



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful



THE CALL

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Editor: Imaam Iqbal Hydal, (B.Sc., Dip Ed.)

Address by Dr Brinsley Samaroo

(delivered at the *Eid* Dinner organised by the Abdul Aziz Trust, on 29 November 2003.)

This evening we gather to commemorate 53 years of solid achievement by the Abdul Aziz Trust.

Meah Abdul Aziz

During its existence for over half a century, the Trust has made a most significant difference to the lives of thousands of people particularly in Central Trinidad where Meah Abdul Aziz lived his life, rising to the position of *sardar* in the sugar industry. Here was a leader who seemed to have known that his life on this earth would have been brief. Therefore, he packed into his 48 years, the activities of a much longer lifetime and, after his death in 1952, this work was continued by Hajin Hanifa Aziz who continued giving *dawah* for some 37 years after, until she, too, joined him in the Garden.

Whilst the spread of Islamic *dawah* was one of his primary objectives, Meah Aziz placed almost equal emphasis on humanitarian work, across the whole spectrum of society without regard to people's race or religion. He clearly understood that in rural communities you cannot force people to make changes which are

too rapid; people have to be moved forward but ever so slowly and patiently.

Panchayat System

This is why, for example, he did not encourage them to abandon the *panchayat* system as a means of settling problems. On the contrary, he placed himself at its service and served for many years as leader. Again, realising that he lived in a state where his religion was not considered civilised enough to have its own schools, he ceaselessly negotiated with the Presbyterians who had set up schools in Central Trinidad. He became the community's representative to the missionaries. At times this must have been a humiliating experience, but as a learned Muslim he was familiar with so many *hadiths* which enjoin Muslims to acquire knowledge.

Knowledge

He was familiar with Ibn Abbas who reported on the authority of the Prophet that "*Let him who is present impart knowledge to him who is absent*". He genuinely believed in the injunction that knowledge lights

up the way to heaven, will be your friend in the desert, your society in solitude, your companion in loneliness, the ornament among your friends, and the armour against your enemies.

It was not until 1948 that Muslims were allowed to build their own schools, but the builder of *Darul-Aziz* (Haven of the Beloved) could not wait while the state fiddled on the question of allowing non-Christians to build their own educational institutions. The work had to be done with the resources at hand and Abdul Aziz humbled himself (as Islam enjoins) and dealt with the missionaries. It was as a result of that foundational vision and work that the Trust was inspired to assist other Muslim organisations when they started their school-building programme from the 1950's. Of course, the Trust has its own Hanifa Aziz Nursery School which in the tradition of denominational schools, had been producing top quality students for the other, higher levels of learning.

Higher Learning

As we ponder the life of the founding *Imam*, we cannot but admire his foresight in realising that

he himself did not possess the necessary learning to take his movement to the levels being demanded by a rapidly modernising society. And so he decided to send his son to India and Pakistan in 1950 to obtain higher learning in theology and medicine. In this way, Dr. Mohamed Aziz returned to add this new dimension to the outreach of the Trust and with a company of others of like mind, expanded the mission into medical and welfare services counselling, charitable programmes, widened *dawah* activities, the formalizing of *zakah* and by assistance to all sorts of deserving causes nationwide. As recently as March this year the Trust conducted a successful seminar on alcohol, drug abuse, domestic violence and crime, in Esperanza and even more recently in August of this year, another day of useful discussion on crime safety and the environment, at Orange Valley.

One hopes that you would continue in all of these society-saving activities particularly in view of the tremendous dislocation which is now taking place in Central Trinidad with the closure of Caroni (1975) Ltd. This is a needful time for abundant charity and we have the knowledge that those who give in such a time of need will be twice blessed in our own production, if it rains or even if it does not:

And the likeness of those who spend their substance seeking to please Allah and to strengthen their souls, is a garden, high and fertile; heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest and if it receives not heavy rain, light moisture sufficeth it. Allah seeth well whatever you do. (Surah 2, Ayat 265).

Pioneers

Yet all of this work started off by an inspired Meah Sahib and all of the subsequent exemplary work of Hajjin Haniffa Aziz would not have been possible without the determined pioneering efforts of those many Muslim leaders who preceded them. In other words, those who went before provided models and gave a context for those who followed. On occasions like these we must remind ourselves of some of those who pioneered for a Muslim presence when the ruling powers were doing their utmost to wipe out non-Christian faiths brought here by the *girmityas* (agreement signers) from British India.

Nazir Muhammad

We must remember, for example. Nazir Muhammad, born in Bengal in 1846 and indentured on Friendship Estate (South of Usine Ste. Madeleine) in 1863. As soon as he was released from being a "bound coolie" in 1868 he set out on two missions. The first was to set up his own family with house and land (*Waqf Al Ahli*) and immediately after to build a mosque at Iere Village and set it up as a centre for the welfare of fellow Muslims (*Waqf Al-Khairi*). Imam Nazir could not have acted in a more timely fashion, for it was at that very time that John Morton was casing that very area on his donkey to wean Hindus and Muslims from their tried and tested faiths.

Ruknudeen Meah

Whilst Nazir was defending the faith in the South. Haji Ruknudeen Meah (1865-1963) was battling the missionaries in the North, moving from the estate of his indentureship in La Romain to Tunapuna. There

he built his house opposite Morton Street so that the missionary could see the work he was doing. On occasions like these we have to recall Hafiz Yacoob Ali who was the first Indo-Trinidadian to go to India in 1888 to pursue Islamic Studies, returning to propagate the faith with learning and authority.

*Syed Abdul Aziz

And Syed Abdul Aziz who came here from Afghanistan in 1862 and after his indentureship in Tacarigua, he moved to Iere Village in the South to spread *dawah*

All of these and many more joined with one another and when necessary, with Hindus and Christians in carving out a space for the Indian community. And it was because of their unflagging efforts that by the middle of the last century, Hindu and Muslim marriages were recognised and the inheritance rights of widows and orphans made legal; that non-Christian schools could be built with state aid, that the teaching of non-Western languages could proceed in schools, mosques and *maktabs* which were now constructed all over the land.

Pen of the Scholar

In these institutions, proper family values were taught, teaching and learning skills were imparted and the discipline of sitting and reciting or simply listening for long hours, was encouraged. Young Muslims were constantly reminded that they must pursue knowledge greedily, even if that meant going as far as China to acquire it and that the pen of the scholar is mightier than the sword of the warrior.

What is the result of all of this activity from Nazir Muhammed to

Abdul Aziz and to the present? One result is that the Muslim community, despite its internal bickerings, is one of the most advanced, in this society although it is a relatively small community. In every sphere of national activity that is constructive, members of this community have asserted themselves confidently. In the place where I have been teaching for some three decades, one cannot but admire the seriousness and dedication of Muslim students and their ability to achieve consistently. The University record clearly attests to this competence. And now with the recent establishment of two additional secondary schools in Charlieville, we expect the continuation of the same high standards.

Upbringing & Traditions

Those who try to explain educational performance by blaming Indo-Trinidadian teachers for neglecting Afro-Trinidadian students are proceeding on a dangerous and foolish argument. The explanation lies in upbringing, in the traditions from which the students come, in the philosophical eagerness to learn and in the rewards that come from the honest pursuit of one's calling. And unless the complaining ones are prepared to look into these deeper, underlying issues, the more they would be perpetuating the very problems which they are seeking to solve. They should, in other words, follow the example of those who in their daily *salah* repeatedly pray for enlightenment so that at the end of the day they have convinced themselves that it is indeed blessed

to know.

And say, O my Lord! increase me in knowledge (Surah 20, Ayat 114).

And whoever is given knowledge is given indeed abundant wealth (Surah 12, Ayat 269).

Christian Jihad

Finally, it is appropriate that we should reflect on the Islamic *ummah*. There is at the present time a re-creation of the Crusades of the Middle Ages during which time Christian kings waged centuries of warfare and spent enormous quantities of their national treasure in fighting those whom they called *Infidels*. That war has now been revived by our present American Emperor who is seeking to force the Islamic world to set up American-style governments whether it suits them or not. The world is too small for us in the Caribbean to escape the fall-out from this new Christian *jihad*. Muslim leadership, therefore, should take time to understand what is going on and where their community stands in this escalating international tension. You must make time for *shura* and *ijma* among yourselves so you can be prepared to act sensibly when the time comes. You are now approaching the end of the holy month of Ramadan. But Ramadan is not only about fasting and abstinence and purification. Ramadan must also be a time of deep reflection, taking time to assess the particular position of your group *vis-a-vis* the rest of the nation and the rest of the world.

Age of Information

We live in an age when the control and use of information has become

the dominant determinant of how the world moves or does not move. And those who do not get caught up in this tide of informatics will be left to drift helplessly in the surging currents of a world which is becoming increasingly turbulent.

What I have said here this evening is nothing new. I have simply expanded on a theme which was divinely predicted some 1500 years ago when an inspired prophet foresaw the futuristic revolution in the spread of information. Today we are in the midst of that revolution and he warned us to be prepared by seeking access to the information that would change the world; in *Ayats 1-5 of Surah 96 of the Qur'an* we are enjoined to:

Read in the name of the Lord who created. Read and thy Lord is most Honourable, Who taught to write with the pen, taught man what he knew not.

The Abdul Aziz Trust, therefore, must add to its responsibilities the fearless discussion and dissemination of information about the glorious history of Islam, both here and in the wider world. Equally, the Islamic community must be made more aware of its own position *vis-a-vis* the national and international community. In this way, you will be further strengthened to make your contribution to the national community.

Brinsley Samaroo,
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Editor's Note:

***Syed Abdul Aziz** IS THE GREAT- GRAND-FATHER OF MAULAANA M.K. HYDAL, RELIGIOUS HEAD & MISSIONARY OF THE AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHA' AT-I- ISLAM INC., TRINIDAD & TOBAGO.



Maulaana S.M. Tufail M.A.
(June 16, 1920 - April 26, 1984)

The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha`at-I-Islam Inc., remembers *Maulaana S.M.Tufail. M.A.* on the 20th Anniversary of his passing away and launches his major work "*A Qur`anic Dictionary & Concordance*".

He was unable to complete this monumental work before his demise and bequeathed it to the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha`at-I-Islam Inc., Trinidad & Tobago for completion.

*German Accepts Islam
at the hands of our Missionary in Berlin.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Islam,
*Assalaam-o-Alaikum
Wa Rakhmatullahi Wa Barakaato Hoo.*

By the Grace of Almighty Allah one German Citizen by the name of Marcos has accepted Islam at my hand by his own free will.

The new Islamic name given to him is Suleman. All the relative literature about Islam was given to him.
Please pray for him.

*Chaudhry Riaz Ahmad,
Imam, Berlin Mission.*

Ahamdiyya Anjuman Isha`at-I-Islam Inc., Trinidad & Tobago.

Cordially invite

*Members, Friends & Well-wishers to the
Official Launch of*

*"A Qur`anic Dictionary &
Concordance"*

*by
Maulaana S.M. Tufail, M.A.*

*on
Sunday April 25, 2004*

*at
10.00 a.m.*

*at
The Ahmadiyya Mosque,
83 Uquire Road, Fireburn,
Freeport.*

Copies on Sale at \$375.00 T.T.

Name :
Address :
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*"All of us have a rendezvous with
death. The moment we are born we
begin to die."*

Maulaana S.M. Tufail

