husband. And the child knows that he must follow the father's religion.

'I never thought of it that way.'

Once, I spoke to a couple about a *qiṣṣah* (a parable) and have used since with success. I told this couple, *shayṭān* (the devil) meets with his *shayātīn* (the devils) everyday in the mosque to get feedback from their adventures. The one said I caused a person to rob a shop.

Shayṭān pats him on his hands and says 'you've done well.' The other said that he had brought about friction between the children and their parents and shayṭān says, 'well done!' and pats him on his arm. The third one, he starts dancing around shayṭān excited, 'I have done much more than they have, I have caused division between husband and wife!' Shayṭān embraces him and says, 'you have been excellent!'

So, I said to the couple, 'You have allowed shayṭān to win.' Well, this story seemed to have helped because the couple got back together and a year later he said to me, 'You must relate that story to others because it helped me that same evening. It changed our lives.'

Yes, Iqbal I do counselling too because my work requires intervention of sorts and common sense, you know, and it produces results.

This ended the tape recorded session and Moolla and I then discussed the photographs of her students that were displayed in her office. Discussions also included certain matters that showed Moolla's knowledge of the Sharī'ah and the praxic ability of her interpretation on specific Sharī'ah points.

7.1.3. MUSLIM (SECONDARY PARTICIPANT)

Name: Cherry Leigh Henderson
Muslim Name: Shenaaz Muslim
Date of Birth: 27 April 1966
Parents Name: Mother: Yvette Henderson
Father: Noel Henderson
Siblings: Patrick Palmer and Sharon Sluczanowski
Date of Marriage: *nikāḥ*: 15 / 06 / 1988; Civil: 14 / 01 / 1989

Educational Background:

Matriculated; B.A. (with Islamic Studies majors), Estate Agents Board Exam,
Postgraduate studies: Diploma in Industrial Relations, Honours in Religion and
Social Transformation.

Presently studying for a Masters degree.

7.1.4. TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEWS

Date of the interview: 10 July 2005
Place: Researcher's home, Durban

R – Researcher

SM – Shenaaz Muslim

SM : I know what my husband feels, he always says to me that he feels that I was destined for a number of reasons. Starting with...I basically come from a Catholic background. My mother was Catholic, my father was Protestant or Methodist but my mother was a Catholic, so we always followed the Catholics. I was to be baptized—which was done. But, when the priest asked what religious denomination...and my father refused. Obviously, I

was meant to be Catholic and my father actually refused and he said no. "When she's old enough she must choose what she wants to be." So it started with that; he said I could decide for myself when I was old enough where I eventually wanted to go.

I had a brother and sister much older than me, sister 12 years older than me and brother 10 years older. They're from my mother's first husband. So, when I was growing up, I always had different viewpoints from others of my own age; my brother and sister were so much older. My outlook to life was always different to my friends because my friends were always the eldest. So once I hit school, especially high school – high school always had religious education, and I always questioned, I always caused chaos in class. I always asked "how do you know that what you're saying is right?" Even then I used to question this "God Jesus" combinations.

So, it started really when I was in high school. In a sense that I never quite agreed on everything that they were saying. Everybody else used to go to Sunday school, confirmation classes, usual stuff I never went to, ever. But I came from a family who was - not that we weren't religious but we did go to church. My mother, also her first marriage, she had married, I don't know if you know, (Nelson Palmer), was a spiritualist, very high in spiritual powers. And, so there was a lot of spiritualism. So immediately my answer was spiritual. And then I left school, went to University; my first year in University I met my husband and it was 1984 we used to talk a lot.

Whatever we spoke about, whatever he said, obviously he was speaking generally about religion and a lot about Islam and it always made sense to me, what he was saying. During those years obviously at home we used to eat pork. My family on Christmas time and things like that used to eat pork but not a lot. It was never a big thing. That I got to this stage when I was dating my husband, I could not eat pork. I used to vomit as soon as I used to

eat bacon or roast pork, it used to come out, immediately. That was the one thing and then the alcohol, once I married my husband it was decision I made not to drink. It wasn't a big deal because I never used to drink much anyway. It was really Christmas time and things like that. So it was those kind of indicators that were there all along and that's why my husband said that he thinks I was destined to be a Muslim, because of those things that happened to me all the way along.

And because I always had this in mind and my brother and sister also used to question - none of us sort of followed that path of religion. I had a grandma who was born in the 1894, that was my mother's mother and she always said, "God was God" and coming back to the Jesus God, she always said God was God and she was highly irritated by what people used to say in the church. I supposed it was from there down. Once I married my husband, I can't say that we were practising Muslims as such, it was more the outlook and no *ṣalāh*. Husband used to go on Fridays, he used to go on big nights. And then obviously we fast, those kind of things; we would eat *ḥalāl* foods, that kind of things but spirituality of it wasn't there. That inner stuff wasn't there. It was only when I had my kids; my son was turning four, when I realised and decided I am going to do something.

I'm the one who's going to have to help with the *madrāsah* homework and all the other things and I didn't know, I did not know how to read the Qur'ān. I was now married 4 or 5 years and although Ahmad [husband] had tried but I just never got used to it. That's when I joined Auntie Gaye. And Tayyob was four, it might have been 1993, 1994 I think.

R: So, in 1994 you joined...

SM: I'm sure it was 1994 and that first year that I was there...

R: And how did you get to know about it?

SM: That was actually through Ahmad's cousin's wife. She said to me, I heard about this Mrs Moolla in Bazley Avenue and she gave me the number and I 'phoned Auntie Gaye and she said come over and I arrived...first year I completed, I did everything I needed to do. I learnt my *ṣalāh* I graduated in my first year. And what I liked about being with her was because of her half an hour talks, at the beginning; it wasn't a necessity to dress in black *abāyas* (cloaks). She would state, it's quite ok for you to come in your jeans and a t-shirt, as long as you got a scarf on your head. She mentioned things like Maulānā Yunus Patel had 'phoned her once and said "You need to instil in the girls and women that they have got to dress more conventionally."

She said "I have to allow them to be who they are, as long as they've got a scarf on their head; they come, no matter what they wore." That number was really important to me. Little things she used to say that almost endeared me to her and it was things like, especially if you're a convert, that was what was important to me. Things like when you were going to be buried and only men can go into the grave, and she never said it again. She only said it that once and I've hung onto it like you can't believe. It's things like my brother could actually be there.

She has said things like that, you know, and how she always said you can never forget your parents. Before, you were brought up in a specific way, so if you were brought up in a Christian home or a Hindu home, in a certain culture, it will always be. And once you become a Muslim there's nothing that says you must forget what you were once before.

Whereas, for example, if you go to IPCI²⁹ they say, forget about what you were before, that was the sinning days, hell days, now you got to look forward. She always and to this day she still says it. She has said before that you will die a Christian-Muslim, you will die a Hindu-Muslim. What she is saying is what you were before, you're still are today. Your mother and your father brought you up in a certain way and it's made you ... to me that's very important, that she never says forget what you were. "Don't forget your parents", you know. "You cannot do that, the Qur'ān says you ought to remember your mother and father; you have to see to them. It does not mean that now you and I are Muslims we must forget about them." That's one thing that I find is very good about Aunt Gaye. In that sense she helps a new Muslim.

That's number one and number two obviously is the whole thing about woman, she's very strong in women's rights and as much as she follows the *Shari'ah* she will never ever sway from that but she will insist that a women must be educated, she must be, she must gain the knowledge, don't just accept what your husband says this and therefore it's the way its going to be. He could be contravening Islam and certain laws – "Know what you rights are and follow them!" For example, a lot of women say, "O God, my husband doesn't fast" and she will say: "You cannot do that, you have the right as a woman in Islam to be educated and to go for it. You can do it." So that for me gave me a lot strength, especially because of the type of person I am.

When I was at school I had all the feminist journal / books and I read all of that, I was at odd – one was never going to get married and have children. All of that changed. So, those kind of things, because it was so close to my heart it just strengthened my relationship with Aunt Gaye. She has

²⁹ Islamic Propagation Centre International, based in Durban, founded in 1956 by Ahmed Deedat (d. 2005) and Goolam Hoosein Vanker.

definitely for me - has become- she's almost like my rock, she's like that. She's my bank, my spiritual bank. In the sense that sometimes I say oh God, Islamic Guidance is too much! But when I come home and I think about the experiences of other women like Shehan Paruk who is her sixties. She is also a convert, a new Muslim, and is twenty odd years at Aunty Gaye's school. Shehan said to me I could never ever not come to Islamic Guidance.

It's through that, that I remember the things that I have to do. So that's what I need to remember. I'm still there. There are new women coming there all the time and obviously she repeats herself. But often that reminds you, it keeps you on the right path. And my opinions, in a lot of ways, are very different. And that's from all my readings, personality and character of mine.

R: Still a fighter?

SM: Still a fighter but obviously I learnt a lot of things and it's really that spiritual base, definitely there.

Second Interview

Date of the interview: 18 September 2005

Place: Researcher's home, Durban

SM: I think you better lead me on with questions.

R: Hmm, but I think that we are at a point, since our previous interview... where you mentioned your involvement in teaching...

SM: Okay. Well I started off with teaching. So, I taught there, I think it's about nine years now. I've been a teacher and I taught on Wednesdays only. It was the adult women that I taught. Then I was also made part of the Pledge, which is really only a committee. I was on that, also for about nine years. Then, they asked me to join the board of trustees; after a lot of thought I eventually did join. But then I realised after the first meeting that I had to do more. In order to know what was going on I would have to attend more meetings - a bit of a loose end.

R: When you joined the board of trustees, what happened?

SM: I still carried on with the teaching, because being on the board, I mean, there wasn't really anything to do, it was just to attend meetings. But it was at those meetings I realised that behind the scenes there were things that I didn't know what was happening. I just taught and did my job and went home. So I started on a Thursday morning, I started that and from that it went to a Saturday morning as well, that's when the girls, the orphans come. So now I do that as well. I don't teach on a Saturday, I just oversee, I'm like a supervisor, and I go around and see what's happening. Actually, I don't teach on Wednesdays either. I got taken off teaching and on a Wednesday night, I do what I do on a Saturday morning, I supervise. I

basically make sure that students are happy; teachers are doing their jobs and I do thousand and one other things as well.

R: Give me an idea of what your work entails as a trustee?

SM: As a trustee, okay. Basically what I do is, I'm in charge of the building. So anything that needs to be done in the building, I'm in charge of that and even new...for example, we're going to be extending; I'm in charge of all of that. And I see to basically the admin, when it comes to marks and reports and things like that. I'm in charge of that. Plus we have regular meetings, every Thursday Auntie Gaye, myself and Fauzie Ebrahim, either we sit and have meetings and we discuss basically what's going on at the school, what's happening with the teachers, what's happening with students - why there are so many absentees, how do we need to change things, those kind of things. Then we have the actual meetings with the trustees which is not very often and then maybe it's a report back; I report back on what's happening with the building, bursary forms. In the meeting we also talk about funds, finances...

I know for myself, I've always said that Islamic Guidance, I'm don't want to be stuck there for the rest of my life because there's not much room for growth. So within the school, I had decided that the school has really got me into studying that I'm doing. If it wasn't for the school, I don't think I would have ever gotten to study Islamic studies and then the Honours and the Master degree that I'm doing. I don't think I would have done it without Islamic Guidance and the interest that I've got through the women that I was teaching.

Their problems and the situations that they went through, things like that, very much related to the women issues. That directed me into the area that I've gotten to. In that sense a lot of the modules that I took, that I was

studying, were based on very much on what I was doing at the school. I did it as a back up so that I would have degrees behind me, subjects behind me to back up what I was doing at the school, in that sense. But I was not going to stay there forever, Auntie Gaye has different ideas. I know that she wants me to take over from her in about two years. But I'm very dubious about that. I think it's a hard road to follow, footsteps.

R: In the next 2 years?

SM: That's it. But if you make suggestions, her most common retort is, "as long as I'm around it will be done my way!" As much as she might be stepping down, she is going to be around and it will be done her way. So that is why I'm very sceptical I've actually just left it, I'm not saying yes, I might go my way and she might decide on something else, who knows. And I know ultimately what I want to do is to lecture, that's what I really want to do. That I have started working on...that's what I'm hoping for, to make a difference as a woman.

R: And tell me about your Masters.

SM: What I'm going to be doing? Okay, I've decided that year to do...basically it was going to be women who converted to Islam for the sake of marriage and not because they want to be Muslim. Because they are marrying and therefore they were expected to become Muslims; and the problems that they have encountered. Whether it be religious or cultural or whatever-more along those lines rather than marriage problems. The issues that come with say Christian-Coloured Christian or Indian Christian. I mean they more than likely would have married Indians, going into an Indian culture and Islamic; focussing on those problems.

But the reading I've been doing, the conversation side of it has become quite interesting. I'm focussing on that far more than on the other side of it. I don't know yet and that's why I'm floundering a bit at the moment.

R: I think you're said you went onto do your honours. Problems, women or women experiencing problems. Eh, give me some ideas of these problems.

SM: What the problems are? Okay, I've noticed that over the years and all different people, so whether it's a white Christian woman who is getting married or Indian Hindu woman who is getting married or Christians, mostly Catholics who are coming into Islam, more than likely, they are marrying Indians. And the problems that tend to come up all the time is this whole conflict between Indian culture and Islam. Its culture, you could say Islam has its own cultural way - and the discrepancies that come up all the time in the sense that, instead of women being taught what is essentially Islam is being confused with what isn't.

And it is these problems that come up time and time again. They are highly confused; they don't understand the differences. And then also, the little things, for example the man who had brought them into the fold of Islam, he will go out and be quite happy with his girlfriend wearing miniskirts and strappy tops and you know, wearing lots of make-up. But as soon as it's getting closer to, to getting married, suddenly she's told, "You got to wear" ... and it's normally once they're engaged, you can bet it's about two weeks before the marriage. "You got to wear long skirts, you can't wear those kinds of shirts, you must try to fast..."

And it's almost as if they, the men have suddenly realised, "Oh my gosh, you're going to come into my family, people are going see her everyday, what is my family going to say, 'Look how she looks like!'"

But that's what attracted her to him in the first place and now there's this sudden change and the women pick up on it and they say, "Why was it fine earlier but now it's not?" And it's almost like these things - that they never discussed; they never spoke about. Things like that and that's one lot of the things. They also have major problems with the mothers-in law and the sisters-in law-enormous problems. Fathers-in-law never seem to be a problem. And then there's huge issues that come up, problems that come up with how you need to be with your husband, the way you must cook, the way they are behaving, especially if they're living in the same house.

So many problems that come up - its incorrect information that comes through to these women as well. For example, when they have menses, they're told "you can't cook dinner, you can't make your husband breakfast" and another, "wherever you walk in the house, you have to wash the floors after you because it is now not clean." Just being absolutely ridiculous, the things that they come up! Women think this is the way it is. And, that frightens them because they come in and think Islam is just far too strict, it's far too rigid. "I can't do this and I can't do that," and that causes a hellava lot of problems. The marriage starts to break down, there's fight because the husband will always support the mother, and no matter what. He will listen to mum and he will try and please mum before he pleases his wife; conflicts that comes up all the time. And its literally true ignorance because new Muslims don't understand and it's always too late anyway.

When there doesn't seem to be an explanation or premarital counselling or anything like that. In fact, somebody phoned on Saturday to say she wanted to come for premarital counselling to Aunty Gaye and apparently Aunty Gaye was going to do it, and she said that too many things had cropped up. I don't know what she was going to talk about but I know, for example, when she does conversion, and that's another thing, I sit in as a witness; she always gives a talk to the young women.

And she says things to her like it's a completely different way of life but "you mustn't forget who you were, you mustn't forget your family. But these are the issues that come up and when you have your first argument," something she always says, "when you have your first argument, don't throw it in his face: 'oh! I gave up everything for you; I became a Muslim because of you,' at the end of the day you did, but don't use it as a leverage or bargaining tactic or whatever because it's just not going to work," you know.

And the same with the husband, you know: "Look I brought you in and you were a non-Muslim or whatever. She does give talks to try and make them understand that if you are living with your mother-in-law, you got to remember, she is your husband's mother and you may not like her but you got to respect her. Although these problem arises nine times out of ten.

We've got them, at the school, always, the women are going back to their mothers. Or another thing that happens, the husbands won't let their wives go home for Christmas; they may not visit their mum and dad. Forbidden! We've got one girl whose parents aren't allowed into the house because they're non-Muslim.

Issues like that all the time. It's all that stuff that's so, so totally opposite of what Islam teaches but it's what's done in name of Islam. It's all of these things that have to be changed or rectified.

R: Is Islamic Guidance focus slightly different?

SM: Islamic Guidance is basically there just to teach us all the basic side of Islam, *kalimas* and *ṣalāh*. And if she wants to, move onto Qur'ān. Counselling side of it is solely Auntie Gaye's side of it. And she does not

have any degree or anything like that; it's purely experience and wisdom that Allāh has given her.

R: The relationship between Islamic Guidance, Aunty Gaye running a school, a woman, and the reaction of men and the '*ulamā*'? Have you heard of or do you know of any negative criticism?

SM: I, you know, but that's me. I haven't heard much and I don't get involved, I don't get involved in the community. I stay right out of those kind of things. I do know that, for example, the *Jamī'at al 'Ulamā*', they always know that the women have come from Aunty Gaye because of the way she speaks. They know because Aunty Gaye instils that the women must know their rights. She's very big on that. So, I don't know all the people who are there and I know that some of them get quite frustrated because the women come in feeling *very* confident and *very* strong and knowing certain things. I know they kind of hesitant of these woman.

I do know that but I haven't heard actually anything negative. She was awarded a trophy from an organisation for her service to the *ummah*. Someone from the school collected it on her behalf because she wasn't there. She doesn't attend these things.

I don't know if she mentioned this – about the school? Aunty Gaye could have built the building three times over from the help of the people in the community. But would not be beholden to any body, not going to do what they wanted her to do in the school but wanted to do it her way. That's once again, her stubbornness and her strength coming through because she was not going to do it anybody's way but do it her way. But that was something else that has really driven her but she got there. She did get there in the end. I know in that sense she probably put people's back up. I just heard, just last week actually, the other supervisor she said to me some advice Aunty

Gaye gives, people don't like. I've never heard it. She knows because she's been there much longer than me in that role. I've never heard anything myself but the stuff that I have heard is normally pretty good. There's something that I don't agree with, but she does normally give good, quite good advice.

R: Looking at Aunty Gaye's approach, she imparts some kind of knowledge - do you leave with knowledge you didn't have.

SM: Okay. I arrived there with some knowledge about what she does. She helps you deal with problems that you are going to come up with in your life. She's not an academic, she's not a maths teacher, she doesn't give that kind of advice. She gives you the bread and butter, how to get through marriage problems, children's problems and she gives it all with an Islamic feeling to it. And she will use *ḥadīth* and Qur'ān to back it up.

She will, she has had a call during the week, a counselling call, she will use that as an example. "I feel somebody here whose experiencing the same thing." One thing Aunty Gaye is absolutely excellent at doing and others in the school will tell you that this is what she does. First couple of years that I was there, I would have something that would be troubling me like you can't believe. And I was sitting there and in her first half an hour she would give her talk and you would swear that she was talking to you. That is how effective she is to the problems that are going on in your life, in general.

Because you know, I was having a problem with my son and exactly what I was talking about, she mentioned, it's so weird because I battled to get him to say the first *kalimah* and he couldn't say it, as easy as it was. And she came up with this, it was the story from the time of the Prophet and it was exactly the same thing. Mother experiencing problems and the son couldn't, you know, I think he was dying or something and couldn't say the *kalimah*

and it was because the mother couldn't forgive her son, and it was so weird. For me it was a story just for me. But it could have been for anyone.

Women come up and say to Aunty Gaye, "how did you know I was having that problem?" She doesn't know that you have that problem but she's good in that line. She can talk about problems that you experience. And as I said, it can range from the basic womanly kind of things right through to marriage. That is what's so good about her and it doesn't matter whether you're a doctor or a housewife or a maid, will leave that school having gained knowledge. Most definitely!

R: I get the feeling; she uses a common sense approach.

SM: Absolutely! Absolutely!

The discussion then centred on the researcher's and interviewee's studies and what they expected to achieve.

7.1.5. Analysis and discussion of data³⁰

What gives me inspiration, I tell myself, we are doing something that is working.
Hafsa Moolla

Proactive Da'wah Activism

Moolla's *da'wah* is not the cliché so often projected in discourses that women have rights conferred by Islam that are progressive. It is not a longing for an elusive glory of the "ideal" *ummah*, often expressed in patriarchal modalities; what Vahed (2000a) refers to as nostalgically turning to an invented past of perfect Islamic sociality. Moolla is proactively committed in transforming women's status and their roles through the axiomatic directives and exemplary life of Prophet Muḥammad (God bless him and grant him peace). The importance of education for women and men is foundational to her *da'wah*. Imbued with knowledge a person has the opportunity for self-development and to contribute meaningfully to a just society. "Denied knowledge," asserts Hassan (1999), "Muslim women are denied justice" (p 5). One can argue that denied justice, society is driven by hegemonic notions of power to impose inequalities and oppression.

South African society under apartheid epitomised in practice the power of marginalising and oppressing the majority; injustice perpetrated atrociously. Knowledge is therefore pivotal in Moolla's *da'wah*: imparting knowledge of Islam, knowledge that empowers women to be God-conscious and knowledge that inspires women to acquire higher education. A person whose responsibilities to Allāh is defined, and is encouraged to practice the *Sunnah* of the Prophet is a person who learns to respect human dignity, the right to equality, freedom and justice - universal concepts.

³⁰ The documents in appendix one are referred to in this critical evaluation.

The most powerful *da'wah* resource is one's exemplary behaviour as champions of justice, human welfare and upholding dignity and freedom (Murad no date). Moolla's *da'wah* is her dedication to women's welfare, coaching them in Islamic matters, fostering cordial family ties and showing respect and love to people of other faiths, creed and beliefs, including people who are non-religious and anti-religious.

Multi-Faith Family Structure

Keeping strong family ties even within a multi-faith family structure is part of Moolla's teachings. She encourages her students to keep in contact with their family and friends, respecting and honouring them even though they subscribe to faiths other than Islam. Muslim (the secondary participant, one of Moolla's students) says:

"She has said things like that, you know, and how she always said you can never forget your parents. Before, you were brought up in a specific way, so if you were brought up in a Christian home or a Hindu home, in a certain culture, it will always be. And once you become a Muslim there's nothing that says you must forget what you were once before."

Another statement of Muslim provides further clarity regarding maintaining family relationship:

Whereas, for example, if you go to IPCI they say, forget about what you were before, that was the sinning days, hell days, now you got to look forward. She always and to this day she still says it. She has said before that you will die a Christian-Muslim, you will die a Hindu-Muslim. What she is saying is what you were before, you're still are today. Your mother and your father brought you up in a certain way and it's made you ... to me that's very important, that she never says forget what you were. "Don't forget your parents", you know. "You cannot do that, the Qur'an

says you ought to remember your mother and father; you have to see to them. It does not mean that now you and I are Muslims we must forget about them.” That’s one thing that I find is very good about Aunty Gaye. In that sense she helps a new Muslim.

Humane Interfaith and Interpersonal Relationship

Moolla believes that maintaining a sincerely affable relationship is an Islamic requirement for converts. She emphasises that it is one of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and quotes incidents from his life (God bless him and grant him peace) to support, what Hussain (2003) refers to, the perennial principles of the Qur’ān for humane interfaith behaviour. Esack’s (1997) reference to the “comprehensive embrace of humanity” (p 261) and Hussain’s interfaith expression underpin Moolla’s teachings and her expectations of her students to respect others. She lives by the standards she sets for her students in her interpersonal relationship, acknowledging and reciprocating in matters that affect her and the Islamic Guidance.

“Do you know, every Christmas she gets a card from me? I just felt, she saved us; she respect the way we are living. We don’t want to convert the whole world! We have a lot of non-practising Muslims around us. We want people to love Islam for the sake of Islam.”

Moolla therefore dispels the practice, often due to misinterpretation of the Islamic texts but more especially culturally embedded, that people of other faiths and beliefs should be treated with contempt. Her conduct is one of respect for others as dignified persons. Muslim explains how such notions affect relationships:

“Or another thing that happens, the husbands won’t let their wives go home for Christmas; they may not visit their mum and dad. Forbidden! We’ve got one girl whose parents aren’t allowed into the house because they’re non-Muslim.”

Social Projects

Moolla also focuses in the *da'wah* activities on non-practising Muslims, people who want to adopt Islam and those who have done so. Within this main area of activity she has social projects that provide for the welfare of orphans, students and the poor. She ran a programme for women who eked out a living through salutory but socially inappropriate means such as running shebeens³¹. Instead of condemning them or invoking God's wrath, her approach was to empower these women with survival skills to earn a living that was dignified. The rich were asked to share their wealth with the poor that was channelled through a "*bayt al māl*" established by Moolla. Her concern was the dignity of women who resorted to illegal or anti-social activities, either out of economic necessity or because of misguidance.

Entrepreneurial Intervention

The introduction of the audio-cassette to teach people how to perform *ṣalāh* was an entrepreneurial intervention in the lives of working class people who were in need of guidance. The audio-cassette says Moolla, revolutionised the gap for women who had to balance the demands of working hours, family life and the need to learn the basics of Islam. The audio-cassette allowed people to take their "teacher" home as Moolla jovially remarked.

"You know, you have to ask yourself - I didn't have that kind of training that this book is going to work, that this cassette is going to work. Allāh subḥānahu wa ta 'ālā – and all credit goes to Allāh, because he instilled it in an ordinary housewife who used to make wedding gowns every now and again.

³¹ A small establishment that sells alcoholic beverages illegally or without a licence, traditionally operating in the poorer regions of Ireland, Scotland and South Africa (Encarta dictionary; Barnhart and Barnhart 1992).

Counselling and Humour

Humour permeates Moolla's approach and is a significant tool to connect with people and enables them to remember certain fundamental instructions. She is resourceful and innovative, using common sense and humour as methods to achieve her objectives when called to resolve a problematic situation. She finds her *da'wah* extending into counselling her students who are in abusive marriages or conflictual relationship with their parents. She provides solace and options to salvage a marriage or family relationship, engaging the husbands and other members of the family to resolve their conflicts.

Mediation and counselling are methods Moolla uses to shape and reshape the contours of her students' lives and those of their families. She applies common sense in mediation and counselling, often punctuated with simple anecdotes embedded in the teachings of the Prophet. Her use of *qiṣṣah* (a parable) provides meaningful constructs to resolve crises.

"Yes, Iqbal I do counselling too because my work requires intervention of sorts and common sense, you know, and it produces results."

Muslim alludes to this in the following statement:

"Okay. I arrived there with some knowledge about what she does, is she helps you deal with problems that you are going to come up with in your life. She's not an academic, she's not a maths teacher, she doesn't give that kind of advice. She gives you the bread and butter, how to get through marriage problems, children's problems and she gives it all with an Islamic feel to it. And she will use ḥadīth and Qur'ān to back it up."

Islamic Guidance: Da'wah Centre and Spiritual Empowerment

Islamic Guidance as a *da'wah* centre, a *madrrasah*, includes *ḥajj* and *'umrah* classes throughout the year, training in *ghusl* (washing, bathing) and *janāzah* (funeral prayer), daily afternoon classes and basic training and Qur'anic lessons

on Wednesday evenings. Orphans from north and south localities of Durban metropolitan region attend activities on Saturdays. In all the activities and character development that takes place within Islamic Guidance, Moolla teaches her students to be vigilant about engaging in bad habits, especially gossiping.

It is guidance, Islamic guidance, that Moolla believes would help change people's lives for the better. It is also spiritual empowerment that South Africa needs in nurturing the newfound democracy and she sees Islam making its contribution. Her school and *da'wah* centre that opened in 2001 was appropriately named "Islamic Guidance" having its humble beginnings in 1976 when she first started *da'wah* with the audio-cassette as a "revolutionary" technique in teaching *ṣalāh*.

Moolla's aphorism which is the motto of the Islamic Guidance: "learn Islam, teach Islam and practice Islam" forms the basis for her students and herself in expressing Islamic identities that mediate the challenges of the *ummah* and society. Moolla's woman is one who has a robust spirituality.

"And I have women here," Moolla says, "and this school is 29 years old, twenty-seven years with me; she's the longest. If you stay with somebody twenty-seven years you're not bound, you're not married to that person, not a relation of yours. Such a person has gained love, picked out now and again for doing something wrong, but if they go out of here, they become spiritually strong."

This "spiritual strength" will manifest itself differently in her students but essential it is an anchor of faith and also a link between student and teacher, as Muslim appreciably says that Moolla is "almost like my rock, she's like that. She's my bank, my spiritual bank".

Challenging Dominant Patriarchal Opinions

Her strength is also one of being independent in her epistemic expression of her views. Muslim recounts an incident about the “dress code” that is demanded by the dominant patriarchal / conservative interpretations. Moolla is pragmatic and forthright about her views on dressing; so long as women dress modestly, they are welcome to her classes.

And what I liked about being with her was because of her half an hour talks, at the beginning; it wasn't a necessity to dress in black abāyas, (cloaks). She would state, it's quite ok for you to come in your jeans and a t-shirt, as long as you got a scarf on your head. She mentioned things like Maulānā Yunus Patel had 'phoned her once and said "you need to instil in the girls and women that they have got to dress more conventionally".

She said "I have to allow them to be who they are, as long as they've got a scarf on their head; they come, no matter what they wore." That number was really important to me.

That's number 1 and number 2 obviously is the whole thing about woman, she's very strong in women's rights and as much as she follows the Shari'ah she will never ever sway from that but she will insist that a women must be educated, she must be, she must gain the knowledge, don't just accept what your husband says this and therefore it's the way its going to be. He could be contravening Islam and certain laws – "know what you rights are and follow them!". For example, a lot of women say, "O God, my husband doesn't fast" and she will say : "you cannot do that, you have the right as a woman in Islam to be educated and to go for it. You can do it." So that for me gave me a lot strength, especially because of the type of person I am.

Mentoring as a Leader

Moolla as a mentor and leader is sensitive to the needs and-well being of her students and is perceptive of a disconcerting situation.

"She will, she has had a call during the week, a counselling call, she will use that as an example. "I feel somebody here whose experiencing the same thing." One thing Aunty Gaye [Moolla] is absolutely excellent at doing it and others in the school will tell you that this is what she does. First couple of years that I was there, I would have something that would be troubling me like you can't believe. And I was sitting there and in her first half an hour she would give her talk and you would swear that she was talking to you. That is how effective she is to the problems that are going on in your life; in general."

She respects the relationship between her students and Allāh and there is a reciprocal cordial, respectful relationship between Moolla and her students. Muslim sums it up when she says:

Little things she used to say that almost endeared me to her and it was things like, especially if you're a convert that was what was important to me.

Multiplicity of Islam and Cultures

Teaching Islamic values is teaching principles that surpass ethnicity and cultural restrictions. Young girls and women who attend Moolla's classes are socially stratified, coming from rich, poor and the poorest of the poor families and from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They are single, married, divorced, widowed, part of a polygamous marriage and single parents.

There are cultural diversities and differences in beliefs and customary practices within Islam as they are in other religions such as Christianity (Esposito 2002)

and there are those who see Islam as another name for their culture (Karamustafa 2003). Moolla encounters the negative response from parents whose daughters have become Muslims and are experiencing marital problems. "Cultural particularisms", Karamustafa (2003) says, "is a major force to be reckoned with" (p 101) and Moolla is aware of the strength of culture and sees the need to separate Islam from cultural norms in her teaching, mentoring and counselling.

"... if she has problems with her husband, the mother, her mother hears from her about the problems and she automatically responds, 'I told you so!' You took this "Sulaman" or this "Mohammedan" because as far as they are concerned, Islam is an Indian religion. That is something we must remember and one has to indoctrinate into that woman that Islam is not an Indian religion so that she can take it home to mummy."

Muslim identifies the problem associated with conflating Islamic values and norms with specificities of cultures, especially Indian culture. Vahed (2000a) in his study of Durban Indian Muslims in post-apartheid South Africa, refers to several Muslim communities (not a monolithic one) with different identities, some turning nostalgically to an invented past of perfect Islamic sociality. Interfaith marriages or Muslim women converts in marital relationship may be introduced by husbands and their families to an "Indianised" Islam³². Muslim validates Moolla's approach to teaching Islam and the problems encountered by women when Islam and culture are merged or used interchangeably:

What the problems are? Okay, I've noticed that over the years and all different people, so whether it's a white Christian woman who is getting married or Indian Hindu woman who is getting married or Christians, mostly Catholics who are coming into Islam, more than likely, they are marrying Indians. And the problems that tend to come up all the time is

³² Said Halim Pasha states that "there is no Turkish, Arabian, Persian or Indian Islam" (in Iqbal 1977:156).

this whole conflict between Indian culture and Islam. Its culture, you could say Islam has its own cultural way - and the discrepancies that come up all the time in the sense that, instead of women being taught what is essentially Islam is being confused with what isn't.

Muslim was inspired and informed by the experience at Islamic Guidance to study for a Masters degree that would focus on the effects on marriage of the collapsing of culture and Islam. She believes that the acculturation to an "Indianised" Islam leads to discrepancies in the lives of women converts. The exposure to rigid rules and ritualistic practices based on ignorance frighten women and is the major cause of marital problems.

Conclusion

Moolla's experience and established methodology, spanning three decades (12 years into democracy), is practically instructive. Her *da'wah* is the interfacing of gender, ethnicity, religious, cultural and linguistics differences and the challenges of minority communities within the dynamics of the emerging democracy of the South African society.

Transcending ethnicity and linguistic barriers that tend to fragment and polarise the *ummah*, is a valuable contribution to rebuilding the strands of a strong social fibre. Wadud (2003) calls for objective dialogue, the sharing of experiences and collective practices among Muslims to achieve a pluralistic understanding of Islam; effective unity and empowerment as a single religious minority. For Moolla all these need to be infused in her students so that at home and in public life, they are intellectually and spiritually dynamic and resilient.

"We are moulding so that the product can go out of the school into her home and she is, as they say, a beacon in her house."

7.2. WOOD (MAIN PARTICIPANT)

Date of the interview: 9 July 2005
Place: Wood's home, Durban

7.2.1. Background, Early Life and Community Involvement

Name: Maryam Wood (Marry Loraine de Lange)
Date of Birth: 10 August 1939
Place of Birth: Mageta (Zululand)
Languages: English, Zulu, Afrikaans and Urdu
Area of Expertise: Arts and crafts and sewing.

Maryam Wood was born in Mageta (Zululand) in 1939 to Alfred John de Lange and Thandi Ndluvu. She and her twin brother were raised by her dad who settled in Sydenham, Durban in 1947. Maryam completed her JC (grade 10, junior certificate) which was considered a fine achievement in those days and was generally adequate qualification to obtain a good job.

In 1966 Wood who was 27 years old married Abdul Raffick who later died in a motor vehicle accident. Five years later she married Victor Wood but soon lost her second companion in 1987. She had 12 children whom she had to raise by herself and while attending to their education, felt compelled to focus on the educational needs of other children in the neighbourhood as well.

She recalls her father's advice to her that she must never tell a lie and it was this dictum that brought father and daughter into a somewhat strained relationship when Wood decided to embrace Islam when she was 15 years old.

She was impressed by the conduct and behaviour of their Muslim neighbours in Sydenham when she was about 12 years old. One day when her brother took food over to the neighbour a discussion ensued around dietary stipulation, what was *ḥalāl* (permissible) and what was *ḥarām* (forbidden) for Muslims. Her brother

related to her the explanation of these concepts that eventually made an impact on her life.

Another incident was a snake that coiled itself around a branch of a tree where Wood was taking shelter one Sunday morning. She began to avoid the Sunday services at St. Ann's Church and used to spend the time at an adjoining piece of vacant land. On this occasion Wood saw a snake and terrified as she was she knew she had to remain motionless. More importantly, she knew that she could not scream for help because this would have alerted her father who was at the Church nearby. She was however astonished to see the snake that petrified her, turned around and disappeared.

That night her dad hugged her and asked her what was bothering her. She expressed her desire to revert to Islam but her dad was not pleased because Wood had previously informed him of this. Her neighbour taught her basic Arabic to help her read *du'ā's* (supplication) and simple *sūrah's* (chapters of the Qur'ān) and gave her Islamic literature. Her dad gave her a choice, to stay with him or to leave if she embraced Islam. Wood soon made a decision even though she loved her dad very much and at seventeen embraced Islam and married Abdul Raffick. While pregnant with their fourth child Wood received news that her husband had passed away in an accident.

Da'wah: Madrasah

Wood has been involved in *da'wah* for 28 years. Her method is very simple: she introduces people to Islam generally by talking to them directly about *dīn* (religion); teach those who are interested. She also performs the *nikāḥ* (marriage) that is usually the domain of men and more especially performed by an *'ālim* (Islamic / religious scholar).

Wood's children, especially her daughters were experiencing difficulties at a *madrasah* (Islamic school) in Overport. Unpleasant Urdu words were used in the

presence of other children that demoralised her daughters. This led Wood to be determined to teach her children the basics of Islam and teach them how to read Arabic.

Her quest for Islamic knowledge continued and she met Mr Ahmad Deedat and Mr Vanker of the Islamic Propagation Centre. However, her interest was not comparative religion but to acquire more knowledge about Islam and this brought her into contact with Mr Bam and a teacher, Zohra, who ran a *madrasah* in central Durban. Mr Bam was the founder of the Sabariyyah *madrasah* where Wood received her basic Islamic training that included Islamic history.

She started *madrasah* classes at home (refer to p 267 of appendix two) and with Maulānā Yunus Patel president of the *Jamia't al 'ulamā*, Natal, who brought a teacher Ruqayyah to assist Wood. The classes had a syllabus to follow. She found Maulānā Patel's approach to the learners to be effective, especially his calm manner of explaining matters to the children. Wood soon approached schools where she spoke to teachers about children who needed Islamic teaching and thus began a referral of students to her *madrasah*.

Another significant person was Ḥajjī Aysen (refer to p 268 of appendix two) who assisted in the introduction of Islam. His approach of making *du'ā* in English helped the children to understand the *du'ā*'s and to appreciate its value that were lost to them in Arabic which they were unfamiliar with.

Wood engaged youngsters into discussions about Islam and invited them over to her *madrasah*. She spoke to their parents about their children embracing Islam and after three discussions with their parents the decision was left not with the parents but with the youngsters. She also approached mothers whose children had Muslim names but attended Church or were not practicing Muslims. These children were then taken to her *madrasah* to be given Islamic education.

In one instance, Wood recalls the protracted engagement she had with a grandfather who refused to give consent to allow his grandchildren to become Muslims. He asked her what she would do since he has refused permission. Wood responded that she would ask him again and then once more, after which the children will have to decide for themselves. One day while the grandfather was very ill, he called for Wood and informed her that he was appreciative that she had asked him permission first.

There were other occasions when people called her “names” because of her active *da'wah* within the community. At times, certain Christian groups would stand outside her house “praising the Lord”. In spite of this, Wood maintained a dignified position and engaged the “protesters” into discussions about Islam that eventually led to some of them becoming Muslims. Wood made it her duty to talk about Islam whenever she was in the company of women and this led to many women embracing Islam as their way of life.

She eventually extended her modest house that now has a *madrasah* at the back and an additional room inside the house for sewing. Wood specialises in arts and crafts, particularly quilts. She sells the quilts and pillow cases at a fleamarket, which she has been doing for the past 22 years. The modest income has helped her sustain her *da'wah* and to cater for her family's needs. The income generated from her self-employment made it possible for her to pay off the house and to make extensions to it. The house in Barns Road, Sydenham has been Wood's home for 31 years of which 28 years has served as a *da'wah* centre.

Wood is of the view that the children are hungry after attending school and provides at least one meal to the learners who come to her *madrasah*. She is able to give the children tea and sandwiches with the help of friends who provide milk and bread.

She wanted to perform *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) but could not do so because of financial constraint and her dedication to the learners. Maulānā Patel told her that her *ḥajj* was her *madrasah* until the “call” for *ḥajj* comes from Allāh. There is love and understanding in her home and in the *madrasah*. While poor, she looked after hundreds of children over the years and took special care of their spiritual needs. At the same time, she did not neglect her own children and grandchildren. She is impressed with all of her children with whom there is mutual love and respect and she is very pleased with her one son who is a *ḥāfiẓ* (one who has memorised the entire Qur’ān).

Present Activity

Wood’s *madrasah* still operates afternoon-weekday classes that has a full time teacher, Rashidah, who has been with Wood for 24 years. The *madrasah* functions within a structured programme. Wood’s philosophy is that as long as there are people who want to learn about Islam, she is prepared to teach them. Some of her students have come to her later in life to have their *nikāḥ* performed by her.

She volunteers her services twice weekly to SANZAF where she teaches and empowers women to have skills in arts and crafts. She believes that it is necessary for women to be self reliant rather than live on hand outs. Her life is an example of how she survived through difficult times. Wood maintains that she truly lived a productive life by using her skills in the interest of the community.

Philosophy

Discipline is necessary and plays a primary role in the holistic approach she has adopted in imparting knowledge to the children, both her own (including her grandchildren) and those who attend her *madrasah*. With discipline goes reprimand and Wood believes that people should not be judged but they certainly need to be reprimanded when they do something silly or wrong.

She speaks with contentment when she says that out of hardship comes goodness and it is important to have a positive outlook. The fact that she does not qualify to give *zakāh* because she does not have the wealth does not prevent her from giving. Her *zakāh* she says is the wealth of teaching, of imparting knowledge and empowering women.

Wood avers that Islam is the way of life for her and she is satisfied being a Muslim because Islam ties all Muslims to a *dīn*. Her supplication to Allāh is that He must let her die with *imān* (faith in Allāh).

A few weeks after the interview the researcher went back to Wood to give her a copy of his notes of the interview for her to peruse for any correction that may be required. A week later he was asked to collect some photographs that he requested and the notes were returned without any correction. Wood then commented about the interview and the notes that brought back vivid memories and the one incident he recorded in his notes sent a “chill down her spine”.

The researcher was then asked to give his advice about a 21 year old woman who had started work recently, assisting Wood with sewing. On weekends, she went back to her home in the rural area of Zululand. One day she became ill and her condition was diagnosed as asthmatic. Wood brought her into the main house so that she and her grandson could monitor her condition. During the day, a neighbour was asked to monitor her condition while Wood was away.

A few days later, the young lady recovered and expressed her desire to accept Islam. Wood was taken aback and asked her why she wanted to become a Muslim. The young lady said that she had a profound spiritual experience through her dream and somehow she knew Islam was what she wanted. She also knew that adopting Islam as her way of life would permanently cure her of asthma.

Wood did not know how to react at first; dreaming of Allāh, now *that* was not possible and this troubled her. She was confounded by the notion that changing faiths is supposed to cure an ailment. Then there was the fact that she was young and lived with her family back home and Wood explained the need for the family's consent. The young lady was sent home for the weekend and Wood was hoping she did not return to work. A day later, she returned both excited and agitated. Her mother had no objection to her adopting the new faith but the tribal clan was most unhappy.

The researcher was asked to give his opinion regarding several concerns expressed by Wood, these were: -

- a) A young girl's reasons for accepting Islam: dreaming of Allāh and expecting the adoption of the new faith to cure an ailment.
- b) The clan's objection.

The researcher found himself in his own quandary being asked by a participant to participate in her own plotline. His research was to record her storied life as it looked at her past, or an interpretation of it, both hers and his, what was happening at the present and how all these connected with the future. He began to understand her work, how it contributed to the betterment of the lives of others by empowering them, especially women, sharing her faith and educating them about their new faith so that people could live in a safe environment and be self-reliant.

The dilemma the researcher faced was whether he should venture an opinion, or express his feelings. Should he say, "Sorry, I am doing research and cannot get involved in advising you?" Can the researcher participate in the activity of the researched and yet maintain a level of objectivity? It appeared to be a case of the researcher becoming the researched, it was the case of the interviewee / participant changing the plotline that was carefully thought of, what questions to ask, what it should lead to. Here was a situation of the participant moving out of the centre of the circle with the interviewer moving inwards.

The researcher felt compelled to respond and to record the incident as part of the research. After all, it is not possible to dissociate oneself by treating the participant as an object of study in a laboratory. It is the tension of living at the boundaries, contending terms at the boundaries, terms that are part of all of us (Clandinin and Connelly 2000).

7.2.2. TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW: MARYAM WOOD

Date of the interview: 24 July 2005

Place: Wood's home, Durban

R – Reseacher

W – Maryam Wood

R *Bis-mi-Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, (in the name of Allāh, Full of Compassion, Ever Merciful).

As I explained in my previous interviews, I am doing my doctoral thesis. What I gathered from our discussions is that you did not have problems, generally with men and particularly Muslim men saying to you, and I may be wrong, “why is a Muslim woman doing this kind of work, it’s not her duty, not her place. Did you encounter this kind of reaction?”

W No, I didn’t. Everybody had so much of respect for me. No, I never came across any problem.

R What I established from previous interviews; what I heard was that you had a good relationship with Maulānā Yunus Patel?

W With everybody...

R ... because, generally women who do *da‘wah*, who do what you are doing, are usually told: “This is not what you are supposed to be doing, it’s a man’s work.

W No!

R *Al ḥamdulillāh* (all praise belongs to Allāh)!

W I had my husband and he always gave me permission; I asked my husband permission for what I wanted to do.

R I want to close the interview with this session, so is there anything you want to say about your work. *Al ḥamdulillāh*, I have recorded more or less, you know, what you've done and how you started. Any other thing that comes to mind that has an important place in your heart that reminds you of the work you've done?

W Well, I must tell you one thing that I am so happy to be a Muslim and I love my Allāh because with all the trials and tribulations that I've had, I managed well. You know, when I became a Muslim I lost my parents. When I got married I was expecting my fourth son, I lost my husband, I was six weeks pregnant. And I got that son.

Five years later, I married Mr Wood who became a Muslim to marry me and took me with all my children and treated me like a queen. And my in-laws, you know, from my first marriage, my father in-law used to come here and used to ask me to please see to him the way I used to and he used to come here to my place.

Islam has taught me love, respect, understanding and everybody loves me and everybody respects me because I make sure that what I'm saying is right. I try my best and I try to respect other people and they, of course, they do respect me.

But, when it comes to Islam, I call a spade a spade and there's no getting away. Islam is Islam and they know there's no comparison; you cannot compare this religion with other religions. If you are wanting, you know, to try to be a good Muslim. I only hope that Allāh *subḥānahu wa ta'ālā* (God, the Pure, the Exalted) accepts this from me, because I'm telling you, this

comes from my heart, I have so much love in here, that I'm prepared *inshā'Allāh* (God willing) with Allāh's *qudrah* (God's power) that I must go on doing this thing [*da'wah*] go on doing ...look, this girl³³ that has come, I love her so much like my own child. This is miraculous for me.

R I'm sure you told me previously that your relationship was cordial with people of other faiths such as Christians and Hindus?

W Oh Absolutely! They sit down, they listen to me and even my own people, you know, now that I'm older, before they said what they wanted to say, you know, that it is a heathen religion and all that. But I kept on and I kept away from them but they come to me and they would not come to me in *Ramaḍān*; they don't disturb me in my prayer. Actually, how can I forget this, I had a sister and she wanted me to visit her, you know, we're from different mothers. She wanted me to visit her and whenever I went to her place in Verulam, she would take the pictures off the wall and turn them and wash a place for me to say my prayers. She says you must say your prayers here, my girl.

R She was not a Muslim?

W No, she was not a Muslim. Even when she was so sick, I asked her to become a Muslim. She said: "you want me to become a Muslim when I've finished like this, what the people would say?"

R Tell me something about your empowerment because what I understood is that people have embraced Islam, there are those who work with you, you teach them sewing skills, arts and crafts.

³³ Ayesha Makhoba whose interviewed session follows Wood's.

W Yes, I'm with SANZAF³⁴ now, I'm teaching the ladies whatever I know. I teach it to them, you know, and tell them this is how you have to earn a living. 'It is so embarrassing', I tell them, 'to keep on asking others for something, you ask today, don't go back tomorrow. Earn a little living, sell your stuff, I'll teach you and the next time you can buy your own stuff,' you know what I am saying?

And, of course, over here too, even my neighbours, they're not Muslim even the people here I teach them. I say, 'listen, I'm not going to hide this work you better learn this work. Take it from me, because I cannot die with this secret.' And I'm living off this so I teach it to anybody who wants to learn.

R That's fine, *Jazakallāh* (may God reward you)! Maybe I can interview Ayesha?

W Yes, you can ask her anything.

³⁴ South African National Zakāh Fund.

**7.2.3. TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH AYESHA (MINNIE)
MAKHOBHA (SECONDARY PARTICIPANT)**

Date of the interview: 24 July 2005

Place: Wood's home, Durban

R – Reseacher

M – Ayesha Makhoba (refer to p 271 of appendix two).

R Ignore the tape recorder, it's a small dictaphone. I am studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am studying Muslim women who are doing *da'wah* like mummy (Mrs. Wood). I'm looking at the kind of work they are doing and the kind of challenges they are facing. The last time I was here she mentioned your name and that you were keen in accepting Islam.

I would like to know where you come from, the area, your family history, about your parents and siblings. Why you have come here and how you have come to accept Islam. You may speak in Zulu if that's convenient.

What was your name before you became a Muslim?

A Yes, okay, Minnie.

R Minnie? And your surname?

A Makhoba

R Where do you come from?

A I come from Mandini.

R Mandini? Tell me how is it that from Mandini you ended up here in Sydenham? Are you not at school, have you left school?

A Ya!

R What standard have you done?

A Grade 11

R Grade 11? You have one more grade to go. I know Mrs Wood wants to see you finish your studies, or at least school and then further your studies, *inshā'Allāh*. So you finished grade 11?

A Passed grade 11.

R And your parents, are they alive? Are they still in Mandini?

A No daddy, Mummy is still in Mandini

R And you have come to Durban?

A Yes!

R And when was this?

A Four months ago.

R And why did you come here?

A My Aunt sent me to Maryam to work in the kitchen.

R Tell me what happened? You can speak in Zulu, not a problem.

Translation from Zulu³⁵:

M Whilst I was working, barely a month, I had another asthma attack. Aunt Maryam whom I refer to as mummy or ma, didn't know what to do, but I was saved. The day after the asthma attack, I had a dream. I dreamt as though I was bleeding in a way I cannot explain. Then there was this person wearing white pants and a long dress.

R Long dress?

M Yes, long dress. She asked me what my name was? She said she wanted to inform me that I will not suffer again and that I will never encounter any asthma attack again. I woke up that morning and told ma what I saw in a dream. (I told her) that this person told me I will not suffer again. I just kept thinking about the dream and I interpreted it to mean that I must become a Muslim. I expressed my desire to ma but she ignored me.

I said, 'Ma, why are you ignoring me?' I thought, ya, it's just that I am young therefore she might be thinking I am kidding. I am in her house for just about a month.

Seeing that she was indeed ignoring me, I said to her, 'Ma, I see you're really ignoring me'. Ma continued to cry. I said, 'Ma, I don't want to see you cry. All I'm saying is that we have to speak to my family about this matter about me becoming a Muslim. You should speak to my biological mother.

Ma then told me to go home, I think she wanted me to think about it and to speak to my mother. I then went back to my house in Mandini, clad in full Muslim attire. My mother agreed after I explained to her in detail what prompted me to become a Muslim. She said to me that as long as that is

³⁵Gugulethu Pretty-Rose Gumede translated the script from Zulu into English.

what I wanted she didn't have problems with it. I told her that I was comfortable with what I was starting. I could really feel something in me.

For ages I have been suffering with asthma, right now I feel a big difference by just wanting to become a Muslim, I told her. So, I'm back a few days later and tell ma that my mother said I can become a Muslim but the problem would be the clan. Okay, she explained to me about Islam and I have for the short time I stayed with her noticed she gets up early morning to pray and I used to observe her. She then took me for a wash in the bathroom and then renamed me Ayesha. Ma then invited elders of the clan out of respect and to inform them that I have become Muslim.

R Are you happy?

M Ya, I am happy

R And what plans do you have for the future?

M Ma wants to help me further my studies and I want to do social work next year.

7.2.4. Analysis and discussion of data³⁶

"Out of hardship comes goodness"

Maryam Wood

Overview

Wood did not express a critical view of Muslim men and the conservative '*ulamā*' and no attempts were made by the researcher to present a contrary view. It is her narratives, her storied life and her achievements. It would appear that Wood sees herself in a traditional religious role where women need to have their husbands' permission.

"I had my husband and he always gave me permission; I asked my husband permission for what I wanted to do".

The masculine epistemology of the *ayah* (verse) 34 in chapter 4 places women under the charge of men and various *aḥādīth* purportedly from the Prophet further reduces women to acquiescence in patriarchal dominance. "The Qur'an does not restrict the female," Wadud (1999) argues, "from being in authority, either over other women or over both women and men" (p 89).

However, this does not mean that Wood in her *da'wah* activities seeks permission from men or needs their confirmation. She is cautious not to present a misguided view of Islam for which she relies on the assistance from Muslim scholars, female and male. She admires Maulānā Patel's (of the *Jamī'atul 'ulamā*) approach to the learners, particularly his teaching techniques. In the interviews Wood did not express any experience of criticism from Muslim men about her work, especially her *madrasah*. These could be due to several reasons. It is possible that through the association with and patronage of well known personalities such as Ḥajjī Aysen and Yunus Patel, Wood gained "endorsement."

³⁶ The documents in appendix two are referred to in this critical evaluation.

This does not mean that Wood did not have her own personality profile; her own perseverance and personal sacrifices that led to meaningful contributions. In fact, Aysen and Patel recognised Wood's contribution and their association with her as her 'mentors' established a respectful relationship.

Egalitarian Approach and Methodology

Is Wood then the uncritical, traditional Muslim woman, an '*ālimah* (female Muslim scholar) who follows the "old school"? In spite of what appears to be a traditional conservative role, Wood is a person in her own right, independent and influential. She is conscious of the discrepancy between cultural and traditional norms and Islamic prescriptions. She is further perceptive of the patriarchal extent of the Islamic prescriptions. More importantly, she has acted contrary to those norms and prescriptions where her vocation as an '*ālimah* and her *da'wah* activities demand flexibility and an egalitarian approach.

There are at least six significant indicators in support of Wood's non-traditional position, expansive engagement of *da'wah* and her distinctive method: -

Independent Person

First, her "rebellious" spirit as a child; questioning her beliefs transformed Wood into an independent person. This was the emergence of an enquiring, critical mind that contributed to her development as a "non-conformist" even later in life, including her status as an '*ālimah*. It is prescribed, as it were, that Muslim men in the hierarchical ordering of society, especially *imāms* and the '*ulamā*' perform the *nikāḥ* (marriage). Wood speaks with pride and confidence of performing the *nikāḥ* herself because some of her students preferred having their *nikāḥ* performed by their ex-teacher.

Innovative / Pragmatic

Second, *du'ā* ('supplication' or 'invocation') made in English or in a language other than Arabic is usually frowned upon or criticised as an innovation like the

response to the Arabic *khutbah* or sermon incorporating English or Afrikaans by certain imams (Tayob 1999). Also, *du 'ā* as an effective mode of communication is stifled by the rigour and ritualism prescribed by culture and custom. It is, as Esack (1999) informs us, imprisoned into fixed notions. Ḥajjī Aysen's involvement in Wood's life as an *'ālimah* led to her adopting English as one of the mediums through which children could understand and appreciate their *du 'ā*.

Entrepreneurial Skills

Third, Wood has struggled to eke out a living but has used 'survival strategies' that has enabled her to remain independent. She has used her entrepreneurial skills in arts and crafts, particularly quilt making, and through occupational opportunities like the Sunday stall at the flea market where she sells her quilts and pillow cases. Traditionally, she would be expected to be house-bound investing her labour at home, secluded from public and active economic life.

The income generating occupation serves several purposes: it provides for the running of her *madrasah*, subsistence for her family and with the help of friends, she provides meals for the children who attend her *madrasah*. According to Hassan (2000) the Qur'ān recognises the right to work for every man and woman and the fruit of labour belongs to him or her, whether the work consists of gainful employment or voluntary service.

Direct Approach

Fourth, Wood enlists the support of teachers to identify students who are in need of basic Islamic teachings. She engages youngsters and parents inviting the youth to her *madrasah*. Wood has encouraged mothers whose children, bearing Muslim names, attend Churches, to send them to her *madrasah* to be given Islamic education. Here her approach is direct but not confrontational in her commitment to reach out to Muslims in need of *da 'wah*.

Empowerment / Religious “Other”

Fifth, her *da‘wah* is not confined to imparting Islamic education and conversion. Wood sees empowering others with occupational and income-generating knowledge as part of *da‘wah*. While making her position as a Muslim, as a *dā‘iyah* known to others, she has cultivated a cordial relationship with Christian and Hindu neighbours. Her sharing and transferring of skills and her empowerment programme includes people of other faiths.

“And, of course, over here too, even my neighbours, they’re not Muslim even the people here I teach them. I say, ‘listen, I’m not going to hide this work you better learn this work. Take it from me, because I cannot die with this secret.’ And I’m living off this so I teach it to anybody who wants to learn.”

Exemplary Conduct

Sixth, Wood leads by example whereby her own behaviour and conduct becomes a catalyst for fundamental change and emulation. Makhoba’s interviews and narratives confirm Wood’s approach and the profound impact on her life in a short period. Equally significant is Wood’s cautionary attitude when Makhoba expressed her intention to become a Muslim and the reasons that underlined her intention. Wood initially ignored Makhoba’s interpretation of her dream and the desire to become a Muslim.

“I said, ‘Ma, why are you ignoring me?’ I thought, ya, it’s just that I am young therefore she might be thinking I am kidding. I am in her house for just about a month.

Seeing that she was indeed ignoring me, I said to her, ‘Ma, I see you’re really ignoring me’. Ma continued to cry. I said, ‘Ma, I don’t want to see you cry. All I’m saying is that we have to speak to my family about this

matter about me becoming a Muslim. You should speak to my biological mother.

Ma then told me to go home, I think she wanted me to think about it and to speak to my mother. I then went back to my house in Mandini, clad in full Muslim attire."

Makhoba's desire to become Muslim and her subsequent conversion to Islam was an intense spiritual experience; the journey having started with an encounter with Wood. For Wood, who is not pretentious, she had to synthesise Makhoba's motivation and reasons with her own methodology. The clan's possible objection to Makhoba's conversion and the expectation generated by the dream that the adoption of the new faith would cure an ailment provides an insight to Wood's rational, pragmatic and sensitive methodology.

Wood's *da'wah* is more than conversion and imparting basic Islamic teachings. It is also ensuring that her students acquire secular education. Hence, she is concerned about Makhoba's education, hoping to get her through grade 12 to pursue further studies. This, in turn, reinforces confidence and motivation in Makhoba:

"Ma wants to help me further my studies and I want to do social work next year"

To sum up, Wood's life is reflected in Moosa's (2003) laconic words that "we live out our submission to God in a way that can be seen by those with whom we are in contact" (p 261), living a life as an integral whole. Wood's significant leadership role as an *'ālimah*, and her involvement in *da'wah* activism requires further studies of Muslim women's position in South African society. Women's different roles and perceived marginality and stereotyped descriptions need re-

examination as Sule and Starratt (1991) recommended in their study of the Islamic leadership positions of women in contemporary Kano society in Nigeria.

Her direct contribution in instilling strong Islamic values in children and the youth, investing enormous time and energy, is a major contribution to the reconstruction of a society whose youth are faced with many challenges. Teaching survival skills to women, Muslims and women of other faiths, encouraging them to be self reliant and empowered, to be independent income earners, is another commendable contribution in a country where poverty is extremely high.

“Islam places a high value on education” (Coles 1991:188). This concise statement by Coles in her essay of her research findings of Hausa women’s economic activity, correlates with Wood’s normative approach to *da’wah*. Wood has made noteworthy contribution to moulding and nurturing the youth and empowering women.

CHAPTER 8

COMMUNITY *DA'WAH*

8.1. MULLA (MAIN PARTICIPANT)

Date of the interview: 7 February 2005

Place: Mulla's home, Cape Town

8.1.1. Background, Early Life and Community Involvement

Name: Waradia (Abrahams) Mulla

Date of Birth: 1937

Place of Birth: Cape Town

Languages: English and Afrikaans

Area of Expertise: Working with refugees

Mulla and her late husband Dawood started a soup kitchen in the 1990s during the month of Ramaḍān. This extended to food hampers that they distributed on 'Īd³⁷ in areas where there were poor and the poorest of the poor. These areas included Down, Tafelsig, and Mitchell's Plain.

Dawood's death in 1997 was a temporary setback for her because of his companionship and support for her community involvement. One Friday, during *Jumū'ah* in 1998 at a *masjid*, Mulla met refugee children, three girls and a boy. They were being "pushed" about and this aroused her curiosity. Upon investigating what was happening, she established that the children were asked to move to one side but could not understand English or Afrikaans. She introduced herself to them and realised that they were not South Africans but refugees from Burundi and Rwanda. Mulla introduced herself to the children whom she was

³⁷ The celebration or festivity that is observed twice a year: 'Īd ul *fiṭr* is the celebration a day after the month long fast and 'Īd ul *adhā* on the 10th day of *ḥajj*.

able to identify as Fatima, Khadija, Sulaina and Yahya and they went home with her.

She learnt that the children fled their countries because of the violence and through the Red Cross were brought into South Africa. They were housed in Phillepi under the care of the Catholic Welfare organisation that ran the refugee centre. Mulla found that Muslims were treated well by the South African Christian organisations while no Muslim organisation were involved in helping the refugees.

Mulla took the plight of the refugees to the public through radio interviews and talks she delivered at the University. She also challenged the public by asking how an African can be considered a refugee if he or she was born in the African continent. The other poignant comment was the fact that Africa was home to many exiled South Africans and activists during the harsh realities of the apartheid regime. South African exiles were treated with dignity and love and cared for in the African countries.

It was apparent that xenophobia had affected South Africans and this further demoralised refugees leading to tragic deaths in some instances. In one case, Mulla recalls how a woman was raped and then beaten up. Her desperate attempt to escape through the railway lines resulted in her being electrocuted. Jealousy also plays a part in discriminating against refugees who dress smart, have tertiary education and in certain cases are professionally qualified as medical doctors, teachers and engineers.

Refugees are generally young and their parents pay enormous money, sometimes mothers "pay" with their bodies, to get them across the borders into South Africa. The department of Home Affairs provide a slip of paper to refugees who find shelter in Gugulethu, Nyanga, Langa and other areas. Some are forced to stay in

overcrowded conditions and pay exorbitant rentals for accommodation in backyard shacks and outbuildings.

Refugee Forum

Zowi, a Congolese started a refugee forum that was recognised by the United Nations but later she had to leave South Africa. The Forum was subsequently headed by a Xhosa woman, with Mulla being one of the active members of the Forum. The Forum is involved in counselling refugees infected with HIV-Aids and provides comfort and assistance. Refugees are treated badly at the local government hospitals; the general attitude towards foreigners is appalling. In some instances, the bodies of the deceased in hospitals are not covered because they are refugees. Refugees do not receive money any longer from the United Nations and have to rely on friends. Where local South Africans want to help, they are prevented either by law or by the families of refugees back home.

Mulla attended to the medical needs of a young Congolese boy, Yusuf whom she intended to adopt. She had acquired an insight into the circumstances of refugees and the families they left behind and Yusuf was one who needed a home. The department of Home Affairs refused to grant Mulla the right to be a foster parent to him and sent him back to his biological family even though they did not have the financial means to look after him. The number of refugees were estimated to be 16 000 in and around Cape Town (in 2003). Belville has mainly Somalis who trade at the railway station, taxi ranks and on sidewalks. Some have also employed local South Africans in wholesale businesses they have set up.

New refugees are provided clothes and then provided shelter; women and children are separated from men. Once a week, husbands and fathers are allowed to visit their wives and children. Women are also taken for *Jumū'ah* (Friday prayers). Those who wish to accept Islam are taken to the Muslim Judicial Council by Mulla. Sometimes, Mulla has to secure bail for a refugee who is arrested for working within the restricted period.

Mulla is affectionately referred to as “Mummy” because of her approach of treating refugees with *adab* or respect and love.

AWARDS / RECOGNITION

Mulla was the only Muslim woman involved with refugees. She received the Sunflower Award from the Catholic Church in recognition of her work with refugees.

8.1.2. TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEWS

Date of the interview: 27 June 2005

Place: Mulla's home, Cape Town

R – Researcher

M –Mullah

HK – Haffsa Kagango

A – Abdallah

R *Bis-mi-Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, (in the name of Allāh, Full of Compassion, Ever Merciful).

Thank you for your time, again. This time, if you don't mind, I wish to record the interview and would like you to focus on your activities with the refugees.

M As for those refugees who are not prepared to work, they come after 5:00 pm. They sell needles and make *du'ā'*. They want an easy life. They come to beg and I say to them that after three days you cannot beg, you must work for a living. You are Muslims, you recite so beautifully but you don't come for *Jumū'ah* (Friday prayer). I made a stand and I say to them, 'do not take photos of yourselves, lazy buggers' and I've also said to them, 'please don't take photos on the beach or at the station, because at the station, there is a guy who specialises in taking photographs and that is his livelihood.

Now, Muhammad, he stands there with somebody else's shoes on, with Boeta Ebrahim's shirt on, somebody else's pants on, somebody else's jacket on, and he stands on Table Mountain looking so

beautiful. He then sends those photographs to his parents or to his girlfriend or to his wife or whoever!

In fact, back home they in turn show that photo to some of the relatives and they say: 'you know, Abdul Aziz is doing so well in South Africa, you must also go there'. In the meantime, they come here and make a damn nuisance because they don't want to work, they want money. You give them food, you give them mielie meal, they don't want that. They say 'No, no, no, we want money!' I said to my friend, 'Must I waste my time by giving them R5, R5, R5 every time so that they know there is money to get.'

The other day my friend said they can't take it anymore. I say, 'turn the hosepipe on them. 'It's not a sin! It's not a sin!' I said, 'because that is what I did already. Because when I gave this guy, this begger, he knew me, he was from India, you could see, he had an accent and he knew that he was the "great" guy you know? He comes to the door every time and says 'Mummy, you know what, at Wynberg, at the police station, they sell loose cigarettes'.

I gave him R100.00 and I said, 'Open up a business and I don't want to see you again'. After a couple a months he comes back to me. In Islam, you can only beg for three days, did you hear that? You can only beg for three days and after three days you can ask, 'Can I clean your garden? Mummy, I don't want your money like that. I'm a Muslim, can I clean; can I wash your car?'

Not one of them, [those who beg], not one of them, will say that they want to work for their money. To people like these, I say, 'Don't you dare come near me! I don't want to see your face!' 'I've given

you so much already, I've given you too much and you're still so fifthly. You cannot recite the Qur'ān when you so filthy like this, go wash yourself, clean yourself?'

You [the researcher] must get yourself the movie, Hotel Rwanda. You know, I've got so much of respect for the people now. You know you will sit there and you will hold your head and I was sobbing my heart out, I say: 'Ya (Oh) Allāh, and we keep on talking about the Jews and the holocaust.'

Any way, I asked Rose, 'and what are you Rose?'" And she said, 'My mother is Hutu, my father is Tutsi and they told my father, 'Kill her!' If you don't kill her, we will kill you.'

It was such a hard time, you know. I've got more respect for this woman, I've got much more respect for her. People from Rwanda, people from Congo where children were left orphaned and the people had to flee. They are so educated. 'Profession?' 'I do electrical work? No, he went to varsity. My fridge was damaged and I called one guy, a youngster, a refugee and he had a Cape Town man with him. What must he do? He [the youngster] earns a thousand rand (R1000.00) a month and the thousand rand is for the room. What can he do?

I'll take you there! This man thought it was better to let his house out to the refugees. He has five rooms and getting **five – thousand - rand** a month. Fatu is such a lovely person. She's a lovely person... but these people are so happy to have a home, not Samora Machel (informal settlement), and here and there and there. I'll show as much as I can when I take you to the refugee sites.

R The last time we spoke about the '*ulamā*', your work with refugees and the problems you experienced as a woman? How do you cope with their reaction?

M Look as far as I'm concerned, I do this work for myself, to uplift myself. My photos are not in the paper. I don't want it there! What I do is, I keep on saying one day, *inshā'* Allāh, Allāh *subḥānahu wa ta 'ālā* will say to me, 'And what did you do?' and I would look up and say 'I tried, I tried, I tried my best to do it. You see, this job is not a nice job and your picture is not in the paper. So what they do usually, the people, they phone me, 'I believe you work for the refugees?' 'Yes!' Can you please come and pick up some clothes here for them?'

As I have said on radio: 'I don't want old stuff, what you wore last winter, what you wore last summer, that's what I want and not broken things and smelly things.' Don't put smelly things in the black bin bag. I don't care what is in the bag, if it is smelly I throw it away!' *wa Allāhī* (by God). And the people know that. I give good stuff, I give such nice stuff! And the Indian people from Cape Town they wear sequence on their clothes but other people don't wear it here. So, when I receive these I send it to Durban, you know what is the place where you have orphans; my husband's niece is at the orphanage? What is.. the darul ...?

R Daraul Yatama (The home for the poor and needy)?

M Yes, the Daraul Yatama, before they were in Pine Street, now they've moved. Now I send boxes of clothes for the people there. I say, you have the poor there and I have good clothes because my people know I don't want rubbish. That's why I'm not very liked. I

say you can't give me - don't give me a kilo of sugar, I can't do anything with it, and I say don't tell me, 'I have baked for them and here's some split peas and mixed *dinges* (things) for the soup. We don't eat it. I said, 'Please have respect for these people!' They have their own way, they've have their own cooking, they have their own style. So don't tell me that you want to give them a barley, want to give soup mix which is good for them. 'What do you know what is good for them?' Don't! This is the first time I didn't give lunch for 'Id and I'm making up a hamper now.

This year there's only two Muslims at the college where we go to so I couldn't be unfair. And I invited people and all those who had left, who are on their own now like the people at the five rooms. So, I made a big pot. I made 2kg of rice, 2kg of sugar, 2kg of maize, big oil, I had chicken, I gave them a box of biscuits, I gave them the sweets, I gave them apple juice.

I gave them mayonnaise, now this mayonnaise you know, they love it because they mix it with their salad, you understand? We don't do that, because mayonnaise is a luxury, and I bought a luxury for them because what I like, I would give the next person. So I made that and I gave it to them. Ah, you must meet Abdallah!³⁸ Oh he helped me fantastically. Allāh *subhānahu wa ta'ālā* is so merciful, you know, so he did a lot of hard work for me. *Al ḥamdulillāh*.

And I do what I can do and I grew up like that. I don't go overboard and say yes, I'll do it and I can't. 'Yes, you need something; I'll try to get it.' They need nappies, nappies you know is something, pampers is expensive. Now I got somebody who is dealing with it and I'm very fortunate.

³⁸ secondary participant

R You don't have people refusing..?

M No, no, no, nobody say that, nobody says that. Nobody says that because I'm taking it out of their hand. They're so happy that I'm doing it because I'm taking the work out of their hand. Then you have this certain lady who criticises me - basically don't like me doing the things I do but I said to her, 'you know if you put your finger in the wind it will blow away.' She said things like, 'You get stuff from Canada; money and clothes from Canada and from all places...' I don't take notice of her; I do what I can.

Where people are ill, I will show you photographs, I take them to the hospital. I say, 'when you finish, I will pick you up.' That is what I do. They say, you know, 'Mummy, this woman is in labour!' I respond, 'yes, I'll help you, I'll take her to hospital.'

A friend says to me, 'I don't hear from you, what is happening. So I say to her, 'I'm terribly sorry it's not the fabric that they wanted, I must pick up these jerseys is lying here. And I said right, I'm looking for a place for myself.

She asks someone at home, 'What is his number?' and she picks up a pen and writes something down and I say to myself, 'What is this woman doing?' So I phone this man, her husband's nephew for a place to rent for myself. And, I get the flat which is beautiful. *Alhamdulillah*, I say 'every time You give me a test and I know I don't pass the test, You are merciful towards me.' Do you feel that, can you feel that, when you do something and you so frustrated with yourself because there's so much you want to do, so much you want to do but you cannot get there?

But you know when you are being promoted, something else, somebody else comes around and someone phones, and says, 'Come pick the 5kilos of rice here and come pick up this parcel.' 'I've got some wardrobes here that I'm not using, get a bakkie.' You must know that these people are naked when they come from their countries and naked when they are here and six months we keep them there at the refugee centre. But during the six months you must educate yourself in South Africa; you must also get used to the South African way of life.

But after 6 months, they kick you out and you must get a place and you haven't got a bed, you haven't got a chair, you haven't got a plate, nothing, nothing. Also, "Mummy I must move" and that is the time I come to their rescue. I go to my friends and ask them, 'Where are the curtains you took off last year, where's this and that?'

R How do you get the local people to accept and live with refugees?

M I don't mix with ordinary people who say nasty things... that's dom [stupid]. I work with people who are educated and with friends who will do it for me. Because they know that I'm doing their work too. So I pick up the phone and say, 'Zuleka, I need this!' 'No problem!'

My doctor, she's a lady, oh! I sent her such a beautiful card to thank her. I had to say that to her. She's got two boys, the one is five years old and the other is six and she sent me four bin bags, four bin bags of these children's clothes. New. And her husband is also a doctor, so he went overseas somewhere, and he bought clothes and the labels is still on, it's winter stuff. There are shoes for the refugee children but the women, they don't wear shoes because they don't wear shoes there. So it's very difficult for them. But, the friend that

I had, they are like magic, like even the friend who got me my flat. They ask, 'what are you sending?' I say, 'Yes! Every week for Ramaḍān, every week, they must get a hamper. I'm sending you a pack, ten rand a pack meal, you know.

Isn't Allāh *subḥānahu wa ta'ālā* merciful? Took my husband away from me. Dawood would have said to me, 'Why don't you run after them, they're giving *ṣadaqah*, *zakāh*? It's Ramaḍān, make soup for them' Why must I run after them. I've got a big mouth and I'm not afraid and they say, 'You got a big mouth, come here!' Recently I've even met one of the ministers from parliament. 'How are you? What are doing for the refugees?' I say, 'Mr Minister,' he was the minister of home affairs,' I want to see you, there's a lot of things going on.'

You know what they're doing, especially our Muslims, they give the people work and make them work their guts out from Sunday to Sunday, you will know first hand when you meet Hafsa³⁹. From Sunday to Sunday for R300.00, and you must take your bus fare from there, your train fare from there. And you work, I think she says, you must be there from 8'o clock in the morning to 7'o clock in the night. And humiliate you until you don't even know which way to turn anymore. This girl was sobbing her heart out, he humiliated her and she said to him, 'I don't want to work anymore!' They want to get rich from other people's *ḥaq* [rights], other people's sweat. Then you get the guy, you work, you work for them and you ask for your money, they beat you up. And the man [the owner] said to Salim [refugee employee], 'What are you doing in my office? He says, 'it's raining so bad.' Salim's job was to look after the cars.

³⁹ secondary participant

There is a shop in Wynburg. There is another businessman, his brother is from Durban. I can send people to him and he will keep them and look after them beautifully.

R What happens to the local people? Are they being helped?

M It is our duty but then our people are never sober. You see, this is where it comes, our people are not educated, you go, you are going down this road here, and you'll see them. You go near them, they stink of alcohol, they stink of sweat, or whatever because they still drunk from last night. They're uneducated, there's nothing they can do except beg.

You speak to a man from Burundi or Rwanda, from the Congo or Angola, they've been to the University, you know. And they will tell you, 'I'm an electrical engineer!' He didn't go to boeta Ahmed or boeta so and so to get their "qualification". No, you understand, not 'give me the pliers and give me the iron' working as a so called apprentice. The refugees have proper qualification, 'I am a computer technician!' They are educated people. When I was invited to the University (of Cape Town) I shared all these with the students.

Hafsa was a secretary at Hilton Hotel in Burundi. If you look at the women, they say 'Mummy', the respect they show, 'I' need help!' So when I met Hafsa, I asked:

'What is your name?'

'Tatu.'

'What does it mean?'

‘My father had three daughters so he says number 1, number 2 and then number three, Tatu.’

So she says, ‘Please help us!’

Tatu’s husband was so rich, they had green ginger roots farms for Africa and then the Hutus came. They destroyed everything. Killed her husband in front of her and her three children. She ran with the others and her little ones and there they don’t ask ‘What and who and how?’ They ran into a shack and managed to escape but the boy was burnt (refer to p 277 of appendix three). Not her little boy. But they shot her at the back, and those who helped her, all they could do was to dig out the bullet. She has married again here in South Africa because all her countrymen are dead. Do you remember the time the *ṣaḥābah* of Madīnah (the Prophet’s companions) looked after the people of Makkah during the time of the Prophet. Aren’t they [the refugees] better than us? ‘I will look after you!’ he says to the widow. And the other wife is quite happy like that.

Their attitude is, and I’ve seen it already. ‘You know mummy’, and I say, ‘Are you comfortable with your husband having another wife?’ She says, ‘Ya, if I’m sick she looks after me. We take care of each other’. Not we, who, what, we so jealous, it’s unbelievable because he’s got this woman and that, that. The only people who marry the locals are the Senegalese, they get married to Xhosa woman. But then a Xhosa woman knows why she’s getting married and she’s comfortable and she will have a baby as soon as possible. She’s now in her cocoon, she doesn’t work, she gets dressed up, she gets treated as a wife, her husband doesn’t mess around with other women. And they got the cheek to say, ‘If my husband does something wrong I’ll deal with him’.

R Do the Xosa women embrace Islam?

M You know this is what we are fighting for; this is what we are fighting about. They get married to these women and they come every Saturday night. They come here for *ta'lim* [Islamic lessons] because their wives do you teach them basics like how to clean themselves?

I went to a wedding now. No, no, no! People from Rwanda, don't get married to people from the Congo, they get married to their own kind and I'm very happy about it. I'm very, very happy about that and I say, 'Keep it there!' I say, 'Why are you speaking English to your child? Speak your language; she mustn't, he mustn't ever forget who she is, he is. She's got roots. She can learn English in school but they must never forget where they come from. Never!' Am I right or am I wrong? 'Don't be ashamed of where you come from and tell them!'

R Do the '*ulamā*' and other Muslim organisations help you?

I don't ask for assistance! They cannot provide assistance because they tell you straight that they got their own work set out. And there is so much poverty, which is also throughout the Western Cape. Yes, if one or two refugees go to them, they give but they have 1000, 2000 South Africans on their papers. There is this *Mustadafin*⁴⁰ and that lady, she helps only the Blacks. She's a local woman, like the Black Mother Teresa. She's got her own group.

⁴⁰ The Mustadafin Foundation was established in 1986 in Belgravia, Cape Town as a social welfare organisation to empower the needy, the destitute and the deprived so that they may participate in the running of their own affairs. The motto of the organisation is "*If every man helps his neighbour, then who will need help?*"

I give what I can, I had a lot of clothes because the Old Age home gives clothes to the Zakah Fund. None of them know me and when I went there, I said I am Mrs. Mulla. They said ‘Are you Mrs Mulla?’ ‘From the refugee forum?’ I say, ‘Yes, I am!’

Unfortunately, the Wynberg Refugee forum is closed today, so we can’t go there. This is where the refugees go to when they need things. A lady from the forum asked me for clothes for new born babies and I in turn will go around and say I need this, this and that. And it comes, Allāh *subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā* is so merciful; He will send me to the people!

[Discussions followed about the photographs and copies were given to researcher. These are included in appendix three.]

8.1.3. KAGANGO (SECONDARY PARTICIPANT)

Date of the interview: 27 June 2005

Place: Bonne Esperance, Refugee shelter in Philippi,
Cape Town

INTERVIEW with Haffsa Kagango (HK) at the 'Bonne Esperance, Refugee shelter for women and children' in Philippi, Cape Town. Mrs. Mulla introduces researcher to the refugees, women and children, (refer to p 274 of appendix three).

R What is your name?

HK Haffsa Kagango!

R Where are you from?

HK I'm from Burundi, but I born in Tanzania.

R And how long are you here in South Africa?

HK 7 months.

R Just ignore this tape recorder; relate to me your experience. How you got to know Mrs. Moolla, your hardship, your work here in Cape Town for this Muslim businessman. How did you get the job?

HK I got it from Mummy.

R And what happened? Are you still working there?

HK No, I stop now working there, after I get trouble I say I must stop this work.

R What was your hours of work?

HK The hours? I use to start at 9 o'clock sometimes, sometimes up to 5, sometimes work to 6, Monday to Saturday.

R And how much did you earn?

HK They give me R300.00

R R300.00?

HK Ya.

R Per week?

HK Ya.

R You had to travel by taxi?

HK Yes!

R And how much did that cost you?

HK Say R100 per week

R And so, why did you leave?

HK I leave there because I got to trouble for long time. Always they trouble me, disturb me, I not like working anymore.

M What did they do with your bag which you found it in the toilet?

HK One day, one lady...I was outside, so I was outside and when I came, she went to the toilet and she told the other people 'I found a bag in the toilet'

The boss asked, 'Whose the bag for, for another lady?

'No, it's not for another lady, it's for Haffsa.' She says it's for me.

She brought the bag and I say, 'Yes, it's mine.' My boss asks why I take bag to toilet but my bag always staying there to the counter. How can you take the bag when there's always people there [in the shop].

[Ms. Kagango is upset]

R How did you get to know mummy?

HK I know eh, mummy from Bonne Esperance. I'd like to say thank you very much. She helped me with everything, she's like my mummy in South Africa.

The researcher together with Mulla and Kagango then talked to the children and women refugees at the centre. (refer to p 273 of appendix three).

8.1.4. ABDALLAH (SECONDARY PARTICIPANT)

Date of the interview: 27 June 2005

Place: Abdallah's home, Cape Town

INTERVIEW with Abdallah (A) at his flat, Cape Town. Mrs. Mulla introduces researcher to Abdallah (refer to p 275 of appendix three).

M This is Sayed-Iqbal

A *Assalāmu 'alaykum* (God's peace be upon you.)

R *Wa 'alaykumussalām waraḥmatullah* (and God's peace and mercy be upon you).

M He wants to speak to you can we go upstairs?

A Yes, you're welcome!

R Are you working?

A I was lucky to get work because by the time I left Burundi, I'm from Burundi where I was doing trucking job, I got here to South Africa where I studied and I got my code 15 license. I am now doing a trucking job here. By the time my family came down, because they couldn't speak English, luckily because (can't understand) they said to me, the main reason was to have other Burundian people so we surround each other because the communication is very, very extensive. We managed to get money, most of the refugees come here communicating over IT because Telkom is very expensive. We didn't get any help until we met Aunty Mulla who is helping us, *al hamdulillāh*.

R Tell me about the rental here?

A It's expensive, very, very expensive. I am lucky now even though my rental is R2000.00, it's now affordable for me,. Other places you pay over R2000.00, it's about R2500.00 to R3500.00.

R And how long are you here?

A I'm in South Africa for six years.

R How did you get to know Mrs Mullah?

A: We met somewhere at a wedding. There is a movie about Islam called the "Message". I made copies for other brothers so that they can see, they can watch and learn a little bit. Because, all the time we're watching things on TV that are not right. So, she said she wanted a copy and I heard about her and knew her from others for a long time but did not meet her, did not have communication, contact like now. This place was owned by Trafalgar and then by another agent and from there one guy bought the building, a Muslim guy, a doctor.

M: Again Muslim, they're not worried.

A: He's not worried about the conditions, we have to fix things. They don't do nothing. Only month end when you don't pay then there's problem. But in our case, it's better because I can afford a little bit more but there are refugees where they're in very bad situation. They've got work but that work just pays the rental.

Some of the places they rent it is about R2000.00 or R2500.00, just for two bedrooms so the man and his family are sleeping, staying in one room and another room has 2,3,4 guys which they can contribute together to pay the rent. And you find his salary is just for rent. So food is a problem, school is a problem; I mean, clothes is a problem, so there's no support, nothing.

R: Nothing from the government.

A: Nothing, nothing at all, you get papers saying go find a job. At least they can try and support people for school, people could go to school easily. To provide the facility and for those who are qualified, at least try and help to find a job. Because most of us, we went to school, we studied but when we get here our qualification doesn't work because some of us, it is in French.

Our diploma is not recognised because it comes from other countries but on the technical side you get qualification. But you lose because the qualification is not recognised, and you don't get support to go to University so you end up at technical school. It's very, very tough surviving for living.

Another thing is that they only get security jobs, and security job is dangerous. So, you find, the only way you can survive, the refugee can survive is through the security jobs and they won't be able to get it. You have to go through the government because you have to get a SOB certificate⁴¹. You have to go through that channel to get the SOB but you don't get SOB at all.

⁴¹ A certificate issued by the Security Officer's Board (SOB) under the Private Security Industry Regulation Act 56 of 2001 to refugees who want employment with security companies. The SOB has now been replaced with Security Industry Regulatory Authority (SAIRA).

So they have to do something. You'll find one person using the same document to the department so they have to change their name, change their name, to survive. Last week, they chased them away, about 40 refugees, one of the companies in Cape Town. They found that one document is being used by 10 people, the other document for 10 people because the government can't give them the chance to apply for SOB. They are told, they must have permanent residency or refugee identity which is a long procedure to get it. It can even take up to ten years to get that. So it's really, really tough. Really, really tough.

M Unfortunately time is so limited. Can you remember an incident on your way to Muizenberg you know, where there is a refugee centre, a refugee was assaulted. He tells the police he knows who it is and they didn't do anything. Now there, I give stuffs there too. So I came there on *'Id*, you know to give parcels; I gave parcels to them.

And I said to a woman there, 'You got parcels already from the mosque?' because they built a *masjid* there. She said to me, 'Mummy Moolla', last year they got something, 'this year, they gave us bunch of carrots.' They were asked, 'Where's your passport? Where's your I.D?' Can you believe it? So, I went to Ebrahim, the man in charge and who prays every night in the *masjid*, every night, every *waqt* (time).

That is nothing, they were Catholics, both of them (husband and wife) were Catholics. He had already embraced Islam before he got married when he was over there. He said to me afterwards he was not going to force his wife. When she came here and then of course, I don't say me. I don't say to people it is me but meeting me, being nice to her and this and that this is Islam and then tells me, 'mummy,

I want to become Muslim! I've already got my name; I want to be Āmina and I have three daughters and want to give them Muslim names.' That woman is dressed like a Muslim and is in the mosque every day but I have to visit them and tell them how upset I am about the carrots.

8.1.5. Analysis and discussion of data ⁴²

The poverty level in South Africa stood at about 46% in 2002 with rural black Africans pensioners being the poorest (Moller and Ferreira 2003). Some of the poor and the homeless are resourceful in exploring avenues for survival and are self-employed as street vendors and car guards. Since 1993 when South Africa signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and with the introduction of the Refugee Act in 1998, refugees and asylum seekers have increased. The media according to Palmary (2002) has played a dual role, fuelling hostility (xenophobia) by reporting about 'floods' of illegal immigrants coming into South Africa and generating sympathy by referring to the circumstances (e.g. fleeing war torn countries) of the refugees.

The immigrant population experience many difficulties that include resistance to integration within the *ummah* (where refugees are Muslims) and within the larger South African society and young girls forced into prostitution (Mohammed 2006). Some of the other challenges affecting immigrants are the inefficient processing of permits and securing basic necessities. The delay in processing permits results in refugees being unable to have access to vital services such as food, health and shelter or enter the labour market.

They are "forced to rely only on informal work such as street trading and car guarding" Palmary (2002:9) bringing them into conflict with competing local interests and the authorities. Information on human rights practices (*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* 2006) show xenophobic related violence and refugees and asylum seekers being abused by immigration officials who are guilty of repatriating refugees immediately upon arrival into South Africa.

⁴² The documents in appendix three are referred to in this critical evaluation.

Da'wah Activism and Masjid

Mulla's *da'wah* activism started as a soup kitchen that extended to food hampers she distributed to the poor in the Western Cape districts of Down, Tafelsig, and Mitchell's Plain. It was the refugee children from Burundi and Rwanda, however, whom she encountered in the *masjid* that connected her with the trials and tribulations of refugees. This eventually brought her into contact with activists like Zowi, a Congolese refugee, drawing her into the affairs of the refugee forum on which she still serves an active member.

The *masjid* plays a crucial part in Mulla's work where she meets refugees and anyone who is able to assist them. She is not impressed with the sermons and talks delivered at the *masjid* because the discursive polemics and exegesis do not benefit the victims of war and curb local exploitation nor is there any motivation or warnings from the *imāms* and '*ulamā*' to involve Muslims to improve the lives of refugees. The *masjid* seemed disconnected from the lives of people and the sermonic praxis further alienates Islam from society.

Poverty – Entrepreneurial Solutions

Mulla's experience with refugees show that South Africans are not amenable to render assistance and organisations established to help the poor are already burdened. *"I don't ask for assistance!"* she remarked when she spoke of the organisations she previously approached for aid. *"They cannot provide assistance because they tell you straight that they got their own work set out. And there is so much poverty, which is also throughout the Western Cape."*

Women and Public Participation

The *fatwā* or legal response of the Permanent Council for Scientific Research and Legal Opinions, the official ('*ulamā*') organisation for the Saudi Arabian government reflects those of the conservative South African '*ulamā*'. Women need to be protected from the "wolves of humanity" (El Fadl 2001:287), Satan

uses women to tempt men and their promiscuity such as driving leads to the collapse of all of society.

Regarding such conservative views, Mulla's public engagement with refugees is therefore conceptualised as "undesirable" for a Muslim woman. She is however, "unrepentant" and considers it her Islamic responsibility and is undaunted by the callous response from and verbal abuse by men to her *da'wah* work. She is the only hope for refugees who trust her and rely on her to respond late at night to life threatening situations. She recounts how she had to rush a pregnant mother to hospital when she received a call that the woman was in labour.

Her activity is not publicised and it is through word of mouth that concerned people contact her to donate clothes.

Look as far as I'm concerned, I do this work for myself, to uplift myself. My photos are not in the paper. I don't want it there! What I do is, I keep on saying one day, inshā'Allāh, Allāh subhānahu wa ta'ālā will say to me, 'and what did you do?' and I would look up and say 'I tried, I tried, I tried my best to do it. You see, this job is not a nice job and your picture is not in the paper. So what they do usually, the people, they phone me, 'I believe you work for the refugees?' 'Yes!' Can you please come and pick up some clothes here for them?'

Uncompromising, Empathetic and Affectionate

Mulla as a Muslim woman is uncompromising in expressing her feelings about the violation of the rights of refugees and illegal immigrants by South Africans. She is equally categorical in her direct criticisms to immigrants who succumb to the "easy" life of begging and handouts. She maintains that people must be guided to help themselves, those who are unwilling have no place in her programme.

“Not one of them, [those who beg], not one of them, will say that they want to work for their money. To people like these, I say, ‘don’t you dare come near me! I don’t want to see your face!’”

Mulla speaks with respect and affection when referring to people from Rwanda and Congo. She explains that they are prepared to do any work to sustain themselves and their families even though they may be professionally qualified as doctors, educators and technicians. Some resort to self-employment, running internet cafés from their homes like Abdallah (secondary participant), who through the meagre income provides moral and whatever financial support possible to fellow refugees in his neighbourhood. Internet is a cost effective means for refugees to communicate with friends and families back home, Abdallah explains, because the cost of Telkom’s telephone charges are very expensive. Abdallah obtained his code 15 driver’s license in South Africa, and was able to do get a job driving trucks, work he used to do in Burundi. Mulla helped him and together they have provided assistance to other Burundians.

Exploitation of Refugee Tenants

The refugees like Abdallah are exploited by exorbitant rentals and subjected to substandard living conditions. Mohamed (2006) found that foreign nationals and refugees as growing community have added to the demand for rental stock and as tenants are the second most vulnerable group who bear the brunt of violent illegal actions by unscrupulous landlords. Abdallah said that the flat he occupies had changed ownership and the new landlord was a Muslim doctor. Mulla says that Muslims are not concerned about the conditions under which their tenants live and generally are not concerned about the plight of refugees. Abdallah expresses the sentiments of other refugees that they vulnerable as tenants and as people waiting for confirmation of their status as asylum seekers and relief from the South African government. He says that “it is tough surviving” and this is intensified by the unscrupulous conduct of landlords.

"He's [landlord] not worried about the conditions, we have to fix things. They don't do nothing. Only month end when you don't pay then there's problem. But in our case, it's better because I can afford a little bit more but there are refugees where they're in very bad situation. They've got work but that work they just pay rent. Some of the places they rent it is about R 2000.00, R 2500.00, just for two bedrooms so the man and his family are sleeping, staying in one room and another room has 2,3,4 guys which they can contribute together to pay the rent. And you find his salary is just for rent. So food is a problem, school is a problem; I mean, clothes is a problem, so there's no support, nothing."

Exploitation of Refugee Labour

Kagango's (secondary participant) experience with a Muslim employer is another example of the levels of exploitation that Mulla has exposed. Mulla is critical and extremely upset of the treatment of refugee workers:

"You know what they're doing, especially our Muslims, they give the people work and make them work their guts out from Sunday to Sunday, you will know first hand when you meet Hafsa. From Sunday to Sunday for R300.00, and you must take your bus fare from there, your train fare from there. And you work, I think she says, you must be there from 8 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock in the night. And humiliate you until you don't even know which way to turn anymore. This girl was sobbing her heart out, he humiliated her and she said to him, 'I don't want to work anymore!' They want to get rich from other people's haq [rights], other people's sweat."

Mulla is of course more concerned with providing relief and finding alternatives for people like Kagango but is deeply troubled by the abuse of refugees, particularly women.

Christian Shelter Caring for Muslims

At the Bonne Esperance Refugee Shelter in Phillepi, Mulla works with women and children who are predominantly Christians. Muslims in this Catholic Welfare organisation are treated well, engendering a symbiotic relationship. She respects the space given to her as the only Muslim woman whose voluntary services are welcomed. Those who do express their intention of becoming a Muslim or Muslims who are in need of basic Islamic education approach Mulla for assistance. The respect to people of other faiths for Mulla is one of the fundamental Islamic requirements. Her respect and affection are reciprocated and she is affectionately referred to as “Mummy”.

Conclusion

Mulla’s work with orphans, assisting refugees who are exploited as labourers and as tenants, comforting victims of intolerance due to xenophobia and attending to those who wish to convert to Islam are positive contributions to the reconstruction and development of the South African society. She provides strength, solace and solutions to people who feel dejected and dehumanised; identifying and locating opportunities for them to use their skills.

Despite the limited resources and constraint generosity from people, Mulla believes that whatever help she can give is from her deep commitment to please Allāh which is also spiritually rewarding. She believes that Allāh has commanded Muslims to respond to the needs of the poor and wayfarer, and refugees and destitute immigrants qualify in both respects of the Qur’anic injunctions.

Mohammed (2006) refers to a gap between the non-responsiveness of local services and the needs of Muslim refugees and suggests that big businesses, lobbyists, and the government need to unite to restore independence and dignity to refugees. Mulla’s sterling *da’wah* work is of an individual Muslim woman who has to compete against the patriarchalism of society and an environment

dominated by hostile responses of conservative Muslims, as she gives real meaning to the concept of dignity and human rights.

8.2. HASSIM (MAIN PARTICIPANT)

8.2.1. Background, Early Life and Community Involvement

Date of the interview: 16 October 2004
Place: Hassim' office at Islamic Relief Fund,
Johannesburg

Name: Soraya Hassim
Date of Birth: 1936
Place of Birth: Fietas (Johannesburg)
Established: Islamic Relief Fund (IRF)

Background: Early Life

Soraya Hassim was born in 1936 to Maganlal Karsands Garagh and Latchmie in Fietas (Johannesburg). Her father was a civil engineer and her mother was a teacher. At the age of eight she reverted (accepted Islam). She was sensitive to the needs of people, and, the poverty in her neighbourhood awakened in her the spirit of selfless action. She was later to have her whole life anchored in *da'wah*.

As a young child, the *adhān* (call to prayer) in the early hours of the morning woke her up. The *adhān* to her was a melody that invoked in her a spontaneous reaction. Her eyes opened as she sat up and her hands raised in *du'ā'* (supplication). It was an inspiration, and experience beyond explanation, she vividly recalls. Born into a family who practiced the Hindu faith, she was one of nine children. Hassim is emphatic that it was the *adhān* that led her to adopt the Islamic way of life and not Muslims.

She expressed her desire to adopt Islam as her way of life to a Muslim friend who took Hassim to her grandfather who was the *Imām* (a person who leads the *ṣalāh*; spiritual guide) of a *masjid* (mosque). She was critical and introspective as a young child and when informed by the *Imām* what she should not do, she

enquired what were the things she could do. She married Hassim Hassim on 23rd July 1958 and has three children. Her husband died in November 1998, leaving her a piece of land bought for an Islamic Centre she intends to establish.

Community Involvement

In 1960 Hassim was the first person to alert the government of children addicted to sniffing glue. Children who needed food, clothing and a home. About this time a woman approached Hassim for domestic work. She did not want money as a handout but wanted to earn it. Hassim provided employment to the woman who needed the money to take care of her six children since her husband died in a train accident. Hassim later adopted the entire Orlando (in Soweto) family. The children were sent to school, one qualified as a teacher, another as a nurse. The adopted children have grandchildren and still keep in touch with Hassim.

The appalling living conditions in the “townships” like Soweto affected Hassim. The turning point for Hassim was the type of houses with small windows people were forced to occupy, condensed milk tins used as cups and the plight of the people in the inner city, the “glue-sniffers”. Her public involvement led her to join women’s groups such as the “Woman of Peace” and she was one of the founding member of “Operation Hunger”.

Islamic Relief Fund (IRF)

In 1968, Hassim established the “Islamic Relief Fund” and is still actively involved in the many projects. As a woman in a society that is very much patriarchal, Hassim has experienced many obstacles. As a Muslim woman, the obstacles become even more challenging. Certain Muslim bodies want to see the closure of the Islamic Relief Fund (IRF). Fund raising for the IRF poses the biggest challenge as it does for most non Governmental Organisations (NGO’s). Without a “Letter of Authorisation” from certain “certifying” religious bodies, Muslims are generally reluctant to provide funding or donations. Hassim believes

that she works for Allāh and not for organisations and refuses to subject the IRF to certain bodies that has a poor track record in community projects.

Awards / Recognition

Hassim has received numerous national and international recognition for her life-long work, these include:

1988 – The Malaysian government for her *da'wah* work.

1985 – Indicator, local community newspaper gave her the Human Rights Award for her work among the homeless and children.

The Star referred to her as the “unsung hero” during its 100th year Star award. In 1980 the Islamic Republic of Iran invited her to Iran. By early 2004, some 16000 people reverted to Islam as a direct result of Hassim’s involvement through the many projects run by IRF. Hassim has records of the reverts who are mainly black South Africans but among the everts are also Jews and “whites”. One of the persons who accepted Islam is a 107 year-old woman. Hassim also has a follow up programme to assist and “monitor” the socialisation of “non”-Muslims.

In 2004, Hassim’s activities included feeding 600 children everyday (started in 1983) and 800 newborn babies.

Activities of the IRF

Some of the activities that are listed below have as their objectives bringing relief to the poor and educating and empowering the masses.

- Provides shelters for “street families”
- Educate people to become self-reliant through skills training that include welding, sewing, woodwork, car washers.
- Intervention with street children who are addicted to drugs
- Feeding projects that include soup kitchens at schools.
- Gardening

- Training people to cook food in a healthy way
- Adult *madrasah* classes
- Work with disabled, especially children

The Health Care Centre in the Kliptown Squatter Camp is one of several new projects. Through the IRF, Hassim has managed to erect two prefab buildings on a site in Kliptown Squatter Camp. 60 patients who suffer from TB and HIV and Aids were identified. Approximately 300 orphaned children who also suffer from Aids were identified (refer to p 284 of appendix four). Two prefabs were erected, one for out-patients and the other for counselling and orphans. Funds are raised to run the health care centre that includes providing medication and food (refer to p 283 of appendix four).

Palm Springs Mosque and Islamic Centre

The construction of a *masjid* for the black community started in February 2005. The Islamic Society of Pretoria responded to Hassim's appeal for a *masjid* and undertook to cover the cost of R 500 000.00 that will include facilities to cater for men and women. An additional R400 000.00 was required for the construction of a hall, classrooms for *madassah*, a *ghusal* area for funerals and quarters for an *Imām*.

Water Tank (with Kitchen & Classroom)

The first water tank with a solar system for hot water, a kitchen and classrooms for a *madrasah* were erected to cater for approximately 60 children together with a crèche facility. An unemployed mother who was living under very difficult conditions started a crèche in her backyard to earn a living in winter.

Hassim appealed to donors to assist in establishing 10 such crèche facilities for underprivileged communities to provide decent care and education to the poor children. The crèche would also provide employment opportunities to struggling mothers. Hassim sent out letters of appeal that indicated the minimum costs of

approximately R30 000.00 per crèche facility that was required. Money was needed for a total of ten such facilities to have the project up and running.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

PRESENT

(Refer to p 285-289 of appendix four): -

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Feeding schemes through 40 kitchens in black areas | 21 kitchens feeding
10 000 people per week |
| • School feeding in 6 schools | 12 schools (6 000) learners |
| • Building 7 <i>madāris</i> (Islamic schools) | |
| • A new Islamic Centre in Palm Springs | |
| • Purchase of an existing school to conduct Islamic Arabic classes and technical skills Training | Land donated by her husband |
| • Building of <i>madāris</i> , Jama`āt Khanas and class-rooms in the rural area of Mpumalanga province (previous: 31 <i>madāris</i> reduced to seven because of inadequate funding.
1 000 Learners are provided daily education. | |

8.2.2. TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW

Date of the interview: 25 January 2005

Place: Hassim' office at Islamic Relief Fund,
Johannesburg

Observation: Fourth interview included tape recording the session and selecting from the myriad of photographs and articles, ones that were "relevant" to the study.

As anticipated, the tape recorder was a daunting device that immediately put Hassim on guard. This, in spite of the previous interviews, and the many discussions in between the interviews. The expression and gesture during this taped session indicated a studied and strained response. After switching off the device, Hassim was relaxed and quite spontaneous. The one comment she made cut through the crux of the challenges women like her face in doing *da'wah*. She said that men will have to account to God why they prevented women from doing *da'wah* since women have produced excellent results. God would say to men that many people would have adopted Islam as their way of life had they not prevented women from *da'wah*. She said that her field workers encountered hardships because their husbands often gave them a choice: "should you volunteer your services to the Islamic Relief Fund, then don't come back!"

INTERVIEW

R *Bis-mi-Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, (in the name of Allāh, Full of Compassion, Ever Merciful).

I intend taping this session so that I am able to quote you directly and include this interview with the previous discussions we had. Just ignore the tape recorder. I'm looking at how you've managed to do *da'wah* over so many years, over decades. What kind of problems have you had as a Muslim woman? What was the reaction of the '*ulamā*' and Muslim men towards you, working out there, working with children, working with men.

It's a world phenomenon, especially for Muslim women that, in spite of the back lash, the constraints and so on, *al ḥamdulillāh* (all praise belongs to Allāh) they still make it. Is it simply because women see themselves as playing the role Allāh expects them to?

- H You know, when I first started to work, I used to go out and do the feeding schemes, etc., and from there, it started growing, I just wondered if I would be in favour of going out to people and asking for donations because when I initially started, my husband used to support me, and he used to give me funding to go about and start the work. And of course, I couldn't keep on asking him for funding, you know. That would have not been right, and I realised that the best thing for me to do is to hold functions.

I started having dinner functions in order to raise funds to continue to do the work. One of my friends said to me, "you know, you're doing this work and you are a Muslim woman, why don't you do it from an Islamic basis. You know, you are working with the people and at the same time you spread Islam to them."

So I told him, "I am doing that, I have been doing that and people are listening to what you have to say to them. I always tell them that I wasn't born a Muslim, I come from a Hindu background and became a Muslim and that what I've seen and I want everyone else to feel what I felt when I embraced Islam; and they said, 'Fine!'

So I went along and started da'wah work. I did the feeding schemes and in the period of time, I have been told by men that my job is to be in the kitchen, and looking after my husband's house and his children. I pointed out to this particular person, he was a lawyer, and I said to him, "You know what, if you don't know about a woman's duty in Islam, then you have not read the Qur'ān." I said, "Read the Qur'ān, and if you have the Qur'ān with

you, I'll show you the duty of a woman." And he still said that he believed that a woman should be in the kitchen and minding the house and be with the children.

So I said to him, "Are you trying to tell me that you married your wife so that she can be enslaved by you, look after your house, do your cooking and mind your stuff and not do part of the work of Allāh she has to do outside?" So he said to me, "I am sorry but I won't be able to support you. I cannot give you donations."

R I'm not sure about Gauteng but in Durban if you go on a fundraising drive as a Muslim organisation, you have to be accredited by a particular body?

H Ya, you have to be accredited by a body.

R Have you had any encounters?

H I've had a lot of encounters. Actually, I have been going to the so called custodians of the Islam for the areas I was involved in. I say to them that I needed this help. Do they think there's a possibility they could give us a letter concerning the work that I'm doing. And they refused me, point blank. They said, 'No!, I don't think we can give it to you.'

I asked them what were the reason for refusing and they said to me, 'You have not separated your funds', like the *lillāh* had to go in a separate account and the *zakāh* had to go in a separate account, etc. So I said, 'But how do you know that it wasn't? How do you know it is not so? Have you come into my offices? Have you looked at my work that I am doing? Have you looked at my books, to come and criticise me and tell me this and then put that as a point blank refusal?'

And they said, 'Well, we'll think about it next year.' And I said, 'Next year, you maybe dead and I maybe dead.' And then I left it for many, many years; I didn't bother about it. And then I decided to ask again because our fund raisers were having problems and we couldn't get a project off the ground. We tried again; we needed money for a project, a *masjid* (mosque), which is also going to be built by women. So that too was another reason that they didn't like because women are not supposed to or not allowed to build a *masjid*. And they were reminded of the history of Islam and were told of the great lady who build a *masjid*

R Now where is this *masjid*? Has it started or are you still building it?

H No, we haven't built it yet. We want to see if the donors can help us put up this project which will be a *masjid* and it will also include a *madrakah* and a training centre, etc.

R And where about will this be?

H This would be in Palm Springs.

R Oh! Okay, okay. That's the project!

H Yes, Yes. In that area, we have converted over 3000 people, which means that these people have to either travel to Vereeniging or go to the surrounding areas which may be closer. You know when I say closer, it may be 10km or 12km away or something like that. Whereas, we could build this project in their own area for their convenience.

R Do you think... I'm just wondering that had this organisation been headed by a man, would that have made a difference? Looking at your experience

with the “custodians” of Islam and how they reacted to you...do you think it would have been different?

H It may have been different but would they have done the work that we are doing?

R I’m saying that in terms of the reaction... I’m not questioning the work that you are doing.

H The reaction would have been different - obviously men would have been perceived much better.

R But why? In your mind, why do you think...

H Ignorance! Because I’m a woman.

And I think also that, that I have realised that there is jealousy because “how can a women do this amount of work”, but they don’t know or they don’t think or otherwise they don’t realise there’s a Creator above. And He’s the one who has given me this strength because, this is 2005 and it would mean that this is my 39th years in this work. And in that period I can proudly say that our organization, that over 16 000 people have come into the fold of Islam. And we’ve got that all on record. And we can proudly say that a lot of people who today are Islamic scholars are people who embraced Islam in our offices.

R Thank you. Is there anything else that you would want to add? Do remember that I’m looking at how women have made it? It is a tremendous struggle.

H It's a very big struggle if you are a woman. It's a struggle but in spite of that struggle, we went ahead, we didn't close doors. We did not close doors. We went ahead and all the women that were on the fields worked hard with me. We were all working very hard together to get what we wanted and to (spread) the world with Islam because we believe that if you don't want to do *da'wah* work it does not mean that you have to leave your country to do *da'wah* work and go abroad to do *da'wah* work. We first have to do *da'wah* work within ourselves, in our families, our intimate families and if we have succeeded in "converting" our own people back to Islam, then we have succeeded. But if we waited for perfection, then we will not succeed.

R Perhaps, the last question. Obviously there are so many articles on the work you do; there is focus in the mainstream paper, community paper, the TV and the radio. We know the reaction generally of Muslim men. Well, regarding certain Muslim men and "custodians" - was there any positive feedback from them? Did they say, for example, '*al ḥumdulillal!*'⁴³ We admire the work you are doing.'

H Again, no, you see, it's not...

R So not even moral support?

H No, there's no moral support. When I was on radio, we expected like, hmm, lots of people would come our way but we didn't have much feed back from that either. And when we were on the TV show, the people who watch says, 'Oh, *al ḥumdulillal!* She's doing a tremendous amount of work.' But it's not a question of doing the work, it's a question of how can we help her?

'In what way can we help her?' We are not saying money-wise, there are many other things that you can come in and do especially among the male

⁴³ All praise belongs to God!

counterparts. When they come and look around, they say, '*Al humdulillal*, 'She's done a tremendous amount of work!' but, 'How can we help you? How can we help you to spread Islam? How can we help you to help people?' because we have converted so many thousands of people; who embraced Islam under our umbrella? And we are saying to them, 'Give us one *masjid* for educational purposes.' Ninety nine percent of the *masājid*⁴⁴ are empty right through the week. The only time that the *masājid* are occupied is during *Jumū'ah* but other than that the *masājid* are empty. They won't allow us the use of just one for the education of Islam.

⁴⁴ Mosques, plural of *masjid*.

8.2.3. YUSUF (SECONDARY PARTICIPANT)

Date of the interview: 25 January 2005

Place: Hassim' office at Islamic Relief Fund,
Johannesburg

Interruption... a male employer / member Yusuf comes in to have a document signed. I have met him on several occasions. So I asked him about the attitude of Muslim men towards Hassim.

Y She's been going since 1968. So, you could write pages about people who have acted antagonistically towards her. It continues all the time that rather than complementing her and saying she's doing good work, they will all revert to the negative side and say "well you know, whatever she does is wrong. She doesn't know what she's doing."

That's the sort of thing that gets fed into the public's mind just because she's a women. But they forget that in the time of *Rasūlullah* (Messenger of God), women were involved in community work but that never gets promoted. There's always more fairy tales that's given to people in mosques every week.

R You know I heard, and I'm still looking for the source, but I read somewhere that during Omar's (may God be pleased with him) *khilāfat* one of the ministers was a women. You don't hear about it.

Y The *Jamī'at* (Muslim "theologians") with their "Indian" cultural background have taken a line where they curbed the involvement of women. But they didn't realise that 50 years down the road, things are going to change. And they stuck to that, what they had agreed 150 years ago, they sticking to that. But you know, like *Maulānā* Sadick criticised in his *Majlis* (newspaper by that name or it could mean a regular gathering) the other day, we also said

the same thing, is that a *Maulānā* Bham was sitting around the round table in Thabo Mbeki's auditorium, with women next to him. So where is the balance?

H I think that basically what I find here is that men are threatened by me as a woman. I think they are threatened because I can show the visible work being done. Can they show me visible work that they have done?

Y Then you see there is the other side of it again. People pick on individuals. It also depends on the individuals' standing. When you have a huge bank balances and you drive flashy cars, people will support you. It's like the Houghton women, they are known as the "Caring Women." Because they come from that elite group of Houghton, no body criticise them. Anything they do is "kosher". So people are not consistent in whatever they say and they do. They hand pick people they wish to criticise.

H And I think that also what makes it very bad which I feel as a woman that maybe because I come from a background of being a Hindu, for a woman coming from that background, introducing Islam to people in a most successful way, is a problem. Why, then do we have people coming here to embrace Islam? Why don't they go to the other organisations, why no matter, where we move, they search for us and they find us. Am I right?

Y Yes!

H When it's so closer for them to just get on a train and go to these people but they search for where we are.

Y You see, like you say there's a huge number of 16 000 that became Muslims. It is not the direct conversion, of changing people from one religion to the other. It is over the years of feeding that out of the 10 million

people, she (Hassim) said 16 000 people came forward and said we want to take up your religion. This is how it happened. Here's a typical example, we are busy with the health care centre in Kliptown, a youngish woman who has been involved with us for a year now has a little boy. She named him Yusuf, and now she and her family, her mother and all, want to become Muslims. So, we will be converting them in the next few days. You see, it's how you interact with people that, religion is not that you drum it down their throats, it's your behaviour. They say, "My culture is different, look at this behaviour. I would like to be like them!"

You see that virtually in all the "Indian" areas that the majority in every "Indian" school are Blacks and they say they would rather let our children grow up with your children because then we know, we are going to have a decent community. But, they don't have a hope in "Indian" areas. These are the sort of things that theses fellows ('*ulamā*') are not interested in.

You see, like we are saying, we are trying to promote that, integration, at the moment. We are telling business people, every squatter camp in this country is a disaster area. So, how dare do we send money out elsewhere in the world because the world can look after the other people. You generate money from the poorest of the poor yet you putting nothing back nothing into this community, nothing but nothing.

R Business sector, do they not help you?

H Very few, very few!

Y Very few indeed! The business sector is aligned to the *Jamī'at* and the *Tablīgh Jama'āh*, they will tell you on your face, they want to have nothing to do with these people. This is the language they use.

H This is the language they use... I have a lot of heart aches and when I come out of there I just say I'm not ...

Y We don't find it easy to collect money. You hear a lot of rubbish but you just turn a blind eye and say "give, if you don't want to give, thank you very much,"

8.2.4. Analysis and discussion of data ⁴⁵

"I would like to thank the 'Islamic Relief Fund' and Soraya [Hassim] for her guidance. She is a remarkable woman. May Allāh bless her and family to see many more people come into the fold of Islam."

Dr. Ansie and Dr. Ernst Louis van den Heuvel (October 13, 1997)

Hassim's narratives, interviews and documents confirm her positioning as a woman in a patriarchal, power-laden society to be "protected" by *Shari'ah* prescriptions. Even though she always wore a scarf and was modestly attired, Hassim is not expected to enter public space, engage and "compete" as an individual in society.

"I have been told by men that my job is to be in the kitchen, and looking after my husband's house and his children. I pointed out to this particular person, he was a lawyer, and I said to him, "You know what, if you don't know about a woman's duty in Islam, then you have not read the Qur'ān." I said, "Read the Qur'ān, and if you have the Qur'ān with you, I'll show you the duty of a woman." And he still said that he believed that a woman should be in the kitchen and minding the house and be with the children."

Men believe that the rightful place for women is at home, her "natural and primary career" (Hasan 1999:29); her "duty to nurture the family at home" (Esposito 2002:ix). As an idealised woman she does not intrude into the male domain (Weiss 1998). Hassim's encounter demonstrates the misogynistic perceptions of a woman's responsibility but she is able to assert her public role as a woman by referring to the Qur'ān that she believes treat women and men equally: *"read the Qur'ān, and if you have the Qur'ān with you, I'll show you the duty of a woman."*

⁴⁵ The documents in appendix four are referred to in this critical evaluation.

Twenty years before Hassim articulated the above statement in the interview for this research study, public interviews by the media showed the change in her life brought about by the Qur'ān through her rendition of it outside the male epistemological exegesis. In an interview with Khan of the *Star* newspaper (1983) Hassim said that she felt liberated since she read the Qur'ān. "It has given me the same status as that of a man". Witthaus (1985) reported that Hassim's religion shaped her life and work: "our Prophet has told us we must never turn our backs on anyone" ... "It's good feeling that you can help people. You want to work with people because its part of you".

The Prophet's advice and exemplary life as a *dā'iyah* is encapsulated in his statement: "All God's creatures are His family; and he or she is the most beloved of God who tries to do most good to God's creatures". Hassim's Islamic ethos is expressed through her conviction and dedication in serving people – all people, a pluralistic approach in her wider conception of *da'wah* of the Prophet (God bless him and grant his peace).

Regarding *da'wah* activism, there are several "corporate" organisations with a dedicated staff doing *da'wah*. Their funding is procured from local and overseas donors but are unable or not willing to make disclosures of their activities, especially regarding the number of converts (reverts). Hassim provided written records such as certificates that identified each convert⁴⁶. This is corroborated by Yusuf who works with her and under her direction at the Islamic Relief Fund. His statement below shows that Hassim's approach and methodology are underpinned by a wider definition of *da'wah* in her commitment to uplift the communities through social intervention:

"You see, like you [Hassim] say there's a huge number of 16 000 that became Muslims. It is not the direct conversion, of changing people from one religion to the other. It is over the years of feeding that out of the 10

⁴⁶ A specimen copy is included in pappendix four, p 294.

million people, she (Hassim) said 16 000 people came forward and said we want to take up your religion. This is how it happened. Here's a typical example, we are busy with the health care centre in Kliptown, a youngish woman who has been involved with us for a year now has a little boy. She named him Yusuf, and now she and her family, her mother and all, want to become Muslims. So, we will be converting them in the next few days. You see, it's how you interact with people that, religion is not that you drum it down their throats, it's your behaviour. They say, 'My culture is different, look at this behaviour. I would like to be like them!'"

Yusuf's reference to "10 million people" may be an over ambitious figure but emphasises the enormous work undertaken by Hassim. The photographs and articles in the Appendix are a minute selection from the voluminous collections and records of her *da'wah* activities. Having examined her work, it is evident that her contribution to the rebuilding and reconstruction of the South African society apparently surpasses the collective efforts of the "corporate" *da'wah* organisations.

The feeding scheme for children and families is one of the ways to connect with destitute families. However, instead of sustaining "hand-outs" Hassim explores opportunities for specific communities. In Sebokeng Hassim introduced a vegetable garden project to assist women to become self-independent; for the Managawane Muslim community a brick making programme was a milestone for people in a country where a few conglomerates still hold a monopoly in the manufacturing of bricks. Hassim recently introduced an Aids programme to provide for intervention and shelter needs of Aids orphans.

She has worked in Soweto with mothers to help them with their children's needs, provided a soup kitchen for pupils at Nancefield with 46 outlets in all the townships in the Johannesburg metropolitan region. Pensioners and the very old are taken care of through feeding schemes, blankets and clothes in winter. In

Soweto as in other areas, Hassim implemented projects that help people help themselves through skills training such as sewing. Informal settlement projects also include feeding, clothes and blanket distribution to reassure “squatters” of their dignity and right to a better life. The beneficiaries are not only Muslims but people of indigenous and other faiths, predominantly Africans.

Children with disability and those who are malnourished are part of her *da‘wah* activities. Women and children are the largest group to convert to Islam followed by families and communities. After acquiring education on basic Islamic matters they are invited to a celebratory function where certificates are given to each individual.

She is considered “a mother to the poor,” who is not easily deterred in her notable achievement as a devout Muslim who has dedicated her life to good deeds (Dellatola 1992:13). Hassim is confident of the enormity and success of her work and challenges men. She is concise and candid when she states:

“I think that basically what I find here is that men are threatened by me as a woman. I think they are threatened because I can show the visible work being done. Can they show me visible work that they have done?”

It is men, religious scholars – the conservative ‘*ulamā*’ who continue to maintain chauvinistic hegemony over women. As Esack (1997) puts it, “for far too long Muslim men have treated women as they treat their beards; the more control they have over women, the greater they judge their faith to be” (p 241). This culture of confining women to their homes and preventing “free mingling of the sexes that may otherwise lead to *fitnah*” as their clichéd dogma, is deeply embedded. Yusuf does not see Hassim’s public engagement leading to *fitnah* or being un-Islamic and is critical of the double standards of certain ‘*ulamā*’.

"You see the Jamī'at (Muslim "theologians"), from the "Indian" Jamiat have taken a line where they curbed the involvement of women. But they didn't realise that 50 years down the road, things are gonna change. And they stuck to that, what they had agreed 150 years ago, they sticking to that. But you know, like Maulānā Sadick criticised in his Majlis (newspaper by that name or it could mean a regular gathering) the other day, we also said the same thing, is that a Maulānā Bham was sitting around the round table in Thabo Mbeki's auditorium, with women next to him. So where is the balance."

Hassim believes that men react negatively to her work because of her gender, *"the reaction would have been different -obviously men would have been perceived much better"*. When asked why they reacted differently, she said that ignorance and jealousy were the two factors that disvalued her work; ignorance of the Islamic texts and jealousy due to patriarchal hostility.

Ignorance! Because I'm a woman.

And I think also that, that I have realised that there is jealousy because 'how can a women do this amount of work', but they don't know or they don't think or otherwise they don't realise there's a Creator above. And He's the one who has given me this strength because, this is 2005 and it would mean that this is my 39th years in this work. And in that period I can proudly say that our organization, that over 16 000 people have come into the fold of Islam. And we've got that all on record. And we can proudly say that a lot of people who are today are Islamic scholars are people who embraced Islam in our offices.

If Hassim was perceived as an "invisible" woman or a woman fulfilling her traditional responsibility- the stereotyping of gendered roles (Peterson and Runyan 1999), she would have encountered less hostility. Ignorance of the

position of women in the Islamic texts have led Muslim men to believe that they are privileged and superior, notions that are promoted by discursive religious discourses. Religious scholars can therefore play a vital role in developing, as Mernissi (1987) suggests, an egalitarian Islam based on the *Qur'anic* principles of gender equality.

To sum up, Hassim's *da'wah* activities and her assertiveness within the multi-contexts is, as Hassan (1996) states, affirming through word and action to co-exist with fellow humans with justice and love. In her reconstructive efforts of the South African society she is engendering "a sense of community that does not make difference, divisive and exclusive" (Eck 1996:353) a criteria for an integrated society. Her activities are underpinned by Islamic principles displayed in behaviour and action to realise a society strong on moral and spiritual values. The South African government has placed special emphasis on moral regeneration, for Hassim it is an inseparable part of her life through *da'wah* activism.

Hassim's methodology and her commitment is a comprehensive embrace of humanity for justice, gender equality and the reinterpretation of Islam (Esack 1997). These are appositely contextualised in a nascent democracy attempting to heal itself from the onslaught of apartheid as it endeavours to rebuild itself into a whole nation.

CHAPTER 9

DA'WAH THROUGH THE MEDIA

"What we expect from the serious study of Western societies, with its complex theories, enormously variegated analyses of social structures, histories, cultural formations and sophisticated languages of investigation, we should also expect from the study and discussion of Islamic societies in the West. Instead of scholarship, we often find only journalists making extravagant statements, which are instantly picked up and further dramatized by the media."

Edward W. Said (1997:xvi)

9.1. DADOO (MAIN PARTICIPANT)

9.1.1. Background, Early Life and Community Involvement

Date of the interview: 3 November 2005

Place: Online

Name: Sureshanee Naidoo
Muslim Name: Suraya Dadoo
Date of Birth: 26 - 12 – 1976
Place of Birth: Durban
Parents: Sarojini and Jayaram Naidoo

The response below is an email from Mrs Dadoo to questions sent to her prior to the taped recorded interview. This response was a previous interview of Dadoo under the headings that I have retained with a few grammatical and spelling corrections and transliteration.

Early Life

I was born in Durban to a Hindu family, and am 28 years old. I have 1 brother (older), and my father passed away when I was 15. I had felt no spiritual fulfilment from Hinduism, and had always held a fascination with Muslims. my interest in Islam peaked when I was in Matric (grade 12), and through the help of my best friend, my knowledge increased. By the time I had started my first year of University, I knew I had wanted to become Muslim, and embraced Islam.

I met my husband, Ziyaad, at University, and we were married in 2002. I live in Lenasia, a suburb in Johannesburg where my husband is from. I have one child, a daughter Khadija who is almost two.

Education

I went to Rhodes University and here is my educational background:

1997: B. Soc. Science (majoring in Sociology and History)

1998: B. Soc. Science (Hons) in Sociology

I then obtained a Masters degree in Sociology, with a specialization in family sociology. My thesis focused on attitudes and perceptions of Indian Muslim students towards marriage and divorce in Islam. It stemmed from a personal interest in learning about how young people feel about *nikāḥ* (marriage), *talāq* (divorce), polygamy, in-laws and all the other issues that come with marriage.

From grade 11, I knew that I loved writing and had a deep interest in socio-political issues. This led me to believe that I would make a great journalist, so I initially enrolled for B. Journalism at Rhodes. But, although I had a lot of the qualities needed for journalism, I just did not enjoy studying it, and discovered that I was more inclined towards sociology and a deeper analysis of issues, rather than merely “covering” events as you would in journalism. Strangely enough, my first job after University was writing and editing for Al-Ansaar’s Al-Ummah, a community newspaper, which I really loved. I hated leaving when I was married

and had to move to Joburg (Johannesburg). So, to answer your last question: No, I wasn't entirely sure what I wanted to do after studying, but I was sure of my interests and fortunately found work in an environment that allowed me to pursue these interests.

When I came to Joburg, I started working for Media Review Network (MRN), and again, this organization allowed me to explore and develop my own interests too. I think that it's important for school kids who want to study further to know exactly what their interests and passions are, and which subjects are their strengths and acknowledge and accept their weaknesses.

Career / work? Was your family ok with you being a female and studying / working at the time?

I am currently a researcher for MRN, and work from home, as this allows me to spend time with my child as well. I come from a non-Muslim family, so the issue of females studying was actually a non-issue. With regard to my husband and in-laws, this has not been an issue, as I am incredibly fortunate to be able to work from home on my own time. In this way, I am still able to fulfil all of my obligations and responsibilities of a wife, a mother and daughter-in-law. However, this is incredibly challenging sometimes.

You are now part of the Media Review Network. Why did you choose that specific field and what is your job description? How can that help Islam? Would you encourage more Muslims to go into that, and why?

Having trained in Sociology, I think it was more a case of media choosing me, rather than me choosing this field! However, I love writing and researching various Islamic issues, and my work at Al-Ummah was so enjoyable that I soon realized that the media was actually my field, so any future work would be in this arena. The media is an incredibly important social institution because it has the power to shape people's perceptions both negatively and positively, especially about Islam and Muslims. That's why we need to know what's out there, and

make sure that our *dīn* (religion) is not misrepresented. If it is, we can't moan about it in private, but try to engage journalists and editors.

One thing that we need to understand is this: *if Muslims don't make the effort to promote and defend Islam, no-one else is going to!* So, this leads me rather nicely into your last question: yes, we need more representation in media-related fields. We're feeling the effects of anti-Islamic sentiment now, and very few people can argue that the media hasn't played a pivotal role in creating so much suspicion and paranoia about Muslims. It's also important for us to realize that there are some people who have never met a Muslim in their lives and their only contact with Islam comes via what the mainstream media provides. So, for that reason alone, we need more Muslims in the media field.

Projects involved in at the MRN?

Because of my social science background, my projects have focused on the human dimension to conflict and the way that this has affected families. My "pet" project is exposing the discriminatory marriage laws in Israel, which prevent Palestinians from gaining residency, citizenship and political rights if they marry Israeli citizens. I have also looked at the way that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has affected the education of Palestinian University students; why young Palestinians are joining the *Intifada* (uprising); and the way that Israel's 'pass laws' have affected the lives of Palestinian people. I have also researched the American exploitation of Africa's oil reserves and anti-terrorism legislation post 9/11.

There have been serious criticisms levied out against you in the past from some sections of the South African society, over your investigations on South African settlement in Israel. What would you say to those who have labelled you as a 'hate-monger'?

The ongoing theft of Palestinian land, both through illegal and institutionalized means, remains one of the biggest obstacles to peace in the region. If speaking out against this theft makes me unpopular in certain sectors, then so be it. Although, I cannot help but think that I must have struck some kind of chord to illicit such a strong response.

What would your message be to other South African Muslim women out there in terms of taking up careers and studies in conjunction with family responsibilities? As a woman working for an Advocacy & Media Group, do you find it hard to reconcile your family life with your professional life?

Family responsibilities super cedes careers and studies, and if pursuing a career or studies is going to adversely affect your marriage and family life, then I would not advocate working or studying. However, if your family understands the sacrifices of working or studying, and are prepared to accommodate you, then you should. Family life should not, however, be sacrificed for a career or studies. Because I work from home, I am able to reconcile family and work life.

'Muslim' issues are championed by mostly Muslim organisations. How do you recommend that the wider and general civil society get involved in those struggles on the basis of human rights?

You say that most Muslim issues are championed mostly by Muslim organisations, and the challenge is getting non-Muslims involved in Muslim causes. I would like to ask how many non-Muslim causes are championed by Muslim organisations simply on the basis of human rights? If we want wider civil society to get involved in struggles in Chechnya, Palestine or Iraq, then Muslims must also be equally vociferous in their criticism of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe or Sudan. We cannot continue to ignore human rights abuses if they do not involve Muslims. When we stop doing that, then it will be easier to convince wider society to champion our causes.

9.1.2. TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW

Date of the interview: 21 November 2005

Place: Dadoo's home, Lenasia, Johannesburg.

R = Researcher

D = Dadoo

R *Bis-mi-Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, (in the name of Allāh, Full of Compassion, Ever Merciful).

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and for emailing background information. Your work is different from the other women I interviewed but you see yourself being involved in *da'wah* through the media and your writing skills. If you could just tell more or less the work you do and we will take it from there.

D Okay!

R I know you said you do research...

D Ya!

R But anything else you want to focus on?

D Okay, a little bit about MRN itself, perhaps before we start. MRN as a website is an advocacy group but the group's main aim is I think to provide an alternative source of information for mainstream media practitioners. It's not specifically on any one issue, em, my bosses like to focus, and I think their passion is the Middle East. And it's very broad, whether it's the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or America imperialism in the region or the various gulf wars and the Islamic revolution of Iran. So, everything associated with the Middle East, that's like their pet project as such.

But, over the last few years, as the group has gained prominence, they started delving into local issues. From about 1995 onwards, especially after that whole Oklahoma city bombing; initially Muslims were blamed for the bombing, and of course the rise of the Islamic-phobia generally throughout the world, they started focussing locally on Muslims and their involvement, anti-Islamic sentiments and that sort of thing. And they then started even looking at things like terrorism, legislation and post 9/11 and Islamic-phobia and they have been trying to address those issues.

I've started only in 2003, I got married in 2002 and I took the whole year off and then I only really started in February 2003. Because my academic background is sociology and obviously a more in depth analysis and even within sociology I looked at family sociology and I'm very interested in narratives, and qualitative methodology and that. So, I've looked more at the human element whereas previously MRN has focussed on political ideology and that sort of thing. What I chose to do is, I've also looked at the same issues that they were looking at, same topics, but in a different sense.

For instance, what I've researched is the way the *Intifada* (Palestinina uprising) had affected lots of these students and their education or why is it that such young children are willing to sacrifice their lives. Things like that. Marriage laws in Israel and the way it discriminates against Palestinians. So it is a more human element as such and the research itself, I actually don't have a specific area, my bosses have basically given me free reign with regard to whatever topic it is. So, if I see something and I can say okay, I can write an article, I think I can research it, something like that. It's basically that I have free reign.

Ya, and then when we discuss the articles, I actually brought down all of them, I wasn't exactly sure what you wanted them for. Any article that you want, you can take it and make copies; you can always post it back to me. Right?

R I appreciate that, *Jazakallāh* (may Allāh reward you).

D So you see, I've actually covered a wide variety of areas.

R And the response? Now obviously there is a change, not a change but there is a different focus now, the human element...

D Ya!

R As a social scientist; what is the response, feedback...

D Ah, it has been, *shukr* (thanks), I actually - I suppose because of the Internet information flows more freely now. And the strangest people have responded, well, like yourself. There is an article that I wrote about when George Bush was coming to South Africa, he's doing the African safari as I called it. Just prior to that, I wrote an article about the way in which America was going to exploit African oil reserves and the way it was actually exploiting it. It came about because I was reading a report from a Catholic Relief Agency about corruption in the oil industry in Africa.

Then, when I typed, when I goggled myself, it came up and it's been translated into Polish, German and Italian and it has been used very widely. It eventually was one of the recommended readings for Sociology three course in an American University. So that in that way the response was unbelievable, *shukr*. And it's actually with

most of the articles that you will see, it's duplicated in various publications as well.

R Now, if we look at that in several contexts, one will say *da'wah*. How would you relate your work to *da'wah*?

D Hmm, I think people have this, especially like in the last ten years, to say that to you're a Muslim or to dress the way I am in a non-Muslim area, that's like a statement in itself. It's a loaded term to say that you're a Muslim. I think that when people read articles even like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for example, I spoke about my research, how it affected University students or why is it that such young children want to become martyrs. Someone who constantly sees all Palestinians as suicide bombers, and then they see another side to the conflict, I think that in itself is *da'wah*. Like you said as long as it allows people to just broaden their horizon, you know, and see another side. I think that for me is very important.

R Also, I mean you saying that, that article was translated has become a recommended reading and so on. Do you see that also as *da'wah*?

D Yes! What you can actually do is, I only categorised them last night, so you can go through it and you can actually ask me about a specific article if you want, even in the course of this interview.

R Okay! Any interesting kind of development in your life; whether it's Islam, you're a woman – reaction from the *ummah*, (Muslim community); '*ulamā*' (Muslim scholars), if you had any?

D No, I have not had any reaction from the '*ulamā*', although, well in my very last issue of the *Ummah*, the Durban newspaper, I used to initially get very irritated when people said "Suraya Naidoo?" and I

remember telling someone Naidoo is no more a Hindu surname than Patel or Rajah or any of the other Hindu surnames. If I was Suraya Patel it wouldn't have been a problem but it seems more noticeable if I'm Suraya Naidoo. And it's not any less Hindu or more Hindu than Desai, something like that. So I think I did raise a few eye brows because I wrote an article "What's in a name?"

That I think this is the only controversial article that I wrote about that got a reaction from the '*ulamā*' - but generally the reaction amongst Muslims is always positive when you hear of somebody who's embraced Islam and I don't think any Muslim will have anything like negative to say about it. From my own family, *al ḥamdulillāh* (all praise belongs to Allāh), I haven't had any problems especially from my mother, she's been very supportive; my brother as well. She's always said that, like you always get comments from the wider families or cousins and aunts and that, and they had a problem with it. Her response has always been: she says, 'there are always worse things that my daughter could have chosen to have done than to become a Muslim. She's like covered from head to toe, she doesn't drink, she doesn't smoke, she doesn't go to night clubs. I think there are worse things that a child could choose to do.' That's how she's viewed it. So, *al ḥamdulillāh* I haven't had a problem from family.

R Are they still in Durban?

D Ja, I'm the only person who doesn't live in Durban.

R In the South African context, well in a way we have one of the best constitution in the world. Much has still to be done, especially realising the rights of women.

D Right.

R Okay, we got the 16 days. And how do you see your role in terms of a woman, a South African woman. Do you see yourself, maybe now or later or do you see the kind of articles you write or going to write making changes or having an impact? Do you write on women's issues?

D No, not really. Just for the fact that I think right now there is far too much out there and it's too controversial. People have their own views and sometimes the views are so far apart, that they very difficult to reconcile. You can't be in the middle or you take a standpoint on it. I've never really been involved or too interested in explaining that women are not oppressed in Islam. To me it's like beating a dead horse, as they say.

I'd rather sort of, even like you said, if someone says oh, okay here's a Muslim women who writes and works from home. Islam cant' be all that bad if it allows for things like that.

I'd rather, as they say, the best sermon is a good example, so providing an example so I'd rather do that than sort of write about it. Strangely enough, I actually don't bother reading too much about the whole woman in Islam area any more. When I was interested in Islam before I became Muslim, then I read quite a bit on it. I could see the different camps and that but after I became Muslim and I understood what a Muslim woman was all about. Then for me I developed my own ideas and I knew what my own view was and I accepted it and ja.

R Have you written anything on recent South African issues?

- D I written a bit about the anti-Terrorism Bill and the effect that it may have had. Although I must admit that I did the research more for Iqbal.

Dadoo then explained the basis that actuated the writing of her articles.

- D These two articles Islamonline asked me to write these. I didn't sort of just decide to do it on my own. They actually asked me. I also tend to write a lot of like small pieces for various Islamic newspapers although I'm not really interested in those. This was about India. Let's start with this. Here they have seemed to give me an honorary doctorate or something because the Citizen put me down as Doctor Suraya Dadoo. This was about Ramaḍān, just a general piece that was before Ramaḍān and there's a line in here that said, 'it's so hot and students are going to be fasting' and this Neels Jackson picked it up just that line and he put it in the Beeld (an Afrikaans newspaper).

This is the recent one, the Danish newspaper that published cartoons of the Prophet *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wassalam* (may Allāh bless him and grant him peace). I just wrote a letter to the ambassador complaining about it and had it published in the Indicator (Lenasia community newspaper).

Here again, this article is 'In defence of Nepad' and this is 'when the battlefield is TV' - this was for *Enterprise Magazine*. The editor approached me to write it. So, you'll see sometimes it's like way out from what I normally write because somebody asked me to write it. It was then used in *Tshwane Sun West*.

I have written about the rise of private military companies, mercenaries, and strangely enough, it was a while before the whole mercenary issue 'dogs of war' became an issue here. This was used

in Peacework magazine, an American magazine, one of the - like an activist magazine. They actually, I think saw, the African oil article is still to come, that appeared on Z-Net. The editor of Peacework read the article in Z-Net and she contacted me and asked me if she could use my article and I kept in contact with her and I send her stuff. Alright?

R 'Private armies, public wars'?

D Yes, that's the article!

This was the letter to the editor and my response to that article. Okay, these are my, like my pet projects now. This is an article about the horrific maternal mortality rate in Afghanistan. In fact, I think if I remember now that they have the highest number of women who die while pregnant and in childbirth. Right, this was used in the Post but this was used in This Day and I got quite a big spread out. Now, when I say these are my pet projects; these are the ones that I am particularly proud of.

R 'Dying while giving life'?

D Ya!

So, like I said, this was actually, when I said you know Iqbal and Firoz, give me a, like a blank slate as it were, I actually saw a small statistics 'did you know' in one of the Baby magazines. And then I just noted down what the reference it was, they quoted a UN study, actually a UNICEF study. I went and I researched it and then that's how I got it. Like I said I was reading a Baby magazine and that's how it came up.

Okay, right, this was a magazine *Washington Report* on Middle East Affairs, I don't know if you've seen it? My thesis started because of the proposed legislation to recognise Islamic marriage. So I

researched quite a bit about marriage law and that sort of thing and I was always quite interested in it. And then again I came across a little snippet about how Israel is the only country in the world that doesn't offer the option of a civil, supposedly a democratic country in the world, it doesn't offer civil marriages. Only orthodox Jewish marriages is recognised, legally recognised in Israel. So, I looked at that and I actually got comments from Chief Rabbi Harris and the different Jewish, reformed, secular Jews and other groups. This article was actually used quite a lot. Okay then here *This Day* really like it, they gave me a full page spread. It was obviously one that attracted a lot of letters to editor.

R 'Love and marriage in Israel?'

D Hmm

This is an American magazine. This is the *Sunday Independent*; just that you can get to know what areas I worked in so that you can ask me questions. This is the way in which University students were affected by the *Intifada*.

R 'Israel punishes Palestinian students with exclusion, harassment and 'pass laws?'

D Ja! 2004 was a relatively quiet year because I was on maternity leave for half the year. Okay, all those, the introduction of the new pass laws in Israel as a result of that security wall. Obviously I was focussing more on the way in which people had to go from, it was the equivalent of going from one extension in Lenz (Lenasia) to the other to work for which you needed a permit. This was actually worse than the pass laws that were in South Africa. Okay, this I think is the original article of that magazine. *Impact International*, I am not sure if you know of this magazine?

- R Yes!
- D This was one of the very first pieces of mine that they carried.
- R ‘Why would a child like to die.’
- D Ya, it was just examining why it is that children were so willing to die. Something must have happened in their childhood or whatever to make them want to, sacrifice their lives. This is the same thing that was carried by that magazine, right and I think this is the same article, *Impact International* carried that you saw in the *Sunday Independent*.
- R ‘Education and military occupation?’
- D Ja, they just changed the title.
- R The Washington report, is it published by Muslims?
- D No, it’s not! It’s very broadly on the Middle East. Right, this is that Israeli marriage thing, the Mercury carried it as an opinion piece. I got a lot of letters to the editor, hate mail as well. Right, this was the same love and marriage article.
- R How do you cope with the negative reaction, hate mail and so on?
- D No, I mean, it’s to be expected. I think in that interview about the Maudeen settlement, I was criticising... because it was on one of the Jewish website and they said, ‘hate mongers: Suraya Dadoo.’ I said well I must be striking a cord somewhere to elicit a reaction like that and I, I don’t really worry about it too much. I mean, if you’re going to, if you’re talking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it’s such a controversial issue. The person who has an opposite view, is obviously going to argue their point and criticise, your research and

that. So it's to be expected. And, I think not just with that. I mean if you're discussing an Islamic issue and someone takes another view or subscribes to a different school of thought or has a different viewpoint, it's still going to be criticised and you have to accept criticism. You know, its part of the job.

R You mentioned you wrote, eh, on marriage and polygamy and so on for your research. I'm just curious as to your opinions; your views on polygamy?

D On polygamy, eh, well I think if a man is able to satisfy all the conditions laid down in the Qur'ān, then he's free, I mean Allāh *ta'ālā* (God, the exalted) will not, would not allow anything that would be harmful to people, male or female. So, if he's able to honestly satisfy all those conditions, then I have no problem with polygamy. I also understand that the context in which polygamy was introduced in Islam and that after war and that there were obviously more women than men and that sort of thing. So there's a very logical reason for it. I don't see it as demeaning or anything, like I said, provided that the husband is able to fulfil all those conditions.

R But, Allāh goes on to say: 'Surely you cannot...

D Ja...

R Okay; no, no, I was just curious because I, the one article I did sometime back, for the Independent on Saturday was on women. It was given the caption "Men are not the chosen ones."

This was your, okay, this was your for Masters?

D Ya, I did it by course work and thesis, that wasn't the full component.

- R Possibility of taking any of the stuff and I will post it back to you?
- D Ja! You can take whatever it is and I'll give you the postal address and when you've done, you can just send it back.
- R *Jazakallāh* (may Allāh reward you).
- D This was also the *Intifada* in the Sunday Tribune.
- R So your focus, your focus has been changing, recently or gradually?
- D Gradually! I actually have'nt written a lot. I've been doing more background research so you see in, 2005, there isn't that many published articles. And actually, from the end of 2004, not that much, published articles. Well, two reasons, like I said, I've been doing background research and I don't have as much time as I did prior to the birth of my daughter.
- R You are pursuing your doctoral research?
- D No, not right now, I do intend to do a Ph.D; I've got so many topics at the back of my head.
- R You know what really caught my attention was, what you sent me by email, 'we cannot continue to ignore human rights, abuses, if they do not involve Muslims.' That is what I feel very passionate about. In fact, Allāh knows best, I've dedicated my life to that. My understanding, my sense, my interpretation of the Qur'an, of the Sunnah is that the life the Prophet (May Allāh bless him and grant him peace) lived was active *da'wah* and that was the mission and we are all asked to do *da'wah*. But, it went even beyond that, he still tended to the needs of the people who were not Muslims.

And, I believe that's what we are required to do. I see that here in your work and I'm just interested, you know, if not now, perhaps in the future - but maybe, even before I go there, we are looking at Palestinian issues. I read of Israeli women, Jewish women, in black, protesting in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Have you ever focussed on that because it's in keeping with...

D No, not me. Iqbal actually focussed on that. He's actually been, during the Racism conference in 2001, he actually was there, worked very closely with a group of Rabbis. They're called *Naturai Karta*, they are ultra-orthodox Jews. They believe that the Zionist government and the Zionist state of Israel right now, according to their interpretation of Jewish law, is illegal. They feel that that land is stolen from the Palestinians and what their theological view is that God will establish the chosen land for the Jews in the hereafter, that sort of thing. Right now, okay, they, their theological argument, whatever that is, is between them and God, between them and Allāh right. They protested a lot during the conference. They were the ones who met Mohamed Aldura's father, the teenager who was shot dead by the Israelis. They apologised to him about the killing of his child.

R Yes, I remember, I do remember! In Overport!

D Well, I used to work at *Al Ansaar* at that time. I have actually written about that. So the MRN, I think Iqbal and Firoz especially are... they work with a lot of non-Muslims as well. They don't want to, like you said, you know, if you come across as a group that is only involved or only protests when there are Muslim or Islamic issues, then I mean when you need people to lobby for Muslim issues, why would a non-Muslim person bother. You can't and

rightfully, you were saying, you can't only focus exclusively on Muslim issues. Like that oil article for instance, that was from a Catholic Relief organisation. And most of those countries that contain oil in Africa have very, very big Muslim populations. So there you had a Catholic Relief organisation worried about the **whole** population. Not just the Catholic population. So, I think we need to take a lead from incidents like that.

R Also, look at the marches around the world against the invasion of Iraq, the solidarity with Muslims.

D Yes!

R It was organised by people ...

D By non-Muslims and actually the Muslim response to it was minimal. Especially in countries like Europe and North America and it was mainly non-Muslims.

R It would appear that MRN's approach has changed?

D You know, even the way that Iqbal described it now. I think previously like when he was asked to say what MRM was he would say along the line that we're an Islamic group, whatever, focussing on misinterpretations of Islam and that sort of thing. Now he just says we are an advocacy group. There are obviously certain viewpoints that we advocate. But on a wide variety of issues, like for instance, when we were looking at the introduction of anti-terrorism legislation here. Rather than saying okay, yes, we did feel that somehow Islamic charities and Muslims would be targeted, he took the approach that it's going to affect freedom of expression,

media freedom, that sort of thing. So, if you want people to oppose ATB (anti-Terrorism Bill) don't just say that it's going to affect Muslims, why would a non-Muslim then worry. If it affects freedom of expression and the ability for the media to do its job, okay, then that's how you form a coalition with the Freedom of Expression Institute, the South African National Editors' Forum and other organisations and lobby with them.

R How many women are associated with MRN?

D There are two female admin staff but I'm the only female writer.

R And the general public, do they want to write?

D Yes, we do get quite a lot of requests. What I do since I'm generally in charge of handling all the requests is to usually send out a questionnaire to figure out what exactly is their area of interest; and what media do they consume the most. Are there more TV or newspaper or magazine, what do they read? It's no use if the person says, 'how can I get involved in MRN but then they only read the sports section. They only look at certain website and they say they want to start their own website but their focus is what we are into. The prominence of the MRN has obviously increased and the reception we get from people and it is not just Muslims, quite a few non-Muslims post comments on the website, positive comments.

R Is there anything else you would like to say?

D No, no. Like I said, when you said *da'wah*, I said okay, not like working in the IPCI (Islamic Propagation Centre International) environment.

R Ziyaad, how does he relate to your vocation?

D He's actually quite happy. Firstly, he did a BComp and I did social sciences, he was the business person and I was the idealist at University. He knew what my views were and my outlook in life. When we got married he was happy that I was going to work from home. Regarding the type of work I do, he's very happy about it. Like I said, women have multiple roles and I wouldn't be happy working away from home. This way I'm able to fulfil all the obligations and responsibilities that I have. He's very passionate about football and that is like his academic pursuit, Liverpool and its history and so on.

He creates this perception that he doesn't know anything about politics or anything that Suraya is interested in. Although behind closed doors he knows much as I do. Actually, what happens during the day, if he reads the Star before I do, he will 'phone me and say to me, 'there is this article on page six and you better respond to it because this is what it says.' Or, on the weekends, he reads the Sunday Independent before I do and he will come into the kitchen and say to me, 'ja, you have to respond to this, you see what they are saying?' That sort of thing; he's very, very involved although he doesn't like to show his real involvement.

R And your Ph.D, do you intend pursuing it?

D I do intend to do my Ph.D but I have only just started a family now so I don't think I have the opportunity right now. In a few years time.

R *Inshā'Allāh* (God willing)

D *Inshā'Allāh* (God willing)

R Āmīn, may Allāh may make it easy for you. I think we are done with the interview. May Allāh reward you for your time.

D If there is anything else, I can send the respond back to you via email.

9.1.3. Analysis and discussion of data ⁴⁷

"It's a loaded term to say that you're a Muslim."

Suraya Dadoo

Overview

The rights of people are violated for different reasons across cultures, religions and governments. In the western media, a distorted image of Islam and the practice, belief, doctrine and history of Muslims are reported. Facts are either omitted out of ignorance or deliberately twisted, generating animosity, anger and fear. The media in most countries, supposedly reflecting the interests of society, sketch the frontiers of political hegemony, be it of the so-called superpowers or autocratic Muslim regimes.

The media through its "truth" and persuasive powers demean people. Through globalisation, the societal institution of the media employs stereotyping, "gatekeeping" and "experts" as the most forceful means to present the "truth", one perspective and one worldview of Islam and Muslims and anyone who disagrees is not progressive, free and modern.

Islamaphobia is premised on the stereotyped image of Muslims with hostile reports based on interpretations and subjectivity. The media today like Nehru's criticism of the colonial press is "ethno-centric in conception and content" (in Wilcox 1975:3). The coverage of Islam is not about its accuracy or having knowledge of it but is based on the political influence of people and institutions producing it (Said 1981) in a highly exaggerated stereotyping and belligerent hostility (Said 1997). The media is therefore "the grand instrument of the subversion of order, morals, religion and human society itself" (Aspinall in Curran et. al. 1977:45).

⁴⁷ Dadoo in her interview provided a concise overview of some of her articles. These are included in appendix five.

Alternative Voice : Defending Islam

Dadoo is committed to *da'wah* through the media working for the Media Review Network (MRN) that provides an alternative voice for counteracting the misrepresentation of Islam and the vilification of Muslims. "The media", she says, "is an incredibly important social institution because it has the power to shape people's perceptions both negatively and positively, especially about Islam and Muslims". Dadoo believes that there is a need to react to the sophisticated propaganda against Islam and also for Muslims to be skilled as media specialists to engage proactively in its defence. Media is a means to disseminate information about Islam and Muslims and if the media is not used effectively or left unchallenged, propaganda compacted into specific clichéd messages will dominate the disparagement and vilification of the *ummah* .

"One thing that we need to understand is this: if Muslims don't make the effort to promote and defend Islam, no-one else is going to! So, this leads me rather nicely into your last question: yes, we need more representation in media-related fields. We're feeling the effects of anti-Islamic sentiment now, and very few people can argue that the media hasn't played a pivotal role in creating so much suspicion and paranoia about Muslims. It's also important for us to realize that there are some people who have never met a Muslim in their lives and their only contact with Islam comes via what the mainstream media provides. So, for that reason alone, we need more Muslims in the media field."

Defending Islam is *jihād* which is part of *da'wah* and as the noble Prophet Muḥammad⁴⁸ defended the teachings of his predecessors (Messengers and Prophets), Muslims must defend the Prophetic discourse of Islam. He is reported to have said that the *jihād* of the pen is a mighty *jihād*; that knowledge is the lost property of a believer; women and men must seek knowledge – from the cradle to the grave and to the farthest corners of the world. Intellectual dialogues and

⁴⁸ صلى الله عليه وسلم - God bless him and grant him peace

debates are therefore cogent and compelling *da'wah* activities of the Prophet's life that began with the first five verses of Revelation to empower with knowledge the advancement of human freedom and human rights.

Dadoo's sense of a sustained attack on Islam through an alarmist Islamaphobia is shared by Armstrong (2006a) who wrote that "we have a long history of Islamaphobia in Western culture that dates back to the times of the Crusades. In the twelfth century, Christian monks in Europe insisted that Islam was a violent religion of the sword and that Muḥammad was a charlatan who imposed his religion on the reluctant world by force of arms; they called him a lecher and a sexual pervert. This distorted version of the Prophet's life became one of the received ideas in the West and Western people have always found it difficult to see Muhammad in a more objective light" (p 17).

Humanistic Methodology

Dadoo's *da'wah* is more than challenging propaganda such as Islamaphobia and correcting misrepresentations. It is also presenting the humanistic methodology of Islam. She recognises the positive role of people of other faiths and beliefs who have vociferously condemned what is perceived as anti-Islamic onslaught by certain western governments. Muslim media *du'āh* need to involve themselves in the struggle for human rights irrespective of whose rights are violated. She remarks: "*we cannot continue to ignore human rights abuses if they do not involve Muslims. When we stop doing that, then it will be easier to convince wider society to champion our causes.*"

Dadoo was impressed by the Catholic Relief organisation's concern of the agenda to exploit the oil reserves in African countries. Their concern was "not just the Catholic population" but also the Muslim majority. There is a reciprocal commitment for Dadoo based on the recognition of the dignity of all people. She is critical of Muslim organisations that promote the cause of Muslims but ignore or neglect the responsibility of wider social and global issues.

"You say that most Muslim issues are championed mostly by Muslim organisations, and the challenge is getting non-Muslims involved in Muslim causes. I would like to ask how many non-Muslim causes are championed by Muslim organisations simply on the basis of human rights? If we want wider civil society to get involved in struggles in Chechnya, Palestine or Iraq, then Muslims must also be equally vociferous in their criticism of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe or Sudan."

Extensive Writings

The MRN is managed by predominantly Muslim men but men who are progressive, respectful and encouraging of people like Dadoo. Her journalism is a repertory of ideas and current affairs going beyond the MRN's focus that confined itself to issues of the Middle East particularly the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. Her story lines are not only the rebuttal of the anti-Islamic propaganda and Middle Eastern politics but also the reporting on national, regional and global issues. She has written about Muslim marriages, South African mercenaries, the exploitation of oil in Africa, South African Muslims, Israeli discriminatory laws relating to marriage, Islam and feminism. Some of her articles were translated into Polish, German and Italian.

Challenging Notions of Ethnicity

As a journalist who wrote under the by-line of Suraya Naidoo for a Durban-based community newspaper, *Al-Ummah*, her surname evoked mixed reactions. She recounts an article she eventually wrote, "what's in a name". She challenged the 'Indianised' linguistic culturalisation of Islam that is prevalent in South African Muslim community, especially among Muslims whose forebears came from the Indian subcontinent.

"I used to initially get very irritated when people said "Suraya Naidoo?" and I remember telling someone Naidoo is no more a Hindu surname than Patel or Rajah or any of the other Hindu surnames. If I was Suraya Patel it wouldn't have been a problem but it seems more noticeable if I'm Suraya Naidoo. And it's not any less Hindu or more Hindu than Desai, something like that. So I think I did raise a few eye brows because I wrote an article "What's in a name?"

"That I think this is the only controversial article that I wrote about that got a reaction from the ulamā' - but generally the reaction amongst Muslims is always positive when you hear of somebody who's embraced Islam and I don't think any Muslim will have anything like negative to say about it."

Education

"I come from a non-Muslim family, so the issue of females studying was actually a non-issue." Inherent in this statement about females able to study is the implication that there is a restrictive environment for Muslim females. This is in fact the position of Muslim women in the world as a result of centuries of systematic patriarchal domination that also affected Muslims in South Africa.

The traditional (misogynistic) role assigned to women is that of a dutiful wife and mother who cannot pursue a career (Husain 2003); is intellectually inferior and a potent sexual source for social disorder (Haddad 1998). There is however a growing recognition of women's contribution to economic and political development process of Middle Eastern countries. While their educational and employment aspirations have increased, they still face formidable barriers, as for example in Oman (Rippenburg 1998).

In South Africa, while the debate still continues regarding the educational needs of Muslim females, increasing number of women are acquiring tertiary education.

Dadoo's husband and his family do not see her educational status and activities as un-Islamic and the birth of her child meant spending less time at the work place.

"With regard to my husband and in-laws, this has not been an issue, as I am incredibly fortunate to be able to work from home on my own time. In this way, I am still able to fulfil all of my obligations and responsibilities of a wife, a mother and daughter-in-law. However, this is incredibly challenging sometimes."

Avoiding Controversies and Accepting Criticisms

Dadoo distance herself from controversy, well aware of the differences and dynamics within the ummah. She knows what she wants and is focussed in her role as a woman. *"When I was interested in Islam before I became Muslim, then I read quite a bit on it. I could see the different camps and that but after I became Muslim and I understood what a Muslim woman was all about. Then for me I developed my own ideas and I knew what my own view was and I accepted it and ja."*

Criticism of one self and one's religious views are noteworthy traits and relevant for growth and development of an individual and society. In the South African context, it is evocative and informative as the country is being restructured. Muslims are often accused of "not accepting of criticism" and some researchers avoid being critical in spite of using empiricist methodology (Mojab 2000).

"I mean, if you're going to, if you're talking about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it's such a controversial issue. The person who has an opposite view, is obviously going to argue their point and criticise, your research and that. So it's to be expected. And, I think not just with that. I mean if you're discussing an Islamic issue and someone takes another view or subscribes to a different school of thought or has a different viewpoint, it's still going to be criticised and you have to accept criticism. You know, its part of the job."

Conclusion

Jamshidian (2003) notes that Iranian women have made progress as active participants in society including in the field of mass communication, education and parliament becoming “the decision makers of the society” (p 104) as a result of a democratic system. The young democracy of South Africa offer women greater opportunities than the Islamic Republic of Iran to realise their potential and express their rights in all spheres of society despite the many obstacles and challenges. The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, protects the rights of minorities and provides equal opportunity for women and men both in theory and in reality.

The South African constitution is considered one of the few in the world to entrench socio-economic rights with the courts giving meaning to it. Sunstein (2001) states that “the first time in the history of the world, a constitutional court has initiated a process that might well succeed in the endeavor of ensuring that protection without placing courts in an unacceptable managerial role. This point has large implications for how we think about citizenship, democracy, and minimal social and economic needs” (p 2). He considers the South African constitution as a transformative constitution that provides a leading example.

Dadoo’s *da‘wah* through the media within such a constitutional framework is an explicatory effort that contributes to the strengthening of the *ummah*, recognition and respect for the rights of others; dispelling myths and stereotyping of people. “Until such time as the vast majority of Muslim women remain unaware of the religious ideas and attitudes which constitute the matrix in which their lives are rooted, it is not possible to usher in a new era and create a new history in which the Qur’anic vision of gender-justice and equity becomes a reality” (Hassan 1995:2). While for Dadoo gender issue is not a priority given the acceptance by her family and her husband’s, the general respectful acknowledgement as a “new” Muslim and her preoccupation with the media, Islam predicates her vision as a woman; a *dā‘iyah* engaged as a media activist.

Correcting distortions and presenting the many divergent views of Muslims and the different “Islams” is essential in South Africa where Muslim constitute a small minority in a fledgling democracy. Muslims need to have knowledge of issues and the capacity to intervene to protect Islam through discourses and dialogues. *“That’s why,”* Dadoo recommends, *“we need to know what’s out there, and make sure that our dīn (religion) is not misrepresented. If it is, we can’t moan about it in private, but try to engage journalists and editors.”* Said (1994) states: “the purpose of the intellectual’s activity is to advance human freedom and knowledge” (p 13) and Dadoo’s *da‘wah* creates that space for Muslim women, and hers is a vital contribution in the reconstruction of democracy.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

"The position of women in any given society can be taken as a mark of the progress of civilisation or humanization within that society."

Mitchell (1975:2)

10.1. General Findings of this Research

In this concluding chapter, an overall assessment is made to establish a collective sense of the participants' struggles, challenges, ambitions and successes in contributing to rebuilding a better and just society.

This research study is about the role of Muslim women in the three provinces of South Africa, who through their *da'wah* activism, are contributing towards human rights and human dignity in the reconstruction of South Africa's nascent democracy. In South Africa, the neo-liberal constraints require an overhauling of the political-economic structures (White 2001) and until that occurs, poverty, crime and moral degradation will remain the norms of society. The research participants provide a rare insight into the plight of refugees, the victims of poverty and HIV-Aids pandemic: women, men and children. Their selfless response and extensive commitments to helping those in need, materially and spiritually, are exceptional and exemplary.

Although they come from diverse cultural backgrounds located within a minority (Muslim) community they are united in their commitment to serve the South African society from an Islamic perspective. Their methodology is infused with their interpretation of the Islamic texts that is egalitarian and pluralistic. The Qur'ān as the main point of reference, is a powerful weapon for moral regeneration; connecting them with the lives of the poor and those in need of spiritual mentoring irrespective of creed, religion or ethnicity. The narratives of their storied lives also provide a rare insight into their lives as South Africans.

In presenting the narratives and the critical discussions that followed within the grounded methodologies, great care and caution was taken not to represent the participants in any manner that would expose this study to dangers and abuse and in turn abuse the trust and privilege of entering the storied lives of extraordinary individuals. "As trust develops, participants frequently give researchers carte blanche to say what they wish. Yet, researchers, perhaps more aware of how texts may ultimately be read, may find themselves being more cautious about how participants are represented than are the participants themselves" (Clandinin and Connelly 2000:177).

The evaluative discussions of the interviews of the main and secondary research participants in the preceding chapters show how the main participants in particular, contribute to the reconstruction of the burgeoning democratic society. Their contributions are configured through *their* own paradigms and *their* own redefinition and reformulation of *da'wah* modelled on *their* interpretation of the Islamic texts. The grounding of their discourses in the multi contexts highlight the many challenges they face as women in improving the lives and conditions of South Africans.

Much has changed from the time the research participants were interviewed. Life is not a constant; each individual undergoes change on a continuum of life's changes. The views of the participants and those of the researcher regarding the status and position of women and Muslim women have been influenced by the inevitable changes through the interviews and through their own work. The gender debate and reinterpretation of the Islamic sources being part of the contemporary Islamist debate, are getting stronger (Roald 1998) and Muslim women cannot be stereotyped as meek and subordinate (Duval 1998). The participants themselves are not meek and aware of the solitariness and alienation of negative elements of western culture on individuals and families. As independent individuals in touch with the underpinnings of Islamic values, they are arduously engaged in making their contribution to the reconstruction process.

Participants' Methodologies

Each research participant has her own methodology but all are equally critical of their "target group". While they are dedicated to improving the lives of others, and are empathetic, they do not hesitate to be critical of those who expect sympathy and handouts. They are willing to help those who are willing to be empowered in spite of their circumstances. Mullah assists in negotiating the space for and the rights of the refugees, including their medical needs, interaction with government officials and providing opportunities for socio-economic upliftment.

Each *dā'iyah's* approach is different, just as there are different methods and methodologies among the '*ulamā*' and within the *ummah*. Allāh did not create one voice for humankind but many voices for one humankind and through diversity expects people to exercise their freedom to live in unity. The diversity provides the ability and opportunities to evolve a dynamic society to define and actualise the rights of all.

Researcher's Voice

The researcher avoided deconstructing the narratives or discussing it out of context because facts and events argues Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) "take their meaning from the narrative structure in which they are embedded" (p 79). In spite of all the precautions taken and cognisant of the methodology used in this research, one cannot ignore certain realities. Even feminist researches who have challenged the traditional approach to research of separateness between researcher and subject, neutrality, distance and masculine bias, end up with their own research results. In other words, it is inescapable that even though life in context, oral and ethnographic narratives are used, the research project / document is ultimately structured, written and registered in the researcher's voice (Stacey, 1991).

Critical Evaluation

The narratives in the different forms allow the interviewee to speak for herself. Both the researcher and the interviewee share certain concerns and experiences and establish “closeness” and a kind of co-authorship especially regarding the text of the oral interview. The absence of evaluation and critical analysis would seem to have validated the voices of the research participants. This would have allowed the results to be what Hale’s (1991) interview with Fatma Ahmad Ibrahim, the Sudanese feminist activist had become, a portrait of a person’s life work without contradictions, mistakes and human frailty. However, it was not possible to rely solely on the life in context narrative methodology and, accordingly, there was a need to evaluate, analyse and discuss the results.

Wood and Moolla were perhaps cautious about criticising Muslim men’s attitude towards them not wanting to be embroiled in controversy or to be distracted by controversy. Their interaction, particularly with *Maulānā* Yunus Patel of the *Jami ‘atul’ ‘Ulamā’* (KwaZulu-Natal) was more symbiotic and reciprocal. They approached him on Islamic matters to clarify issues and “validate” their syllabus. He made referrals perhaps he was “satisfied” that these two women provided a service that cannot be rendered by a body of male religious scholars. The *Jami‘atul’ ‘Ulamā’* would also reap the harvest of blessings of indirectly “converting” and ensuring that “proper” principles and ethics of Islam (the male interpretation of it) were followed.

There is a respectful relationship but this does not mean that the research participants are not independent in their thoughts, interpretation and epistemology. Moolla expresses her views on women’s rights by holding critical discussions with her students. She reflects on the contradictions of scholars and jurists in relation to women’s rights, including the views of classical scholars but does so with gentility.

Dadoo's *da'wah* is through the media where she has to counter the public's negative perception of Islam and Muslims. These loaded terms instantly trigger resentment, anger and sometimes a vicious campaign of derision and hatred. Her writing skills and creative approach as a social scientist helps her in dealing with the western media, placing her on the global scene.

Shanaaz Muslim, Ayesha Makhoba, Haffsa Kagango and Abdallah confirm the impact of the *du'āh* / main research participants on the quality of their lives. Their stories require further research in their own rights of their life history and narratives in context. Where Islam was adopted as way of life, the participants that included two principal participants, expressed through narratives their experiences as converts / reverts 'rather than a reductionist explanations focussing on sociological 'causes'" (Hunt 2003:104).

Hassim's and Mulla's areas of activities are different while they share similarities in *da'wah* with Wood and Moolla. The former work out in the field including intervention that affects men, young adult males and children. Their work has been widely publicised via the audio-visual and print media. This also means that they are more exposed to criticisms from men. Perhaps, if they went about "quietly" with "conversion" and worked with women only, they would find "acceptance" by Muslim men. Such "confinement" would be viewed as an extension of their "household duties", still within the stereotyped perception.

South Africa with its first democratic constitution is a society in transition and despite the efforts, emphasis and action by the ANC led government to provide women equal status, patriarchy is still a dominant force. Socio-economic, different cultural and religious factors and the different patriarchies discriminate and stereotype women. In a sense, South Africa reflects the global patriarchalism.

Muslim women are victims of bias; suffer prejudice in many ways and most certainly when they are stereotyped. According to Duval (1998) the

understanding of women in history suffered from a triple bias, a male bias, a class bias, and a worker bias (p 46). Women's struggle is therefore resonating everywhere and "women's rights activists can be seen and heard in the capital of all Muslim countries" (Moghadam 1994:6).

While the women participants in this research cannot be taken to reflect the activities of Muslim women living as minorities, it may typify the public role of Muslim women in countries where Muslims are a minority but are guaranteed the right to be free (from male-structured framework) and equal as in South Africa. Here, their contribution is one of challenge to those Muslims who live as isolationists, seeking, in the conceptual framework of Abedin (1980) to "break down stereotypes, seek areas of corporation with their compatriots" (p 29); committed to justice and pluralism (Esack 1999) within a resurgent drive of Islamic activities (Dangor 1991).

Ridd's (1994) experience in Cape Town's Districts Six demolishes the stereotyped notion of Muslim women been relegated to a private, secluded and restrictive life. She found that in spite of the street gangs controlling the neighbourhood, Muslim women were in the centre of activity, "vocal in their authority and often conspicuous in their dress" (p 87). The research participants in this study were certainly not confined to their homes and would not have allowed themselves to be deprived of their right to engage in *da'wah*. They are actively involved in the field in transforming lives and giving direction to the communities.

10.2. Specific Findings of this Research

10.2.1. Research Participant's Methodology and Framework

The starting point is the individual with the family as a nucleus of a stable society. Individuals therefore have to develop or help to develop the natural goodness (*fītrah*) that engenders co-operation, respect, and for those who adopt Islam, to be firmly grounded in its basic tenets. The ultimate aim is to provide the individuals and families with a strong sense of morality, caring and belongingness to humanity based on *tawḥīd*. The work is undertaken for the love of Allāh as South African women working with women (and some men, e.g. refugees) to empower them to shape a better South African society. *Da'wah* started in the 16th century in the Cape finding expression through different methods that gave people; indigenous blacks, slaves and others, a true sense of dignity and equality leading to the rapid spread of Islam (Mason 1999).

The research participant's methodology and framework include the following: -

- 10.2.1.1 Inviting to Islam. They carry out the command of Allāh to invite people – both the “inner-other” (Muslims) and “external-other” (people of other faiths, beliefs and creed, including people who are non-religious and anti-religious), to bear witness to the *shahādah* (that there is only One creator and Muḥammad is Allāh's last messenger).
- 10.2.1.2 Just social order. Establishing a just social order was the mandate carried out by all the Prophets and Messengers (God bless and grant them peace), to end: -
 - a) discrimination based on class, ethnicity and caste (e.g. Prophet Nūḥ / Noah)
 - b) imperialism, tyranny and wastage of public resources (Prophet Hūd)
 - c) abominable crime: immorality and permissiveness (Prophet Lūt / Lot)
 - d) injustice and economic inequality (Prophet Shu'ayb)

- e) injustice, extravagance and cheating (Prophet Ṣāliḥ)
- f) infanticide, social inequality, religious exclusivism and tribalism, tyranny, permissiveness, economic inequity, gender discrimination, exploitation of the masses by religious scholars and the rich aristocrats (Prophet Muḥammad).

10.2.1.3 Social and spiritual upliftment. Committed to the wellbeing and welfare of people, irrespective of religious affiliation, gender, race, caste or class.

“‘What led you into hell?’ They will answer: ‘We were not among those who prayed; nor were we of those who fed the indigent; but we used to indulge in sinning with all who indulged in it; and we used to deny the Day of Judgement, until the certainty of death came upon us’” (*Al-Muddaththir* 74:42-47).

“Do you see one who denies the Recompense? Such is one who repulses the orphan callously, and does not encourage the feeding of the poor. So woe to the worshippers who are neglectful of their prayers, those who do good to be seen and refuse all neighbourly needs” (*Al-Mā’un* 107:1-7).

10.2.1.4 Modest and Balanced: They do not consider themselves superior to others by virtue of their *da‘wah* activities. This would be “antithetical to the nature, spirit and methodology of Da‘wah” (Murad, no date). They are unassuming in the work they do and do not go to extremes, exemplifying what the Prophet said, “the character of Islam is modesty” (at-Tarjumana and Johnson 1982:438).

- 10.2.1.5 Recognising the dignity of others. They remind their subjects / students (“converts”) to honour and love their family members even though they have not accepted Islam and the research participants themselves attend family functions. They consider that the goodness and justice in the “external-others” are natural, universal qualities and therefore everyone is potentially good (*Al-Tīn* 95:4) and anyone who is just and does righteous deeds is loved by Allāh (*Al-Hujurāt* 49:13; *Al-Mumtahana* 60:8; *Āl-‘Imrān* 3:112-4).
- 10.2.1.6 Recognising that moral values belong to all persons. They do not demonise people because of their beliefs.
- 10.2.1.7 Communication: they communicate at the level of the people, in their language and have a firm grasp of the subjects’ culture and religion.
- 10.2.1.8 Dispute. They do not get into dispute with their subjects / students.
- 10.2.1.9 Empowerment through changing character. Prophet Muḥammad changed the character of “converts” (ad-da’wah 1983) and so empowered people. This is an inspiration for the research participants to empower women creatively.

“There was never a revolution where the Prophet suddenly changed the lives of people, it was a gradual replacement of the bad things. Even when the Quraish were oppressing the Muslims, there was no reason for the Muslims to denounce their Quraishy ancestry” (Hussain 2003a:5-6).

Referring to women Islamists of the 1990’s, Rasmussen (1998) viewed their activities as *da’wah*. “Instead of *fitna* these women try to relate closely another Islamic notion to the Muslim woman, that of *da’wa*, invitation or invitation to Islam. The concept is often translated into mission, and these women would not object to this meaning of the word. In their argumentation through *da’wa*

becomes a self-practice: While arguing that the Muslim woman can practice *da'wa* by constituting a good example for others to follow, *da'wa* is turned into cultivation of the self in addition to the meaning of persuading others. This implies that the individual must educate and cultivate oneself" (p 8-9).

The research participants in this thesis are educated in the literal sense, spiritually cultivated and have persuaded and empowered others through their selfless hard work for the love and pleasure of Allāh.

10.3 The Research Participants contributions to the Reconstruction of South African society

The ushering of constitutional democracy with a Bill of Rights and the separation of powers between the state and courts have ensured democratic values. The government has also committed itself to establishing gender balance in the employment sector and in political institutions, including national, provincial and local tiers of government. The constitution of South Africa is considered one of the best and the courts have given expression and amplified aspects of it. Democracy has become a trajectory of a new social order providing numerous possibilities and opportunities.

Challenges by the poor regarding socio-economic rights, women seeking to achieve equity and other individuals and groups relying on the courts, contribute towards reconstructing a fractured society. Reconstruction is multifaceted and its contributors include political, religious, moral, spiritual and ethical exponents and discourses in re-establishing human dignity.

Critical Mediators and Interpreters

The participants are women who are critical mediators and interpreters, playing a critical role in reforming and reconstructing from an Islamic perspective. "In most Muslim areas there are constant debates over what is proper Islam and what is not; what behaviour is derived from proper Islamic principles and what derives

from other sources” (Manager 1999:225). Fundamentalist interpretation by Christian feminists is the literal interpretation of the Bible whereas to Muslim feminists it means the return to the pure sources (Roald 1998). The research participants use the Islamic texts as their source for counselling, teaching Islam, spiritual mentoring and helping the poor and needy.

Social Agents for Change

They are social agents for change for a better, just and equitable society. They are occupied through their *da‘wah* activities in instilling strong religious, moral and spiritual values based on their own modalities. Their students are taught how to live Islam: searching for positive meanings within themselves and expressing their humanity in the interest of society.

Investing in Human Dignity

Democracy in South Africa is also about deconstructing the evils of a divided society and reconstructing a multicultural value system. The participants’ concern and involvement in uplifting the socio-economic condition, re-affirms in people their human dignity and dispels decades of systematic suspicion and division, particularly rooted in the notion of the “other” (black and white, Indian and coloured) and the superimposing of religion and culture. They are directly involved in reinforcing the democratic principles of South Africa in helping individuals, families and communities in realising that they are dignified human beings (*khalifah* or representative of Allah).

Entrepreneurial Techniques

Each participant’s *da‘wah* activity employs entrepreneurial techniques, whether through direct conversion of the subjects and providing education through their Islamic classes (Moolla and Wood), the use of the media (Dadoo) or as community activists (Hashim and Mulla). The grassroots intervention and engagement with the poor, homeless, glue-suffers, emigrants and victims of xenophobia is a constructive, positive contribution to the reconstruction process.

Recognition by the ‘*ulamā*’

That the participants are Muslim women actively engaged in social change against the plethora of misogynistic restriction- religious and social, is another aspect of their contribution to the reconstruction of a society, seeing themselves not half of men but equally capable of realising Islamic values.

The fact that the ‘*ulamā*’ make referrals to the participants, Moolla and Wood, is an acknowledgement of their *da‘wah* activities. While the participants work closely with male scholars this does not imply that their work needs validation from men (‘*ulamā*’). On the contrary, it is evident that they see no conflict in Islam in co-operating and co-existing with men. It is what Hassan (2002b) believes that people of divergent viewpoints are capable working together in pursuit of the common good.

Universal Values and Pluralism

They differ in their praxis and hermeneutics of the Islamic texts from the ‘*ulamā*’ and are cautious not to get “side tracked” by conflicts and debates. They have all expressed a common purpose, working in the interest of people and acknowledging moral values of others who are not Muslims. In Esack’s (1999) discourse, it is a commitment to justice and pluralism of people who seek an Allāh who is just and inclusive. They “search for moral universals that could serve as shared and common goals with humanity at large” (El Fadl, 2003:41) but such a search is based on their commitment to and interpretation of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*.

Educational Needs

The participants, with the exceptions of Dadoo and Muslim, do not have a tertiary qualification. They have however inspired, assisted and encouraged their students to aspire to achieving post-matriculation qualifications. They speak with pride about their students who have graduated as doctors, lawyers, educators and have excelled in other discipline. These students keep in touch with the participants and are still actively involved in the “school”.

Contribution to Debate

The research participants are not scholars in the conventional sense and have meagre resources at their disposal, working in a patriarchal milieu. They are fully aware of being stereotyped and being reproached but their active role as *du'āh* (*da'wah* workers), as humanists, are further contributions to the genre of literature on gender, minority community, *da'wah* and moral regeneration of the South African society.

Developing Strong Personalities

They have asserted their rights within the context of the Qur'anic discourse and authentic *Sunnah*, as *they* understand it and contributed far more successfully in writing and re-writing of history than is known or acknowledged. Each in her own idiosyncratic style have made an impact on the lives of individual women and their families in developing a strong personality, solid family structure, asserting one's individuality as a woman with a free mind and soul and acquiring economic independence or having provided the tools to do so.

Contribution to Oral History

The participants' stories through this research were an attempt to collect their words and to place it on the social public domain as a legitimate social discourse (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991). It is the researcher's hope and prayer that the women who participated in this research will be encouraged and inspired to tell much more of their stories in their own words, recorded by them and registered in their names.

The oral interviews provided valuable information, uncovering women's perspectives (Anderson, and Jack, 1991) with the researcher being an active participant. When oral narratives is applied to women of colour, as was the case in this research, "it assumes added significance as a powerful instrument for rediscovery of womanhood so often overlooked and / or neglected in history and literature alike" (Elter-Lewis, 1991:43).

Contribution to Researcher's Worldview

But, it went beyond womanhood, the participants contributed to the researcher's reflection of his worldview, intensified his admiration and love for Allāh, the exalted, the great. His views found resonance in the interviews with the research participants, strengthening his core belief in the greatness and beauty of a Being; who is absolutely wise, not dogmatic; not a sexist or a bigot or partisan to our subjective interpretations and who does not impose hardships on creation. The participants through their interviews re-affirmed the researcher's worldview.

Direct Contribution to further Research: This research study is not an end in itself but as Trinh Min-Ha's approach suggests it "supports the notion of alternative narrative accounts that include not only what the subject has said but also serve as a beginning for what has not been said and remains to be explored" (in Khan, 2001:11). While the research participants are not Islamists in the "conventional" sense, modern reformists or part of the growing academia of research scholars, their contribution is direct and profound.

Upliftment of Society: Another focus is the positive contribution in the upliftment of society through the emerging "power" of women as they contest male dominance and '*ulamā*'-centred approach. It must be emphasised though that most of the participants did not encounter hostility or any impediment from the '*ulamā*'.

Working towards Integration: The research participants have not been part of the emerging debates and their names are not inked on the pages of international or local workshops and conferences. As Dadoo (2003) states, "South African Muslims come from many cultural traditions but belong to one nation-a dynamic blend of age-old customs and modern ways, building a new South African society to create a better life for all" (p 7).

Da'wah: This research is expected to stimulate interests in studies of other women engaged in *da'wah* in the context of the wide definition postulated. The

definition and concept of *da'wah* in itself is another area that needs further research.

Women's Activism and non-racism: What is the correlation between women's activism and the decrease in schisms, suspicions and "racism"? This may be a hypothesis that researchers may need to investigate.

Educating and Reforming Society

"The overall message is: The Muslim woman is a moral creature, capable of being an example for others to follow. Neither *fitna* nor backwardness is the main feature of the true Muslim women, but rather willingness and capability to form the avant-garde of the women of Islam leading the *umma* into the future" (Rasmussen, 1998:9).

Rasmussen (1998) identifies several women Islamists who contributed to political and intellectual development to Egyptian society. Regarding the period 1892-1920 about thirty journals were listed for and by women. "We can assume that the women contributing to the public in this period, whether veiling or not, whether revealing their names or not, saw themselves as educated literally and morally, thus capable of educating others and reforming society" (p 5). It is in this spirit that the research participants, at grassroots level, see themselves and are actively involved in transforming society. It is working towards an *ummah* that is enlightened that contributes towards a better South African society.

The awards and recognition of the research participants by the '*ulamā*', Nelson Mandela (refer to p 282 of appendix four), the church, media and other local and international institutions is an affirmation of their contribution to the *ummah* and to the reconstruction efforts of the burgeoning democracy.

Appendix One: Hafsa Moolla

Documents: Photographs, Letters, Articles	Pages
<i>Top:</i> Moolla at the main entrance of her <i>da'wah</i> centre, Islamic Guidance in Overport, Durban (2005)	259
<i>Bottom:</i> Moolla (left) and Muslim (right) outside Islamic Guidance in Overport, Durban (2005)	259
Moolla during the interview in her office	260
Students at Graduation day (2005) at the Islamic Guidance	261
Teachers and staff after lunch at Graduation day (2005)	262
Moolla addressing the students	262
File photographs of past students	263
Photographs of students on a post card	264
Moolla (extreme left) with students in Newlands, north of Durban in 1976	265



Moolla at the main entrance of her *da'wah* centre, Islamic Guidance in Overport, Durban (2005)



Moolla (left) and Muslim (right) outside Islamic Guidance in Overport, Durban (2005)



Moolla during the interview in her office





Students at Graduation day (2005) at the Islamic Guidance





Teachers and staff after lunch at Graduation day (2005)



Moolla addressing the students



File photographs of past students



We, the children of Islamic
Guidance have come a
long way with all your
generous contributions, all
gratitude and praise to
ALLAH Almighty

1976 - 2005



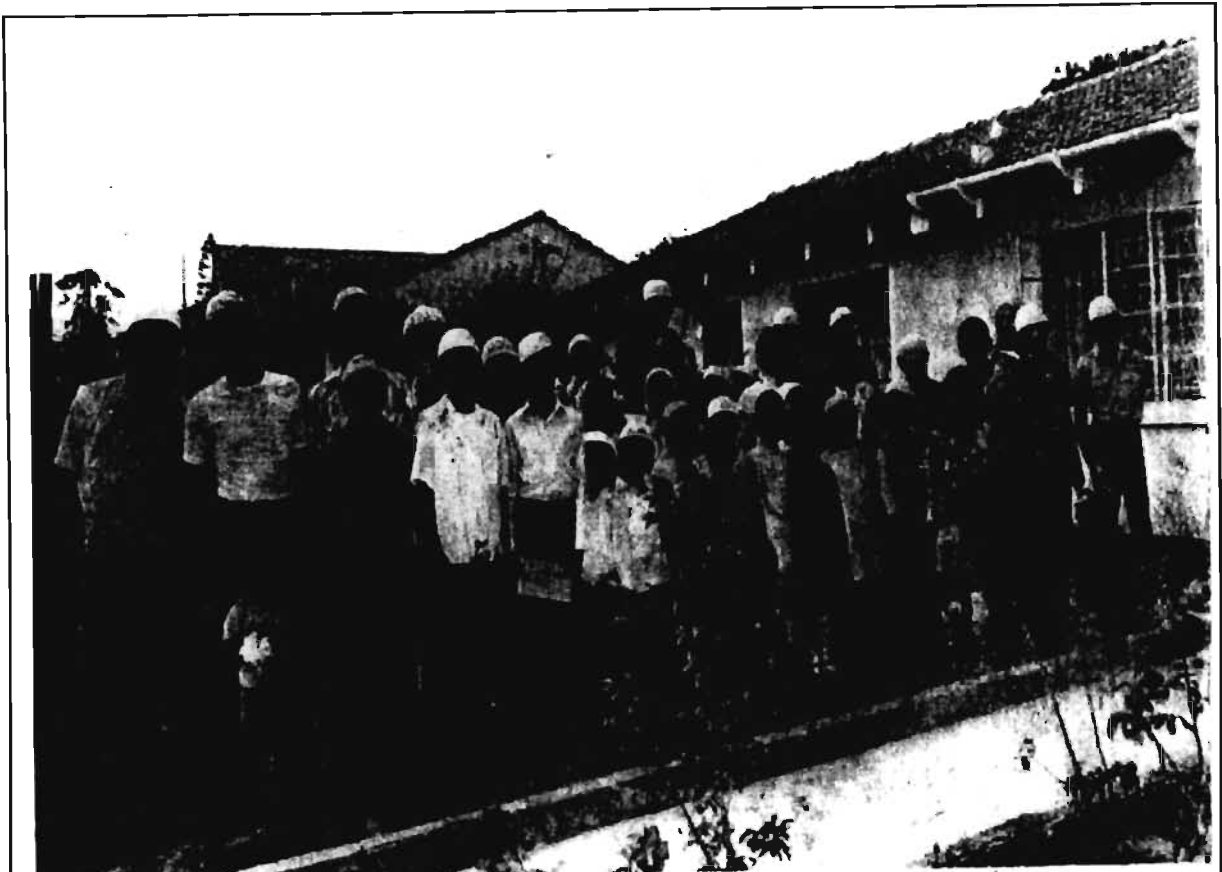
**Photographs of students on a post card outside Islamic guidance
(2005) celebrating 29 years of service**



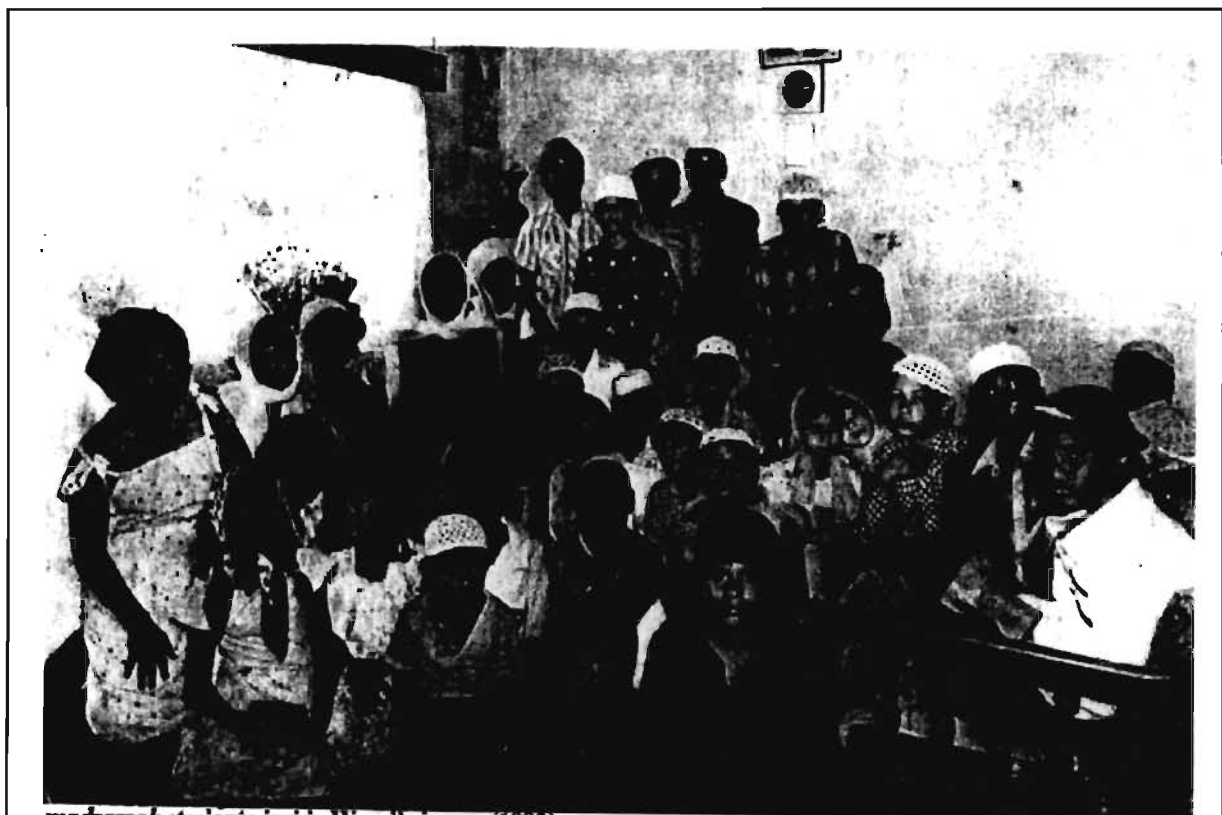
Moola (extreme left) with students in Newlands, north of Durban in 1976

Appendix Two: Maryam Wood

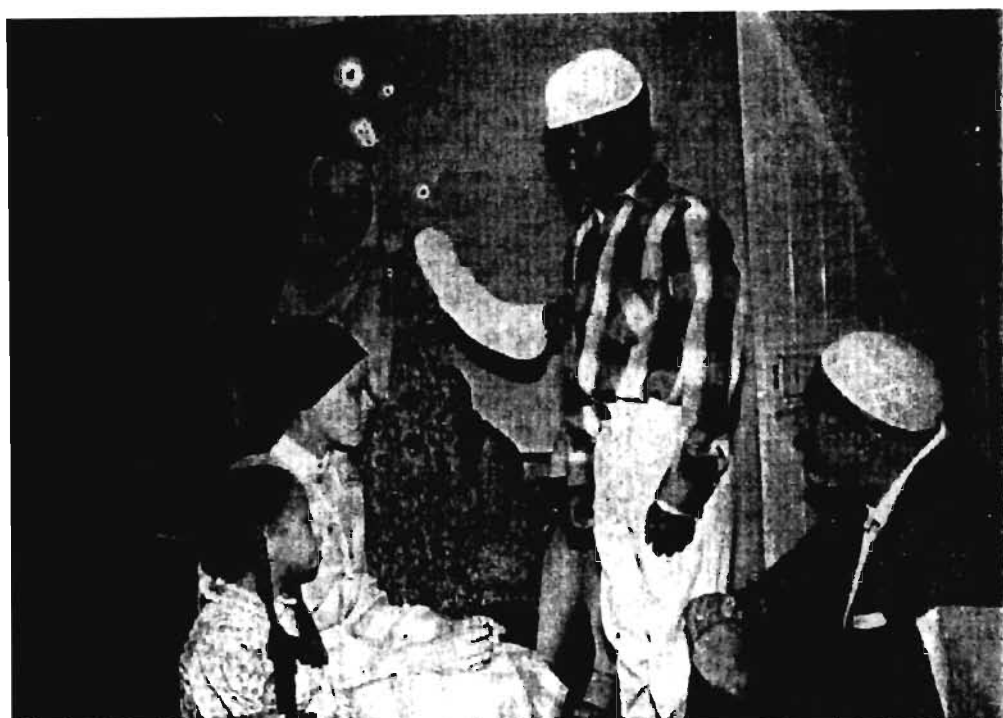
Documents: Photographs, Letters, Articles	Pages
Group of students (1977) before <i>madrassah</i> was built at the back of the house	267
<i>Madrassah</i> students inside Wood’s house (1982)	267
Wood with Ḥajjī Aysen who officiates on Isaac’s becoming a Muslim	268
Ḥajjī Aysen supplicating as he holds onto Isaac	268
<i>Madrassah</i> play organised by Wood and her students	269
Senior students performing in plays	270
Ayesha Makhoba (2005: secondary participant)	271



Group of students (1977) before *madrasah* was built at the back of the house



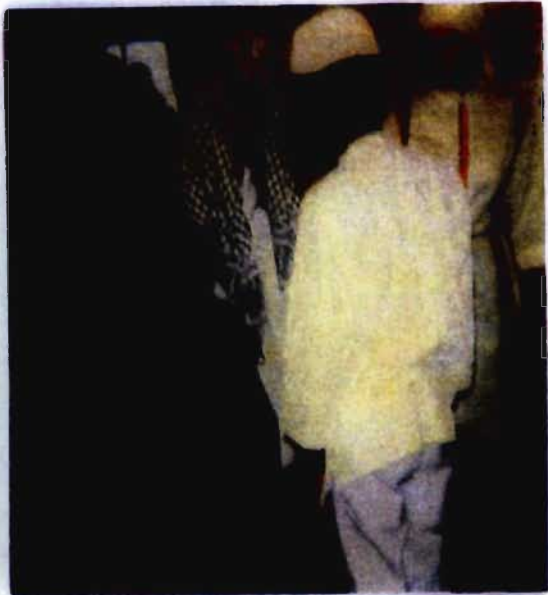
madrasah students inside Wood's house (1982)



Wood (with her hand on Isaac) with hajji Aysen (right, sitting) who officiates on young Isaac becoming a Muslim. Isaac's mum and sister are seated at the "function"



hajji Aysen supplicating as he holds onto Isaac



Madrasah play organised by Wood and her students



Senior students performing in plays



Ayesha Makhoba



Appendix Three: Waradia Mulla

Documents: Photographs, Letters, Articles	Pages
Mulla at the entrance of <i>Bonne Esperance</i> Refugee shelter for women and children (2005: in Philippi, Cape Town)	273
Children at <i>Bonne Esperance</i> enjoying sweets Mulla shares with them (2005)	273
Haffsa Kagango (secondary participant) talking to Mulla during the interview with the researcher (2005)	274
Abdallah (secondary participant) at his flat with his family, Cape Town	274
Maitland, Cape Town, residential flatland where Abdallah and other refugee tenants live	275
Top: Ahmed and his family from the Congo	276
Bottom: Ahmed and his family saying good bye to friends at <i>Bonne Esperance</i> - leaving for Pietermaritzburg to teach	276
Top: Young Hoosein sustained scars and injury when the hut he was living in was set alight by Hutus. Hoosain's mother Teeto is carrying her baby Edries	277
Bottom: Hoosein with refugees from Burundi – Fameida and her children	277
Top and bottom: Christmas party with refugee children (2003)	278
Top: Mulla (left) with Charles from the United States of America and other guests	279
Bottom: Mulla with women from Senegal	279
Letter from <i>Bonne Esperance</i> 's programme manager expressing gratitude to Mulla for her voluntary work	280

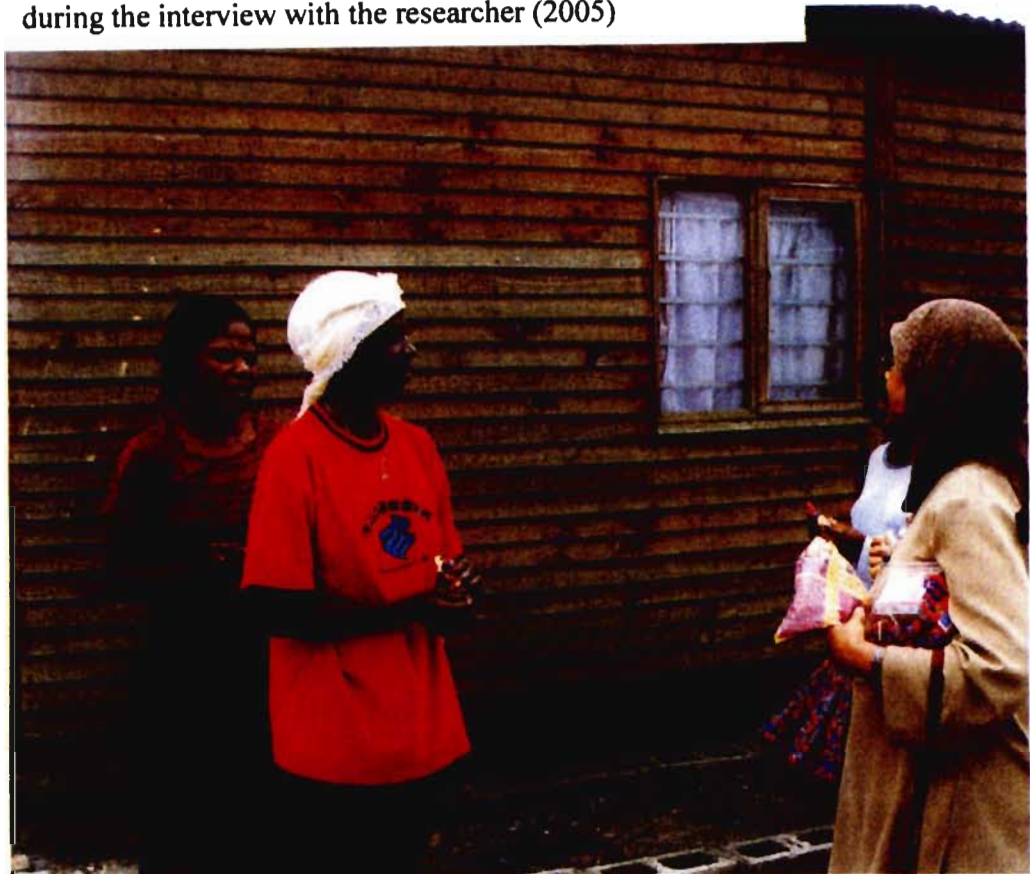


Mulla at the entrance of *Bonne Esperance* Refugee shelter for women and children (2005: in Philippi, Cape Town)



Children at *Bonne Esperance* enjoying sweets Mulla shares with them (2005)

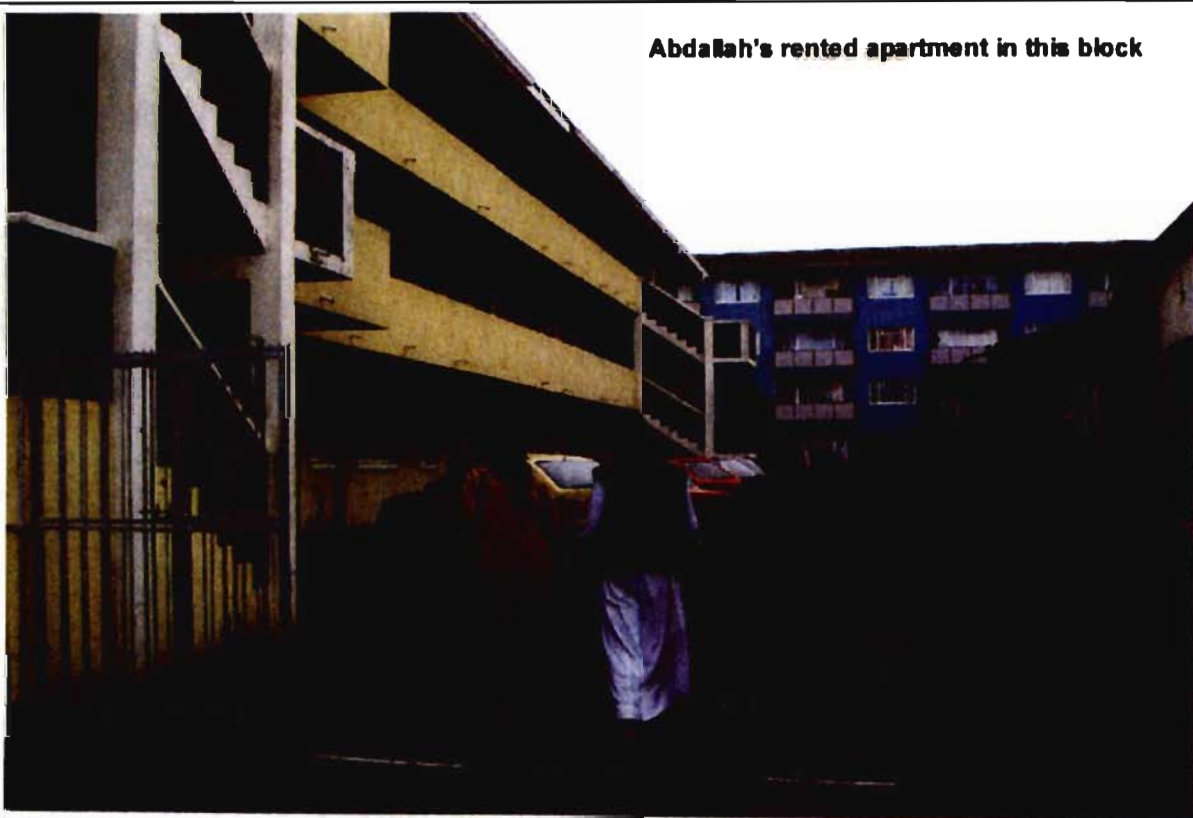
Haffsa Kagango (secondary participant) talking to Mulla during the interview with the researcher (2005)

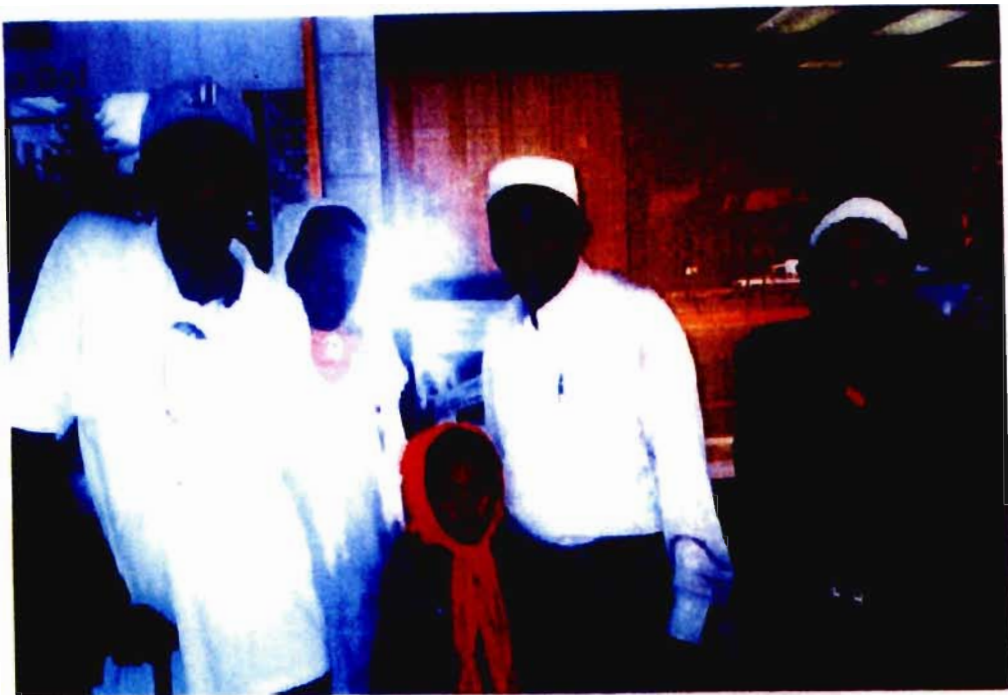


Maitland, Cape Town, residential flatland where Abdallah and other refugee tenants live



Abdallah's rented apartment in this block





Ahmed (second from right) and his family from the Congo.



Ahmed and his family saying good bye to friends at *Bonne Esperance* - leaving for Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal, to teach



Top: Young Hoosein sustained scars and injury when the hut he was living in was set alight by Hutus. Hoosain's mother Teeto is carrying her baby Edries
Bottom: Hoosein with refugees from Burundi – Fameida and her children



Top and bottom: Christmas party with refugee children (2003). Mulla (top) standing next to father Christmas with a child in her arms



Top: Mulla (left) with Charles from the United States of America
and other guests

Bottom: Mulla with women from Senegal



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Ph: 021 7785

Email: esperance@imweth.co.za

Website: www.bea.org.za

22 September 2006

Dear Mrs. Warda Muller

Bonne Esperance and Refugee Welfare and Development thank you for your years of support in our work as a volunteer in the Cape Town Refugee scenario.

Your contribution in comforting the mothers, the children, the fathers, the widowed, the disabled, the disfigured, the orphaned, the destitute, the hungry, the sick, the dying, the homeless and the weary of the community of asylum seekers and refugees, is being noted with the deepest admiration.

Bonne Esperance alone has been able to benefit 80 women and 60 children in 2005 up to 30 September 2005. In 2006, about 60 women and 50 children have benefited from your benevolence. Food, doctor's consultations, clothing, shoes, a shoulder to cry on and I ride in your car; these are all the gifts you have shared with our people and more. We realize that you are not in this alone.

Your kind benefactors are, through you, also being acknowledged for their untiring efforts in helping you assist those whose destiny has been touched by war and civil strife and displacement from their countries.

We thank you God for the Treasure that you are to all of us!

"Happy are those who work for peace God will call them his children." -

Kind regards

Nzwaki Odege
(Programme Manager)

Appendix Four: Suraya Hassim

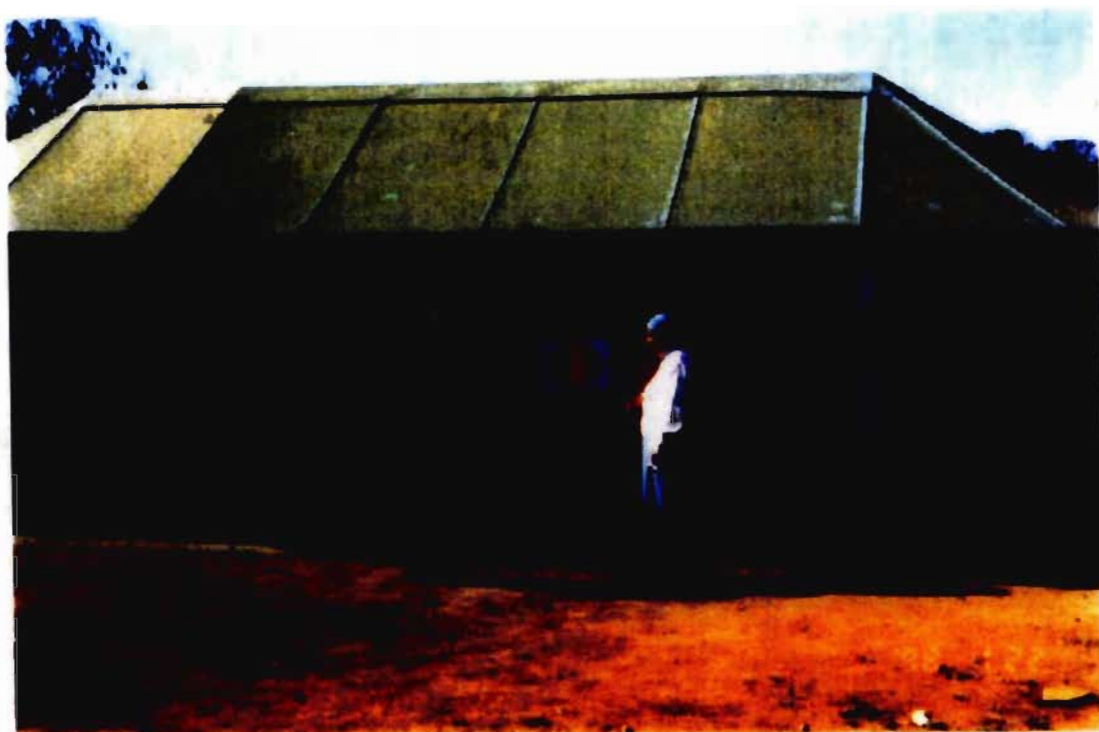
Documents: Photographs, Letters, Articles	Pages
President Nelson Mandela meets with Hassim and members of a Muslim delegation	282
Top: Hassim bends over, trying to get the attention of one the children who live at the Centre for children with HIV in Kliptown, Johannesburg (1998-2005)	283
Bottom: one of the volunteers at the Centre	283
Top: Hassim in front of one of the 'Wendy house' at the Centre that she painted	284
Bottom: one of the toddlers infected with HIV	284
Feeding projects: government school (top), madrassah (middle) and the homeless (bottom)	285
Hassim's feedings scheme for destitute women and children	286
Hassim's work with disabled children	287
Community Veg garden self-help project in Sebokeng	288
Managawane Muslim Jama'at brick making project	289
Islamic Relief Fund's Newsletter	290-293
Specimen of a declaration certificate given to a person adopting Islam as her / his religion	294



President Nelson Mandela's meeting with Hassim who was part of a Muslim delegation



Top: Hassim bends over, trying to get the attention of one the children who live at the Centre for children with HIV in Kliptown, Johannesburg (1998-2005)



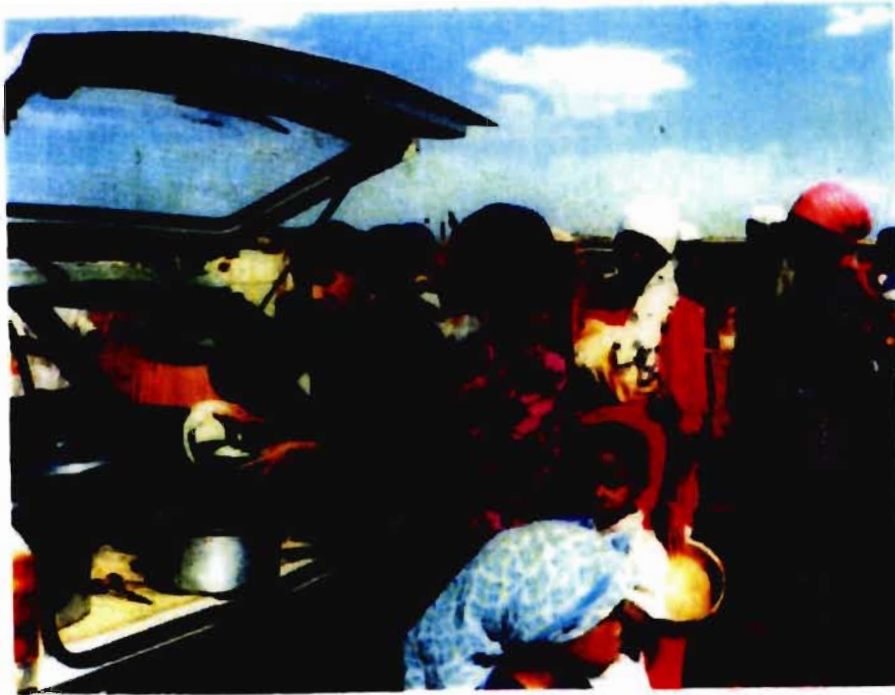
Hassim in front of one of a 'Wendy house' at the Centre that she painted



One of the toddlers infected with HIV



Hassim's feeding projects
government school (top), madrasah (middle)
and the homeless (bottom)



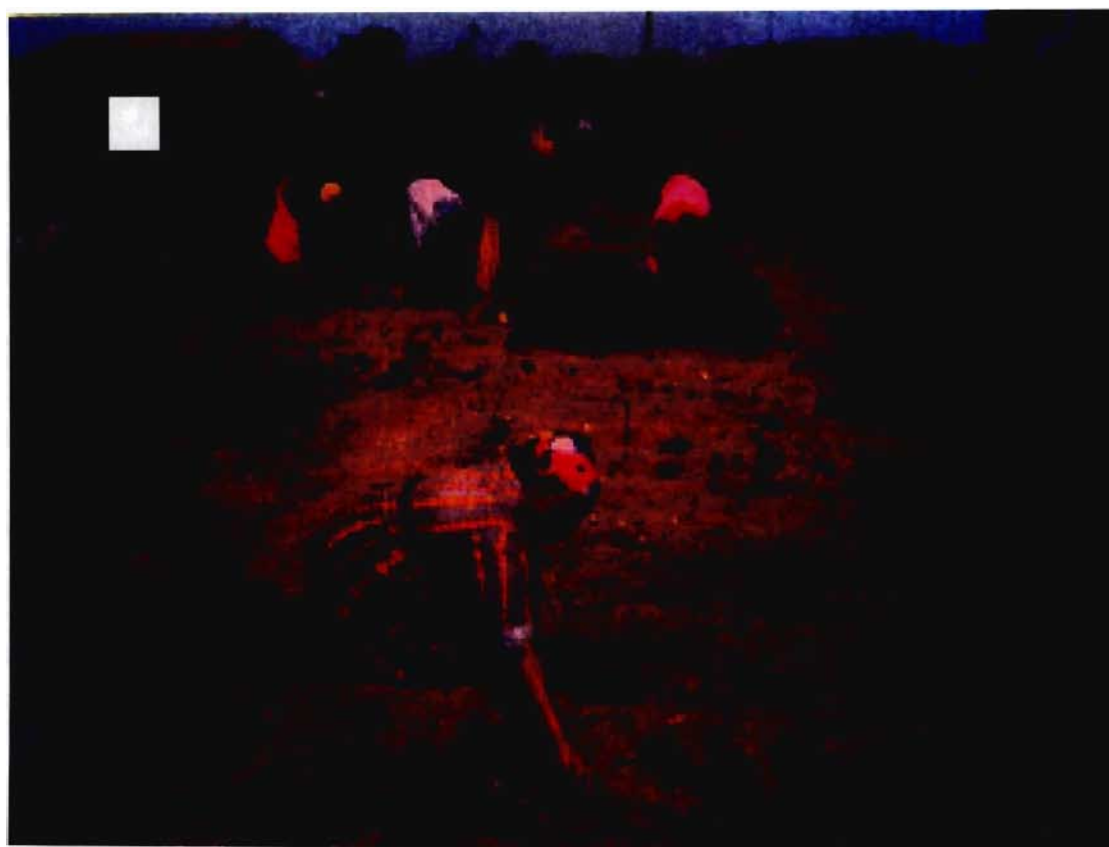
Hassim's feedings scheme for destitute women and children



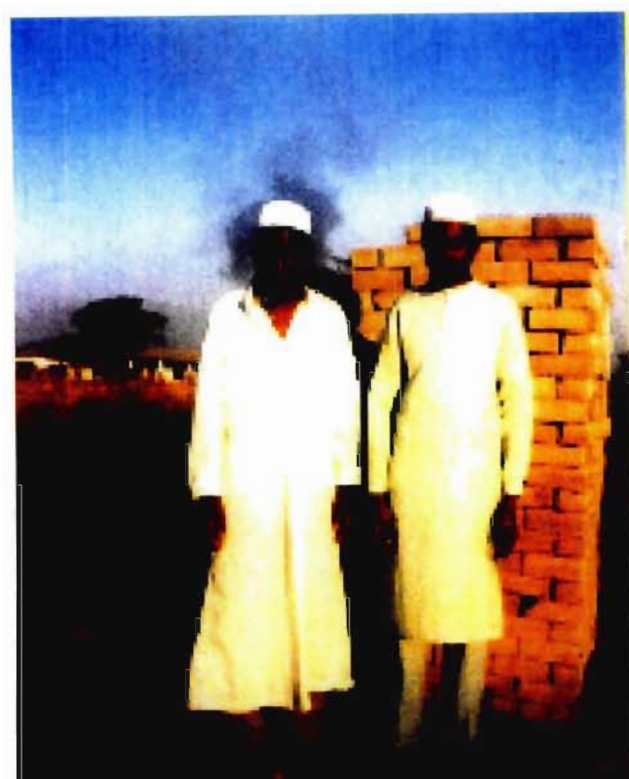
DISABLED CHILDREN



Hassim's work with disabled children



Community Veg garden self-help project in Sebokeng



Managawane Muslim Jama'at brick making project

PUBLISHED BY:

ISLAMIC MISSIONARY SOCIETY
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JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Islamic Relief Fund

TELEPHONE 838-1676

OF THE ISLAMIC MISSIONARY SOCIETY

RAMADAAN APPEAL

RAMADAAN... is the most auspicious time in the calendar of Islam. A time when millions of Muslims throughout the entire world are called on by Allah to put their Imaan to the Test, and to prove obedience to Allah as well as to follow in the great Sunnat and traditions of our Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) during the Great Fast.

FOR US... at the ISLAMIC RELIEF FUND - besides having to prepare ourselves for the demands of the Holy Month of Ramadan, also leave our homes and offices to serve humanity. It is a most challenging period for Muslims, and the ISLAMIC RELIEF FUND makes the ANNUAL RAMADAAN APPEAL to caring and compassionate Muslims throughout the length and breadth of our troubled

country, South Africa, to help feed and clothe and educate Muslims who have no means to feed themselves during the MONTH OF RAMADAAN.

These poor and underprivileged Muslims rely on the ISLAMIC RELIEF FUND to bring them bread and dates and soup during this time of Sabr.

SORAYA... who runs these feeding schemes, travels through poor areas such as Evaton, Tembisa, Sebokeng and other Black East Rand townships to provide food for Muslim convicts and their families. Many of these young men have been enrolled in Islamic schools that are presently training Da'is for the noble cause of Islam.

THIS charitable work of helping the needy and the hungry, con-

tinues unabatedly at the townships of Soweto, Eldorado park, Klipspruit West, Newclare, Western, Riverlea and the Klip-town area, where many hundreds of Somali and Zanzibari Muslims live under appalling conditions.

THE ISLAMIC RELIEF FUND... calls on the MUSLIM COMMUNITY of South Africa to come to the rescue of the starving Muslims as well as to the poor people of other faiths who also benefit immensely from the charity and compassion of Muslims in general.

We need EVERYONE although providing first the SADQA to the Muslim fraternity, and also the necessary Dawa'h which ALLAH and his RASOOL (S.A.W.) enjoin upon us to perform. We have

made great strides through the Mercy and beneficence of ALLAHUTALAH.

YOU... the MUSLIMS OF SOUTH AFRICA, those of you who have cared and supported the humble efforts of the ISLAMIC RELIEF FUND, have with ALLAH'S GRACE, made our work worthwhile and commendable in the sight of the Creator. Your donations and contributions have made Muslims earn the respect of the sceptical and the critical opponents of our Deen.

MAY ALMIGHTY ALLAH... in His Unending Mercy and Benevolence grant to ALL MUSLIMS the Blessings of good health and honest prosperity earned through well-meaning, humanitarian action aimed at earning the sole

pleasure of ALLAH. May ALLAH be praised and may Blessings upon the name of our Holy prophet.

THE ISLAMIC RELIEF FUND... has an EXTENSIVE FEEDING SCHEME that is coupled with the BLANKET and CLOTHING PROJECT, that has provided warmth and comfort during the cruel winter months. We also appeal to the Muslim businesspeople to make their presence felt in this noble work by generously donating money and gifts in kind towards our Welfare projects. Your donation DOES make a difference to our work.

MAY ALLAH MAKE US WORTHY OF HIS UN-ENDING MERCY... AMBURI



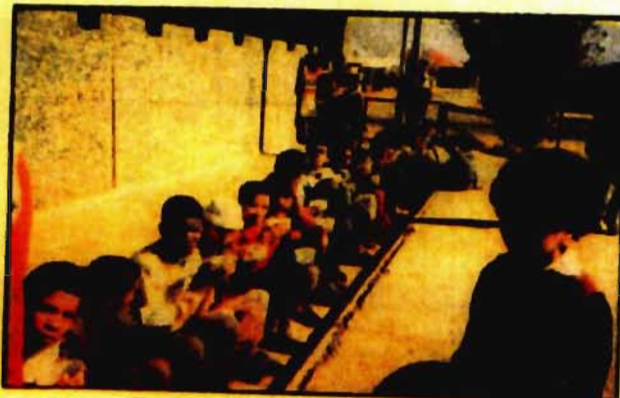
Soraya Mothers and their young ones.



Soraya and the triplets she helps...



Preparing food for Ramadan...



Happiness is... bread and soup for Nancefield pupils.

Compassion means caring for Allah's creations

COMPASSION ... is the First Attribute that Mankind came to know about our Almighty Creator, ALLAH, since the very dawn of time.

ALL the Prophets of God, lived their lives alongside this Ethic of Compassion.

Though we can only strive for compassion, Muslims are enjoined to try to emulate the Attribute's of Allahu 'talah and to copy the

lifestyle of the greatest man that ever walked the earth - the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)

YOU ... can possess ALL the material wealth and fame and popularity in the world and yet without Compassion, you are nothing in the sight of ALLAH.

There can never be any Humanity where there is no Compassion and Empathy. Coupled with the fear of

ALLAH and the love of HIS Rasool (S.A.W.) and ALL the other illustrious Messengers, Mankind is called upon to exercise Compassion for the poor, the homeless, hungry, the orphans and the widows, and ALL the creations of ALLAH who suffer and are oppressed.

THE PICTURES ... on this Page tell a story that cannot lie. They are the honest

proof of the work, we at the Islamic Relief Fund undertake and perform as lowly slaves of Allah.

It is not a false modesty we display but rather to bear to the Great Mercy and Compassion we receive from our Creator.

We have many shortcomings and failures, and we continually work to better our own Imaan, seeking al-

ways Allah's tawfiq and Guidance.

WE CALL ... on Muslims to be Compassionate as our Lord is Compassionate and Beneficent, though we often transgress against Him.

GIVE ... generously of your possessions and wealth in the knowledge of greater blessings for those who give for the pleasure and bounty of Allah.

RAMADAAN SOUP KITCHENS

46 SOUP KITCHENS SET UP
IN ALL TOWNSHIPS IN THE
JOHANNESBURG AREA.
15,000 MUSLIMS FED
DURING
THE MONTH OF RAMADAAN
FOR IFTAAR WITH SOUP
AND BREAD



Ramadaan soup kitchens... Giving food to Muslim Children.



Muslim children gather for daily Ramadaan soup



Showing concern for the handicapped... means food for those underprivileged children.



Old-age pensioners wait for food, blankets in Soweto.



Orphan children at an Islamic Relief Fund feeding scheme getting their DAILY ration.

THESE
ARE SOME
OF THE
PEOPLE
WHO
COME
TO THE
ISLAMIC
RELIEF
FUND
FOR FOOD,
CLOTHING,
BLANKETS
AND
DAWAH.

IT IS HARD
WORK,
BUT WE
TRY OUR
BEST WITH
ALLAH'S
GRACE.



Squatter camp family wait for a meal around an empty pot.



Common scene... mission to give out food parcels in Mendonlands.



Helping hand for handicapped children.

A GRAIN WHICH GROWS...

"The likeness of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain which grows seven ears and every ear has a hundred grains. Allah increaseth manifold to whom He will. Allah is all-extending and all-knowing." (2:261)

It has been reported in a Hadith that actions and deeds are of six kinds and human beings are of four kinds. Six kinds of actions are as follows: Two actions are such that make its reward essential, two actions carry equal rewards, one carries ten times and one carries reward seven hundred times.



THERE IS NO POWER...

In the name of Allah, the Infinitely Merciful, the Compassionate.

There is no power nor strength except in Allah, the Most High, Glory to Thee; of knowledge we have none, save what Thou hast taught us; in truth it is Thou who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom.

The Laud is Allah's, Lord of majesty, Bounty, Honour, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of All-Knowing.

He who has graced us with bounty after having guided us to iman and Islam; and appointed us as the best of Peoples, evolved from mankind; and expounded to us in His Glorious, All-Manifesting Book through the tongue of His honest and true Messenger; and explained to us what is just and what is unjust; what is guidance and what is error; and which are acts of obedience and which are sins.

From Muslim Events.



Preparing Food for needy children are some concerned Muslim women.



Helping others to help themselves at a Punition's sewing club in Soweto.



Cool drink and lots of smiling faces.

O BELIEVERS....

O believers! Spend out of the good things you have earned, and out of that which We bring forth for you from the earth and intend not to spend the bad part thereof, which you would never accept yourselves, except that you avert your eyes from it. (al-Baqarah 2:267)

REMOVING THE HARDSHIPS OF MUSLIMS

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: "one who is engaged in removing the difficulty (needs) of his brother, Allah fulfills his needs. One who removes the difficulty of a Muslim, Allah will remove his difficulty on the Day of Judgment. And one who covers (the fault or body of) a Muslim, Allah will hide his act of the same kind." The Prophet (S.A.W.) has stressed the performance of a needy person and has said that the Widow (marriage feast) is the worst for which only rich persons are invited to the exclusion of poor people.

BE QUICK TO GIVE SADAQAH

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "Be quick in giving Sadaqah as calamity and misfortune cannot jump over the Sadaqah."

It proves that hovering calamities are warded off by Sadaqah. In a weak Tradition it has been mentioned that Sadaqah shuts seventy doors of evil. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "purify your wealth through Zakat, provide treatments to your patients by Sadaqah and face the waves of difficulties by Prayer (Dua)."

In another Hadith it has been stated: "treat your patients with Sadaqah as it removes disrespect, removes diseases, increases virtues and etc. To get relief from your worries and sorrows, give Sadaqah as the Merciful Allah shall remove your worries through it and will help you against your enemies."

The Khoza Family of Soweto...



Madrasa for Soweto Children

HELPING A WIDOW OR AN ORPHAN...

The Prophet (S.A.W.) has said that one helping a needy husbandless woman or an orphan is like the person who is engaged in Jihad. And (perhaps) also said that he is like a person who offers prayers throughout the night without any laziness and always keeps fast during the day."

(Mishkat)

ON GIVING CLOTHES TO A MUSLIM...

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) has said: "One who will give clothe to a Muslim in his nakedness Allah will clothe him with heavenly green clothes. One who will feed a hungry Muslim, Allah will feed him with heavenly fruits, and one who will quench the thirst of a Muslim, Allah will give him heavenly wine to drink."



Blankets and food for Kibera West people who have no houses and live and die in tents.



Kibera granny and her warm blanket.



Blankets for old people in the severe winter of Johannesburg.



Kibera granny give bread and soup.

محمد

الله

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful
"Propagate my Teachings, even if you know only one line." - Holy Prophet

Islamic Relief & Dawah Work

P.O. Box 42533, Fordsburg 2033

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF ISLAM.

BE IT KNOWN THAT

I _____
Full Name

of _____

Residential Address

Am truly and humbly grateful to Almighty Allah for having guided me to the STRAIGHT PATH, and I hereby openly declare that today I accept of my own free will the DEEN OF ISLAM.

(1) LAA ILAAHA ILL LAL LAAH. MUHAM-MADUR RASOO-LUL-LAH (there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah.)

(2) ASH HADU UN LAA ILAAHA ILL LAL LAAH, WA ASH HADU AN-NA MUHAM-MADAN ABDUHOO WA RASOOLUH. (I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is His worshipper and Messenger.)

PARTICULARS

Date of Birth _____ Nationality _____

I.D. Number _____ Previous Church _____

Profession _____ Sex _____

I HAVE CHOSEN FOR MYSELF THE MUSLIM NAME OF _____

DECLARATION

I hereby declare under oath and direct that upon my death my funeral shall be held according to the tenets of the Islamic Faith, and that my body shall be buried in a Muslim cemetery according to Islamic rites.

THUS DONE AND SIGNED AT _____ ON THE _____ DAY

OF _____ 19 _____ Islamic Date _____

Signature of Declarer _____

WITNESSES

1. _____

2. _____

for: Islamic Relief & Dawah Work

Signature _____

Capacity _____

Appendix Five: Suraya Dadoo

Documents: Photographs, Letters, Articles

Ramadan in South Africa: a Time for Unity

file://C:\DOCUME~1\SURAYA~1\LOCALS~1\Temp\7WH9GDPV.htm

South Africa: Many Muslims, One Islam -

<http://www.Islamonline.net/English/artculture/2003/06/article08.shtml>

Arab and Islamic Media's Role in Intifada Highlighted at Beirut Conference

<http://www.palestinechronicle.com/story.php?sid=20031001165916645>

May the spirit of Ramadaan prevail. *Citizen*, October 20 2003

Moslems skryf eksamen terwyl hulle vas. *Beeld*, October 31 2003

Apology sought after paper prints cartoons of the Prophet. Vol 21, No 9 *Lenasia Indicator*, November 1-30 2005

In Defence of Nepad. *Enterprise*, June 2003

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Lifting the veil (Complementing Marie Claire for her positive article of women in Islam) Suraya Dadoo's response. *Peacework*, November 2003

Glossary

<i>abāya</i>	loose cloak; traditionally a black robe worn by Muslim women that covers the body from head to toe.
<i>‘ālim</i>	<i>f sing.</i> <i>‘ālimah</i> <i>pl</i> <i>‘ulamā’</i> knowledgeable Muslim person, usually Islamic / religious scholar
<i>‘umrah</i>	a visit to the city of Makkah where one makes <i>ṭawāf</i> for circumambulation of the <i>ka‘bah</i>
<i>adhān</i>	call to <i>ṣalāh</i> pronounced loudly five times daily to indicate that it is time for <i>ṣalāh</i>
<i>aḥkāṁ</i>	sing. <i>ḥukm</i> , religious edicts, Islamic law, Allāh’s decree, rules of law,
<i>Al ḥamdulillāh</i>	all praise belongs to Allāh
<i>Allāh</i>	God the one and only; without gender or case in Arabic grammar. The word Allāh occurs in the Qur’ān more than three thousand times. It is also used in the Arabic Bible.
<i>aqīqah</i>	slaughter an animal in honour of a newborn
<i>bayt ul māl</i>	public treasury
<i>dā‘iyah</i>	<i>pl.</i> <i>du‘āh</i> ; one who is engaged in <i>da‘wah</i>
<i>da‘wah</i>	literally means an invitation, and in the Islamic context, it is to invite people to Allāh. Also referred to as “The Call” – the mission of Prophet Muḥammad
<i>dīn</i>	a complete way of life; faith, creed, religion
<i>du‘ā’</i>	supplication .
<i>ḍārūriyah</i>	<i>ṣhari‘ah</i> principle of necessity that makes lawful what is unlawful
<i>fajr</i>	early morning prayer
<i>fatwā</i>	legal edict; non-binding legal opinion (El Fadl 2001)
<i>fiqh</i>	intelligence, knowledge; Islamic jurisprudence
<i>fitnah</i>	temptation, infatuation, sexual excitement, civil strife, social discord

<i>fiṭrah</i>	nature, instinct, natural or innate disposition to do good
<i>fuqahā'</i>	jurists
<i>ghusl</i>	washing, bathing, also washing the body of a deceased
<i>ḥadd</i>	punishment for violations of people's rights
<i>ḥadīth</i>	pl. <i>aḥādīth</i> – narrative reports of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muḥammad and his approval of actions of others
<i>ḥāfiẓ</i>	one who has memorised the entire Qur'ān
<i>ḥajj</i>	pilgrimage to Makkah
<i>ḥalāl</i>	permissible and lawful
<i>ḥarām</i>	forbidden and unlawful
<i>ḥayā'</i>	shame, modesty, diffidence
<i>ḥikmah</i>	wisdom
<i>ḥijāb</i>	literally a cover and refers to a woman's head, face, or body covering with an extended meaning that includes modesty, privacy, and morality. The word <i>ḥijāb</i> is not used in the Qur'ān. It is a tradition that predates Islam and men in Saudi Arabia and of the Tuareg tribe in North Africa wear <i>ḥijāb</i> as do nuns.
<i>īmām</i>	one who leads (in prayer; tends to the affairs of the <i>ummah</i>)
<i>Imān</i>	a person who leads the <i>ṣalāh</i> ; spiritual guide
<i>inshā' Allāh</i>	God willing
<i>isnād</i>	chain of narrators of a <i>ḥadīth</i>
<i>'izzah</i>	honour, inviolable feminine chastity
<i>janāzah</i>	funeral, matters related to a deceased
<i>jannah</i>	paradise
<i>jannatī</i>	a person destined for paradise
<i>Jazakallāh</i>	may God reward you
<i>khalīfah</i>	pl. <i>Khulafā'</i> - representative or deputy of Allāh; every person is God's representative; political successor to the Prophet. <i>al Khulafā' al Rāshidūn</i> : the four rightly guided

	successors, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī who are considered the (first) four legitimate political successors to the Prophet in <i>Sunnī</i> branch of Islam.
<i>qiṣṣah</i>	a parable, story, narrative, tale
<i>kufr</i>	rejecting or disbelief in God
<i>madrasah</i>	pl. <i>madāris</i> : literary a school; Islamic school; a religious boarding school associated with a mosque
<i>masjid</i>	mosque
<i>muḥaddithūn</i>	compilers of <i>aḥādīth</i>
<i>murat</i>	Urdu word: image / photographs
<i>namāz</i>	Urdu word for <i>ṣalāh</i> : five daily prayers
<i>nikāḥ</i>	marriage
<i>Purdah</i>	Persian word that literally means a curtain. A pre-Islamic Persian custom of covering of a woman’s body that may include the concealing of her face. Observed in the Indian subcontinent, among Muslims; also forms of <i>purdah</i> are used by Jews and Christians (Wikipedia). A term not used in the Qur’ān.
<i>qiṣāṣ</i>	law of equality, retaliation for murder (death sentence or life imprisonment) but mercy and forgiveness is provisioned and the victim’s family can ask for remission in return for compensation
<i>Qur’ān</i>	Revelation from God to Prophet Muḥammad (over 23 years).
<i>‘urf</i>	custom, local usage
<i>Ramaḍān</i>	the ninth month of the Islamic calendar in which Muslims fast and is also the month in which the Qur’anic revelation started
<i>ṣaḥābi</i>	pl. <i>ṣaḥābah</i> - a companion of Prophet Muḥammad
<i>ṣalāh</i>	five daily prayers

<i>shahādah</i>	to bear witness to the oneness of God; the declaration of a Muslim is to bear witness that there is only One creator and Muḥammad is Allāh's last messenger.
<i>Sharī'ah</i>	Islamic law
<i>Shayṭān</i>	devil
<i>Shebeens</i>	A small establishment that sells alcoholic beverages illegally or without a licence, traditionally operating in the poorer regions of Ireland, Scotland and South Africa (Encarta dictionary; the World Book dictionary)
<i>Shī'ah</i>	literally a group or faction; Muslims who believe that religious and political leadership is based on hereditary succession. Historically, <i>Shī'ahs</i> believe that 'Alī should have been the first political successor to Prophet Muḥammad and they therefore do not recognise the political leadership of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān.
<i>subḥānahu wata'ālā</i>	God, the pure, the exalted)
<i>Ṣūfī</i>	a Muslim mystic
<i>Sunnī</i>	Muslims who constitute the main branch of Islam that accepts Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī as the four legitimate political successors. Political leadership according to <i>Sunnīs</i> belong to the most pious and qualified person(s).
<i>Sunnah</i>	the sayings and actions of Prophet Muḥammad
<i>sūrah</i>	a chapter of the Qur'ān
<i>ta'ālā</i>	exalted, mighty – used as an adjective with the name Allāh
<i>tafsīr</i>	Qur'anic interpretation / translation
<i>talāq</i>	divorce
<i>taqwā</i>	piety, God-consciousness
<i>tarāwīḥ</i>	optional salah performed at night after the fifth daily salah of ' <i>ishā</i> ' during the month of <i>Ramadān</i>

<i>tawhīd</i>	monotheism-an uncompromising belief in the oneness of God
<i>ummah</i>	nation, people, generation, world community of Muslims
<i>ustādh</i>	teacher, mentor
<i>uṣūl al fiqh</i>	legal science
<i>wuḍū</i>	cleanliness, ablution before prayer
<i>zakāh</i>	compulsory tax: a fixed proportion levied on one's wealth and fixed property that is given to the poor

Glossary of Qur'anic *sūrahs* (chapters) with chapter number next to it

<i>Al-Baqarah</i> 2	The Cow
<i>Āl- 'Imrān</i> 3	The Family (House) of 'Imrān
<i>Al-Nisā'</i> 4	Women
<i>Al-Mā'idah</i> 5	The Feast / The Repast
<i>Al-An'ām</i> 6	Cattle / Livestock
<i>Al-A'rāf</i> 7	The Heights / the Faculty of Discernment
<i>Al-Anfāl</i> 8	Spoils of War
<i>Al-Tawbah</i> 9	Repentance
<i>Yūnus</i> 10	(Prophet) Jonah
<i>Al-Ra'd</i> 13	Thunder
<i>Banī Isrā'īl</i> 17	The Children of Israel
<i>Al-Ḥajj</i> 22	The Pilgrimage
<i>Al-Naml</i> 27	The Ants
<i>Al- 'Ankabūt</i> 29	The Spider
<i>Al-Rūm</i> 30	The Byzantines
<i>Al-Aḥzāb</i> 33	The Joint Forces / The Confederates
<i>Al-Fāṭir</i> 35	The Creator / The Originator
<i>Al-Zumar</i> 39	The Throngs / The Multitude
<i>Al-Ḥujurāt</i> 49	The Private Rooms / Apartments
<i>Al-Dhāriyāt</i> 51	The (dust-) Scattering winds

<i>Al-Mumtaḥana</i> 60	Women Tested / The Examined One
<i>Al-Muzzammil</i> 73	The Enfolded One
<i>Al-Muddaththir</i> 74	Wrapped in his cloak
<i>Al-Ghāshiyah</i> 88	The Overwhelming / Overshadowing Event
<i>Al-Tīn</i> 95	The Fig
<i>Al-Zalzalah</i> 99	The Earthquake / The Convulsion
<i>Al-‘Aṣr</i> 103	The Declining Day / Time through the Ages
<i>Al-Mā‘un</i> 107	Common Kindness / Neighbourly Needs

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