

## **Crisis of Identity in a Multi-cultural Society: The Case of Muslims in Canada**

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**Abstract:** *A great majority of studies on ethnic identity or ethnic separatism indicate that a minority group dealing with severe deprivation becomes more frustrated, more aggressive, and more demanding of autonomy or separation. However, in a multi-cultural society where the people can live with their both separate and co-existing identities, the minority group usually demands for greater rights within societies, not an exit from them. This is the case of the Muslims in Canada who constitute a tiny minority in the Canadian population. Since Canada is a multicultural country, the Muslims have not demanded any kind of autonomy but have demanded rights to preserve Islamic values, and their own distinct identity as Muslims. In this article some basic questions are raised regarding the Canadian Muslims. When and how did the Muslims arrive in Canada? What types of challenges they are facing? How do they meet these challenges? What is the future of Muslims in Canada?*

A great majority of studies on ethnic identity or ethnic separatism indicate that a minority group dealing with severe deprivation becomes more aggressive, more frustrated and more demanding of autonomy or separation.<sup>1</sup> However, this is not necessarily true for a multi-cultural society where individuals have the right to live with both separate and co-existing identities. "In such a society," Ted Gurr writes, "the religio-cultural differences prompt demands for protection of the group's social, religious rights" rather than for autonomy or separation. The minority group has "demands for greater rights within societies, not exit from them."<sup>2</sup> The factors that influence this type of identity are "challenges, threats, competition, cultural and linguistic

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homogeneity/ heterogeneity, fear of assimilation among majority, and need for security of life and property."<sup>3</sup>

Canada is one of the most prominent multicultural societies in the modern world. It is a country of immigrants with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, and from various parts of the world. A significant part of the Canadian population consists of Muslims who have migrated to Canada from various countries over the last four decades.<sup>4</sup> Although their numbers have increased dramatically during the last half-century, Muslims constitute a minority in the make-up of Canadian population. Furthermore, they are not confined to a geographical boundary; rather, they are scattered throughout Canada. Consequently, the Muslims are faced with a variety of challenges in their new environment. Since Canada allows freedom of religion, the Muslims have not demanded any kind of autonomy. However, they are constantly demanding rights to preserve Islamic values and their distinct identities as Muslims. In this paper, some basic questions are raised regarding the Canadian Muslims. When and how did the Muslims arrive in Canada? What types of challenges they are facing? How do they meet these challenges? What is the future of Muslims in Canada?

### **The Arrival of Muslims**

Canada does not have an indigenous Muslim population. The Muslims are immigrants from the Arab world, Southern Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, the Caribbean and South America. Although, according to some claims, the Muslim contact with Canada predates the arrival of Columbus,<sup>5</sup> the official record indicates that the earliest presence of Muslims in Canada dates back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> The year 1854 marked the birth of the first Canadian-born Muslim: James, named after his father, was the first of eight children born to James and Agnes Love, who had migrated from Scotland and settled in Ontario. This family, along with John and Martha Simon who were Americans by birth but Europeans in origin, were the first known Muslim settlers in Canada.<sup>7</sup> The Muslim population slowly grew till the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of immigrants from Syria, Albania, Yugoslavia and Turkey. In 1871 there were only 13 Muslim residents in Canada,<sup>8</sup> who had come primarily from Syria. Until the Second World War, the rate of growth in the Muslim community was very slow. In fact, in 1951 there were only 3,000 Muslims.<sup>9</sup> Most of them were uneducated, unskilled and of peasant background. Lacking proficiency in English, many became peddlers. Some of them found

jobs in factories, mines and grocery stores. With the change in their economic conditions many, who had earlier intended to return to their home country, changed their minds and felt inclined to stay permanently in Canada.

**Table 1: Approximate Number of Muslims in Canada (1998)**

<i>City</i>	<i>Number</i>
Toronto	200,000
Montreal	80,000
Edmonton	40,000
Ottawa	30,000
Vancouver	25,000
Calgary	25,000
London	15,000
Hamilton	5,000
Cambridge	1,000
Windsor	1,000
Saskatoon	1,000
Regina	1,000
St. Catharines	1,000
Others Cities	10,000
<i>Total</i>	445,000

*Source:* Data compiled by the author from The Muslim World League, *Muslim Guide to Canada* (Etobicoke: West Mall, 1998).

The gradual reforms in the immigration policy of Canada in the 1960s led to a further increase in the Muslim population. Those who came to Canada during the 1960s were well educated, fluent in English, and westernized. They came from a wide variety of countries, including many beyond the Middle East. Most of them came for higher education or for setting up business.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, they settled permanently in Canada. The immigration policy was further liberalized in the 1970s, which led to a larger influx of Muslim immigrants to Canada.<sup>11</sup> Thus, according to one estimate there are nearly 450,000 Muslims in Canada.<sup>12</sup> Most of them are found in large cities like Toronto, Montreal and Edmonton (see table 1). Nearly half of them live in the Province of Ontario. Quebec has the second largest number

of Muslims. Nova Scotia is one of the oldest centers of Islam, and in 1921 had more Muslims than did Quebec.<sup>13</sup> Muslims are, of course, dispersed throughout Canada. In other words, they are nowhere concentrated in a closely-knit Muslim residential community.

Initially, the Muslims were concentrated in western provinces reflecting their agricultural backgrounds, but gradually, after the industrial boom in the 1940s, many of them moved to business centers in Ontario and Quebec, the eastern provinces. In addition, the inauguration of Islamic studies at McGill University in Montreal in 1952 attracted many Muslim scholars and students to Quebec.<sup>14</sup> Since the late 1960s, the center of population has shifted to Ontario because of better economic opportunities there and a relative increase in the number of Muslims coming from English speaking countries. They are largely in the prime-age working group. According to the latest census, 28 percent of the Canadian Muslims are under the age of 15, while 16 percent fall in the 15-24 age groups.<sup>15</sup> Islam is the third main religion in Canada, after Christianity and Judaism.

What led these Muslims to leave their home country? The factors that led the Muslims to emigrate vary from individual to individual, because they did not come to Canada "as corporate religious groups in search of a sanctuary."<sup>16</sup> However, in general there are five factors that are responsible for the immigration of Muslims to Canada. These are: (a) better economic opportunities; (b) political instability in their homeland; (c) children's education; (d) the pull of family members and friends already in Canada; and (e) the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Canadian constitution.<sup>17</sup> In a nutshell, they all came for a "better life."

Since Muslims came to Canada from various parts of the world, they differ in their language, culture and customs. Haddad writes:

Different ethnic allegiances tend to go to different mosques. This is true in Montreal where the Fatima mosque seems to attract a predominantly Arab congregation, while the Quebec Islamic Center appears to draw more Indo-Pakistanis. It is also true of the Muslim Association in Toronto, which is predominantly Caribbean and West Indian. In other cities, it has been noted that after the Sunday services; groups tend to congregate according to ethnic identity.<sup>18</sup>

Despite their diversity, there is one thing common among them, that is, the bond of Islam. The basic tenets of Islam remain the same among all the Muslim immigrants. They believe in the same holy Qur'an. The regular five times prayer a day, the Friday prayer, the

Ramaḍān (fasting month), and the two *ʿĪd* festivals contribute to the gathering of Muslims from various origins under the banner of Islam.

### **The Challenge of Canadian Muslims**

Before coming to Canada, the Muslim immigrants were living in countries where there were institutions and opportunities for practicing Islam. Once they arrived in Canada they did not have the same environment and opportunities and therefore, adapted their religious practices to the requirements of the Canadian society in varying ways. The earlier immigrants tended to settle with fellow Muslims, most likely with those of similar ethnic backgrounds. They were generally too preoccupied with basic economic survival. More importantly, most of them considered Canadian residence as temporary and, therefore, did not feel seriously about Islamic consciousness. Gradually, with the increase in number of permanent Muslim residents, varieties of psychological and social challenges were felt and consequently their awareness began to develop to face these challenges. The Muslim immigrants gradually felt the need to establish organizations and institutions to preserve the Islamic faith.

An initial challenge that the Muslim immigrants face in Canada is that they are losing their identities. As Sulayman Nyang says, "the first challenge that faces the Muslims in the West is the question of identity. Muslims in the West in general and in North America in particular are now unanimous in their self-definition as Muslims versus non-Muslims. They all agree that they share a common belief in the Qur'ān and Sunnah."<sup>19</sup> Muslims, upon arriving in Canada, encounter the problems of adjusting to language, culture and religion as they lose their identity with their country of origin. Islam provides an opportunity of macro-identity. Muslims, whatever their origin, have a very hard time fitting into the Christian-majority Canadian society. The identity crisis of the Muslims is enhanced by the hostility of the host culture. Faced with rejection, Muslim immigrants sought an alternative integrating system for their lives. In this situation, Islam is perceived to be the only integrating system. Earle Waugh comments: "the paradoxes of the first migration highlight that each must choose ultimately to stay and mature in this place. Such is the experience of God's Ummah. The template is migration as exile, paradox and new identity. Such notions arise out of migration experience, where the homeland becomes idealized while the new locale is perceived as full of bitterness and change. Memory transforms home into paradise."<sup>20</sup>

In their daily life Muslims also often feel encountering differential treatment, despite the fact that "the Canadian constitution makes no distinction on the basis of race, ethnic origin, color and creed."<sup>21</sup> The Canadian constitution guarantees religious freedom and other fundamental rights. However, lack of information and general misperception about Islam has led to discrimination. In particular, a pejorative attitude towards Muslims has intensified after Islamic revolution in Iran and the gulf war in 1992.<sup>22</sup> Discrimination is manifested at the individual as well as at the institutional levels. The media often fuel them. People see media coverage of terrorist attacks by Muslims abroad, to which other Canadians express their negative reactions against Canadian Muslims. Here Waugh describes an incident in Toronto where a Muslim was "punched up by a rabid group of young rowdies taunting 'Paki Paki!'"<sup>23</sup>

Thus, Islam is equated with terrorism, which is perceived by the Muslims as biased and prejudicial. Individually, Muslims can smell the sense of discrimination in the schools, job market, and in the shopping centers, though the Canadian government does not permit such discrimination. In one of her studies, Sheila McDonough commented:

The most serious problem Muslims suffer from in Canada is the negative stereotyping about Islam which is promoted through the Canadian media, and which is pervasive. Muslims may differ themselves as to how conservative or liberal they might be on issues like the dress of women, or on the nature of their religious practice, but they all suffer greatly from this negative Muslim experience from that of other ethnic groups.<sup>24</sup>

A recent example of discrimination is found in the case of Michael (Abdul Rasheed) Taylor, who works as a Muslim prison chaplain. During a criminal trial in late 1993/early July 1994, Justice A. C. Whealy of the Ontario Court General Division (Toronto) told Taylor and other Muslims that they have to remove their head-caps if they wished to remain as spectators in the court. On November 15, 1993, at the very beginning of the trial, Justice Whealy said, "anyone insisting upon wearing a hat may leave (the courtroom)."<sup>25</sup> When a lawyer present in the courtroom said that it was a "religious matter," Justice Whealy replied, "I don't care. I am not quarreling with his religion, he is just not going to be in my court."<sup>26</sup> This remark in itself constitutes grounds for an investigation under the Human Rights Code, as Justice Whealy explicitly stated that he would deny people's access to his court based on religion. Similar incidents happened on November 17, 22 and 25, 1993, when Taylor and others were either ejected from the

courtroom or denied entry. On February 4, 1994 Taylor and a number of others were forced to leave the courtroom by several police and court officers. Two motions filed by a lawyer requesting that Justice Whealy allow those "wearing head coverings for religious purposes" to attend the trial were dismissed by Justice Whealy. In his ruling on the motions, Mr. Justice Whealy said: "there are many self-proclaimed and unrecognized forms of religions or cults claiming to be religions. They come and go often to attract attention and new adherents, bizarre, intrusive or simply impolite attire is worn."<sup>27</sup> In protest Michael Taylor has filed complaints about Justice Whealy's conduct with Ontario and Canadian Human Rights commission.

Discrimination against Muslims is evident not only in the work places, but also in the educational institutions. In September 1994, 13 year old Emile Oumiet was sent home from Montreal's Louis-Riel High School because her *hijāb* (veil on head) did not conform to the school's dress code. Two months later, a second Quebec girl, 15-year-old Dania Baali, was told she would have to transfer to another school if she wanted to observe *hijāb*. The Catholic School Board agreed to the decision of the school. However, three months later the Quebec Human Rights Commission ruled that "the dress codes in public schools that ban the *hijāb* are discriminatory."<sup>28</sup> This is not all. Sometimes anti-Muslim flyers are circulated in schools. Such an incident happened in June 1997 at Wesson Collegiate Institute of Toronto. The leaflet accused the Muslim community in general of being no different from murderers and branded them as "violent and hateful" toward anyone who denies "their false religion."<sup>29</sup>

Another crucial challenge to Canadian Muslims emanates from their own Canadian-born children. The children are born and brought up in the Canadian culture and environment. Children are quickly assimilated into the Canadian way of life and tend to move away from Islamic traditions and values. Gradually, the Muslim parents feel that they are losing control over their children. They find it difficult to command allegiance in the new generation. In particular, the parents face the problem of raising their children in the Islamic faith. At home they watch TV programs which are full of Western culture, and outside they see the free mixing which is often considered unacceptable to Muslim parents. A Muslim child has two identities: one in front of his/her parents and one in front of friends. Both the child and parents end up losing the pleasure of family life and add to the problems of their societies. Thus, the parents feel that the only way

they can keep their children on the right track is through imparting them with Islamic values and faith. A great majority of the children do not think in the same way, which obviously brings them in conflict with their parents. The guardians find it difficult to accept the liberalism of Canadian society which is undermining the integrity of the family unit, the cornerstone of the Muslim community.

Finally, the Muslim community in Canada is also facing the problem of Islamic dietary restrictions. In Islam, certain foods and drinking alcohol are prohibited. However in Canada there is no restriction on food and drinks. Muslims are not allowed to eat pork or pork products, and other meats need to be *ḥalāl*, that is, properly slaughtered with appropriate mentions of the name of Allah (SWT).<sup>30</sup> *Ḥalāl* meat, especially cooked meat, is not easily available in Canada. It is not only meat but also baked products which can be a problem, as they often contain lard (pork fats), frequently without proper labeling. Therefore, Muslims often read the ingredients of these products carefully before purchasing them. The avoidance of such products is especially difficult in certain places like the coffee shops of the university, hospitals or in prisons. Muslims are also, according to Shari'ah law, bound to abstain from alcohol, which is difficult to avoid in the Canadian society where alcohol is an integral part of the social and business cultures.

### **Meeting the Challenges**

Due to the above challenges Muslims believe that one of the ways that they could preserve their strength and unity is through following Islamic ideals. The greater the challenges the greater the sense of awareness. The major areas in which their awareness is reflected are: prayer and fasting, marriages, diet, burial and education. The other means of meeting the challenges is to develop and expand Islamic centers and Institutes through which the next generation can live through the spirit of Islam.

### **The Islamic Ideals and Rituals**

Since Canada is primarily a Christian majority country, there is no environment for routine of five daily prayer, weekly Friday (*Jum'ah*) prayer or annual two *Īd* prayers. Also, there is no environment for fasting during the month of Ramaḍān. The basic obligations of performing daily prayer present serious difficulties to the Muslim in practice. They need to observe these prayers regularly at prescribed



intervals. The ritual of *wuḍū*, (i.e. cleaning of face, hands, elbows, ears, head and feet) is required before praying. This is often difficult in public places, in the schools or at offices. The place of praying must also be clean and free from any pictures or portraits, which is hard to find in any of those places. At the moment, there are many mosques in Canada where Muslims perform the Friday and mid-day prayers. But for many Muslims this conflicts with job responsibilities. The same is true for two *ʿĪd* prayers and principal Muslim religious holidays. Due to the lack of any specific place for *ʿĪd* prayers, Muslims in Toronto, Montreal, and Edmonton rent huge halls or stadiums where thousands of Muslims meet twice a year. However, if the *ʿĪd* does not occur on a weekend, the attendance is usually low because the majority have to go to work or schools. There is no Muslim religious holiday, while major Christian and Jewish holidays are recognized by most employers and academic institutions in Canada.<sup>31</sup> During the fasting month of Ramaḍān those who fast frequently encounter job related problems. Muslims have to meet their business and job obligations, which discourage them from fasting.

Upon arriving in Canada as immigrants, the Muslims face all these problems and they become conscious of their rituals. Therefore, Muslims have on many occasions urged the Canadian government to declare Friday prayer legal, meaning, giving them off work during the prayer time. In 1991, a Muslim association of Toronto, *The Canadian Society of Muslims*, initiated a countrywide campaign asking the Canadian government to recognize Muslim Family Law. It stated, "as Canadian and as Muslims we care about justice, equality and fairness, rights, freedom, order, opportunity, good government, peace and harmony. As Canadians and Muslims, we care about the importance of having the sort of framework which is going to provide a spectrum of degrees of freedom as well as constraints, which will permit all the people of Canada to pursue their individual dreams, goals and interests."<sup>32</sup> However, the government of Canada has not yet given any serious consideration to these issues.

The Canadian Muslims are also concerned about many marriage-related practices. Pre-marital sex, dating practices and the tendency toward inter-religious marriages deeply concern the great majority of Muslims. The Muslims, by no means, want their children to get married to a non-Muslim Canadian.<sup>33</sup> The problem is more serious for the girls than for the boys as it is stated in the Qur'ān. "This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the

People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours lawful unto them. (Lawful to you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste among the people of the Book revealed before your time,...when you give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues. If any one rejects faith, fruitless is his work and in the Hereafter he will be in the marks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)" (5:5). In another verse it is written, "Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication, marry any but a woman similarly guilty, or an unbeliever. And do not let any man but such a (guilty) person or an unbeliever marry such a woman: To the believers of such a (marriage) is forbidden" (24:3).

Sometimes Muslim children are also involved in pre-marital sex, which is not legal in Canada but occur frequently. In Islam sex outside marriage is prohibited. This is called *zinā* and therefore, is considered to be *ḥarām* (forbidden). Parents attempt to avoid this problem by reminding their children that this is *ḥarām*. However, this warning has little effect on their children because of peer pressure.<sup>34</sup> In many cases, the Muslim boys have married non-Muslim girls and converted their wives, but subsequently conflicts have arisen in the family over basic values, which have brought disastrous consequences for their children. Either the children have been baptized or the spouses have been divorced. Thus, "safe marriage" of the new generation is a concern of the Canadian Muslims.<sup>35</sup>

Education of their offspring is the most important area of concern for the Muslims in Canada. Negative attitudes of Canadians are evident in the educational curriculum and institutions. Most of the textbooks in the schools are full of Christian mythologies and praise of Christianity, while pejorative terms like infidels, fanatics, etc. are used for Muslims.<sup>36</sup> Kenny states very clearly that biases against Islam exist in Ontario school textbooks. He quotes, "Islam was born among the nomads of Arabia, who were wholly illiterate and for whom caravan raiding was a cherished pastime."<sup>37</sup> Many Muslims who were not very Islamic in their home countries have become concerned after coming to Canada due to the negative bias against Islam. This leads them to search for their identity and religious roots. Even the health education program offered in Canadian public schools at a very early stage, relates to sexuality and the use of contraceptive measures, is often viewed by Muslim parents as a serious problem because these might "actually promote sexual promiscuity among their children."<sup>38</sup> Not

only the curriculum, but extra-curricular issues have also become the concerns of many Muslim parents.

After the death of any family member, a crucial concern for Muslims is whether to bury the dead body in Canada or to send it to their home country. This is due to the fact that until recently, in most cities there were hardly any separate Muslim cemeteries. However, in some major cities, especially in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Edmonton, Muslims have now purchased lands for Muslim cemeteries. In most cases, the Muslims are buried in non-Muslim cemeteries. Five to ten years ago, most of the dead bodies used to be sent to their home countries. This led the Muslims to consider having separate Muslim cemeteries in the major cities in Canada. But this has not been done in all cities in Canada and therefore, Muslims are still facing the problem, not wanting to bury their bodies in Jewish or Christian cemeteries.

### **The Islamic Centers and Institutions**

By now Muslims in Canada have understood that the Islamic faith as well as their identities cannot thrive without institutional support such as mosques, associations and organizations. This is especially important for the second generation to perpetuate their faith and to strengthen the community. Therefore, Muslims in Canada have by now established many mosques and many organizations. The mosque is one of the most important institutions that help the Muslim immigrants to integrate themselves into a Muslim community. In a non-Muslim society like Canada, the mosque performs the functions of social organization and is a source of education. Thus, the Muslims first felt the need for building mosques in major cities of Canada, as the attendance in the mosque contributes to the sense of community culture. Despite all the differences in culture and geographical origin, Muslims come to the mosque on the basis of their common religion. Mosques provide an opportunity for integrating the differences of individuals into the sense of community and collectiveness. Upon arrival in Canada many Muslims get a culture shock, and the mosques help the new immigrants to establish social contacts within the Muslim Community. Mosques create an awareness of solidarity and unity among the Muslims in Canada, and also are taking up certain non-traditional functions such as wedding, funeral, community dinners and cultural events.

Before the 1970s there were very few mosques in Canada. The first mosque was built in Canada in 1938 and is situated in Edmonton, Alberta. At that time, Edmonton had approximately 20 Muslim families.<sup>39</sup> This mosque was not only a place for prayer but also a meeting place for sharing their common problems.

**Table 2: The Mosques in Canada, 1998**

<i>Provinces</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
Alberta	Al-Rashid Mosque	13070 11 <sup>th</sup> St. Edmonton
Alberta	Markaz-ul-Islam	7907 36 <sup>th</sup> Ave. Edmonton
Alberta	Salah El Deen Mosque	195 Douglas Ave. Red River
British Columbia	Masjid al-Noor	13526 98A Ave. Surrey
British Columbia	Victoria Masjid	2642 Quadra St. Victoria
Newfoundland	Masjid al-Noor	430 Logy Bay Rd, St. Johns
Ontario	Stoney Creek Mosque	102 Hwy # 8
Ontario	London Muslim Mosque	151 Oxford St. W. London
Ontario	Masjeed Omar	572 Moodie dr. Ottawa
Ontario	Masjid Al Noor	117 Geneva St., St. Catharine
Ontario	Jamiah Al-Uloom Al-Islamiyah	2944 Audley Rd. Toronto
Ontario	Jame Masjid Brampton	8450 Torbram Rd. Brampton
Ontario	Masjid Al Ansar	132 Rail Side Rd, Don Mills
Ontario	Umma Nabawia Mosque	2074 Kipling, Etobicoke
Ontario	Bosnian Community Mosque	4146 Dundas St. Etobicoke
Ontario	Masjid Al Farooq	935 Eglinton Av. W. Mississauga
Ontario	Zafar Mosque	153 Benworth Ave. North York
Quebec	Abu Bakr Assidiq Mosque	7389 St. Laurent Rue, Montreal
Quebec	Al Ummah Mosque	1245 St. Dominique, Montreal
Quebec	Fatima Mosque	2012 St. Dominoque, Montreal
Quebec	Masjid Al-Eman	5405, Parc Ave. Montreal
Quebec	Noor Al-Islam Mosque	4675 Amiens, Montreal
Quebec	Younes Mosque	6378 St. Laurent Blvd, Montreal
Quebec	Makkah Mosque	11900 Gouin Blvd, Pierrefond
Quebec	Islamic Center of Quebec	2520 Laval Road, Montreal
Quebec	Trois Rivières Mosque	3009 Blvd de Forges, tr. Rivières

*Source:* Data compiled by the author from Muslim World League, *Muslim Guide to Canada* (Etobicoke: The West Mall, 1998).

After 1950s mosques were also built in other major cities like Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. But they were very limited in number. For example, during the late 1970s (while this author was a student at McGill University), there was only one mosque in Montreal, far away from downtown. Gradually, one after another, mosques began to be built and today one can find more than ten mosques in the city of

Montreal alone. The same goes for other cities (see Table 2). The Mosques are now to be found even in smaller cities of Canada.

Although mosques contribute to the unity of the Muslim community, the larger integration of diverse Muslims in Canada is not possible without larger institutions such as centers. As Baha Abu Laban says, "the social integration of the diverse Muslim national groups," is not possible without "an integrative strategy emphasizing the commonalities of all these groups"<sup>40</sup> and for this, larger institutions are necessary. The Muslim immigrants, in response to the challenges, felt the necessity of establishing Islamic associations or Islamic centers from the beginning. But this became possible only after the Second World War when the number of Muslims increased in Canada. Thus, the Council of Muslim Communities of Canada (CMCC) was founded in 1972. The primary objective of the CMCC was to develop a coherent national approach to the issues facing the Canadian Muslim community. A larger number of Muslim associations began to operate as its affiliated organizations. The scope of activities of the CMCC is quite wide, covering education, youth, women, religious affairs, public actions and public relations. Furthermore, the CMCC publishes a major quarterly magazine, *Islam Canada*, which focuses on religious, educational and political matters. It also contains news regarding Muslims in Canada and around the world and also publishes articles on Islamic views on various contemporary issues.

**Table 3. Islamic Centers and Organizations in Canada, 1998**

<i>Province/ number of organizations</i>		<i>Province/ number of organizations</i>	
Alberta	7	Nova Scotia	2
British Columbia	5	Ontario	65
Manitoba	1	PEI	1
New Brunswick	1	Quebec	14
New Foundland	1	Saskatchewan	3

*Source:* as in table 1

In addition to the CMCC, associations of Muslim communities exist in almost every city of Canada (See Table 3). In some major cities like Toronto or Montreal, there are many associations and centers. All these associations and centers constantly make Canada's Muslims aware of their Islamic identity. They express their political support for Muslim causes throughout the world. They keep their members informed of Muslim celebrations, holidays, on-going activities and

future plans and they also collect donations for Muslim causes throughout the world.

Moreover, in almost every university and college there are Muslim Student Associations (MSA). Especially, when the foreign students come to study in Canada they feel the need for such associations on campuses for a variety of reasons. The MSAs organize Islamic seminars and Friday prayers on the campuses. The Muslim students, thus, from various parts of the world are able to establish links among themselves on the university campuses "providing the nucleus for an International network."<sup>41</sup>

**Table 4. Islamic Schools in Canada, 1998**

<i>City</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
Ajex, Ontario	Jamiah Al-Uloom Al - Islamiyah	2944 Audley Road
Brampton	Al-Iman School	253 Summerlea Rd.
Calgary, Alberta	Calgary Islamic School	225-28 St. SE.
Cornwall, Ontario	Al-Rashid Islamic Inst.	PRI, Cornwall.
Edmonton, Alberta	Edmonton Islamic School	13070 11 <sup>th</sup> Street.
Edmonton, Alberta	Darul Uloom Al-Islamiyah	7532 Meridian St..
Etobicoke, Ontario	Al-Ashraf Islamic School	23 Brydon Dr.
Etobicoke, Ontario	Muslim Girls High School	10 Vulcan Street.
Halifax	Maritimes School Acad.	42 Leaman Dr.
London, Ontario	London Islamic School	157 Oxford Street
Mississauga, Ontario	ISNA Islamic School	1525 Sherway Dr.
Montreal, Quebec	Montreal Islamic School	7435 Chester Av..
Ottawa, Ontario	Ottawa Islamic School	10 Coral Avenue.
Richmond, B. C.	B. C. Islamic School	12300 Blundell Rd.
Scarborough, Ont.	Islamic Foundation School	441 Nugget Avenue
Winnipeg, MB.	Al-Hijra Islamic School	155 Tembina Hwy

*Source:* as in Table 1

In response to the challenges faced by the younger generations in academic institutions, the Muslim communities in different cities have established Islamic schools. There has been a growing concern for the ethical and moral upbringing of the children. Islamic education is considered to be necessary to preserve Islamic values and culture, and to "ensure the survival of an Islamic heritage for succeeding

generations."<sup>42</sup> Thus, there are Islamic schools in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, and Alberta (see table 4). All these schools have the same goal, i.e., to provide their students with knowledge of the Arabic language and Islamic studies. The Islamic courses, ethics and dresses are maintained in these schools. Besides regular schools, there are "Sunday" schools. The Islamic schools promote the consciousness among the new generation about the Islamic culture and heritage that is essential for maintaining a strong sense of Islamic identity in Canada. In fact, many non-Muslim parents are applying for admission of their children in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal to Muslim schools. In an interview with the Principal of the Montreal Muslim School this author came to know that non-Muslims are interested in sending their kids for keeping them away from the "open" Canadian culture and for instilling moral values in their minds. The purpose is not to Islamize their children but to strengthen their moral consciousness.

### Conclusions

Despite Canada's long history of immigration, Muslims are a relatively recent addition to the country's ethnic mosaic. In this multi-ethnic society, Muslims are struggling to preserve Islamic heritage against many odds. Initially, a Muslim has to face a lot of challenges from the host culture. Gradually, however, due to the Muslims' awareness and consciousness of their basic Islamic values, they have developed academic and non-academic institutions in various cities in Canada which have helped them to overcome these challenges. Today, most of the schools and colleges in Canada know when the Muslims are starting Ramaḍān or when they have *ʿĪd* day, which was unthinkable only ten years ago. Now, many journals are published by the Canadian Muslims in which articles appear regarding Islamic ideals and rituals. Moreover, there is weekly Islamic program on some TV channels. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) produces and distributes Islamic educational programmes for children and adults on video, computer software and audiocassettes.

However, the Muslims cannot isolate themselves from their participation in public affairs in Canada. They must assert and reaffirm their active participation in the larger framework of Canadian communities, which will allow others to understand Muslims better. In fact, the Muslims have contributed to the Canadian society all along. When the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim laborers worked hard. Muslim farmers were pioneers who opened up Alberta and Saskatchewan for cultivation and

settlement. When Canada needed migrants to sustain economic booms, the skilled and professional Muslim workers arrived to keep up the tempo of the economic growth. The Muslim teachers taught at the Universities as well as small schools of the Prairies and the outposts of Atlantic Provinces. Currently, Muslim Canadians are also full participants of the system of the country as they are working for political parties and running for political offices. Sheema Khan writes, "just as the earlier generation of Muslims helped in the physical development of this country and in the bridging of the geographical distances, this generation—marking a transition from the frontier to the urban places—is making more subtle contributions in the sublime realm of the acts as well as the more mundane world of daily custom and tradition, often blending the legacy of the fore-fathers with this Canadian experience."<sup>43</sup> And this is what is necessary, because as Sulayman Nyang says, "Muslims who refuse to assimilate without being assimilated in North American society are not very helpful...Muslims should be conservative enough not to bargain away their *dīn* (religion), but liberal enough to seize any political opportunity to form alliances with others having shared interests."<sup>44</sup> Muslims need to take serious interests on issues affecting all Canadians. It is necessary for them to have an open dialogue with the people of other faith and face the media in order to remove misperception and misconception regarding Muslims and Islam.

## Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order In Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 275. Michael Hecter, *Internal Colonialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).
2. Ted R. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global view of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington D. C.: United States of Peace Research, 1993), 316.
3. M. G. Hussain, "Muslim Identity: Indian Perspective," Paper presented in International Conference on Islamization of Sociology and Anthropology, Kuala Lumpur, 1997, p.7.
4. Sheema Khan, "Muslims in Canada," *The Message*, January, 1995, p.6
5. Numerous evidences suggest that Muslims from Spain and West Africa arrived in the Americas at least five centuries before Columbus. In his book, *Africa and Discovery of America*, Weiner wrote, "West African Muslims had spread throughout North American territories in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In his book *Saga America*, Barry Fell wrote that during the rule of the Muslim Caliph of Spain Abdullah Ibn Muhammad (888-912 CE) a Muslim navigator, Khaskhas



Ibn Aswad of Cordova, Spain sailed from Delba (Palos) in 899 CE, crossed the Atlantic and reached an unknown territory of the Americas. For details see, <http://www.aapi.co.uk/q-news/277p23.htm>.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Baha Abu Laban, "The Canadian Muslim Community," in Earle H. Waugh, Baha Abu Laban and Regula B. Quereshi (eds.), *The Muslim Community in North America* (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 76.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid. See also A. Rashid, *The Muslim Canadian: A Profile* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1985), 15-19.

11. See Canada Manpower and Immigration, *The Immigration Program* (Ottawa: Government Printing Press, 1974); Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972); and David C. Corbett, *Canada's Immigration Policy: A Critique* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957).

12. Earle H. Waugh, "Hijra and Canadian Muslim," *New Straits Times* (Kuala Lumpur) April 16, 1997, p. 10.

13. Sheema Khan, "Muslims."

14. Ibid.

15. Rashid, *The Muslim Canadian*, 19.

16. Yvonne Haddad, "Muslims in Canada" in Yvonne Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith (eds.), *Muslim Communities in North America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 71.

17. A. Yousif, *Muslims in Canada* (New York: Legal Press, 1993), 17.

18. Quoted in Laban, "The Canadian," 87.

19. Sulayman Nyang, "Using the First Amendment to Maintain Muslim Identity in North America," *Islamic Horizons*, July-August, 1996, p. 32.

20. Waugh, "Hijra," 10.

21. Haddad, "Muslim in Canada," 71.

22. Yousif, *Muslims in Canada*.

23. Waugh, "Hijra", 10.

24. Quoted in Yousif, *Muslims in Canada*, 73.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Yousif, *Muslim in Canada*, 68. He writes, "Islamic educational institutions try to counteract this problem by educating their students on the historical background of Christian and discussing why Muslims do not celebrate this festival."

32. Ibid.

33. Yousif, *Muslim in Canada*, 63. See also, Murray Hogben, "The Socio-Religious Behavior of Muslims in Canada" in E.H. Waugh et al (ed.), *The Muslim Community in North America* (University of Alberta Press, 1983), 116. He writes, "There is a fairly high incidence of Muslim men intermarrying with non-Muslim women, because they have met hand fallen in love with an outsider and somehow missed finding or accepting a bribe from within their community."
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., 116.
36. Gamet McDiamid and David Pratt, *Teaching Prejudice* (Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971), 41. They write, "Prejudice still manifests in text books, but because it has been less respectable it is more subtle. Immigrants may no longer be called 'shiftless and vicious,' but there are still instances where they are referred to as 'a problem' or 'a swarm.' It may be that they have a more immediate effect on readers' attitudes than would more obvious discriminatory references."
37. L. M. Kenny, "The Middle East in Canadian Social Science Text Books" in Baha Abu Laban and F. Zeadey (eds.) *Arabs in America: Myths and Realities* (Wilmette, Ill: Median University Press).
38. Yousif, *Muslim in Canada*, 67.
39. Laban, "The Canadian Muslim Community."
40. Ibid., 87.
41. Yvone Yazbek Haffadh, *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 10.
42. Yousif, *Muslims in Canada*, 104.
43. Sheema Khan, "Muslims in Canada."
44. Sulayman Nyang, "Using the First," 33.