

THE HAJI RUKNUDDEEN INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

“Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is right and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity”.

(AL Qur’aan 3:104)

*Tarbiya programmes conducted during the three-year period
of the first Board of Governors term (1987 to 1990)*

By the Chairman, Board of Governors

Board of Governors:

Chairman - Haji Zainol A. Khan

Deputy Chairman – Justice G. A. Edoo:

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Haji S. S. Hosein

Dr Nizam Mohammed

Member/Secretary - Haji Hider Ali

Principal - Maulana Siddiq A, Nasir - M.A. (Phil.), L.L.B., M. Ed.

(A) Short Lecture Series on a variety of topics

The series was non-examinable and its object was to improve the knowledge of participants so that they would be better able to understand and appreciate the beauties of their religion.

About six of these were conducted by the Principal at three Centres, namely:

- (i) the Institute's building in Tunapuna
- (ii) *Masjid Ullah* in Curepe, and
- (iii) ASJA Boys College in San Fernando.

Each of the series was advertised by announcements at *masaajid* and notices in a local newspaper. The format for the lectures was that the lecturer would speak on the scheduled subject for about 50-60 minutes and 15-20 minutes would be allocated for questions on the subject..

Attendances at each of these series attracted between 50 to 60 males, females, and persons of different strata in the community.

(B) Haniff Bagh Khan's innovative course to learn to read Arabic in nine one-hour sessions using the English alphabet.

This method, which had been developed by Mr. Khan of Guyana, had been used on two occasions before locally as follows:

- (a) In 1962 when it was conducted free over a three week period arranged the Islamic Missionaries Guild, which at that time was the missionary arm of the ASJA. It was conducted by a young Guyanese, Br. Kayume Khan at the El Socorro Road *Masjid*, who was on a short visit to this country,. The writer does not remember the number of persons attending the course but recalls that it was very well attended and participants were extremely impressed with the method of teaching.
- (b) During the 1980's by *Imaam* Hassan Karimullah, a Guyanese domiciled in Trinidad, who was *Imaam* of the *Haji Gokool Masjid* in St. James and also on the staff of the local office of Rabeta. *Imaam* Rahimullah conducted courses in various parts of the country and the response in all cases was exceptionally good as numerous persons who wanted to learn to read Al Qur'aan in its original language did not have the opportunity to do so.

The Principal of the Institute strongly recommended to the Institute's Board of Governors that Br. Khan, who he knew very well, be invited to conduct the course he had developed as referred to above at the Institute. He offered to approach Br. Khan on the Institute's behalf if it so desired. The Board agreed to the Principal's suggestion and Br. Khan accordingly came to Trinidad for a period of three weeks and conducted two courses of nine days each, one at the Institute in Tunapuna on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and the other at the San Fernand ASJA Boys' College on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 7.00 to 8.00 p.m. each night. The courses, which were free, attracted over one hundred and twenty five persons in Tunapuna and over forty five in San Fernando. Participants were of all ages, both sexes and different strata in the society.

Mention must be made of the fact that Br. Khan, who had paid his return fare to Trinidad, declined both to receive a refund of his fare and any remuneration for his time. His response when offered that this knowledge was a blessing from Allaah (*S.W.T.*) and he could not gain any benefit, financial or otherwise, for teaching it to others. May Allaah bless him.

(C) First Residential Tarbiyyah Programme

The objective of the programme was to start training young males initially in the basic principles of Islam and develop in them leadership qualities so that they could take a more active part in Jamaat activities by assisting their Imaams, teaching in maktabs and Muslim schools and so on. The course was developed by the Principal after several meetings with the Board of Governors and was designed to be a residential one lasting for one hundred and fifty contact hours over ten weekends (one weekend a month) from *Maghrib salaah* on a Friday to *Asr salaah* on the Sunday.

The first course, which was examinable, took place in 1988 at the Institute in Tunapuna. Jamaats were informed of the details thereof and asked to sponsor one or more persons from their Jamaat and to donate one thousand dollars for each person to assist in covering the expenses involved. Lecturers at this Course were:

- (i) The Principal, who covered the religious subjects,
- (ii) Dr. Nizam Mohammed (deceased), a medical doctor, who had authored many books and articles on various aspects of Islam and Islamic history, and
- (iii) the writer, who had training and experience in management, marketing, and export promotion, covered such areas as public speaking, deportment, compartment, personal development and so on.

Co-ordinators for the Programme were the writer and Haji Hyder Ali, Director and Secretary of the Board of Governors and also Treasurer of the ASJA.

Twenty two persons participated in this course, of which nineteen were sponsored by their respective jamaats, and three by their parents. Twenty persons passed the examinations. A graduation ceremony was held later in the year at which the Minister Responsible for Religion, Dr. Brinsley Samaroo, a former senior lecturer at the University of the West Indies specialising in the history of East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago, gave the feature address.

As far as the writer knows no trace has been kept of the activities of the graduates of the Course, but he is aware of the following:

- (i) two have qualified as maulanas and are *Imaams* locally.
- (ii) one of the two referred to at (i) above holds three master's degrees in different disciplines from Universities in the England; a Diploma from Al Azhar University; is an *Imaam* in a local *masjid*, Principal of the *Ahles Sunnah Wal Jama'ah Institute*, and regularly conducts a programme on one of the two local Islamic television stations.
- (iii) About eight, including the two mentioned above, are *Imaams* in local *masaajid*, and one in a *masjid* in New York city.
- (iv) Five or more are teachers in Muslim State-aided schools, of which one is a Principal and another is a Vice-Principal.
- (v) Five are on the Executive Committee of two national Muslim bodies.
- (vi) One, a retired businessman, is an *Imaam*, on the Executive Committee of a national Muslim body, and Muslim Chaplain to the Prisons Service.
- (vii) One conducts Islamic classes in a weekend maktab in New York city.

Physical arrangements for the course

There was no dormitory in the building allocated for use by the Institute and it would have been difficult to provide such facilities at short notice. Participants were therefore informed of this in the notices inviting applications for the course and they were advised they would have to sleep on the floor and should therefore bring with them a sheet of 2' X 4' x 6' foam to use as a mattress and also a bedsheet (to cover the foam), a blanket with which to cover, and a pillow and pillowcase. Most of the upper floor of the building was used for sleeping .

The students prepared their own breakfast. They indicated from the day before the meals they would be serving, the items they would need, and the quantity of each. The items would be obtained by the co-ordinators of the course and left in the kitchen. The students would divide themselves into two groups: one to prepare the breakfast and the other to wash the plates, utensils and so on used. Lunch and dinner were catered for and the students would serve themselves and also share in the washing of the dishes and the cleaning up after. As the writer recalls the Principal shared the same facilities with the students.

The arrangements for sleeping and so on referred to in the paragraph immediately above were made out of necessity as it would have been difficult, not to mention costly, to provide dormitory-type accommodation to conduct the programme. However, it proved to be an immense success as sleeping on the floor together, attending lectures together, old talking and so on together created a great deal of camaraderie in keeping with the teachings of Islam.

(D) Second Residential Tarbiyyah Programme

The first *Tarbiyyah* Programme was considered by many as an enormous success and as a result their requests from many *Jamaats* and individuals for the Programme to be quickly repeated and the duration, but not content, shortened. Accordingly, a second Programme was organised in 1990 with the same content, lecturers, and co-ordinators but to be conducted every two weeks instead of five weeks, thus completing it over a period of five months instead of ten.

The lecturers and venue remained the same and twenty persons participated of which nineteen were successful in the examinations. The ASJA General elections were held in October of that year and the writer, who had served as an officer since 1951, declined to stand for re-election and accordingly passed on all documents, including results of the examinations, he had in his possession to the incoming Secretary of the ASJA. He moved on to other areas of *dawah* and so was not able to ascertain whether any graduation ceremony was held.

The end

To follow shortly

Former first Chairman of the Board of Governors of HRIIS, accompanied by Professor Syed Ali Ashraf, who made arrangements, visit:

(a) Al Azhar Minister (seeking Lecturers) ,

(b) Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah (to follow up application for funds to fully construct/furnish new building for the HRIIS

(c) New Delhi (to interview Senior staff)

(d) Nadwi tul Ulema, Lucknow (to seek technical co-operation, affiliation, etc