

Ascertaining USMAA's Focus

Disclaimer: The authors of this paper would like state that this paper is written solely for the sake of Allah (swt) and is not designed to endorse a personal view about Islam. Further note that this paper is by **no** means an initiative of 'USMAAYouth'.

The Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Ascertain what the focus of USMAA is.
- To clear misconceptions within the community about what USMAA stands for.
- To determine a cause of action USMAA may take to unequivocally establish its focus.

The Issue

The issue at hand is one of whether USMAA considers itself either:

- A Social Organization that follows Islamic principles intermittently.
- An Islamic Organization that has an emphasis on social affairs of the Sri Lankan community.

The issue is considered of utmost importance, given that there is confusion amongst the membership and non-members as to what the focus of USMAA really is. The following are a few documented examples:

1. Confusion over whether the segregation of sexes would be practiced at the recent 'Youth Forum.'
2. Requests from several children attending YMA madrassa **not** to invite their teachers to USMAA functions as they felt embarrassed – given they felt USMAA does not adhere to the 'Islamic Culture' that they are taught to practice.
3. The abstention of several Sri Lankan Muslims from coming to USMAA because they feel that the desire to be sociable compromises the Islamic way of conducting ones self.
4. An incident involving a guest speaker – who left prior to having his dinner, because he felt the behaviour of the community as a whole was not Islamic in nature.

The Proposal

Although there may be merits to the two abovementioned approaches, the authors of this paper would like to propose that USMAA adopt the latter:

i.e. An Islamic Organization that has an emphasis on social affairs of the Sri Lankan community.

The sole reason behind this endorsement is that USMAA carries the word 'Muslim' in its name and as such the organization and all its members are claiming to be

representatives of Allah (swt.) As a result of this we are under an obligation to promote the best possible image of the Muslim Akhlaq (character). It is such a lack of character that prompts for example many junior members of this organization to request that we don't invite their teachers to USMAA.

Put simply the proposal is aimed at generating a culture within USMAA that puts Allah (swt) first in all affairs and as such generates a mindset that when one serves this community they are doing so for the sake of Allah (swt). Although one may think that such is the condition at present, the reality as evidenced by the great difficulty in filling positions in the committee is that individuals do not come to this realisation.

Values that are being endorsed in this proposal would appear to be enshrined within the constitution. However, it is unfortunate that the community hasn't made a conscious effort to achieve them. Thus, this proposal is aimed at changing this situation.

Such a proposal will inevitably give rise to numerous questions and points of discussion. The authors have tried to address the following:

1. How will we determine what the proper Islamic principles are to follow given there is a diversity of views within this society?

Firstly we must acknowledge that there is a diversity of views within this society and that potentially, conflict may arise if one party tries to impose their viewpoint over the other. It is for this reason that we suggest that USMAA act on a basis that is fair for all and find a point in the religion that no one individual can dispute. If one looks to the last sermon of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) he states:

‘I leave behind me two things, the Quran and my example, the Sunnah, if you follow these two you will never go astray.’

Thus, we propose that USMAA make a conscious effort to follow the Quran and the Sunna in **all** of its affairs.

The authors of this report would at this point like to state that they are in no position to interpret the Quran and Sunnah themselves for their knowledge about the religion is limited. This would appear to hold true for the whole of the organization and as such it is frivolous for us to argue on points of religion. It is for this reason that we propose to obtain guidance from those within the greater Australian Muslim community that have a greater understanding about the religion (this point will be explained further in the ‘Proposed action’ section.)

2. How Should USMAA have the right to tell an individual how to conduct themselves?

The proposal is not one of reforming the individual; it is more about reforming the organization as a whole, in a manner that is most pleasing to Allah (swt.) Thus, the proposal is about USMAA having structures in place that promote an image of this being an institution that does not compromise Islam, whilst going about fulfilling its objectives.

Proposed Action

The Authors believe that before USMAA can observe any practical change, it is important that we are educated and understand the religion first. We propose that we follow the “Educate-Appreciate-Implement” process.

Through our observation within the general community, there is a tendency to view Islam as a prescriptive set of rules that tells an individual what to do and what not to do. Although this is true, it is but a mere aspect of Islam. Unless one gains an understanding of who Allah (swt) truly is, then such rules and regulations only seem like a burden that merely acts to restrict oneself. It is imperative that we appreciate the religion for the great benefit it has conferred upon us, so that we may begin to implement the laws of Allah (swt) in the workings of this association in a more conscious manner that is pleasing to the entire membership.

It is for this reason that the authors undertake to organise a series of lectures on the following topics:

- The true meaning of “La ilaha Ilallah.”
- What is the purpose of life?
- The importance of adhering to the Sunnah of the prophet Muhammad (saw.)
- Brotherhood.
- How does the Quran apply to my life?

The logistics of when these lectures will take place needs to be determined. One possible suggestion may be to conduct them in conjunction with USMAA functions. However, we acknowledge that this is a matter to be decided by the new committee.

Inshallah, it is hoped that following the educative process, the whole membership will have an appreciation for the beauty in Islam and thus we may **begin** to generate a culture within this institution that is most pleasing to Allah (swt.) Ameen.

Submitted by : Sis Rifka Naufal
 Bro Rizwan Mohinudeen
 Bro Adel Mohamed

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Tamil version of this document could be obtained from the authors on request

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1. Confusion over whether the segregation of sexes would be practiced at the recent 'Youth Forum.'
2. The abstention of several Sri Lankan Muslims from coming to USMAA because they feel that the desire to be sociable compromises the Islamic way of conducting ones self.

The Proposal

Although there may be merits to the two abovementioned approaches, the authors of this paper would like to propose that USMAA adopt the latter:

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The sole reason behind this endorsement is that USMAA carries the word 'Muslim' in its name and as such the organization and all its members are claiming to be representatives of Allah (swt.) As a result of this we are under an obligation to promote the best possible image of the Muslim Akhlaq (character).

Put simply the proposal is aimed at generating a culture within USMAA that puts Allah (swt) first in all affairs and as such generates a mindset that when one serves this community they are doing so for the sake of Allah (swt). Although one may think that such is the condition at present, the reality as evidenced by the great difficulty in filling positions in the committee is that individuals do not come to this realisation.

Values that are being endorsed in this proposal would appear to be enshrined within the constitution. However, it is unfortunate that the community hasn't made a conscious effort to achieve them. Thus, this proposal is aimed at changing this situation.

Such a proposal will inevitably give rise to numerous questions and points of discussion. The authors have tried to address the following:

1. How will we determine what the proper Islamic principles are to follow given there is a diversity of views within this society?

Firstly we must acknowledge that there is a diversity of views within this society and that potentially, conflict may arise if one party tries to impose their viewpoint over the other. It is for this reason that we suggest that USMAA act on a basis that is fair for all and find a point in the religion that no one individual can dispute. If one looks to the last sermon of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) he states:

‘I leave behind me two things, the Quran and my example, the Sunnah, if you follow these two you will never go astray.’

Thus, we propose that USMAA make a conscious effort to follow the Quran and the Sunna in **all** of its affairs.

The authors of this report would at this point like to state that they are in no position to interpret the Quran and Sunnah themselves for their knowledge about the religion is limited. This would appear to hold true for the whole of the organization and as such it is frivolous for us to argue on points of religion. It is for this reason that we propose to obtain guidance from those within the greater Australian Muslim community that have a greater understanding about the religion (this point will be explained further in the ‘Proposed action’ section.)

2. How Should USMAA have the right to tell an individual how to conduct themselves?

The proposal is not one of reforming the individual; it is more about reforming the organization as a whole, in a manner that is most pleasing to Allah (swt.) Thus, the proposal is about USMAA having structures in place that promote an image of this being an institution that does not compromise Islam, whilst going about fulfilling its objectives.

3. What is USMAA doing that is not Islamic?

From the onset, the authors would like to state that we do not believe we are in a position to pass judgement about the organisation, as we do acknowledge that our Islamic knowledge is limited. However, there are several issues that are both concerning and confusing to many in the community – but we do not feel it is our prerogative to document these, as this would ultimately result in us passing subjective judgement about the organisation. Nevertheless, what we would like to see is USMAA develop a culture based on **Taqwa**. As a consequence we hope that a genuine sense of brotherhood is practiced and that the organisation does things solely for the sake of Allah (swt) – using the guidance he has provided us with through the

Quran and Sunnah as the basis for decisions made and practices followed in the operation of this organisation.

Proposed Action

The Authors believe that before USMAA can observe any practical change, it is important that we are educated and understand the religion first. We propose that we follow the “Educate-Appreciate-Implement” process.

Through our observation within the general community, there is a tendency to view Islam as a prescriptive set of rules that tells an individual what to do and what not to do. Although this is true, it is but a mere aspect of Islam. Unless one gains an understanding of who Allah (swt) truly is, then such rules and regulations only seem like a burden that merely acts to restrict oneself. It is imperative that we appreciate the religion for the great benefit it has conferred upon us, so that we may begin to implement the laws of Allah (swt) in the workings of this association in a more conscious manner that is pleasing to the entire membership.

It is for this reason that the authors undertake to organise a series of lectures on the following topics:

- The true meaning of “La ilaha Ilallah.”
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- Brotherhood.
- How does the Quran apply to my life?

Please note, the authors do not in any way object to other members of the organisation endorsing speakers of their own providing that the individual is one who is able to back up his/her claims with the accepted sources of Islamic information/rulings (i.e. Quran, Sunnah and the ‘consensus’ of the Ulama (scholars).) Our sole concern is that one who addresses the community not be an individual who speaks primarily based on what their personal opinions may be on various topics.

The logistics of when these lectures will take place needs to be determined. One possible suggestion may be to conduct them in conjunction with USMAA functions. However, we acknowledge that this is a matter to be decided by the new committee.

Inshallah, it is hoped that following the educative process, the whole membership will have an appreciation for the beauty in Islam and thus we may **begin** to generate a culture within this institution that is most pleasing to Allah (swt.)

Summary

This paper proposes that USMAA become an organisation that utilises the Quran and Sunnah as the main source of information and guidance when making decisions as to its operation. This is not to say that the organisation needs to abandon its current objectives. To the contrary, this proposal is aimed at promoting the current objectives

of USMAA. However it is put forward that we make a conscious effort to follow the guidance of Allah (swt) and his Messenger (saw) **at all times** when attempting to implement and achieve such objectives. In order to achieve such a goal, the authors consider it important that we are educated and appreciate Islam before we can begin to implement its teachings practically. Thus through the educative process we hope that the society will become **united** in trying to achieve the ultimate result. Inshallah, may Allah help us achieve this. Ameen.

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