

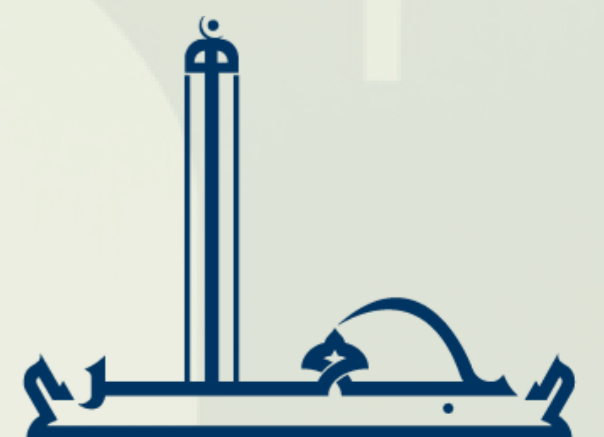
Positive Self-Identity & the Holiday Season

By Sr. Tahera Kassamali, Religious Advisor for Women

Muslims living in the Western world are surrounded by images of Christmas festivities. It is easy for children to be attracted to the glitter of Christmas trees, Santa, gifts & parties. Christmas is no longer mainly a spiritual-religious celebration. Instead it has become more of a time to enjoy time with family & friends in a particular manner. While the decision to incorporate some of these manners remains that of individual families, it is good to keep in mind the following points:

- **A healthy self-identity is essential** for a child to develop confidence & feel good about themselves. It wards off the pressure to fit in among circles that may not have similar values. This is an important asset all through life. The home environment is crucial in developing this sense of self in the child.
- **Every family has its own culture and values.** Promoting that in the home & associating with like-minded families creates a strong awareness of one's personal heritage & religion.
- **Every child deserves to have their own identity respected & celebrated.** Families must make an effort to celebrate their own festivities in a unique & joyous manner without necessarily indulging in consumerism.
- When parents feel good about their **own self-identity**, it becomes much easier to pass it on to their children without apologizing for it.
- **Discuss Muslim celebrations** such as Milad-un-Nabi, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha & Eid al-Ghadir with children. Many of the festivities we see in the holiday season (e.g. getting together with friends & family, exchanging gifts, sharing food, giving charity) are all recommended on those special days. Additionally it has the deeper purpose of helping us remember Allah and guiding us towards Him.

Help your children feel good about what they can do to celebrate their own religious heritage.



Islamic Shia Ithna-Asheri
Jamaat of Toronto
FAITH PEACE UNITY