

# ***Choice***

Newsletter of the Centre for Islamic Studies

**New Series Issue 2**

**Shaban 1435 (June 2014)**

## **Islam by choice**

*Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error*

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*Invite (all) to the way of thy  
Lord with Wisdom and  
Beautiful Preaching and  
argue with them in ways  
that are best and most  
gracious (Surah Al-Nahl:  
Verse 125)*

## **Awareness Through Mosque Tour (ATMT) to commence at Wekanda Mosque**

The Awareness Through Mosque Tour (ATMT) program spearheaded by the Centre for Islamic Studies (CIS) will commence from August this year, Insha Allah. The pilot project will commence at Wekanda Mosque, Slave Island, to be followed by the Red Mosque (Sammankot Mosque) also known as Jamiul Alfar in the Pettah area of Colombo and Masjidul Abrar, the oldest existing mosque in the island, located in the Maradana area of Beruwala.



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ATMT at Wekanda Mosque will commence with an Open Mosque Day on a weekly basis (Sundays) in the mornings (10.00-12.00 noon) and evenings (4.00 pm-6.00 pm). At a later stage the mosque should be able to accommodate casual tourists once a pool of qualified tour guides are trained for the purpose, so that they could be present as and when needed.

To reflect the traditional Malay culture of the area, *batik sarongs* and *songko* headgear for

gents and *baju kurung* with *selendang* for ladies will be made available for visitors to wear before they enter the mosque. Free literature will also be provided, including *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam* and *Pocket Guide Book on Muhammad*.

The prospect of twinning Wekanda Mosque with a well known ATMT Mosque in Malaysia has also been discussed so that ideas and experiences could be shared between the two mosques.

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## Reaching out to those of other faiths- An Islamic Duty

**Asiff Hussein, Head of Outreach- Centre for Islamic Studies**

Reaching out to Non-Muslims to convince them of the beauty of Islam is an Islamic duty which has been neglected over the past few centuries. This also explains why the Muslim world has lost its charm and dynamism as well as its good image, not only in the West, but also elsewhere.

This is where ATMT, short for *Awareness Through Mosque Tours* comes in. This unique program helps Non-Muslims better understand Islam through a tour of a mosque. A well trained tour guide accompanies the visitors to the mosque where he uses every possible feature of the mosque to explain the beauty of Islam while at the same time elaborating on its history and cultural aspects so that visitors do not feel its got anything to do with converting them. At the end of the tour they are given free Islamic literature to take home, which they could read at leisure. Many have in fact embraced Islam through this unique program.

I never realized how powerful this medium was till I agreed to undergo ATMT training in Hong Kong under the man behind it all, Syed Ali of Discover Islam, Bahrain. What I experienced changed my life and I decided that I would henceforth devote a good part of my time to

reaching out to Non-Muslims. What better way, I thought to myself, than through ATMT.



This is especially relevant in this day and age when active promotion of Islam is not possible in certain parts of the world such as ours due to various social and political reasons. This program involves people coming to us to learn about Islam rather than our going to them to teach them about Islam. In other words, it is a form of passive da'wah and the beauty of it is many do not even realise we're promoting our faith through it. It is done in such a subtle way that they get away with a good impression of Islam and in many cases come back to us to engage with us and take the dialogue further. The result, needless to say, is that many embrace Islam, become ambassadors of it or in the least go away with a very favourable impression of Islam.

**The CIS welcomes volunteers for the program to undergo training and to serve as tour guides. Please e-mail the Head – Outreach, Centre for Islamic Studies at [Asiffhussein@gmail.com](mailto:Asiffhussein@gmail.com)**

## Mosque Tours – A fulfilling experience by Usama Zaid, ATMT Lead Tour Guide

ATMT is a novel concept in sharing the message of Islam and I am so pleased to be part of it. I underwent an intensive two week training in ATMT in Melaka, Malaysia, being personally trained by the founder of this fabulous concept, Syed Raziuddin Ali of Discover Islam, Bahrain.

The training was attended by nationals from sixteen countries such as Singapore, Maldives, Estonia, China, Brunei, Poland, Turkey, Egypt, Kosovo, Albania ,etc. The mosque being the focal point of Islamic worship, tourists are attracted to its architecture and varied influences and are also curious about how Muslims worship, why they worship, whom they worship etc .

They tend to be receptive to what we say and are willing to give an ear during the guided tour. This is where the faith factor and practices of islam is also conveyed along with the mosque details, a very polite and diplomatic means of conveying the message of Islam.

The tourists who come are usually taken aback by the serenity of the mosque with its calm atmosphere without idols or statues of any sort.

They are also impressed with our active mode of worship with its cycles of standing, bowing and prostrating. Very often you will find their hearts softening during the tour.

In my experience in Malaysia I got a chance to be a guide to an elderly couple from New Zealand. Guiding them through the mosque, we came across the Quran which they were curious about, I explained to them about the Quran in a very simple manner, especially for what purpose it had been revealed and I was pleasantly surprised to see how it moved them.

The gentleman was so touched by the details, that he hugged me not once but twice before leaving to share our beautiful message with the rest of the world. In my opinion the commandment of Allah in Surah Nahl: Verse 125:

*“Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who have strayed from His Path, and who are guided”*

can be effectively implemented through this beautiful concept of ATMT



*At the ATMT training camp at Melaka, Malaysia with Syed Ali and participants from all over the world*



## Sheikh Kamarudin Abdullah Lectures on Mosque Tours

A lecture series by well known Malaysian scholar Kamarudin Abdullah organized by the CIS was held on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2014. The highlight of the tour was the program on *Awareness Through Mosque Tours* (ATMT) held at Wekanda jumma Mosque.



## Malaysian Mosque Tour Guides Visit a grand success

A Workshop on Mosque Tours conducted by the team that spearheaded the concept in Malaysia was well received by Sri Lankan Muslims and especially the youth. The event organized by the Centre for Islamic Studies (CIS) was held on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at First Global Academy.

The team was led by Sister Normah Sulaiman and included Dr.Ghazali Basri, Dr.Noriah Mohammed, Saleh Hassan, Mohd Nuruddin, Asiah Binti Ismail, Zaimi Binti Jani, Zainab Binti Zainal, Hazizah Binti Ibrahim, Aminah Binti Saleh, Salbiah Binti Noor, Ghazillah Ghazali and Noraidah Binto Kasim. Sister Normah, an experienced Da'wah Worker serving at Masjid Negara, Malaysia's national mosque was joined by Saleh Hassan and Asiah Binti Ismail to share their experiences on mosque tours with the audience while Dr.Basri who served as Chairman of ABIM Outreach Malaysia made a presentation on *Reaching out to Those of other faiths*, after which he was joined by his wife Dr.Noriah for a Q&A session. 15 volunteers enlisted to undergo training as Mosque Guides shortly after the sessions.



### What some Non-Muslims said about Islam

*"I believe in One God, and Mahomet, an Apostle of God'is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honor of the Prophet has never transgressed the measure of human virtues; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion."*

**Edward Gibbon and Simon Ockley, Histor of the Saracan Empires (1870)**

*"It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for, in the mosque, when the call for prayer is sounded and worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and king kneel side by side and proclaim: 'God Alone is Great'... I have been struck over and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes man instinctively a brother."*

**Sarojini Naidu, Ideals ofIslam (1918)**

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### Sayings about Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)

*"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher."*

**Annie Besant, The Life and Teachings of Muhammad (1932)**

*"Muhammad, the inspired man who founded Islam, was born about A.D. 570 into an Arabian tribe that worshipped idols. Orphaned at birth, he was always particularly solicitous of the poor and needy, the widow and the orphan, the slave and the downtrodden. At twenty he was already a successful businessman, and soon became director of camel caravans for a wealthy widow.*

*"When he reached twenty-five, his employer, recognizing his merit, proposed marriage. Even though she was fifteen years older, he married her, and as long as she lived, remained a devoted husband".*

*"Like almost every major prophet before him, Muhammad fought shy of serving as the transmitter of God's word, sensing his own inadequacy. But the angel commanded 'Read'. So far as we know, Muhammad was unable to read or write, but he began to dictate those inspired words which would soon revolutionize a large segment of the earth: "There is one God."In all things Muhammad was profoundly practical. When his beloved son Ibrahim died, an eclipse occurred, and rumors of God's personal condolence quickly arose. Whereupon Muhammad is said to have announced, 'An eclipse is a phenomenon of nature. It is foolish to attribute such things to the death or birth of a human-being'. At Muhammad's own death an attempt was made to deify him, but the man who was to become his administrative successor killed the hysteria with one of the noblest speeches in religious history: 'If there are any among you who worshipped Muhammad, he is dead. But if it is God you worshipped, He lives forever.'"*

**James A. Michener, 'Islam: The Misunderstood Religion' in Reader's Digest (May 1955)**

## Humour in the Hadith

A certain old woman came to the Prophet and requested him to pray to Allah to make her enter Paradise. The Prophet said, *"O mother of so and so! No old woman shall enter paradise."* The narrator says that on hearing this the old woman went back weeping. The Prophet said to the people around him to go and tell the old woman that she would not enter into Paradise as an old woman (Tirmidhi) He then recited the Qur'anic verse: *"Verily we! We have created those (maidens) by a creation and have made them virgins, loving, of equal age."* (Tirmidhi)

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was once narrating a story while a Bedouin was seated near him. He said: *"One of the inhabitants of Paradise will ask Allah to allow him to cultivate the land. Allah will ask him: 'Are you not living in the pleasures you like? He will say: 'Yes. But I like to cultivate the land'. The Prophet added: 'When the man (will be permitted, he) will sow the seeds and the plants will grow up and get ripe, ready for reaping and so on till it will be as huge as mountains within a wink. Allah will then say to him: O son of Adam, here you are. Take it and gather the yield; nothing satisfies you'. On that the Bedouin said: 'The man must be either from Quraysh or an Ansar, for they are farmers, whereas we are not'. Hearing this, the Prophet smiled (Sahih Bukhari)*

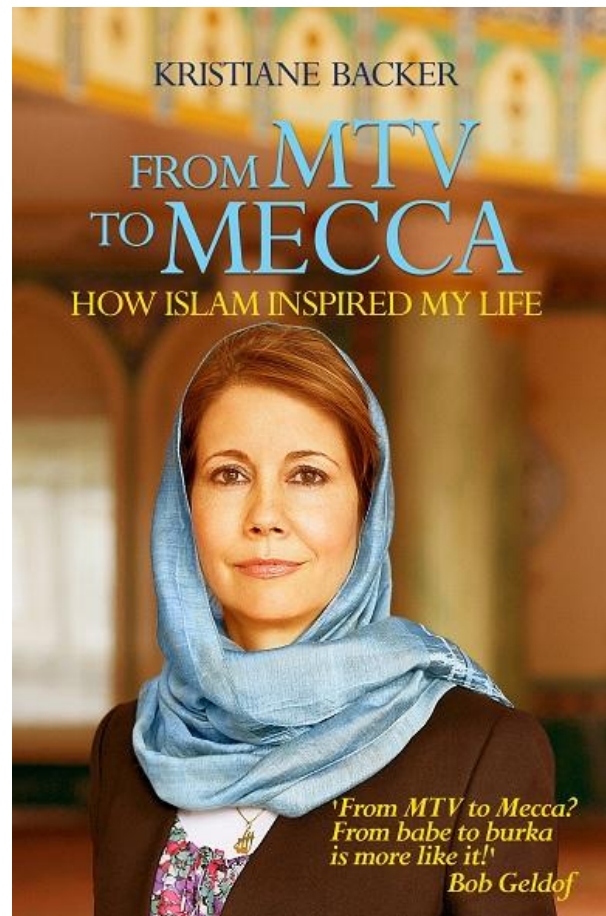
### BOOK NOTICE

**From MTV to Mecca by Kristiane Backer**

**From MTV to Mecca is the truly inspiring story of Kristiane Backer, who at the height of her career as one of Europe's leading pop culture icons, converted to Islam.**

In the early 1990s, Kristiane Backer became one of the very first presenters on MTV Europe. For years she lived and breathed the international music scene, quickly gaining a cult following amongst viewers and becoming a darling of the European press. Rubbing shoulders with the likes of Mick Jagger, Bono, Bob Geldof, Jim Kerr and Cat Stevens, Kristiane was catapulted to the forefront of popular culture.

Through a fateful meeting with the famous cricketer Imran Khan, Kristiane was drawn to an Islamic way of life which was dominated by a love of God. She began to read the Quran and to study books about the Faith and the more she immersed herself in the world of Islam, the more she found herself dissatisfied with her own material life. In 1995, she decided to become a Muslim which at long last filled a spiritual void in her life. From MTV to Mecca takes the reader on a spiritual and cultural journey across the globe from Bosnia to Saudi Arabia and should inspire Muslims and non-Muslims alike.





# HEART TALK

## Program for Youth – A Success story

Heart Talk, a special lecture series for Muslim youth organized by the Centre for Islamic Studies (CIS) has met with a resounding response from young people, especially students. The program which has been customized to meet the needs of Muslim youth in the modern day context is undertaken by two renowned scholars of Islam, Sheikh Arkam Nooramith and Sheikh Muiz Bukhary. The themes have included some interesting topics like *Tackling Fitna*, *Dajjal: Signs of the End of Time* and *Love and Romance in the Light of Islam*. The lectures are held at the Ahmed Deedat Auditorium, Centre for Islamic Studies, 15 A, Rohini Road, Wellawatte.

## Free Islamic Posters

Islamic Outreach has produced some beautiful, thought –provoking posters on Islamic issues covering the basic teachings of Islam, equality in Islam and human rights, women’s rights and animal rights in Islam. You may freely download these from the CIS website ([www.cisweb.lk](http://www.cisweb.lk)) and print them



## Courses we offer

### Gents & Ladies

#### Thafseer Course

Wednesday - 6.45 pm – 8.00 pm

#### Qur`anic Arabic Course.

Tuesday - 6.45 pm – 8.00 pm

#### Understanding Christianity Course

Mondays - 6.30 pm – 8.00 pm

#### Elementary Arabic Language Course

Thursday - 5.00 pm – 6.30 pm

### Courses for Ladies

#### Arabic Language Course

Tuesday – 10.00 am – 12.00 noon

Saturday – 9.30 am – 11.00 am

### Courses for Boys

#### ‘Heart Talk’ Program for Youth

First Thursday of every month - 4.00 pm – 5.30 pm

### Courses for Kids

#### Understand the Qur`an in an easy way

Mondays & Tuesdays.- 3.00 pm - 5.00 pm

# CIS in Action



The Centre for Islamic Studies (CIS) is the pioneering organization in Sri Lanka involved in promoting an understanding of Islam among those of other faiths. The CIS also organizes an *Arabic Qur'an Course* by Seyyed Hassan, *Tafseer Classes* by Sheikh Abdullah Mohideen and *Heart Talk Program* for youth by Sheikh Arkam Nooramith and Sheikh Muiz Bukhary. More recently, the CIS undertook free distribution of Sinhala translations of the Holy Qur'an to Temples, Kovils, Churches, Libraries, Universities, Academics and Professionals as well as an informative book on the Life and Mission of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). It has also commenced a Janaza Service as part of its social welfare program. A CIS Youth Wing was recently inaugurated to cater to the needs of young people.



*Br. Ilyas Haniffa, Vice President, CIS presents some books on Islam to Ven Maduluwawe Sobitha Thero of Naga Vihara,*



*Br. Abdullah Mohideen President, CIS gives a talk on Tafseer which is held on a weekly basis*

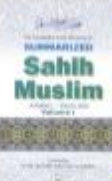




*Distribution of free rations to deserving people during the Holy month of Ramadan*



*The CIS warmly welcomes those who wish to learn more about Islam*

**VISIT CIS BOOKSHOP**

We have a range of Islamic books, Qur'an translations and CDs and DVDs of Lectures by famous Islamic Scholars

**Open Saturdays to Thursdays 10.00 am- 6.00 pm**  
**Tel: 011-2593523, E-mail: cisnews@sltnet.lk**

