

Interview With Hujjat al-Islam Muhammad Rizvi

Interviewer: Husain Eshghi

1- Please introduce yourself.

Biography,

Classic and Religious educations

I was born in 1957 in India, in a family of 'ulama. My father is the late Hujjatul-Islam wal-Muslimeen Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, the founder of the famous tablighi institution in Africa, “Bilal Muslim Mission”. I was three years old, when my family migrated from India to Tanzania.

I completed my elementary study in Tanzania and then privately studied Arabic and Farsi languages with my late father and a scholar in Dar-es-salaam.

In 1972, at the age of 15, I went to Qum for religious studies in the Hawza 'Ilmiyya. I studied there for ten years under various teachers till 1982 when I returned back to my homeland, India.

For my MA in History, see below under migration to Canada.

2-How did you go to Canada ?

Immigration

Staying

In 1983, I migrated to Vancouver, Canada, by the invitation of the Shia Muslim Community of British Columbia and worked there as the Imam (religious guide) of the community till 1991.

During my stay in Vancouver (Canada) in 80s as the Imam of the Shia Community, I got an opportunity to join the Simon Fraser University (Vancouver, Canada) in its Master program. This was indeed an unexpected gift from the Almighty Allah. They accepted my published works as sufficient for admission into the MA program without any prior degree(s) or certificate(s). Al-hamdu lil lah, I was able to complete my MA thesis and attained my Master degree in History.

From July 1991 to July 1996, I became the Executive Director of Islamic Education & Information Centre, Toronto, Canada.

From July 1996 till the present, I hold the position of the Religious Guide & Imam of the Ja'fari Islamic Centre, the biggest Shia centre in Canada.

3- scientific works:

Books & Magazines

Publications & newspapers,

Articles

Book:

1. *An Explanatory Translation of the Qur'an*, vols. 1-3 published 1983-1984. (This covers half of the Qur'an; the remaining three volumes, unfortunately could not be completed till recently and we hope to get the whole Qur'an published soon before coming Ramadan.)

2. *Imam Husain: the Saviour of Islam*. 1984.

3. *An Introduction of the Islamic Shari'ah*. 1992. Also translated & published into Italian by Jami'atuz Zahra, Qum.

4. *Khums: An Islamic Tax*. 1984. Also translated & published into Italian by Jami'atuz Zahra, Qum.

5. *Ritual & Spiritual Purity*. 1989. Also translated & published into Swahili by Bilal Muslim Mission, Tanzania.

6. *Ritual Purity for Women*. 1985.
7. *Marriage & Morals in Islam*. 1990. Also translated into Indonesian & Spanish.
8. *Writing An Islamic Will*. 1993.
9. *Hajj: the Pilgrimage to Mecca*. 1996.
10. *Shi'ism: Imamate & Wilayate*. 1999. Also translated into Japanese.
11. *Hijab: A Muslim Woman's Dress*. 2004.
12. *Islam: Faith, Practice & History*. 2004.
13. *Business Ethics in Islam*. 2007
14. A series of 5 booklets on Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.):
 1. Muhammad: the Messenger of God; 2. Peace & Jihad in Islam; 3. How Did Islam Spread? by sword or by conversion; 4. Polygamy & Marriages of the Prophet; 5. Justice Peace & Prophet Muhammad. Published in 2007.
15. Infallibility of the Prophets in the Qur'an.

Articles:

I have written many articles. A partial list is as follows:

1. An Introduction to Islam.
2. An Introduction to Shia Islam.
3. Jesus: the Prophet of Islam.
4. Imam Husain's Mission: Reforming the Ummah. 1992
5. Freedom of Expression: only a right or also a responsibility? 2006
6. Samarra, O Samarra; Your Golden Dome Shall Shine Again. 2006
7. The Last Messenger's Last Message. 2006
8. Salat al-Jum'a / Friday Prayer: a few reminders. 2006
9. Proposal & Engagement: a few pointers. 2006
10. Optional Conditions in An Islamic Marriage Contract. 2006
11. Organ Donation & Transplantation. 1993; 2006
12. Gender Apartheid or Respected Interaction? 2006
13. Respectable Interaction or Mixed Gathering. 2006
14. The Shias of Lebanon (1). 1993; 2006
15. The Shias of Lebanon (2). 1993; 2006
16. Brotherhood, Courage & Loyalty in 'Abbas bin 'Ali. 2006
17. Basic Fasting Guidelines. 2007
18. What After Ramadan? 2007
19. Health Care in Islam. 2007
20. Al-Fajr as-Sadiq: A New Perspective. 199?
21. *The Da Vinci Code*: from a Muslim's Perspective. 2007
22. Apostacy in Islam. 1997; 1998.
23. Ghadir & the Orientalists. 1991
24. The Story of the Crescent. unpublished.

25. Ababil Air Force. (the story of the Surah “Fil” for children, unpublished).

26. Zakat in the Shia Fiqh.

27. On the Zabiha of Ahlul Kitab. 1996

4- Religious activities:

Teaching

Speeches

Other activities

Lectures & Other Activities:

I have had many travels to various countries for giving lecture. Besides Canada and the USA, I have also lectured in Trinidad, Guyana, Australia, UK, Dubai, Pakistan, Tanzania and Kenya.

I have also appeared in a TV program of our centre broadcast all over Canada entitled as “Islam in Focus” which ran for half-an-hour on first Saturdays of every month. This was temporarily suspended for reasons beyond our control, and we hope to relaunch it on a weekly basis from November 2008.

I was the founding editor of the quarterly magazine, The Right Path, published by Ahl al-Bayt Assembly of Canada from 1992 to 1998. Unfortunately, it was discontinued due to my illness in 1999.

I give speeches at the Ja'fari Islamic on weekly program (Thursday night and Friday - Jum'a khutbas) which are broadcast live also through internet and are heard/seen by many viewers at www.jaffari.org or www.islamicentre.org The latter website has an archive from all our lectures at the centre.

In addition to the weekly programs, I talk at various special occasions celebrated and commemerated by our community. We also host about 200 visits from high schools students of non-Muslim Toronto schools during the academic year, where I give a talk on Islam for 15 minutes and then we

give the opportunity to the students to ask questions about Islam and the Muslims. We also hold interfaith gatherings at our centre.

I also have weekly classes of a more advanced level between the months of Shawal to Eid al-Adha, and between Rabi ath-Thani to Rajab. In these classes, we select a subject and dedicate the whole semester on that subject. Some of the subjects covered are: Infallibility ('ismah) of the Prophets in the Qur'an; Islamic Theology (using the Sharh Bab-e Hadi 'Ashar as a text); a look at Nahjul Balagha (in 10 sessions); A study of Risalatul Huquq (in 8 sessions).

Besides lecturing and teaching, I am also involved in providing guidance and counseling to individuals on their personal problems, and for couples in their marital issues.

I am also involved in the full time Islamic school known as "Sadiq Islamic School" which was established in 1994. Its program starts from pre-school to Grade 8 levels; and presently has 300+ students.

5- How many people became Shia follower by your guidance?

In what manner
How many
Previous faiths

This is a difficult question to answer since I don't keep a record for this. I know that many people hear my talks in person (in Toronto) and on line (in different parts of the world), they communicate with me through mail or email, read my books and publications, and are inspired.

I just pray that may Almighty Allah give me the success (tawfiq) to be useful in the way of spreading the faith and religion of Ahl al-Bayt. It is for us to work; the results are in the hands of Allah.

6- What is your opinion about the tendency of people to Islam and Shiism in the Western community. Specially in Canada?

Unfortunately, due to the political tension between the West and the Middle Eastern region, the media and anti-Islamic forces (especially the Fundamentalist Christians) have intensified their attack on Islam and Muslims. This has made our task for difficult and challenging. But we are hopeful; many times adverse propaganda against Islam becomes a blessing in disguise (many converts came to Islam because they had hatred towards Islam and wanted to study themselves about this 'evil' religion - and then their search for information led them to the true nature of Islam and they ended up becoming Muslims. Makaru wa makarallah...)

7- Please explain the detail of some religious trips to other countries, or cities, and the results?

I have mostly travelled during the months of Muharram and Safar intensively to various cities and countries for lecturing, and have talked on a variety of topics. Hopefully, we have increased the level of their Islamic understanding, and helped them in improving their religious life.

8- Do you have any cooperation with other Muslim centers (Sunni or Shia)? How?

In Toronto, there are about ten Shia centers and we have a good working relationship with them. Occasionally, we also try to hold some programs together.

9- Please give a message to Muslim youths around the world.

In this world of easy and fast communication, there is no more excuse of saying that we don't have access to sources in our

languages. So use the new tools to enhance your religious knowledge and improve your spiritual life. However, remember that this new tool (internet) has *negative side-effect* attached to it. So be cautious in what you see and what you read. Even on the positive side of information, be careful and use the sources after verifying its authenticity.

The social ills of the Western society and its present financial crisis clearly portrays that peace and tranquility cannot be bought by dollars - that also on credit! Real peace and tranquility comes with peace in our mind and heart; and that only happens by connecting ourselves to the Almighty, through Prophet Muhammad and his blessed Ahl al-Bayt.