

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Assalamualaikum brothers, sisters, and believers in the oneness of Allah.

Praises be to Allah for allowing the 19th annual MSA conference held from 18-20th Safar, 1430 Hijrah (February 13-15th) to come into fruition. The 3-day event was in abundance of insightful knowledge and provided Muslims in Manitoba the opportunity to discover the dimensions of self-purification; a theme central to the heart of each and every believer. We had the privilege of having Abdurraheem Green from jolly ol' England and our very own Ismael Mukhtar as our distinguished speakers, each having made invaluable contributions towards Islam. Although they differ in their stylistic manner of presentation, their speeches complemented one another to allow a complete comprehension of the path towards self-purification. Indeed, it was a welcoming approach for they tied our knowledge of the material world to the immaterial world, which is practically nonexistent in the realm of the Westernized sciences. The paragraphs that follow are only snippets of what was covered during the conference.

To go on the path of self-purification, one must consider the facets that constitute the self. The heart (*qalb*) acts as the focal point that does more than pump blood around the human body. The intellect (*aql*) is the rational component that separates us from non-human beings. The desire (*hawaa*) is the constituent that is closest to our great enemy and is the only offensive tool that can bring an individual towards the path of destruction. One who submits to his every desire weakens and corrupts the heart until he brings forth his intellect to rationalize his every action, and when this happens the person has lowered himself to a rank lower than that of animals. Despite this, we also have an immutable inclination towards good (i.e. *fitra*), which can lead us to a life of goodness towards Allah. It remains available and helps us in time of great need, thus we must learn to utilize our *fitra* in the most efficient manner at all times.

How does one undergo this seemingly mystical process? To do so, one must begin with the end in mind. This sentence alone speaks volumes of our presence on Earth and our accountability of our every action. An action is a result of our conscious decision, but unlike our

conscious behaviour, *hawaa* is innate and can never be fully satisfied. When one concedes to this temporal form of self-gratification, he starts seeking for more and eventually becomes subjugated to his every “primitive” need. These needs are our basic desire concerning hunger, thirst, and even pleasure. Eating more than we should be; engaging on worthless activities; spending money on senseless items; engaging in meaningless conversation or even gossiping; self-purification entails controlling and overcoming such desires. However, this path is full of endless tests and struggles and this is our personal *jihad*. Through this virtuous path, we can achieve felicity. Thus, self-purification means a move towards strengthening of the heart by utilizing our intellect and our *deen* so that we do not fall prey to our caprices.

What purpose does self-purification serve? Apart from achieving felicity, we seek to achieve the Paradise (*jannah*) that has been adorned with unspeakable beauties that’ll make every believer rushing for his or her rightful place. However, there is also the Hellfire (*jahannam*) that has been adorned with the many pleasures of desire. This is the righteous place for those whose masters are not Allah, but their desires. Thus, self-purification would ensure we act according to the right purpose, which is for Allah’s sake.

Another aspect of the conference held great relevance to the theme. The story of a Muslim convert can move the heart of many men and women, and the same can be said for Abdurraheem’s, if not more. With respect to what has been said throughout this article, Abdurraheem’s heartfelt story of his path to conversion was indeed a clear example of one’s *jihad* and self-purification for none other than Allah. His explicit narratives of overcoming his worldly desires and finding his right path remind us that we are not to be complacent of our privileged status as born Muslims. Instead, we should be striving for more of Allah’s rewards and for our places in the Paradise.

The scope of the conference cannot be covered justly within this pithy article. Many more remain to be mentioned and it will take up more than the pages of this magazine. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that throughout the three days we have gained insights for the betterment of our own selves and of others. The Q&A sessions provided opportunities for the audience to bring forth intriguing queries that were relevant to the present situation. Short quizzes tested their

knowledge on whether they truly listened and comprehended the topics. The turnout exceeded our expectations with the attendance totalling to approximately 150 each day. Moreover, we had not anticipated that we would be able to cover the expenses. The conference would not have come into fruition without generous donations from sponsors. May Allah reward them with His endless blessings and bounties. Additionally, this conference marked another milestone by having student volunteers as the organizing committee. Their tireless efforts and commitment toward ensuring each aspect of the conference was dealt with in the best possible manner should be commended. However, we are not without faults and we sincerely welcomed the comments, suggestions, and genuine concerns expressed by the attendees, specifically for the entertainment and food (see Figure 1). We have heavily considered and deliberated them for future MSA events, and *insyallah*, you will see the necessary ameliorations.

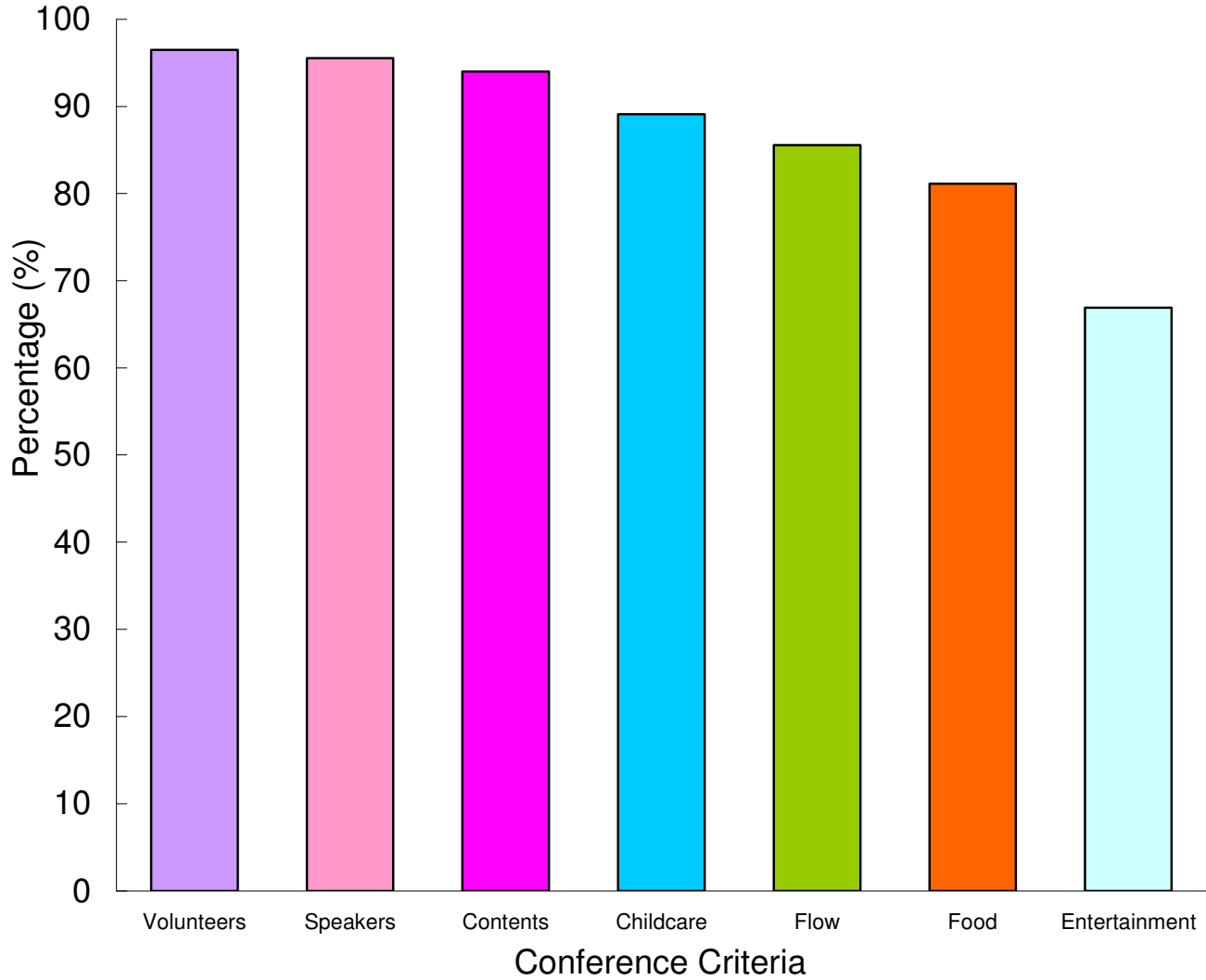


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents' overall satisfaction based on each criterion.

What this conference taught us was more than just a chance to spread knowledge on Islam. It allowed us to contemplate, ruminare and introspect on whether we are moving towards self-purification as described by Abdurraheem Green and Ismael Mukhtar. It made us question whether we are aware of the consequences of our every action or whether we are slaves to our desires. The life of a Muslim is not without daily struggles or tribulations and we should help one another to overcome them so that we may be among those in Paradise. As a closing remark, we offer our sincerest gratitude to Abdurraheem Green and Ismael Mukhtar for revealing the internal and external dimensions of self-purification.

We would also like to acknowledge the volunteers involved in the conference:

Aezeden Mohamed	Harun Cicek	Mustafa Mohamed Talib
Ahad Baghery	Hasinah Halim	Nermin Moujani
Anas Aboobacker	Mahmoud Alzaibak	Rania Mohamed Talib
Barlin Farah	Mariam Jarkas	Ryan Ramchandar
Celaleddin Gulluce	Maryam Rezaey	Saman Golkari
Davood Qahraman	Mastooreh Naseri	Suadi Liban
Farah Ahmed	Muna Abdi	

If you are intrigue to learn more of the issues presented during the conference, please visit the UMMSA's website at: <http://www.ummsa.org/msa-conference-2009.html>.

Wassalam.

Hasinah, H.