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# al-badr



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**UCLU**  
University College London Union



# Lowering the Bar

Islam is a religion that is open to all regardless of race, age, gender or previous beliefs. We all believe in the oneness of Allah (SWT), Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the final messenger sent to mankind, all other Prophets (PBUT) which have come previously, the Qur'an and other Holy Scriptures, the Five Pillars, the Angels, Shaytan and the Day of Judgement. These are common beliefs that we share. But of course, man being the obnoxious, self-obsessed creature that he is and thinks he knows better cannot ignore the differences that lie between us. I, then ask you to turn your attention to one verse:

“And We gave them clear commandments in (religious) affairs, but they did not differ until after knowledge had come to them, through rivalry among themselves; surely your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they differ.”

Even with this verse, there were several interpretations yet having read all them, I found that they all conveyed the same message. The most striking part of the verse in my opinion is that the people differed because of the rivalry amongst themselves and not because they were arguing about what is fundamentally right or wrong. Rivalry is what is destroying us today: the act of competing with each other in the attempt of proving who is more superior. But it begs the

question, in whose eyes are you recognised as being superior?

Having some knowledge of the Deen, a few surahs memorised, a collection of hadiths and that one particular wise saying from a 'top' scholar which happens to be at the tip of your tongue does not make an individual more superior than others. Nor does it grant them a place on a pedestal with the rest of the community worshipping and constantly praising them. You only need to have absolute faith in Allah (SWT) to recognise that in fact this is incorrect. A person of such knowledge is blessed and should he act upon it accordingly, then he is better in the eyes of Allah (SWT). But the decision lies with Allah (SWT) because He is most fair in His judgement.

A fair judgement can only be reached by the one who has all the information at his disposal. When you see a sister who is not wearing a hijab, you lack both the knowledge and understanding of her struggles to comply with Allah's (SWT) orders. In the same token, when a sister is seen speaking to a brother (publicly), why are we all too quick to form judgements about them? Whatever happened to the middle ground?! A place in time where all you would see is two people talking to each other and leaving it at that rather than creating a story to be told to another.

As a community, we have formed an unhealthy fixation on appearances and should anyone not fulfil the criteria, they will be seen as outcasts. It is almost as if we have an endless list of names and by our own judgement, we choose whom we strike off. I cannot help but think that should man be in a position to select who enters Heaven, he would leave Paradise a very empty abode.

As cliché as it may sound but you know that appearances can be deceiving (and skin deep). Ever picked up a novel expecting so much more only to be left dissatisfied?! The decision to read the book was formed primarily by what you saw on the front cover - not the wisest way to make a choice but it is just a book therefore little harm can occur. However the same example can be extrapolated to everything else in our lives and suddenly the danger is overwhelming. Maybe it

is wise to contemplate over the dangers which put you at risk. But at the same time, give a thought to the vulnerability of others whereby you are the individual casting an unjust verdict. There is little you can do where the actions of others are concerned but a great deal can be done with yourself. Always begin with yourself and the rest should be left to Allah (SWT).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Whoever wishes to be saved from Hell and admitted into Paradise as desired, they should believe in Allah and the Last Day and treat other people the way they themselves would like to be treated.” (Sahih Muslim)

You believe in the oneness of Allah (SWT), the existence of two destinations – Heaven and Hell and that one day, there shall come a day when the entire of mankind will be gathered, waiting for the final judgement. So why not adhere to the entire saying of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) rather than picking and choosing the bits you wish to. It is hardly surprising that your treatment of others will reflect upon how others treat you. If you show respect, kindness and humility to those around you, not only will the same individuals have a positive opinion of you but they are more inclined to show respect towards you and others alike. Through your actions, peace can be established and maintained.

So to bring this to a close, there is one thing I request from you – to lower the bar for those individuals who may not be as 'practising' as you are. Open the doors of warmth and kindness to them so that one day, by the grace of Allah (SWT), they may choose to follow the straight path, the path that Allah (SWT) has favoured. Allow brothers/sisters to come to you rather than forming an invisible barrier (which has now become a solid fence) and thus preventing any good from being attained. This is not the type of segregation that is required nor is it helpful to the progression of unity. We are one Ummah. Maybe it is time our actions showed this, first and foremost by leaving the differences between us to Allah (SWT) to judge accordingly.

**Rabiah Mirza**

Mar	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghrib	Isha
4	5:55	7:30	12:17	2:31	4:59	6:22
5	5:53	7:28	12:17	2:32	5:00	6:23
6	5:52	7:27	12:18	2:34	5:02	6:25
7	5:50	7:25	12:18	2:35	5:04	6:27
8	5:49	7:23	12:18	2:38	5:06	6:28
9	5:47	7:22	12:18	2:39	5:08	6:30
10	5:46	7:20	12:18	2:41	5:10	6:31
11	5:44	7:18	12:18	2:42	5:11	6:33

# Khutbah After Khutbah

How often do we advise sisters not to beautify their voices and to be stern and to the point when talking to non-mahram men, yet when we come across a sister who fulfils (or attempts to fulfil) this, we waste no time in labelling her brash, rude, blunt or arrogant. The truth of the matter is that a sister who appears friendly, submissive and sweet is seen as the 'preferred' sister and is given leeway simply because she has displayed the attractive features of her personality. Whereas the sister who does not (deliberately) over-display her softer side (or go out of her way to beautify herself in other ways) or sugar-coat her words to appear more pleasing, is disapproved of when she is simply adhering to what brothers themselves have asked of her khutbah after khutbah. Do tell me, where are our 70 excuses....?

How do we justify judging, labelling and even backbiting about people whose reality we do not know? How do we justify basing our opinions on mere hearsay? Wouldn't a sister who is not 'in the spotlight' be a better choice - Yes you may not see the 'nice' side of her or even hear from her too often (obviously we can't be mute) but isn't that the point? Would you really want your wife to be 'friendly' or 'comfortable' with others? It is no more wrong after marriage than before, so why do we not look to the Islam we are so quick to preach and learn to appreciate these qualities?! And furthermore try and adopt them within ourselves - no woman would want her husband to be 'friendly' either.

Speaking of khutbahs, how many times is it said to brothers and sisters about 'lowering your gaze.' Yet in reality, very few individuals actually abide by this. On the way to prayer (ironically), you pass a brother/sister and may catch his/her glance for a split second. Proactively, you lower your head and think that you have succeeded in this although I'm not entirely convinced. Yes, physically you have lowered your head and ensured the ground has now become your focal point. But surely (and I may be wrong here), it is not simply the issue of where your lustful eyes fall upon but rather where your imagination leads you to. It is possible to speak to a male/female whilst maintaining natural eye contact. Argue it however you will, but the fact is I can

speak to another male, look him in the eyes and think nothing more. Hell, most of you do this with non-Muslims males/females on a daily basis. Heaven, I have seen this with my own eyes and never think it to be anything more but a conversation. So why change the rules?

Our community acts to do good and does succeed however through subtle trickery, double standards somehow manage to creep in. The term 'sister' is used for the sake of appearances as we are primarily seen as women. Confusing as it may be to some, the obligations that exist between a husband and a wife do not exist between you and I. This is often forgotten. One must learn to walk before they run otherwise disaster will soon set in. My attempts in gaining your affection or your approval are futile. I have no desire for this; you cannot lose what you never had in the first place.

The rules and regulations that exist should apply to everyone in exactly the same way contrary to the contacts which you may or may not hold. Do not excuse something that is Islamically incorrect.....for a sweetheart.

## I will leave you with a final thought...

*Eyes squinting, they peer through their sex-tinted glasses*

*Establishing social justice, equality and belief in God are long forgotten*

*Islam is seen through the prism of brief encounters with the opposite kind*

*Appeasing their unruly desires has become our purpose*

*Cloaked in black, we must appear as shadows, present but not acknowledged*

*All in the name of modesty you say?*

*But, hidden under the guise of propriety lies their hypocrisy of*

*Secret assignments*

*Snatched conversations*

*Flirtatious gazes*

*Forbidden fantasies*

*The continuous call for reticence does not penetrate their hearts.*

## A familiar tale....or not?

**Hadiya**

# Being Muslim is Controversial

I was really stumped about what to write about when told the topic for this issue of Al-Badr, I mean what do I know about controversy....

But then on the way home last week, a passer-by spat at me and followed up his vulgar behaviour with a string of swear words that would make even the hardened swearer ashamed. This person was clearly drunk. Although shocked by the incident, I ignored the behaviour and deep down, I felt sorry for him. No one should carry around so much hatred. Besides the guy was drunk; people do lose their senses and understanding in such a state.

The next day, when making my way home from Euston station, a couple of men made some insulting comments about Muslims as I passed. This time however, they were not drunk and to my utter surprise they were suited and booted. To top it off, one was of oriental origin.

The following day went without incident, thank God.

But the day after that was again followed by insults, by random people passing by... this time I really and truly ignored it, as I am unable to give a description of what they looked like.

At first I thought what on earth am I doing to cause such reactions from random strangers?! Surely I'm doing something controversial to cause such a response? And I couldn't understand the number of incidents in such a short space of time, as I've not really dealt with such frequent anti-Islamic sentiment before. Upon reflection I thought there must be something that has happened in the public domain for there to be a sudden rise in this sort of behaviour. The media is, after all, a powerful tool to control the masses and what they are thinking.

Lo and behold, our Prime Minister had made a speech at the Security Conference in Munich the weekend before, where he heavily focused on Muslims and terrorism. Even by coupling these words together so frequently over the last decade, they still don't belong together. That is just not happening. I will be the first to admit that

we have problems within our Muslim community; it is a sad fact. I don't think that David Cameron gave a speech that would start to address these issues,

but instead he has given wind to inflame an already delicate situation. Although there was some sense in what he said, for the most part I would describe the speech as a big whinge where he used the platform to essentially hate on Muslims; any of the good and sensible statements he made were lost in the sea of negative comments. Furthermore, some of the negativity was not explicit but implied, which in a way is more dangerous. (Worthy advice: learn to read between the lines).

I do agree with one thing that was mentioned in the speech and that is that there is no defined British identity. In the past, British identity was intrinsically linked to the Christian faith, but as we have moved towards a secular society and the majority are moving away from any form of religion, I would like to know where the identity and values are to originate from. Who is to tell us what morality is, when as humans we make mistakes, and a person who is in Parliament is no better than someone who is not. Would you want a politician who has been unfaithful to their spouse to be making up the rules of how you live your life? I wouldn't!

The fact that the BNP leader and the EDL have both applauded the Prime Minister for his speech in Munich is a telling sign of how it has been received. The reaction by the general public - or those who I have encountered this past week makes me think, is it now becoming socially acceptable to hate on Muslims? Is this the new accepted form of racism? Remember, the anti-Semitic sentiment in Nazi Germany did not happen overnight, it was a conditioning of the people over years....

We, British Muslims, need to be a positive force in our society. We need to engage, interact and try to get back to being the people who were known for standards, morality, justice and good conduct. Don't let others tell us who we are - show the world we are better than how we are being portrayed.

**SparklyDiamond**

# Islam: Equality or Justice?

In a society where we understand everyone to be equal, many people, both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, question whether Islam is a religion of male chauvinism. The apparent inequality of the genders found in the rules of inheritance, witness, clothing, and several other rules, would easily lead one to this conclusion. However, before we begin to make such claims, we need to ask ourselves a few questions:

What is equality? The answer specifically used by governments would be the availability of equal opportunities. This means that no matter what the situation may be, two people of equal ability should have the opportunity to achieve exactly the same things, irrespective of race, gender, age or wealth. Individuals should also be judged equally in the sight of the law.

Does Islam recognise and advocate equal opportunity? If one were to examine the laws of Islam with an open-mind, they would find that rules such as those pertaining to interest and trade in fact further this goal. In reality, they do so more than the governments that claim to advocate this type of equality do themselves. For example, the prohibition of loans for some worldly benefit prevents the level of extortion that has, and is still, taking place all over the world. Wealthy countries take advantage of the poorer countries' need for loans, and wealthy individuals take advantage of poorer individuals' needs. Such levels of extortion, whereby the debtor ends up paying several times more than the capital they were originally lent, would not be possible if such a rule was implemented. However, there are some differences which we will come to, Insha'Allah.

Is this perception of equal opportunity actually equality? Are all people equal? It is very nice to say such a thing but can the blind person ever be equal to the one who sees? Can the deaf person ever be equal to the one who hears? The reasonable answer, when one considers the facts, is no. The one with such disability needs some assistance to do the same things as the

one who is healthy, such as driving. Technology is currently being developed to allow the blind to drive, but even if they could drive, they still wouldn't be able to drive like the one who sees without such technology. If they were truly equal, we would treat them the same, which means that we would not install such technology. Without this, the blind would not have the opportunity to drive, showing that they are not actually equal.

If the perception of equal opportunity is not actually equality, what is it that both reasonable people and Islam advocate? Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

**"Verily, Allaah enjoins justice..." [16:90]**

**"...and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice." [4:58]**

How does Islam differ from what is being advocated as equal opportunity? Equality judged by governments and institutions is based upon perceived abilities. For example, it is perceived that men and women are equal in terms of abilities; hence they should have equal opportunities. Islam, however, recognises Allah, the one true God, as being the Creator of all that exists. As such, He alone knows the most about His creation, the opportunities they should have and the differences between them in terms of their abilities.

Allah (SWT) recognises that men and women are spiritually equal:

**"..Never will I allow to be lost the work of any of you, whether male or female..." [3:195]**

**"And whoever does righteous good deeds, male or female, and is a true believer, such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a speck, will be done to them." [4:124]**

However, Allah (SWT) also informs us that there are differences between men and women.

**"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given one more**

**(strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means..." [4:34]**

In this way, Allah (SWT) acknowledges that men are physically stronger and should be the providers, whereas women have been blessed with the natural ability to raise and look after children. 'Women should raise children?! Is this not the epitome of male chauvinism?' I ask the reader in response, what is wrong with this noble task? Do we say that teaching is an inferior profession because teachers influence and teach the next generation? Do we say that nursing is also an inferior profession since nurses take care of the sick? Of course not. So how then can have the notion that bringing up children is something that we should look down upon? In fact, this is one of the noblest things a person could do – raise, take care of, and shape the future generation.

The way that society perceives this noble profession has contributed a huge amount to the ills society faces in our time. The ill-mannered, immoral youth that we see around us are a direct consequence of the lack of appropriate upbringing, and this in turn results in a downward spiral. Much could be said at this stage regarding the amount of good such Islamic principles could contribute to society, however, this is beyond the scope of the discussion.

It should be noted and firmly embedded in our minds and hearts, that Islam is a religion of justice. Islam recognises the differences in people and judges them based

upon that. In this way, Islam recognises the differences between the genders, such as the fact that the average man will be physically stronger than the average woman, and that the average woman will be more emotional than the average man. The different qualities given to men and women are strengths for their own individual roles, and it is based upon these differences that certain rules are set. As those who claim to be submitted to Allah (SWT), we should understand and accept this for what it is, and not judge in the manner that those with less knowledge judge.



# He's Like a Brother, She thinks

"You're just like a brother to me!" She would often tell her Muslim college friend whom she has grown close to over the years. She feels comfortable with confiding in him, trusting him, opening up to him – but she has never thought of him as a husband. They hang out together during their breaks, she calls him whenever she needs to vent, and she loves how he is never judgmental towards her. To him, she was a friend at first — but he soon discovered that he would often feel a tinge of jealousy whenever she spoke nonchalantly and joked with other male classmates. It burned him inside, and he would always try to pull her away casually without making his irritation apparent. Many times, he would look at her with admiration, smiling and melting away with his dreams of what could be for them. He would never dare bring up marriage to her, though. How could he when she only viewed him as her brother?

So, would you call these two good friends? Brother and sister maybe? Boyfriend and girlfriend? As with many cases in the Muslim community, this is a confused pseudo-marriage framed under the guise of friendship or an innocent brotherly bond. As the two become lax in their interaction, their hearts naturally – albeit unintentionally – gravitate towards each other, their minds become occupied with each other, and one or both parties eventually develops feelings that either remain trapped or expressed and acted upon unlawfully. With their increasing closeness and intimacy, the special reserves of loyalty, emotional sentiments and halaal physical attraction may be exhausted before their rightful outlet in marriage. If they end up not getting married and search elsewhere for a partner, they may never be content because they can't resist comparing potential spouses with their former "friend". Even if they eventually marry someone else, they will always have a history, and sometimes Shaytan can push them to reconnect and rekindle that past relationship during marriage.

It is no wonder why our wise Creator `azza wa jall,

who is well aware of our natures and inclinations, says in the Qur'an "...Nor of those who take (boy)friends...(4:25). With many commands and prohibitions in Islam, Allah (SWT) has mercifully forbade the prerequisite acts that would lead to major sins. He (SWT) is protecting us from Shaytan and from falling prey to our desires, which saves us the emotional distress and painful regret that often come as consequences to disobedience.

It's also no wonder why it is purer and more chaste for both men and women to lower their gaze when speaking to those of the opposite gender (24:30-31), and to focus only on the tasks necessitating their communication. Remember Musa (PBUH) with the two daughters of Shu`ayb? Their interaction and communicating was exuding hayaa and self-respect; Musa (PBUH) never struck personal, unwarranted conversation with them and when one of the daughters informed Musa (PBUH) that her father is inviting him to reward him for his assistance, she walked (and spoke) with utmost modesty and dignity.

One of the greatest manifestations of modesty and also a safeguard to indecent conduct is the Muslimah's Islamic dress. Besides obeying Allah (SWT) and the Messenger's commands in wearing loose, non-transparent, non-perfumed clothing, the attire brings with it an entire set of behavioural traits that the Muslim woman finds befitting to uphold. She is no longer comfortable mingling with men, joking and laughing loudly with them – or behaving in any way that may ignite their desires. Her taqwa (God-consciousness) and hayaa' with Allah (SWT) becomes embodied in all her mannerisms – her body language, how she speaks and carries herself – and reminds her of amicably maintaining the boundaries that Allah (SWT) and the Messenger (PBUH) would be pleased with.

There is a profound hadith of the Prophet (PBUH), which if practiced and truly believed in, can adorn our lives with blessings and many successes. It states: "There is nothing that you

leave out of God-consciousness except that Allah will compensate you with something better" (Ahmad). We all long for acceptance and relationships that quell our loneliness and make us feel needed and loved. Perhaps if we devote our lives to increasing our love for Allah (SWT) and gaining His love in return, He will bless us with halaal relationships that will be the greatest source of happiness, love, loyalty and compassion in this life and the better one to come.

## Muslimah

## So Close Yet So Far

*Sometimes souls touch before eyes see  
At times your existence seems so unreal to me  
Almost like a dream that keeps on pausing  
But never quite reaching the final scene*

*Sometimes the beauty of the soul is imagined  
At times colour stained glass seems more appealing  
Almost like what reality throws at me every day  
But never quite having the same effect on me*

*Sometimes life pushes you to the edge  
At times you think there is no coming back  
Almost far enough where you can see the faintest line  
But never quite finding the ability to cross it*

*Sometimes you're so close to me  
At times you're so far away from me  
Almost like a breezy wind passing through the day  
But never staying long enough to be seen*

*Sometimes.....At times....Almost....  
The cruelty of distance may be a blessing in disguise  
For the living reality with a burning desire  
Living till the day when our paths will cross  
When the miles between us will cease to exist  
Until then, so close yet so far.*

## Akilah

# Kindness to Our Parents

We start in the name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the Merciful and we seek His help and guidance in all that we do.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the short topic which I want to address today is one which I feel many of us have neglected. Subhanallah, today's reality is one where we as young Muslim students are so preoccupied with the dunya, whether it be studying, going out with friends or for some of us just staring at the TV, that we have forgotten the womb that has borne us. We have forgotten that entity that has clothed us when we had nothing to wear, that has fed us when we could not feed ourselves, that has protected and nurtured us when we were defenceless and in need of protection. That entity that we have forgotten, is non-other than our parents.

My Brothers and Sisters, when was the last time that we made our parents smile? When was the last time that we bought our parents a gift? Subhanallah, when was the last time we told our parents that we loved them? How sad is it that the most vivid memories that we hold of our parents are ones where they are angry with us, ones where they are scolding us, ones where a chapal (a slipper) comes flying at us at 40 m/s from the other side of the room. Ya shabab, I ask, is this our definition of 'Birr Al-Walidayn'?

Allah (SWT) says in Al-Quran Hakeem,

'And your Lord decreed that you should worship none but Him and that you be dutiful to your Parents. If one of them or both attain old age in your life, then do not say to them uff, nor shout at them, rather address them in terms of honour / and lower for them the wing of submission and humility through mercy. And say, "My Lord! Grant them Your Mercy as they brought me up when I was small." – Al-Israa' 17/23-24

Allah (SWT) says in the Quran 'that don't even say uff to them', and Subhanallah I ask, is there a small statement of grievance against your parents then 'uff'. In fact, it was reported by Al-Husayn ibn Ali, that the Prophet - Sal Allahu

alayhi wa Sallam - said, "If Allah knew any smaller than uff to be disrespectful to parents, He would have decreed it to be haram!" My Brothers' how many times have we committed this act of haram against our parents, and if uff is haram (and surely it is) then what about the other statements that we say.

We all remember when the Rasul Sal Allahu alayhi wa Sallam was asked, 'who is worthy of dear companionship'. He - Sal Allahu alayhi wa Sallam - said, "your Mother!" and when he was asked again and again, the Prophet - Sal Allahu alayhi wa Sallam - replied, "Your Mother! Your Mother!" Until on the fourth time he - Sal Allahu alayhi wa Sallam - said, "Your Father." Today, when the common question is asked, "Who is your best friend?" How many people would say, "my Mother!"

My Brother and Sisters, I would like to conclude by asking what is 'Birr Al-Walidayn' and how should one show 'Birr Al-walidayn' to their parents.

To enhance our understanding of 'Birr Al-Walidayn' (kindness to parents), the scholars have set the following conditions:

1. One should place the pleasure of his parents above the pleasure of anyone else, including himself and his wife and kids. EVERYONE
2. One should obey them in everything they command or forbid, whether it agrees with his desires or not, so long as they do not command the disobedience of Allah (SWT).
3. He should present them with everything he feels they desire, whether they ask for it or not. He should present it with kindness and mercy.

My Brothers and Sisters, I would like to urge you today, before you go home, go to the shops and buy a small gift for your parents and when you reach home, instead of locking yourself in that abyss that you call a room, spend at least 30 minutes talking to your parents asking them about



how their day was, making them smile, massaging their feet for verily Jannah lies under the feet of your parents (mother). And let not this be something that you do once and forget but let it be a Sunnah that you practice for the rest of your life.

We ask Allah (SWT) to increase our love for our parents, we ask him to help us always stay in a state of obedience towards them, we ask him to bestow kindness and mercy towards them and Inshallah grant them and us, Jannah, where gardens grow and rivers flow.

AMEEN

## Is This HARAM? This Is HARAM!

For some time no, there is something that has grown into our culture that genuinely bothers me. I often think, why are we asking such questions? Do we not have the intellect to decide the answers to such questions ourselves?

Yes, I know Islamically it might not be wrong. And no I am not saying its "wrong" either. But it does worry me that we're so fixated with this notion...

The amount of times I've heard the words say, "this is Haram" when it is not based or backed up by sound Islamic knowledge is staggeringly worrying.

There are two things that worry me. Firstly I worry about the speed at which we utter the words "this is haram". A few issues are associated with such statement. To begin with, the numerous examples of the greatest scholars of Islam who would refrain from making such statement tells us that it isn't for us to be so quick to impose our judgement on Allah's (SWT) rule.

Secondly, why do we even find ourselves in a situation where we need such clearance with trivial matters in life? As in why are we flirting with the boundaries so much that we need to be enquiring about them all the time?

I feel like we're moving closer and closer to the edge of acceptability. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged the best path. The most noble path. Rather than asking questions of Halal and Haram, why don't we reverse it and ask what's the BEST thing to do? Rather than flirting with the border of Halal and Haram, why don't we create a habit of aspiring to be the BEST?

It also bugs me how we aren't prepared to use our own intellect framed within the understanding of Islam, any longer. Or I should say that our judgement is so clouded that we can't decide what is wrong on the most basics of levels? Have we become so detached, de-sensitized to what is wrong that we need it to be spelt out to us repeatedly?

Just to prevent myself from self-contradiction, just as I have pointed out at the start, I will point out again. I am not suggesting we're right or wrong in living in a society which constantly flirts with the boundaries. The message I am trying to get across is that, let's reverse this trend. Let's stop trying to live on the edge of logically acceptable and aspire for BEST existence guided by our beloved Prophet (PBUH). Perhaps then we'll be asking questions not about the boundaries of acceptance but the questions to seek excellence.

# Leaving the Doubtful

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

So many times we hear the phrase “living your life on the edge”, and it seems like an exciting thing to do which will be very fun and makes you an adventurous person. However, have we thought of the implications of acting in such a way when it comes to matters of the religion? Many times we do things that are not related to the religion and are permissible to do, but we don’t manage to stop these things rubbing off in the way we are with our Lord. It is unfortunate that many Muslims around us (and I have personally seen this on a number of occasions while here at University), are constantly walking on thin ice when it comes to matters relating to Islam.

The Prophet (PBUH) said in a very comprehensive hadeeth which Imam Al Nawawi included in his 40 hadeeth collection, “Leave what is doubtful, for that which is not doubtful”

(Reported in Tirmidhi and Nasaa’i)

This hadeeth is laying the foundations for what our decision must be built upon once we are faced with making a decision, and helps in achieving piety. When we fast in Ramadhan, we are leaving halal actions for the sake of Allah (SWT), and Allah said that fasting helps in attaining piety, therefore the same can be said here. The hadeeth is nurturing us so that if we can leave what is halal but doubtful, it will be very easy to leave what is haram!

In another part of a hadeeth which is also found in Al-Nawawi’s collection, the Prophet (PBUH) said, “But he who falls into the doubtful matters falls into that which is unlawful, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing

therein. Verily every king has a sanctuary and Allah’s sanctuary is His prohibitions”

(Reported in Bukhari and Muslim)

The example given of the sheep grazing on the boundary of the shepherd’s land teaches us as humans not to be like the shepherd who goes to the boundary of his land and lets the sheep graze from there and he says everything will be ok, as it is very hard to tell sheep where to stop grazing. So you need to take the sheep away from the boundary because if they graze from your neighbour’s land, then you have committed a sin. Therefore as humans, we should never approach the boundaries of Allah (SWT) (implying His prohibitions) as it will be very hard to stop ourselves when we are near the prohibition. So it is best to stay away from the prohibitions as much as possible. From the hadeeth, we also learn that when it comes to sins, if we are near the boundary, we will be like sheep who don’t know right from wrong, therefore will have a higher risk of committing the sin.

Let’s look at what our role models in this life said and try to emulate them and act on it, because why else are they role models?

Al-Hasan said, “The pious remained at a state of piety to the level that they left a lot of halal out of fear of falling into haram”.

Sufyan Al-Thawri said, “They were called pious because they stayed away from what others do not stay away from”.

Abdullah ibn Umar said, “I wish to put a barrier of halal between me and the haram, and I do not break that barrier” i.e. he will leave out certain halal actions that are close to haram actions so

that he does not fall into haram.

Sufyaan bin ‘uyayinah said, “A slave does not attain the reality of eeman until he puts between him and the haram a barrier of halal, and he leave sins and what is doubtful of it”.

Other righteous predecessors said, “We used to leave seventy doors of halal out of fear of falling into haram”.

As we can see from the examples given, we should always stay away from the matters which are doubtful in the religion and stick with what is known to be correct. One point to mention though, is that we cannot stay away from matters which are known to be halal and say we are doing this out of fear falling into haram, because that is just shaytan fooling us. What the righteous predecessors were referring to, were matters which are doubtful and may lead to haram. We can also see that this is exactly what Allah (SWT) calls to, and some religious laws were brought down for this reason. It is not wrong in of itself for someone to be alone with stranger of the opposite gender, or for them to shake hands, but Allah (SWT) has prohibited it due to dangers that may come out of it. Therefore we should always try to stay away from matters of controversy within the religion as Allah (SWT) has commanded us to stay away from the doubtful matters. The great sahabi Abdullah ibn Mas’ud said, “What do you want from approaching what is doubtful when there are 4000 non doubtful matters”. He said the number 4000 as an exaggeration and not referring to something specific, but is telling us that the non doubtful matters are many, so why go for the doubtful?

As you can see, it is not a difficult task to stay

away from doubtful matters and as Hassan ibn Abi Sinan put it: “Nothing is easier than wara’: if something is doubtful to you, then just leave it”. So let’s not live our lives on the edge and do things which may lead to haram, or things which are controversial in Islam nowadays (though were never controversial in the time of the Sahaba and the generations that followed) e.g. music, free mixing, Islamic dress code etc.

Some of the benefits of adhering to the above include:

- Saving oneself from the punishment of Allah (SWT)
- It leads to tranquillity in the heart and mind
- Ensures we don’t fall into haram
- Distances oneself from that which does not benefit and from wasting time
- It leads to Allah (SWT) loving us as He loves those who are cautious in following his orders
- It helps in the acceptance of du’aa
- It brings about the pleasure of Allah (SWT) and increase of our deeds
- It helps in attaining the higher levels in Paradise

I will finish off with one last hadeeth, in which the Prophet (PBUH) said, “You do not leave something for the sake of Allah, except that Allah will replace that thing for you with something that is better than it” (Reported in Ahmad).

# I is for Integration: I is for Islam

As 'ethnic minority' Muslims in the West, we are constantly bombarded with pressures, both implicit and explicit, to conform; to change, adapt and adjust ourselves to fit the mould of our surroundings and in doing so become a more 'incorporated' part of society. In such a situation it is often difficult to discern exactly what is going on and which way we should be moving.

We are torn between the desire to 'fit-in' and the awareness of our distinct obligations as carriers of the Deen. Enveloped by factors continually swaying us towards the former, resisting the push and pull factors at play can be a very tough game. On the one hand we have transnational food outlets and supermarkets offering halal options across the country to cater for the Muslim community; identifiably Muslim women featuring in dance/music game-console adverts as though to say 'you are the same as us'; unpalatable (and blatantly anti-Islamic) drama/soap storylines promote the 'moderate' and 'modern' Muslim prototype - a sculpture delineated from outside views of what the word 'Muslim' should encompass - Pull. On the other hand, media reports of Muslim prejudice becoming more socially acceptable ('dinner table Islamophobia') being debated in public domains, do much to coerce us into trying that bit harder to please - Push.

David Cameron, in a recent speech on the failures of multiculturalism, asserted that there have emerged "segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values" and that these have thus far been "tolerated," a call to greater social cohesion through building a stronger sense of national and local identity has been declared the way forward. But what does it mean to be 'integrated' and part of a society, following their values and norms? How essential is it to our success as a religion and community, if at all? A trip down to some of the predominantly Asian/Muslim areas of London may be a case in point: drunken men stumbling down the street, barely able to keep themselves upright; gangs of

youth loitering around street curbs; drug use and violence - the scene of a typical Friday night in East London - all within yards of a masjid. If this is what Mr Cameron means when he says people should be able to say "I am a Muslim, I am a Hindu, I am a Christian, but I am a Londoner... too", then I say we have integrated. If identifying a Muslim in a crowd comes down to little except the vague connotations of their name, then I argue we have succeeded.

What it appears we are being offered is the ability to maintain our 'Muslim' identity with a diluted and edited version of the very concepts which constitute it; a way of life confined to the four walls of the house and mosque is what is ultimately 'better'. Our madaaris are under attack for their Islamic teachings; avenues for us to reach knowledge are being censored if not slowly sealed and our Imaan is being slowly chipped away - the prescribed remedy to end our 'seclusion'? Acclimatising our Islam. Apparently.

But why must this be the case? In order to make ourselves seemingly more acceptable and 'integrated' into this 'multicultural society' and to make our Islam more 'user-friendly' we find ourselves making concessions with regards to our Deen and justifying Allah (SWT)'s laws to satisfy and complement those of individuals and societies whose principles and guiding morals shift with the coming and going of successive generations. Were the Ambiyaa of Allah (SWT) not sent to societies and people who chastised, rejected and outcaste them on account of their faith? Was Ibrahim (AS) not sent to defend the Deen of Allah (SWT) as a one man cause in a society that was nothing but his own? Did Musa (AS) not face the task of holding on to his Imaan in the very house of Phiraun? Did Muhammad (PBUH) not live among his own tribe, the Quraish and face fierce opposition from them? Every one of the messengers of Allah (SWT) and those that followed them faced pressure to conform but this fear of being rejected did not deter them from their goal and it was they who ultimately triumphed.

Many criticisms of 'failure of multiculturalism' and our community at large point to the battle of the two conflicting realities of inside vs outside the home that many Muslims face. But where the foundations of Islam are based on an amalgamation of cultural values and loosely held concepts taken from distorted 'Islamic' teachings and regurgitated within the homes and the masjid as though to be memorised rather than understood and internalised, it should come as no surprise that such foundations hastily give way once taken outside the door of the home and into the realm of the 'real world.'

Even within our so-called 'practicing' Muslim sections we see cause for concern both nationally and internationally. We have abandoned and side-lined many Islamic traditions and values (that are key to our overall understanding and application of it), in place of a very superficial form of Islam that very often fails to extend much further than the cloth fibres of our thobes and jilbaabs. We are Muslims by appearance yes, but dig a little deeper and you will find holes, holes that are being filled with concepts and ideas alien to Islam, seeping in to our social makeup and visible in the little things we say and do and the attitude we employ in approaching things. Our Islamic traditions are fading because we are too comfortable with ourselves and our situation, forgetting who we are and why we are here.

If we do truly believe that Islam is the best way of life then should it not be us who set the standards, who illustrate the prototype? Who raise the bar and hold high the flag of Islam? Successful da'wah can only be given by people who understand, identify and associate with the specific society and people they are among, agreed. However with many of us being born and bred in this country, an integral part of society by birth, we are failing to even protect our Islam first and foremost let alone spread it! We must ask ourselves who it is we are looking to please and who it is we should be aiming to please. If

the answer to both is Allah (SWT), Lord of the Dominion, then how can this be achieved at the expense of our core values? Where do we draw the line between integration and assimilation? Where or more importantly who will we be as a community, as a society and as an Ummah five generations down the line?

With more people than ever accepting Islam, we need to stop and think about the Islam that we have put forward for them to enter into. We need to see the bigger picture - to identify, accept and then aim to address the issues we have from within. But in order to do this we must change ourselves first - we must only look to our own communities to see that the answer lies within - fragmented as an Ummah on lines of ethnicity; so-called 'level of piety'; fiqh or age (the generation gap all too obvious in the internal politics of our mosques) etc. how do we hope to maintain ourselves? With many of our children performing poorly in schools; in the hands of parents ill-educated in the realities of everyday life, how do we expect to progress? How can we uphold our Deen when we are unaware of its guiding principles and similarly of its correct application in the current climate?

I do not lay claim to holding the solution to any of the issues raised but by discussing and challenging certain notions I have merely aimed to try and raise a few vital questions.

**Abida**



# Angry Hijjabi

Let me be frank with you,  
 Buzz-cut  
 Mao-quoting  
 Tattoo-bearing  
 Gender and women studies major,  
 Waving your flag of female liberation  
 up in my face –  
 No,  
 Man (with a capital “M”)  
 Has not colonized my mind.  
 No  
 I am not beaten,  
 Abused,  
 Or subjugated  
 By my heinous male relatives.  
 And the only thing  
 Militant about my father  
 And brothers  
 Is their militant hospitality.  
 So beware, oh guests  
 Of the Abdul Musawwir household –  
 Nay, you will not be skewered  
 But you can expect  
 Skewers of spicy kabob  
 And stuffed grape leaves  
 Piled a few inches too high  
 On china plates lined with gold.  
 Heaven’s kitchen  
 Resides in my home.  
 Hands too wide for triggers and switches  
 Can only extend, palms up in hearty embrace...  
 “tafadal, tafadal el henna washifa.”  
 So when my eyes flare  
 And I spit fire  
 In defence of this Ummah  
 Do not attribute my passion to  
 Stockholm syndrome –  
 A lunatic’s love  
 For the patriarchal society  
 That has rendered me  
 Immobile  
 Under a wrap-around of heavy metal.  
 The people of which you speak

Speak beautiful words,  
 And their tongues break the dull ceilings  
 Of your thought chambers  
 as they whisper:  
 “Alhamdulillah,  
 SubhanAllah,  
 Allahu Akbar.”  
 And as for this piece of cloth  
 That consumes you  
 More than envious socks and tank tops  
 Could ever dream –  
 Know that  
 You stand correct –  
 I bow  
 Subservient –  
 This scarf, my apron in servitude  
 Not to men –  
 But to truth  
 And the command of  
 Allah:  
 The Unique  
 The Most Merciful  
 The Fashioner of all things beautiful –  
 Allah who defines jihad  
 As struggle against oppression  
 And struggle against one’s inner demons  
 Allah who commands man  
 To observe the universe  
 In all its stunning intricacy  
 To speak for justice,  
 Even against oneself.  
 Allah who related through the Prophet (PBUH)  
 That smiling at a passerby  
 Is good charity.  
 And so  
 Buzz cut  
 Mao-quoting  
 Tattoo-bearing  
 Child of the universe,  
 I offer you a smile –  
 In my family’s tradition of offering,  
 In subservience.