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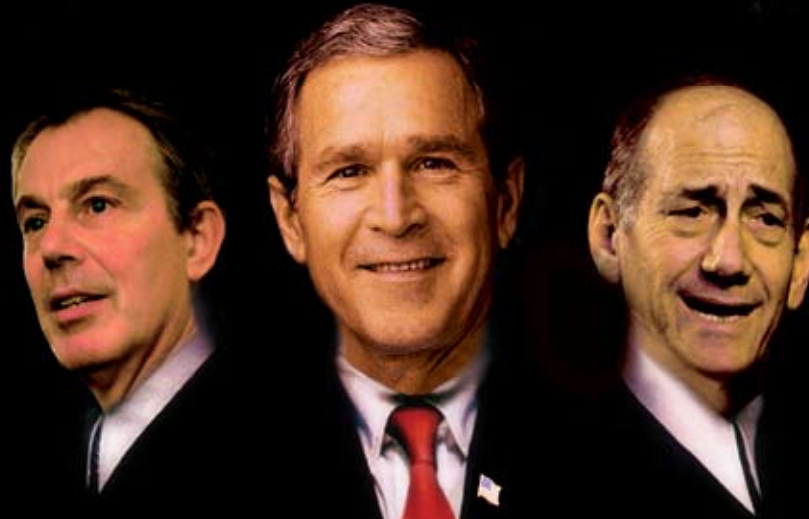
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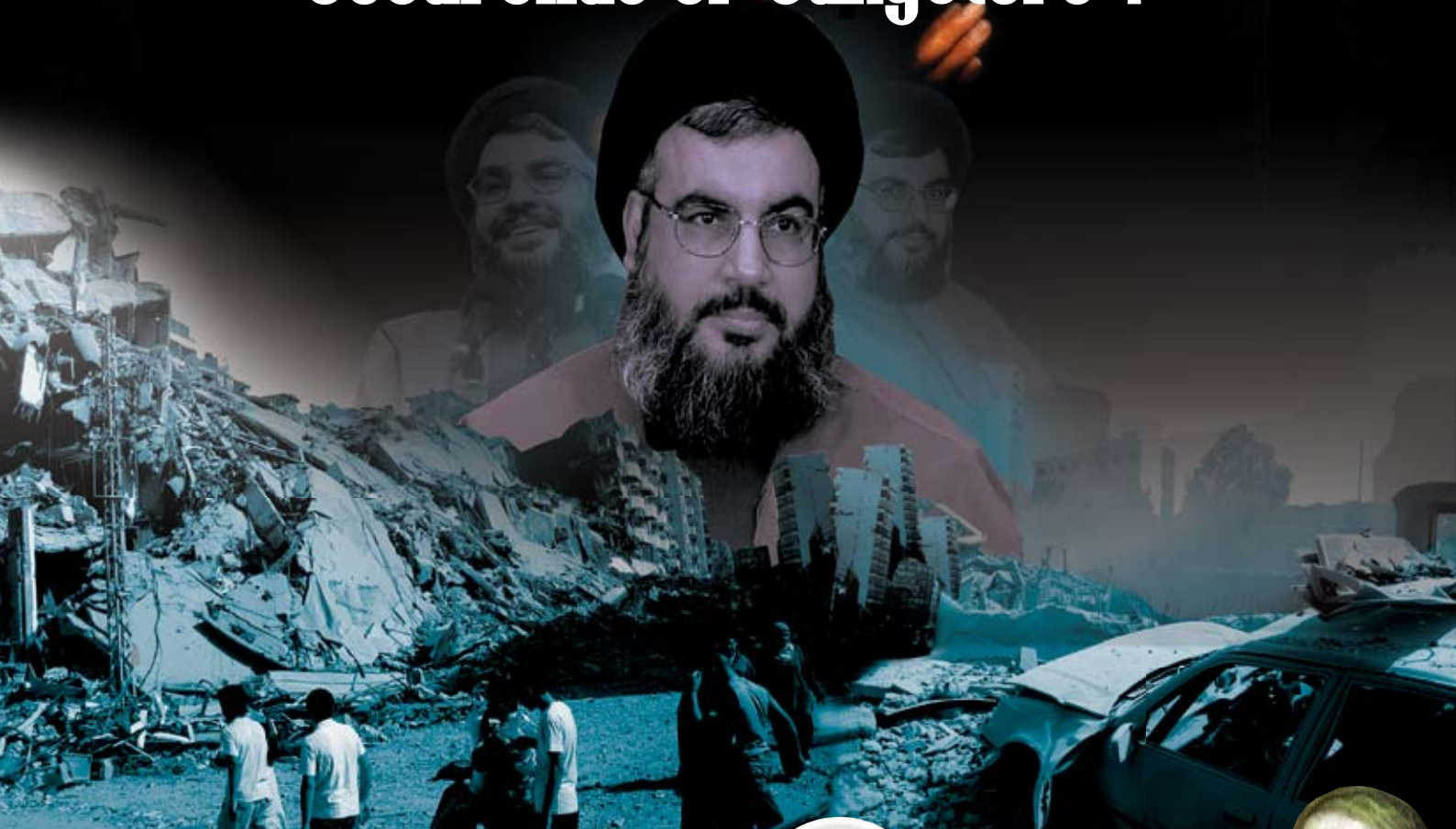
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FREE

voice of the muslim youth



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'My Ummah, those who follow me, the future of their faith makes me worry till I cry. My brothers and sisters in Islam, will they be strong and carry on after I die?'

These are the moving lyrics from a nasheed (Islamic song) by Dawud Wharnsby Ali expressing how the Prophet (peace be upon him) was worried about the likes of ME and YOU- his Ummah. The Ummah is the Muslim world, about 1.6 billion of us from all colours, races, nations, tribe, backgrounds, languages and cultures.

The Prophet (pbuh) was always worried about his Ummah. He used to stay awake at night crying in front of Allah (swt) and praying for his Ummah. Even when the Prophet (pbuh) was blessed with a visit to the heavens to see Allah (swt) he remembered to pray for his Ummah. It is the prophet (pbuh) who will be interceding for his Ummah on the Day of Judgement.

Today the Ummah is LOST. It's in a mess. The Ummah is divided by race, colour, sect and tribes. Today a lot of Pakistanis and Bengali's don't get on; a lot of Arabs think they're superior to others and a lot of white Muslims are treated as second class. Today, we have separate "Paki" mosques "Guji" mosques and "Bengali" mosques, even marriages between different cultures and nationalities is still not readily accepted by all. Why? Because we have forgotten the teachings the Prophet (pbuh) gave to this Ummah. We are still divided by race and nationality and forgot about the concept of the 'Ummah'.

Allah says: "O mankind, verily We created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes so you could come to know one another. Verily the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."

The Prophet (pbuh) said "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black has any superiority over a white - except by piety and good action".

Today the ummah is busy fighting and hating each other on the lines of Sunni and Shia, deobandi and brelwi, sufi and salafi and so on. Our Quran is one, our Prophet (pbuh) is one and our fundamental teachings are one yet we are divided and that is one of the main reasons why this Ummah is weak and not as successful as it should be.

Today, there is too much in-fighting on petty issues, this is also one of the main reasons why the Ummah is in trouble, we're too busy condemning others to hell, big deal if someone's beard is not the right length, or scarf is the wrong colour or does not celebrate Mawlid. There were differences of opinions among the Companions, their followers, and great Imams. But they did not turn these into fights. They disagreed but they maintained respect and love for each other. The brotherhood remained intact. They had tolerance for the other view; we need to learn from them.

Allah says: "And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah (i.e. this Qur'an) and be not divided among yourselves." (3:103)

'The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear God, that you may receive Mercy.' (49:10)

The Ummah of the prophet (pbuh) is being attacked, occupied, ripped to shreds and humiliated in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Kashmir and the world over. Most of our leaders in the Muslim world are either too weak, too scared or just simply the puppets of the West. Over 60 nations but no bottle, no guts, no wisdom and no real Islam. They're either kissing Bush's backside, begging from the West or hating the West so much that they are prepared to kill themselves and anyone that comes in their path. We have the amazing deen of our prophet (pbuh), we don't need to look elsewhere for success- and that is why we are suffering around the world.

The Prophet (pbuh) likened the Ummah to one body, when one part of the body is hurting and in pain the entire body suffers as a result. (Bukhari) In the same way if a Muslim is hurting or oppressed at one end of the world, its pain and grief must be felt by all.

LOST

LET ME ASK YOU:

Do we feel the pain of our fellow brothers and sisters? Do we care about them? Do we even think about them? Do we pray for them? Do we speak up for them? Or do we just feel sorry for them and then just ignore them?

So today, here and now, we need to think about the Ummah and take positive actions in trying to revive and strengthen our Ummah:

1. To start off give 'Salaam' to every Muslim you know and don't know how many of us do this today? This automatically connects you to the Ummah.

2. Understand and increase Brotherhood and Sisterhood Treat your fellow Muslim as your 'brother' and 'sister'. As the Quran says: The Believers are not else than brothers (and sisters) (49:10)

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "A Muslim is the brother (and sister) of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, forsake him, or despise him."

3. Understand that Muslim unity is not an option We need to understand that we HAVE to unite with each other if we want to strengthen this Ummah. Unity is not to agree on every issue but it is to work together for the common goals.

4. Learn tolerance towards other points of view Even if you disagree with your fellow Muslim- don't fight over it and call anyone a Kafir! Learn to respect each others views, be constructive and always respect each other- remember you belong to the Ummah of the Prophet (pbuh)

5. Make Dua Pray for your Muslims across the world- pray for the Ummah; especially those who are suffering.

6. Help your fellow Muslim in need Don't just feel sorry for your fellow Muslims who are suffering and are in need of help- help them! Donate your money, offer your time, speak up for them and let them know your fellow Muslim cares!

So... play your role in reviving this Ummah of the Prophet (pbuh). Start today!

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Have things ever got so hectic that you seriously thought about running away from home? Has your family or so called mates peed you off so much that you considered packing your bags and leaving just to show 'em? Have you ever been subjected to extreme physical/emotional abuse and thought that running away is the only answer to your problems? Or maybe you know or have heard of someone who was forced to take such a drastic action.

Running away from home is more common than you'd think. Around 100,000 teenagers go missing each year. They make up almost half of the total number of people registered missing. A large proportion of young runaways are girls aged between 13 and 17. The recurring themes in runaways' stories are disagreements with families (sometimes over boyfriends), pressure at school, and the amount of freedom a teenager is allowed at home (1)

Double Standards?

In the Asian community, if a girl runs away from home she is immediately regarded as being "loose" and "immoral" and brings "shame upon her family" even if her reasons are legitimate and no boy is involved.

However if a boy does the same it's no biggie. No one would wonder whether the boy was messing around with girls, and even if he were it would be shoved under the carpet as a small thing.

Why I ran away from home?

Forced marriages is one of the reasons why many young girls choose to run away from home. Almost 1,000 cases of suspected forced marriages have been dealt with since 2000, mainly involving links to south Asian countries (2)

Saika Begum

"I ran away from home a few months ago. Despite my protests my parents had arranged for me to be married to my cousin from back home. When my cousin arrived from Bangladesh, I wanted nothing to do with him. Once he tried to make a move on me in the kitchen and I slapped him on his face. At that time I was also in a long term relationship with my boyfriend whom I met in University. When parents wouldn't take no for an answer, I ran away from home and went to stay aunties home. My parents don't want anything to do with me unless I agree to marry my cousin, meanwhile my boyfriend's mother doesn't want her son to marry me as I have the stigma of being "the girl who ran away from home". My cousin has ruined my name in Bangladesh by telling my extended family how "loose" I am. I hate my parents for ruining my life and want nothing to do with them ever again"

Of course forced marriages are not the only reason why youngsters run away from home. Some youngsters run away from home cos living at home is like being banged up in jail, sometimes over-protective families believe that by locking their sons and daughters away and keeping tabs on their whereabouts, they are protecting them from the Western culture 'the sex, drink and drugs'. Unfortunately, oppression can lead to rebellion.

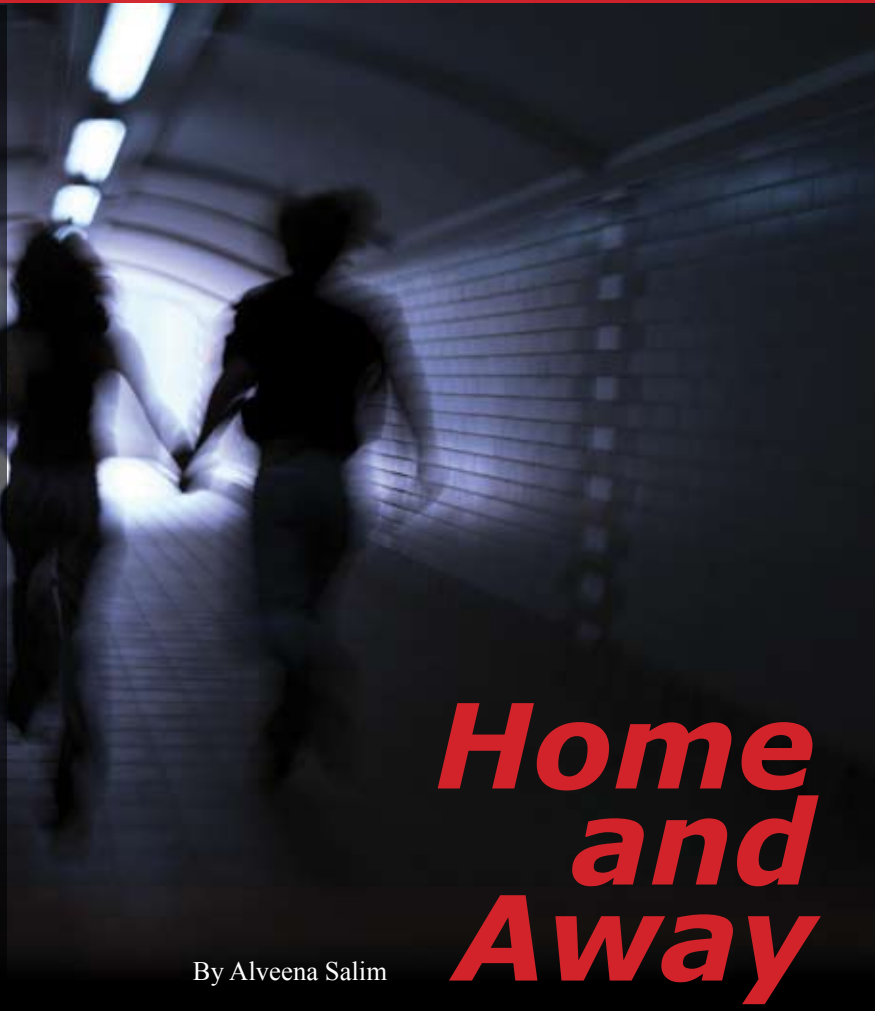
Nagina Shah

I was born into a strict Pakistani Muslim background but, when I was 19, I decided to break away from my family. My upbringing was very strict, even by Asian community standards. It was backward, strict and suffocating. I was not allowed to go out on my own or even travel on buses.

I went to an all-girls school, although my father believed girls should not really be educated. Instead, all attention was focused on my brothers, who were expected to become doctors or lawyers. My parents chose a husband for me. I was engaged to him at 14 and forced into marriage at 17. When I was 19, I had had enough and I decided to run away from home. On 8 August 1991, I packed my bags and went.

I have since put myself through college and university and now consider myself as an independent career woman (3)

Another big reason why people run away is because they are madly in 'love' with their boy/girlfriend and know their



Home and Away

By Alveena Salim

parents will never accept it- so the only solution they see is to run away together.

Sophia Butt

I was 18 when I ran away from home. I fell in love with my dad's best friend who was married with children. I knew that my parents would never accept our relationship so we got a secret nikah done and ran away to London. My parents knew where I was but wanted nothing to do with me unless I divorced my husband. After a few months my husband grew abusive, left me and returned to his wife and kids. I went back home and after a few years got married again. I regret running away from home. I lost my self respect, ruined my rep in society and hurt my parents.

Rukhsana

"I ran away from home when I was 16 with my boyfriend. I thought it was love. He was older than me, a 23-year-old taxi driver. I had known him for two years, I used to skive off school and meet him on the sly. I stole a few hundred pounds from my family and took a bag of clothes with me. I'll never forget that morning. I was so scared. I thought I'd get caught. I left the house quietly at five in the morning. We went and stayed at his mate's flat in Manchester. It was good at first. I felt I had escaped and I was lucky to be with the perfect person. But five days later my man found out his family had received death threats and his family house had been attacked. He tried to take me back to my parents after that. But when I wouldn't go back, he beat me. Then I ran from him. When I got home no-one was happy to see me. All I got was disgusted looks and more abuse and beatings. My family still treats me like rubbish for shaming them" (4)

Sometimes, youngsters may run away from home because they are being sexually abused by a family member/close relative...yes, it's a taboo issue, and we don't like to talk about it, but we need to accept that it does happen.

Gemma age 17, ran away from home where she was physically abused by her father (who had severe mental health problems) and her brother. After going through eight care placements in 18 months, she attempted suicide with an overdose of painkillers and was developing anorexia.

Kerry age 17, visited social services since her early teens after revealing she was raped by a family member as a child. When running away from home she was abducted, raped and physically attacked. She acquired two significant 'boyfriends' who were both heroin users and encouraged her to sell sex for money (5)

Sometimes if one is being mentally/physically or emotionally abused then to save themselves sometimes running away from home is the only answer. Sometimes extreme situations call for extreme actions. It's very easy to condemn and look down at those people who run away from home, however, that is mainly cos many of us are fortunate enough to come from families that would never do anything that'd make us want to run away. The fact is, in many south Asian families there are more repercussions for staying home and saying "no".

The Reality of Running Away

OK, say you decide to run away from home, you probably think that there'll be no more rules, no more parent telling you what to do, no more fights, no more problems or stress. Sounds great in-it? But in reality, running away is anything but fun. Have you ever thought about where you'd live? What you'd eat? How would you buy stuff? And who'd watch your back?

People with no home and no money become desperate and are willing to do almost anything just to meet their basic needs and cos of this, they often find themselves in dodgy situations. Sometimes runaways who live on the streets often have to steal to meet basic needs. Many take drugs or alcohol to get through the day because they become so depressed and feel that no one cares about them.

Some are forced to do things they wouldn't normally do to make money. The number of runaways with HIV or AIDS and other diseases is higher on streets too, because often runaways might use drugs or have unprotected sex for money. Also runaways are much more vulnerable so are more likely to physically, emotionally or sexually abused. A report in 2002 by the Children's society said Asian runaways are at more risk of violence and abuse on the streets than others who run away because support services do not understand them.

Alternative to Running Away

If you ever find yourself in such a situation where you're contemplating running away from home then please bare in mind the following points as a last resort:

1. You should first confide in a trustworthy family member who'd be willing to give you shelter for a while.
2. You should also contact a respected/religious member of your community who'd be willing to act as a mediator between you and your family.
3. Also, get hold of a teacher you can trust and confide in him/her
4. If all else fails you should contact organisations or ring up helplines that specialise in cases such as yours (more information given below).

Running away is never a real or a long term solution. It gives massive pain to your parents, family and loved ones. There's always a solution so you need to be strong and tackle the situation by getting support from family, friends, scholars and other professionals.

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Note: All personal stories above are real-life accounts. Some names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Muslim Youth Helpline
www.myh.org.uk
08088082008
e-mail: help@myh.org.uk

Muslim Mediation Service
Tel: 020 8552 2050
Email: mms@conflictandchange.co.uk

Southall Black Sisters
21 Avenue Road
Southall
Middlesex
UB13BL
Tel: 020 8571 9595

**Helpline For Muslim Women
IN SCOTLAND (Glasgow)**
Tel: 0808 801 0301

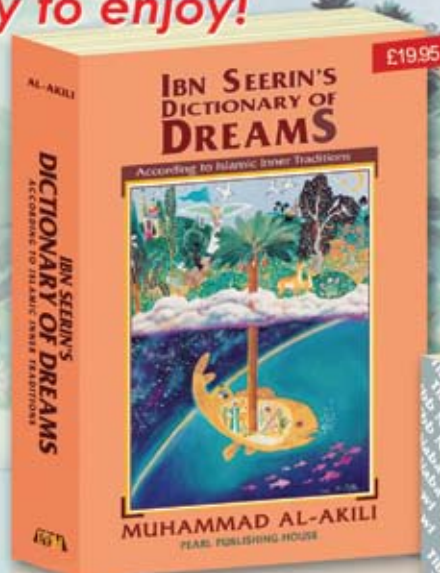
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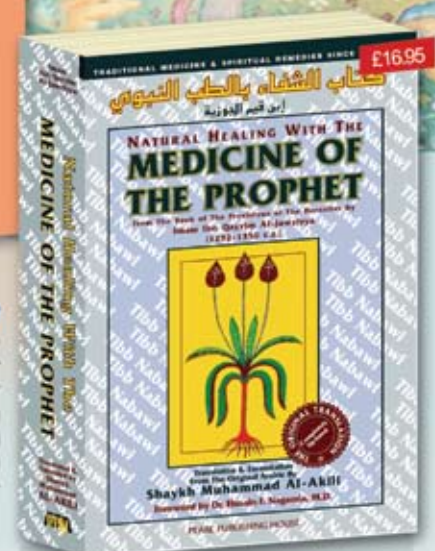
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Ali: Easy Yo

Jamal: Easy to you as well!

Ali: Na na Bro u got it all wrong its easy 'Yo' not You

Jamal: I prefer Asalamalaikum

Ali: Yeah..... just too many words for me. Bro you been seeing what go on in Labnaan? Them getting proper messed up man.

Jamal: Yes brother it's terrible what is happening in LEBANON, just make dua for all those innocent people affected.

Ali: Just Dua? Bro dua ain't gonna stop a bomb killing you, somat gots to be done, know wat I mean?

Jamal: Your right Ali we should be writing to our MPs, speaking against the massacres, holding peaceful demonstrations opposed to the barbaric killing of all the innocent people.

Ali: That ain't gonna do jack, it didn't stop them from doing Iraq over did it. How can the world just sit there and do nothing? I thought the UK would do sometin' but that Blair he's a 2 face toe rag, says he wants to help Middle East and then he goes against da ceasefire and kisses da Israeli's backside and that. Me is well vexed!

Jamal: People are doing something Ali, people are protesting....the world knows that the Lebanese people are suffering.

Ali: Muslims are suffering big time not just in Labnaan but in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Palestine... we is getting our butt kicked.

Jamal: Brother patience is what we need, the prophet(pbuh) and his followers were made to suffer a great deal. Many attempts were made to kill the Prophet. He had animal excrement thrown on him whilst in prayer. He was stoned by children in Mecca and was badly injured. His followers and supporters were tortured and killed. He and his supporters had sanctions put on them and were boycotted by the rest of Mecca. He went through many periods of bitter starvation. He had to leave his homeland and migrate to Medina to escape the persecutions in Mecca. Yet he carried on with his message and we need to do the same bro.

Ali: Me is gonna go down and kick some ass! I've seen plenty of Bruce Lee films Jam. it's time for some jihad... Ali style!

Jamal: Bro... it's not time to get emotional but time to be active so we can do something positive. Before you talk about Jihad, you should at least know what it is.

Ali: You think me don't know what jihad is man. Its to mash up the kuffar innit. They kill our brothers and sisters, so we must go there and sort em out innit Jam?

Jamal: No you got it all wrong; you are using the Western Media interpreted meaning of Jihad. You see the word "Jihad" means struggle, or to be specific, striving in the cause of God. Any struggle done in day-to-day life to please God can be considered Jihad. One of the highest levels of Jihad is to stand up to a tyrant and speak a word of truth. Control of the self from wrong doings is also a great Jihad.

Ali: Nah man, me brotha Ladin tells us to fight the

kuffar is jihad, not the other jihads you is chattin' about.

Jamal: One of the forms of Jihad is to take up arms in defence of Islam or a Muslim country when Islam is attacked. This kind of Jihad has to be declared by the religious leadership or by a Muslim head of state that is following the Quran and Sunnah- we ain't got no leadership.

Ali: But I wanna kick some butt.

Jamal: I'll kick your butt if you don't start talking sense. Bro your jihad is to sort yourself out first and practise Islam. Then if you really want to do some Jihad then fight your desires...

Ali: Easy now I'm gonna tell the boyz that brother Jamal says we can fight with J Lo....Aiiii. Now that would be...sick!

Jamal: You need to start to control your desires so you don't look at other women, don't chat them up or sleep around with them. Quit the weed and booze. Start reading your prayers. That's your jihad here bro. Before you want to sort the world out Ali, you need to sort yourself out.

Ali: Raas! That is a mission bro....So shall I put the Bruce Lee movies away for a bit then....but Brotha Ladin is blowing the crap out of these kuffar Jam...you telling me that ain't jihad.

Jamal: No! That is nothing but terrorism. What Bin Ladin is doing is totally against the teachings of Islam.

Ali: Nah, nah you is wrong; brotha Ladin is a soldier, eye for an eye that how we do tings on da street.

Jamal: When is killing innocent civilians justified? Even in times of war Islam tells us 'No women, No kids, No elders, even no animals or land and buildings are to be destroyed. We have rules.

Ali: Damn the rules Bro; they don't play by the rules, why should we?

Jamal: Because we're Muslims and it is what Islam tells us to do. We have other rules as well Ali: no booze, no drugs, no gambling, no killing, follow the rules and you will be successful. Don't follow them and you will fail and that's why Muslims are suffering- we don't follow Islam, we are away from Islam. That's why were in a mess. When we did live by Islam we were the greatest now look at us.

Ali: But I'm telling ya bro this is the West against Islam. Then they tell us that Iraq and Afghanistan and all that ain't got nothin' to do with fighting against Islam, they is taking the mick. Muslims aren't thick you know...even I got one GCSE.

Jamal: You may have a point there Ali, but two wrongs don't make a right, we have to be better and stronger. We must show that we are appalled but in the right way.

Ali: They don't do it right, they're all like this in the west Jam, they is against us.

Jamal: Woah...easy right there bro, wait just one minute here. You are saying how all the West is wrong yet look at you, look at the way you live, look and behave. You follow everything westernised, you live, talk, eat and sleep the WEST. You love it and you know you do and so you should

know there are many great things about living in the West so much us Muslims can learn.

Ali: Yeah like some of da girls could learn how to do proper make up and dat so they don't look like clowns.

Jamal: No Ali we can learn important things...

Ali: Like how to bomb the crap out of a place



By Irfan Khan and Sajid Iqbal

and get away scott free? That's all they do to us- bomb us and do one!

Jamal: That's not right Ali, look when the earthquake happened in Pakistan, Tsunami in Indonesia. It was the West that raised loads of money and provided aid. People who work and live alongside me and you gave their own hard earned money to help Muslims. They did it through humanity and kindness now those are attributes we as Muslims should be showing and doing the same.

Ali: But bro you tell me how I'm supposed to think that the West ain't against Islam when all I read and hear is how Muslims are getting attacked by USA made bombs and weapons. How the USA and UK can do something about it but ain't doing nothing, like I said I think they is against us. It ain't Is it cos I is black no more its Is it cos I is Muslim.

Jamal: Bro we may disagree with a lot of the western foreign policy but Muslims are not against non-Muslims.

Ali: I hate these 'goray'.... !They bomb us and kill us that's all they about.... deep down bro they cant stand us.

Jamal: Then you are a racist and a disgrace to Islam and the Muslims. Muslims don't hate the West, don't hate non-Muslims or anyone of any colour, race or creed.

Ali: What about da Jews... we gots to hate them? I even know white guys who hate em.



Jamal: Shame on you Ali! Bro you don't understand Islam at all do you? Once the Holy Prophet (saw) was seated in Madinah, along with his Companions. During this time a funeral procession passed by. On seeing this, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) stood up. One of his Companion remarked that the funeral was that of a Jew. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) replied, "Was he not a human being?"

Ali: Whooaah!!! The prophet(pbuh) gave bare respect to da Jews?... me Imam not told me that...you not having a laugh are ya.... cos me fixed meeting next week to bash some Goras up man...shall I call it off then!

Jamal: Bro, our job here is to be an example to the non Muslims. To speak to them and interact with them so they know that we're not 'crazy-West hating-terrorists' as the media say.

Ali: I speak to bare white gals, they think I is the Don.

Jamal: You see a lot of Muslims haven't bothered to

it should be, now has it?

Ali: Bare brothas are going out with white gals.... they is getting big time education Jam.

Jamal: That's my point bro. It's cos of you and your 'brothas' that a lot of non Muslims are put of Islam and Muslims because all they see is Muslims on weed, mashed out of their heads, trying to pull women, beating up non Muslim... and then talk about Ladin and Jihad.

Ali: what's your point Jam?

Jamal: Are you stoned or what? Earth to Mars do you read me?

Ali: You takin' da mick Jam... I'll...

Jamal: My point Ali is that: When was the last time you tried to explain to a non Muslim about your beliefs and lifestyle? When was the last time you went out of your way to help a non Muslim? When was the last time you gave a non-Muslim an Islamic leaflet, magazine or even the Quran? When was the last time you invited a non Muslim to your mosque or an Islamic event?

Ali: Ahhhh...i gets ya now...

Jamal: Like I always say bro, every Muslim needs to be a walking, talking advert for Islam. We need to understand Islam, practise it then promote it.

Ali: So me is a bad advert then?

Jamal: I'll let you answer that bro.

Jamali

tell non Muslims who we are, what we believe and what Islam stands for. We haven't educated them about our way of life. We haven't answered their misconceptions. Our examples and behaviour hasn't been exactly what



● ● ● ● coffee ● ice cream ● juice

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falooda



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10 Things Every Imam Should Do

First of all: What is an Imām and who should be an Imām?

- An Imām is someone who leads the 5 daily prayers (Salaah) at the mosque.
- Ideally he should be a fully-qualified Islamic scholar and a role model for his congregation.
- He should have a fixed contract with clear aims and objective which can be reviewed regularly.
- He should be on a good salary in order to be dedicated to his job as community leader.
- The Imām is accountable to the public.

So... Imāms. They get a raw deal. It's easy to slate them, but for some reason much harder to come up with 'constructive criticism'. Instead of just jumping on the bandwagon of Imām-bashers, The Revival will present what we think a GOOD Imām should do:

1 Speak English

Aside from having a sound knowledge of Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, and Arabic, Imāms should speak English so that they can give sermons which have an impact on their congregation.

Those who are not fluent in English should seek to improve it through English classes. The Imām has to be 'in touch' with the Muslim community (especially the youth), so it is vital that he is aware of contemporary issues. Friday Khutbahs and other speeches delivered in the mosque are a guidance for the community; as well as containing the knowledge which is essential for every Muslim, they should relate to current affairs. Half of the Friday Khutbah should be in English - if sermons are not in a common language, many people miss out.

2 Stop Sectarianism!

The Imām must always speak out against sectarianism and promote unity and brotherhood. As leaders, Imāms can make or break this Ummah – they must show solidarity with their fellow Muslims, regardless of race or sect. Imāms of different mosques must communicate with each other and show support for one another, demonstrating to their community that at the end of the day, whether Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Arab, Hanafi or Shaf'i, Deobandi or Bareilvi, Sunni or Wahabbi, we are all Muslims and Islam unites us.

3 Set an Islamic Curriculum

Many mosques run evening classes for kids, commonly known as 'madrasah' (Arabic for 'school'). The books used are often in a language other than English (Urdu, Bengali etc). Whilst it is always beneficial to learn multiple languages, one cannot expect children to fully relate to Islamic issues which they have to translate before they even arrive at understanding it. It is vital for the Imām to set up an appropriate curriculum whereby the learning process is made easier for children by the information being available in English. GCSE and A-level Islamic Studies should be available for older students. The Imām should also ensure that no teacher hits the students, as this is far from the example of the Prophet (s.a.w) and often turns children away from the Deen. An Imām must make sure that all his teachers go through Child Behaviour management training.

4 Cater for the Community

The Imām should ensure that the mosque is there to cater for ALL the needs of the community – including sports, social events, Islamic entertainment, Internet and library facilities for the youth as well as women's facilities. The Imām should hold a weekly or a monthly/bi-monthly youth programme where guest speakers are invited and youngsters are encouraged to participate. Such activities are needed to attract the youth, educate them about their religion, and erase the perception that the mosque is a place for elderly people alone. It is vital that the Imām is able to communicate and be approachable to youngsters.

5 Set up Social Organisations

The concept of the 'Ummah' is fast vanishing; it is a sad state of affairs when Muslims in need of financial/emotional support are left with no other option but to turn to non-Muslims for help. The Imām should set up social organisations in affiliation with the mosque to help disadvantaged sectors of society such as the old/disabled/single mothers etc.



6 Drugs Counselling

The Muslim community, like any other, has issues. Over 1000 of the 5840 Muslim prison inmates have committed crimes relating to drug use or drug pushing – that's one in five.¹ Among the youth this problem is widespread. We need to stop brushing such issues under the carpet and start addressing them properly. This issue tears families apart, and as the leader of a community, the Imām must also put in an effort to resolve it. Drugs counselling from an Islamic perspective will inshaAllah help the affected youth and their families.

7 Mediate

Unfortunately it is common nowadays for families to fall into petty disputes, and the Imām has the potential to be a perfect mediator as he is impartial, respected, and can advise from an Islamic point of view which no Muslim can refute. The Imām can offer marriage counselling and help resolve family disputes by judging solely from an Islamic perspective; he should stop and monitor sham marriages and prevent honour marriages/killings by openly condemning these actions and offering guidance.

Aside from disputes within a family, the Imām can also advise and assist on issues affecting individuals and the local community, such as anti-social behaviour, financial problems, racism, alcohol abuse and so on.

8

Visit Hospitals and Prisons

Whenever the Prophet (s.a.w) heard that someone was ill, he would rush to visit them (Muslim or non-Muslim), pray for them and show that he was there in their time of need. We do not see enough of such compassion in today's society. Everyone is too busy doing their own thing to go and visit people who are ill, see if they need anything, etc. InshaAllah if Imāms regularly visit ill people in their community, this will not only be a great form of da'wah, but it will also set an example for other Muslims to follow. The Imam should organise his congregation in a way that makes it possible for members of the community to take on this responsibility too.

Muslims already form 8% of the prison population. Over 65% of these prisoners are young men between the ages of eighteen and thirty. This does not include youngsters under the age of 18 who are in custodial care.² These people should not be abandoned, rather they should be guided and helped by their Muslim community. Imāms should visit prisons at least once a week (especially in those prisons where an Imam is not already appointed) to counsel Muslim prisoners, help with their rehabilitation, and ensure that they are not abandoned by fellow Muslims on their release.

9

Hold Da'wah Programmes

The Imām should organise an 'open day' at the Mosque at least once a year, have regular interfaith forums, invite school children to the mosque as part of their Religious Education classes, produce literature which can be distributed to non-Muslims, etc. The Imām is a representative of the Muslims in his community and so he has a responsibility to inform non-Muslims of who we really are, as well as making Muslims aware of the responsibility they have - each as a walking, talking advert for Islam.

10

Practice what you preach

Above all, the Imām is a role model for the Muslims in his community. No human being is perfect, but it is imperative that the Imām does not come across as having double-standards. Imāms will always be good role models for the youth and elderly in their community as long as they practice what they preach.

NOTE: All of the above can only be achieved with active help and support of the Mosque Management committees.

1, 2 See 'Gangsterism' article of The Revival, Issue 4.

THE "LETS TALK SHOW" is back with The Revival team live on air from 10pm-12am Sat-Tue on Mashal Radio 106.7fm also on therevival.co.uk

The Idiot's Guide to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

By Irfan Jalil

When was Israel created? Why?

Israel was created in 1948. It gave Jews their own state and homeland for the first time since Biblical times.

When was Palestine created?

The land on which Israel was created was originally Palestine and a part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. After World War One Palestine was handed over to Britain. Fighting between Jewish immigrants and the native Arabs erupted during the years of British control. The UN divided Palestine into a Jewish state called Israel and an Arab state called Palestine.

What is Zionism and who are the Zionists?

Zionism is the ideology that Jews should have their own country. Zionists are people who support that ideology. But not all Jews are Zionists and not all Zionists are Jews. Some Orthodox Jews believe that Jews should not have their own country until the messiah comes. Some non-Jews support the Israel because they are convinced that Israel is a democratic and peaceful country in an area where other countries are ruled by dictators and are always at war with one another.

What are they fighting over?

The Palestinians didn't want to give their land to Israel. They wanted all of Palestine to be one country for people of all faiths - Muslims, Christians and Jews. Israel had a war with the Arabs in 1967 and invaded and occupied all of Palestine. The Palestinians want their land back and are willing to go back to the pre-1967 borders.

Is this a war between Muslims and Jews?

Not necessarily. It is true that Israel is a mainly Jewish state and that Palestinians are mostly Muslims. But many Palestinians are Christians. There are some Muslims who live in Israel but Israel is an ideologically Jewish state - it actively tries to maintain a Jewish majority.

What is the Gaza Strip and West Bank?

The Gaza Strip and the West Bank are the occupied Palestinian areas. 1.4 million people live in the Gaza Strip and 2.8 million people live in the West Bank. The Gaza Strip is one of the most overcrowded places on earth. Israel severely restricts Palestinians from travelling to

and from Gaza and the West Bank.

What do the Palestinians want?

The Palestinians want their own state. They want Israel to give back all the territory it took in 1967. They want Israel to stop sending troops and missiles into their areas. Palestinians are often arrested on mass and tortured, and many have their homes bulldozed - they want an end to these types of attacks on their human rights.

What do Israelis want?

The Israelis want to see an end to suicide attacks, threats on their sovereignty and to keep some of the land they took in 1967. Israel is currently building a massive wall which it says will stop Palestinians from carrying out suicide attacks in Israel. But the wall takes up yet more Palestinian land and divides Palestinian families.

Why are a lot of Jews from across the world against the occupation?

Israel is guilty of numerous war crimes and human rights violations. Palestinians regularly face excessive force and violence at the hands of the occupying Israeli soldiers. Many Jews do not like the fact that a Jewish state is acting in such a cruel and un-Jewish way. Noam Chomsky and Norman Finkelstein are well-known Jewish critics of Israel.

Why do some Palestinians want to destroy Israel?

Israel was built at the cost of Palestinian land, homes, and lives. Israel continues to occupy Palestinian land, destroy Palestinian homes, and kill Palestinian civilians. Palestinians see their treatment at the hands of the Israelis as humiliating and degrading. Some Palestinians therefore have taken up armed resistance to the Israelis. Some even carry out suicide attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians.

Who are Hamas and what do they want?

Hamas is a Palestinian political organisation. It currently runs the Palestinian government. Hamas also has an armed wing which carries out suicide bomb-



ings against Israeli targets. Recently Hamas cabinet ministers and MPs were detained by Israel.

Why do Hamas and other Palestinians carry out suicide bombings?

Palestinians endure immense humiliation and suffering - many decide to take their own lives rather than endure further degradation. Suicide bombings are seen by many as a last resort. The Palestinians lack the sophisticated weaponry that Israel possesses. They think that all they can do is use themselves as bombs instead of real bombs.

How does Israel respond to the suicide bombings?

Israel carries out collective punishment of the Palestinians whenever a suicide attack occurs against Israelis. Helicopter gun ships fire missiles into Palestinian areas and kill many innocent people. The homes of suicide bombers and their relatives are demolished by bulldozers.

Aren't suicide bombings the main obstacle to peace?

Suicide attacks against Israel keep the cycle of violence going. Israel uses excessive force to punish Palestinians for suicide bombings. This then creates further resentment among the Palestinians and more suicide bombers.

Who are Hezbollah?

Hezbollah is a Lebanese political party. It started out as a resistance movement which fought against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the 1980s. It continued to fight against the Israelis until they withdrew. At the same time Hezbollah contested elections and sent members to the Lebanese parliament.

Why does Hezbollah fire rockets at Israeli towns?

Hezbollah says that it fires missiles into Israel because Israel fires missiles into southern Lebanon. But the Israelis say that they fire missiles into southern Leba-

non because Hezbollah fires missiles into northern Israel. However, rockets that are fired into Israel rarely hit any real targets - they are imprecise and many get fired into open fields. Israel's missiles invariably destroy lives, homes, and infrastructure - and they're supposed to be precision strikes.

Isn't Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands illegal?

Yes it is. Israel is in violation of many UN resolutions. But the UN finds it difficult to enforce international law when it comes to Israel. Israel has the support of the USA. The Americans regularly block UN resolutions which urge Israel to follow international law (see below).

What is the UN doing about this conflict?

The UN monitors the situation and tries to broker agreements between the Palestinians and Israelis. But the UN can't do anything practical and concrete without US support.

How is the peace process going?

At the moment Israelis and Palestinians aren't negotiating. Israel refuses to negotiate with Hamas because Israel says Hamas doesn't recognise its right to exist. Recently the Palestinian president tried to get Hamas to recognise Israel. But Israel went into Gaza and arrested several Hamas cabinet ministers and MPs. Israel has prevented negotiations in the past too. In July 2002 Palestinian militant groups decided to suspend attacks against Israel and try to find a peaceful solution - but on the same day Israel dropped a 1-tonne bomb on a crowded Gaza apartment block. The militants' agreement was scrapped.

Why does the U.S. always support Israel?

Many in the US are under the impression that Israel is a liberal law-abiding country. Americans like to think that they

share these ideals. Israel's human rights violations and breaches of international law are overlooked due to the very powerful pro-Israeli lobby and the distorted media. American politicians are afraid of being smeared as anti-Semitic if they criticise Israel. Right-wing Christian organisations in America are also very influential and support Israel.

What are the Muslim countries doing to help the Palestinians?

Muslims countries support the Palestinians at the UN and other world bodies. But in practical terms they can't do much. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia once stopped oil supplies to the West for its support of Israel. But the US drew up plans to invade Saudi Arabia and secure the oilfields by force if that happened again. King Faisal was assassinated a year after he cut-off the oil.

Is there a solution? What?

The common consensus among the international community is that there have to be two states - Israel and Palestine. Israel needs to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders and stop attacks on Palestinians as a result this will bring an end to the suicide attacks. Palestinian leaders must also recognise Israel's right to exist.

Seek knowledge about Palestine and the conflict.

Follow human rights groups such as: **Amnesty International** (web.amnesty.org/library/eng-isr/index),

Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org/doc?t=mideast&c=isrlpa)

B'Tselem (www.btselem.org/English/index.asp).

Read *The Fateful Triangle* by **Noam Chomsky**, *Pity the Nation* by **Robert Fisk**, *Beyond Chutzpah* by **Norman**

Finkelstein, and Blaming the Victims by **Edward Said**.

We need to learn the facts. Knowledge will help convince others. We need to know the truth and speak out against the illegal occupation and the oppression of a nation.

What can I do?

1. Write to or e-mail your MP, the Foreign Secretary and Tony Blair daily. Get your MP to speak out against Israeli human rights violations and its use of excessive force. One letter a day costs 32p - we can spare that. E-mails are free!
2. Boycott companies that support Israel. Islamic Human Rights Commission(IHRC) have brilliant cards that fit in bags or wallets. Help distribute in your local area. (www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=810)
3. Donate money to Interpal - all funds go directly to Palestine and refugee camps in Lebanon. (www.interpal.org)
4. Media Watch - when you see Zionist propaganda, take note & complain. Follow groups such as MPACUK and their campaigns to ensure balanced coverage in the media. (www.mpacuk.org)
5. Attend gatherings being organised in support of Lebanon & Palestine.
6. Contact your local Imam, Islamic circle, etc., and get them involved.
7. Write to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia and ask (politely) why they are not supporting Palestine and Lebanon during this crisis.
8. Wear Palestinian badges, wristbands, T-shirts at all times. These can be purchased from Interpal or Friends of Al-Aqsa. (www.aqsa.org.uk/page_detail.aspx?id=24)



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The Revival's Guide to Ramadan



YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T EAT ANYTHING? NOT EVEN DRINK WATER? ISN'T THAT LIKE BAD FOR YOU?"

Yep, when Muslims fast for the 30 days in the month of Ramadan from dawn till dusk they can't eat or drink anything throughout Ramadan. Fasting is not bad for your health, even Celebs occasionally fast (they call it "detox"), abstaining from food and drink cleans out your insides, gives your digestive system a rest and causes harmful chemicals to be flushed out of your system.(1)

30 WHOLE DAYS?! YOU'D DIE!

Ermm... No you wouldn't. Muslims are required to fast from dawn to dusk. The fast begins just before dawn when Muslims eat a light meal (suhoor) and confirm their intention to fast for the day; the fast ends at sunset. It's important for Muslims not to miss their Suhoor as this is a blessed meal. The Holy Prophet (saw) said "Eat Sehri as there are blessings in Sehri" (Bukhari). The importance of waking up for Sehri can not be emphasised enough, even if it's just to drink a glass of milk.

WHAT ELSE CAN'T YOU DO IN RAMADAN?

Sawm (fasting) literally means to "abstain", Muslims are required to abstain from all sins in the month of Ramadan which brings them away from Allah (swt). Fasting is not just giving up food and drink; it's a LOT more than that. The entire body, including ones hands, ears, eyes, mouth etc. must fast.

HOW CAN THE WHOLE BODY FAST-WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?

The eyes fast when they refrain from viewing rude, dirty scenes on TV or checking out the 'birds'. Fasting of the mouth is refraining from swearing, arguing, lying, back biting, slandering and indulging in idle gossip. The ears fast when they do not listen to idle talk or rude music. The Holy Prophet (saw) said: 'If a person does not avoid false talk and false conduct during fast, Allah does not care if he abstains from his/her food and drink.' (Bukhari).

BUT ISN'T THAT HARD...?

Fasting can be challenging to some people, particularly the smokers. However, the whole point of fasting is to discipline the body and the mind. Muslims use this month to give up their bad habits and start afresh, it's easier to do so in the month of Ramadan as the devils are locked up and are not tempting us to commit sins. This is the month in which it's easier to break bad habits. Muslims should lock off from their bad friends this month, if they listen to rude music, watch dodgy programmes on TV or can't speak without swearing then they should try to give up their bad habits now. If they haven't as of yet became regular with their prayers or don't dress Islamically, Ramadan is the best time to implement these changes.

BUT WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT TO YOURSELF?

The main purpose of fasting is described in the Qur'an as "so that you may attain Taqwa." Fasting is one way to achieve Taqwa which is the fear and consciousness of Allah (swt).

Taqwa is a feeling that comes from within which helps Muslims to lead a life as morally conscious individuals; it stops them from committing sins and makes them think twice about their actions. Fasting is also a means of self-purification as it's easier to give up bad habits in Ramadan than any other time in the year. The month of Ramadan is an opportunity

to develop qualities of patience, self-control, and trust in Allah (swt); it awakens feelings of compassion for the poverty and sufferings endured by people all over the world and makes us appreciate what we do have.

BUT HOW EXACTLY DOES FASTING HELP MUSLIMS TO ACHIEVE TAQWA?

When we refuse tasty halal food and drink from dawn to dusk for the sake of Allah (swt) it becomes so much easier to avoid doing those things that are forbidden for us. Think about it, it's SO easy to sneak in a fag or a packet of crisps when we know that no one is looking. However, because we KNOW that God is watching us, we don't do that. Lack of Taqwa is the main reason why Muslims sin, so fasting helps Muslims to increase their fear and consciousness of Allah (swt).

HOW COME YOU CAN'T DO THAT ALL YEAR ROUND?

Ramadan is a holy month. It is the month in which Satan and his cronies are said to be locked away in Hell to prevent them from inciting the believers to commits sin. Also, there is more reward in doing good deeds in Ramadan than all year round. The reward for fasting in the month of Ramadan is unlimited!

What's more, the month of Ramadan is the month of Mercy and Forgiveness. Muslim's sins are more likely to be forgiven and prayers are more likely to be accepted in the month of Ramadan. So if you have a dodgy shameful past and want to erase history and start again with a clean slate and if you want Allah to forgive all your sins and make it easy for you to live your life as a good Muslim- now is the time to beg for Allah's forgiveness!

The Prophet (saw) said "Every night Allah descends to the lowest heaven, when only one third of the night remains. He says "Is there any servant of mine who invokes me for anything so that I may answer his request? Is there anyone who begs Me for pardon and forgiveness, so that I may to forgive him?" (Bukhari and Muslim)

This is the month in which many people decide to take that plunge and change their life around. So take advantage of every special moment, especially the blessed night called Laila tul Qadr which falls in the last 10 days of Ramadan which is considered better than a thousand months- ask for whatever you want!

WHAT ELSE MUST YOU DO IN RAMADAN?

The Holy Qur'an was revealed in the month of Ramadan, this is why Muslims should attach themselves to the Qur'an this month. The likes of Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik and Imam Shafi would stop teaching Islamic jurisprudence and Hadith during the month of Ramadan and would devote themselves exclusively to the Qur'an. Muslims should try to read as much as they can EVERY day in Ramadan.

Also, Muslims should try to read the Tarawih prayer every night in their local Mosque. The Holy Prophet (saw) said, "Whosoever stands for prayer during the nights of Ramadan will have his/her prior sins forgiven." (Al Bukhari).

MY MUSLIM MATE DUMPS HIS GAL IN RAMADAN AND ACTS AS IF HE DON'T KNOW HER, DOES HE HAVE TO DO THAT?

Out of respect for Ramadan many Muslims, give up their bad habits and do good deeds, which they normally wouldn't do all year round. This is because it is easier for them to give up their bad habit and also because they wish to derive the most out of Ramadan. Perhaps now though your

mate should try and maintain his “goodness” after Ramadan now that he’s proven he can do it for one month!

DOES EVERYONE HAVE TO FAST?

Fasting is obligatory for Muslims. However, the sick, elderly, young children, and menstruating women are exempt from fasting. Those who miss their fast due to illness must make them up after the month of Ramadan, if they are unable to do so they should feed 60 poor people. Those who miss their fasts deliberately are making a big mistake – The Prophet (pbuh) said “Whoever misses a single fast of Ramadan without any valid excuse or illness will never be able to make up for it even if he fasted for eternity.” (Tirmidhi). The fine for missing a deliberate fast is known as ‘fidya’. The payment of fidya was originally freeing a slave but now it’s a matter of feeding or paying for two meals for 60 poor people and if you work that out at Nando’s prices that’s£2.50 x 2 = £5.00 x 60.....£300!!! So take your pick!

SO, WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO EAT WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR FAST?

Anything you want. There is no restriction on what is eaten by Muslims provided it is halal. They can eat whatever they want, be it chicken or chips, chicken tikka, chappati or your favourite pizza. Muslims are recommended to break their fast with dates, milk, water, honey, olives and figs. However, it is important not to stuff yourself silly as this defeats the whole point of fasting.

WHAT’S EID?

Eid is the festival following Ramadan. Eid literally means ‘returning at regular intervals’, as it gives a repeated opportunity for renewal, to forgive enemies and put right quarrels.

A final word...

Is it gonna be another Ramadan where you starve yourself but don’t improve as a Muslim? Or this time are you gonna improve yourself and change for good? It’s your decision.

Notes:

1. See The Health Benefits of Fasting by Will Carrol and The Benefits of Fasting By Alan Goldhamer, D.C. On The Revival Website

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH YVONNE RIDLEY

By Irfan Khan and Mohammad Ayoub

Yvonne Ridley is probably the most popular revert to Islam, since her conversion back in 2001 after she was captured by the Taliban. Since embracing Islam she hosts a talk show on Islam Channel and is very outspoken with her views on current issues and how Muslims should behave. The Revival has met up with sister Yvonne to ask her a few questions.

Revival: Asalamalaykum (Peace be upon You)

Sister Yvonne Ridley: Wa allaykum Salam (Peace be upon you too)

Revival: We're sitting here at the convention of 'Global Peace and Unity' event with sister Yvonne Ridley. A lot of things come to mind, it's a big event, mashallah, it's well organised. We have several questions for you, but let's start with the most important: What does global peace and unity mean and what context is it applied to in this event?

Sister Yvonne: It's an excellent question because we don't have global peace, and we don't have global unity and we don't actually have unity globally, regionally or locally [so] these sort of events, as long as we're brutally honest and frank can explore ways of trying to pull the Ummah together as one which was as Allah (swt) had intended.

Revival: What do you think needs to be done or taken away from today to allow genuine unity to actually take place, rather than just being discussed?

Sister Yvonne: Well I hope Muslims walk away [from] today with their heads held high saying you know this is a great day, this is a fantastic day, look at what the Muslims can do when we aim very high.

Revival: What I'm trying to get at is that this event has happened at a time when the Muslim Ummah is (to some extent) in a bad way, what do we need to do? Is this going to be a theological debate that we need to have?

Sister Yvonne: We need to get guts, its as simple as that. And the only way we can get guts is by believing in what Islam teaches us which is to fear no one but Allah (swt). And you know we have the Qur'an in our hearts. Not even the most brutal dictator in the world can rip that out from us. And we've got to remember that this life is just a short blip and stop getting obsessed with material things and titles and honours, that is not what Islam is about. Nobody in here is better than anyone out there and nobody out there is worse; we are all brothers and sisters.

Revival: As a youth magazine we attempt to engage our readers in the process of uniting the Ummah, but what is the role of the adult generation in this?

Sister Yvonne: Well I feel very sorry for the young people today because they are far brighter and far more clever and far more articulate than the motley crew of Muslim leaders that are paraded in front of us at events like this. How on earth can someone who can hardly string two words together engage with the Muslim youth? The Muslim youth are incredibly bright ... you know they combine the best

of the west and the best of the east and you know what...mashallah I'm so impressed in the way they are holding onto the rope of their deen.

Revival: We do have knowledgeable adults involve with the Muslim Council of Britain, who are trying to be the Muslim voice. And if you have a look most of the people here today are of an older generation. Do you think that the views and opinions of the youth are being listened to by these people? What about the day to day situations affecting the youth, can they be answered and tackled by this older generation?

Sister Yvonne: No not at all, they are totally out of touch with the youth. I go out into the community throughout the UK across Europe and ... you know across the world and I engage with young people and I keep my mouth shut and I listen. I listen to what they have to say and what their concerns are. And quite clearly the MCB is out of touch....

Revival: A major issue being addressed right now is that women are still marginalised in our community...

Sister Yvonne: Of course I was going to come on to that. Look at the event today it's a boys only club. *The MCB is a boys only club; they have a few token women-its lip service.* Many of the MCB brothers I have met have a major problem recognising women as an equal part of the Ummah. I think it's a cultural problem they have and they resent somebody like me as lippy. Who is prepared to stand up and say 'You're a chauvinist, you're misogynistic?' You know I have countless examples of the unchivalrous behaviour of MCB members towards sisters. You know we are half of the Ummah ... an important half of the Ummah and how dare they... you know this is why they are out of touch. Now when you look at universities today you'll find that the driving force of many Islamic Societies is the sisters. How on earth can they look up to or engage with some of these leaders who are totally misogynistic?

Revival: That brings me onto my next question, do you think that the future is brighter or better for the Muslims especially when it comes to female participation and allowing women to get involved?

Sister Yvonne: You say allowing women to get involved, basically what we are doing is racing ahead, and we are not even standing there waiting to be asked. The Muslim women are extremely opportunistic and I mean that in a very good way. They are bright intelligent and *while brothers talk about it, sisters do it. We are seizing the opportunities; we are seizing the moments.*

Revival: Do you think there are some leaders that have old fashioned views, e.g. "we're older and we know better." ?

Sister Yvonne: This is the trouble...

Revival: How can the youth take on a more important role ?



Sister Yvonne: Some of these sisters are brighter, far more intelligent and far more articulate than these old fossils. *They might have been the big cheese in the local village back home but the time has come when they should bow-out gracefully and let younger brighter voices of the Ummah move in.* I'm not saying we should disrespect our elders you know at my age I'd be shooting myself in the foot by saying that.

Revival: Some in the West believe that there is a "Clash of Civilizations" between the West and Islam. What are your views about Islam in the West? Is there a clash, is there quite a bit of disparity; are we going to continue in this mode for a long time or do you see us improving relations and improving our situation and working together? And are peace and global unity going across humanity rather than just across Muslims?

Sister Yvonne: You see I think Islam is civilised anyway. I have a difficulty at the moment describing the West as civilised. And I think that is a contradiction in terms when you look at the primitive, disgusting behaviour of the American soldiers in Iraq. Our soldiers, the British soldiers have hardly clothed themselves in glory either. You know how do you define civilisation? I was in a debate in Oxford recently and it was over the you know 'is there a clash of civilisations?' and my argument was 'no' because the West is not civilised. So how can you have this clash? Really what we've got at the moment, we've got a government that is pedalling 24 hour binge drinking, 24 hour gambling- you know basically its promoting a sediment life style and you know the young people in this Ummah.

Now does that make them uncivilised because they don't want to drink around the clock and gamble around the clock and live outside of wedlock. If you said 'do you want people to have strong family values? Not to get drunk, not to waste their money on gambling,' people would say yes. Well that is Islam. So you know how can the West be civilised when it's promoting this hedonistic lifestyle. I mean when the Roman Empire collapsed it was probably because the very sort of lifestyle that you know... promiscuity... drunkenness... they brought about the collapse of the Roman Empire and you know this country is on the road to ruin. When you get kids as young as 23/24 being treated in hospital for cirrhosis of the liver that's what the government should be concerning itself with.

What I am really very concerned about within the Muslim community is the drugs problem. Most of the major drug syndicates in this country are Muslim. And we have Muslims selling drugs to Muslims and that is obscene. It's vitally important to get hold of them and put them on the right path.

Revival: According to some sources 7% of Muslims, Scholars, individuals and prominent people have turned around and said they would not grass on a Muslim to the police if they found out they were doing something wrong. Should the Muslim community be more open with the institutions like the police who are attempting to get rid of the problems? Or is it that right now an issue of confidence and we don't have enough confidence in the police or in the institutions?

Sister Yvonne: It serves the police's purpose for the Muslim community to be dealing with drugs. People are dealing right outside Sparkhill police station in Birmingham for instance. Nobody gets nicked. It's no use telling the police. *What I would like to do and what I would like to see is some parents take more responsibility. You know if the virginity of their daughter is an issue they're up in the air, they're screaming and shouting. If only they cared for their sons' welfare as much as their daughters chastity.* Why don't they ask 'oh son where did you get that four wheel drive from? When you're not working and you're 17,' or 'Son you've just given me a thousand pounds towards my new home in Pakistan, where did that money come from?' or something like that. You don't need to talk to the police because they're not going to help. It's the parents; you know it's the parents in this country who should hang their heads in shame because they are taking drug money from their sons for their nice retirement. For goodness sake we're travelling through this life you can't take you're fancy home in Peshawar with you to paradise or hell wherever you're going.

Revival: When there is a problem with drugs we say: "they're not as educated," "there's poverty here," "we don't get the same chances and opportunities

that other people in other communities do." Do you believe that's a 'get-out-clause'?

Sister Yvonne: It isn't a 'get-out-clause'. We know the difference between right and wrong. It doesn't matter if we've been educated or not, we know the difference between right and wrong. Even the most ignorant Muslim knows alcohol is haram and that is not an excuse. I really want every parent to really honestly search their hearts and as I say, if they cared as much as their sons welfare as they care about their daughters chastity you know we wouldn't have some of the drug problems that we've got.

Revival: We must look within and change within?

Sister Yvonne: Yes ... we can't rely on the establishment. The establishment doesn't care about us, the establishment doesn't have any time for us, the establishment puts fear in our communities and in the home. Muslims in Downing Street you know are quite happy to spread this fear around the community. *We have to start taking control of ourselves and we should look to the way the Jewish community handles its affairs as an example.* They're a tiny minority compared to us and yet, they are a very tight community, there's diversity there. They handle and protect their community very well. And this is what we should be doing. Getting rid of this tribal mentality, Islam transcends nationality, skin colours, cultures- these elders should start to practice what they preach.

One of the things that upsets me time and time again is when a young Asian girl will come to me and she has a very good proposition for marriage from a good practising brother that is black and the parents won't tolerate it: that is not Islam. There is this racism in the community. When I campaigned for Iraq in Leicester for instance there were two or three

members of the Gujarati community who said 'well she's not a real Muslim, she's not like us'. All these prejudices and this racism have got to be eroded. When I look at somebody I see a brother or a sister I don't see a skin colour, I don't see a culture, I don't see that at all.

Revival: The West is saying that we fall into categories now- Islamist, fundamentalist, we're moderate, we're extremist. What do you make of these labels?

Sister Yvonne: I hate labels. I was at an event in America and somebody introduced me to their husband and said 'oh he's a moderate Muslim' and I said 'a moderate'. I said 'what does that mean?' You know it's like you're either pregnant or you're not, you're either a Muslim or you're not. I said 'do you believe in the five pillars of Islam' he said 'of course I do'. I said 'so does Osama Bin Laden'. I said 'so does that mean he's a moderate as well?' and he just acknowledged my point in the end and said 'sister I'm a Muslim' and I said 'fine'. I said 'that's all I am'. People keep saying to me 'what sort of Muslim are you?' I'm barely two years old I can't speak authoritatively about Islam and I say 'I'm a very simple basic Muslim and I follow the Prophet (peace be upon him) and I follow the Sunnah and that's me. I am nothing more than a Muslim.'

Revival: And finally, with all your experience working with young people in various programs, what is your message for our readers, especially our leaders... what would you like to say to them? Is there anything positive to look out for? What do we need to do to ensure Muslims, especially the sisters, have a better tomorrow?

Sister Yvonne: Education, education, education and fear no one but Allah (swt).

Revival: Thank you very much.

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By Irfan Jalil

This issue of the Revival has had the displeasure of having to sift through numerous candidates for the un-coveted prize of Turkey of the Month.

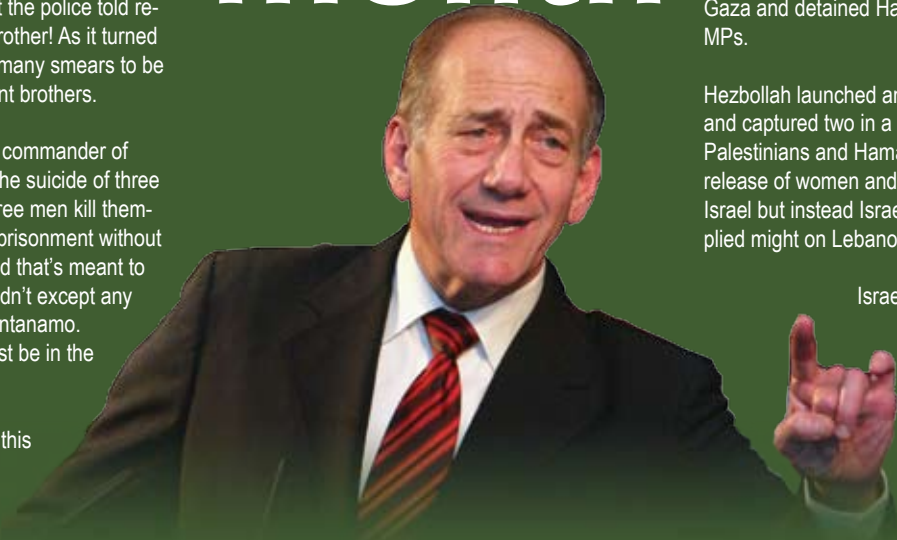
First off was the farcical raid by Sir Ian 'Turkey' Blair's Metropolitan police on the home of two Muslim bothers and their family. 250 anti-terrorist officers in full protective gear and guns to boot forced themselves into a single terraced house looking for a chemical suicide-vest-type bomb. During the raid one of the brothers was shot. But the police told reporters that he was shot by his brother! As it turned out that was a lie and the first of many smears to be levelled at the completely innocent brothers.

Then there was the cold-hearted commander of Guantanamo Bay who said that the suicide of three prisoners was an 'act of war'! Three men kill themselves after suffering years of imprisonment without trial, humiliation, and torture – and that's meant to be an act of war? Probably shouldn't except any better from a commander of Guantanamo. Being callous and unmerciful must be in the job description.

But unsurprisingly the Turkey for this issue of The Revival comes from the Middle East. Israel, in July, bombed Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon indiscriminately and in violation of international law.

We would have gone with George W Bush and Tony Blair for repeating the mindless mantra "Israel has the right to defend itself" – but who can blame 'em? It's not their fault that their governments are held to ransom by the pro-Israeli lobbies in Washington and London. The whole of the American governmental system is in synch to Israel's tune. No American politician dare say anything against Israel or he'll face having no funding to fight elections and questions about his private life in a media-fuelled smear campaign. Blair dare not say anything otherwise

Turkey of the month



Israel-loving Lord Levy will go and grass to the cops about all the bribes Tony's been taking. Blair and Bush definitely have blood on their hands by giving Israel the green light to bomb Lebanon back to the dark ages!

But the undoubted **Turkey of the Month is Ehud Olmert, prime minister of Israel** – the man behind the psychopathic bombing of Palestine and Lebanon.

Hamas broke-off its unilateral ceasefire in response to hundreds of missiles which were fired into the crowded Gaza Strip and destroyed Palestinian lives and property – including an Israeli attack on a beach killing seven members of a Palestinian family and leaving dozens of other Palestinians injured. Hamas' first acts was to attack an Israeli army post and capture a soldier. In order to rescue the soldier Olmert

ordered the bombing of Gaza's roads, bridges, power station, and other infrastructure. Despite the UN's warnings of a humanitarian disaster the bombing and killing of Palestinians continued.

If that wasn't bad enough, Olmert derailed a very real chance of negotiations between him and the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. As bombs were raining down on Gaza Abbas was trying to get Hamas to recognise Israel's right to exist. Just as it appeared Hama might have tacitly recognised Israel Olmert sent in the troops – Israeli soldiers went into Gaza and detained Hamas cabinet ministers and MPs.

Hezbollah launched an attack on Israeli troops and captured two in a show of solidarity with the Palestinians and Hamas. Hezbollah demanded the release of women and children prisoners held by Israel but instead Israel released it's American-supplied might on Lebanon.

Israeli bombing of Lebanon left over 900 people dead and half a million displaced. Under the pretence of trying to rescue soldiers Israel has bombed villages, refugee convoys, apartment blocks, roads, bridges, airports and other Lebanese civilian targets. At the time

of going to press Israel was preparing to invade southern Lebanon.

Human Rights Watch accused Israel of committing war crimes and deliberately targeting civilians in its war on neighbouring Lebanon, demanding an international commission to probe such violations and war crimes. "In some instances, Israeli forces appear to have deliberately targeted civilians," said the New York-based rights group in a report posted in its website. "In some cases, these attacks constitute war crimes," added the 52-page report, entitled "Fatal Strikes: Israel's Indiscriminate Attacks Against Civilians in Lebanon." (1) The international watchdog said Israel has systematically failed to distinguish between civilians and combatants. "The failures cannot be dismissed as mere accidents and cannot be blamed on wrongful Hizbullah practices." Olmert, it seems, is taking lessons from past events. In 1982 Yasser Arafat, the then Palestinian leader, wanted to negotiate with Israel and the US was pressuring Israel to talk to him. Israel responded by invading Lebanon and trying to destroy Arafat's party, the PLO. (2) During the invasion Israel targeted every civilian area, every institution in West Beirut, hospitals, schools, apartments, shops, newspaper offices, hotels, the prime minister's office, and the ports – Israel killed over 18,000 people, mostly civilians. (3) And that wasn't the first time Israel bombed Lebanon – it's been bombing Lebanese villages since 1967.

Ehud Olmert is trying to prove to Israelis and Palestinians that he is just as ruthless and barbaric as any leader Israel has had in the past. For this reason he is the Turkey of the Month!

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1. <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/lebanon0806/>
2. Beyond Chutzpah, Norman Finkelstein
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The Revival's Agony Aunt

This issue we take a break from our usual Q & A with Shaykh Salim Ghisa and instead we bring to you 'The Revival Agony Aunt' section with sister Ruqayyah Waris Maqsood.

Asalamu Alaykum sister. I just got married, and me and my husband are not in good times but the problem is his mother is a controlling person and I am just falling away from him. As things were this bad... someone from my past comes in and I end up loving them. I try to act in an Islamic way but the thing right now in my mind is that I just feel like divorcing. I know Islamically it is not a good thing but that's how I feel. I am scared about the way it would hurt my family even though I know they would support me...but I don't know if it is the right thing...please help me.

Dear Sister, asalaam aleikum wa rahmatullah.

It sounds as if you have not been married very long, but even so it has turned out

Dear sister I'm at a very difficult point in my life & require your guidance. I have been married 5 years to a wonderful man (from Pakistan). I am having an affair ... I want to get out of this horrible cycle and be a good wife. Can you please guide me, I want to be a good Muslim, read namaz (prayers) but I can't stand in front of Allah when I'm such a bad person.

My dear sister, you are in a very difficult time of your life, and you already realise that you have to do something about it, quickly. If this continues, you run the risk of ruining your life, and the lives of others who love you, including your husband, of course. You say you cannot stand in front of Allah (swt) - but my dear, He (swt) sees and knows everything you do, and this man does, and the motivations and feelings involved for all of you. You cannot hide anything away from Allah (swt) - the good news is that Allah (swt) still loves you and dearly cares for all of you, no matter what mistakes you have made. You have only to be truly sorry, and truly desire to get out of this situation, and you will discover Allah's forgiveness already, and the road ahead should be made clear to you.

I take it that your husband knows nothing about this. The first thing you must decide is whether or not you will ever tell

disappointing and stressful for you. If you loved your husband, you would not be attracted by anyone else. Maybe it was a big shock for you to discover how close your husband was to his mother, and how much she would be part of your life.

It is only natural that you'd be attracted to someone from your past, because you're feeling vulnerable and unhappy with your husband but it would be totally haraam for you to even consider acting on your feelings whilst you are married to your husband. Have you even voiced your concerns to your husband? Maybe he doesn't even know how you're feeling?

It is a great shame when marriages end up in divorce, but we must remember that we have a duty to get to the bottom of the

him. Sometimes honesty is the best policy (things have a habit of coming out eventually anyway); sometimes we are able to put things behind us and keep the skeleton in the cupboard for the rest of our lives. As soon as your husband knows, there is going to be a huge reaction. Whereas Allah may forgive you, your husband may not, and things will change for you from that moment on.

I wonder what sort of character the man has who has led you into this affair. Is he prepared to take you on and look after you if your husband divorces you, as he has the legal right to do? He may just disappear, and then you will have to cope with your life on your own. All such things are the huge risks a married person takes when breaking their vows. You are not the first to have an affair and will certainly not be the last - but the hurt it causes is not something that people can recover from easily.

If you wish to try to keep your marriage, you must send the lover packing. If he really loved you, he would not have put you in such a position, which will damage many, including your parents etc. If you want the other man more than your husband, Allah made clear provision in Islam for such happenings - which were as frequent in our Prophet's (pbuh) day as they are today. You may have the other man, but you must let your husband go honourably

issue with professional counselling first; and then, if it is still not working, Allah does not expect people to be stuck together in sadness and stress. This is why Surah Talaq (Surah 65) set out the procedure for divorce. Unfortunately Muslims in some cultures, notably Pakistani and Indian, find divorce very difficult to cope with. The Prophet always allowed divorce to people who were unhappy together, and the community helped them to find new partners with whom they might have better luck. He set the sunnah by marrying several divorced women himself, as if to prove there was nothing to be ashamed of in divorce. Marriage is a contract, and if broken divorce is accepted. Please do confide in your mother as you will need her support, I'm sure. God bless you. Wasalaam, Ruqaiyyah.

in divorce, and be prepared to take the consequences. You did not say whether there were any children involved - it is obviously easier if there are not. Your husband has grounds to divorce you for adultery, which makes you the guilty party and therefore you would receive less sympathy in a court of law than if he was the guilty party. Your entitlement to property, house, etc would be settled by lawyers and the judge.

If you do not wish to divorce your husband or be divorced, then you must get rid of the lover. It is all too easy to be under the influence of raging hormones and think this is love - but he has put you in an awful position. Either be rid of the lover, or let him assure you he is willing to stand by you and face up to your husband and say he wishes to marry you himself.

You seem from your few words to me to still care for your husband; if I were you I would ditch the lover and at the same time make an appointment with a marriage counsellor to discover why this situation was able to arise in the first place. How come you were able to form this relationship while still living with your husband - does he totally neglect you, is he blind, insensitive? Please do something about it, my dear, before the whole business destroys you. God bless.

Wasalaam, Ruqaiyyah.

In my year there are 6 Asians, and nearly every single day, we get a racist comment. We get ganged up on by other years, when there are only 5 of us girls together. We tell the teachers, write statements and do everything we can, but after a week or two, everything is the same again, and it sometimes feels like the teachers don't believe us and ignore us. Before the half term, some yr.9's videoed us and one ran past and pulled one of our scarves. They only do it coz we're Muslims and we wear scarves, and sometimes during lessons, the whole class goes against us. Why do white people hate Muslims?? They walk past and call us Pakiz, and if we say something back to them, they say we're being racist.... coz ov this, we can never really get on with school work coz all that's on our minds is what they've done. Half of us are trying to find other schools to go to. They don't do it to the Muslim boys, coz they know they'll get beaten up, and coz we're short 'pakiz' and girls, they think we wont say anything....HELP!!!!

Dear Sister, asalaam aleikum wa rahmatullah. I am so sorry you are having such a tough time at school. Does anything remind you of the Prophet's own time and experience - when young Muslims (and old ones) were laughed at, sneered at, poked and punched and slapped, tormented, despised, and some even wounded and killed?

All you are suffering may be because you are Muslim - in which case, your schoolfellows are pretty ignorant sorts! Sadly, a lot of general public get the idea Muslims are connected with terrorism, or being snobbish or unwilling to join in, or too holy, or all sorts of thing.

It may be racist, because you are Asians, but that seems so old-fashioned now, and again, is very ignorant on the part of your schoolfellows.

It may be because you wear hijab - I'm afraid you will have to toughen up and face up to this issue - it is something that could happen for the rest of your lives. It may be that you decide not to wear it to school (especially if it is an all-girls' school) and put it on when you leave the premises, but this is up to you. Boys are so lucky that they do not have to wear a special headscarf or outfit to school - they get away with the torment. Girls always have to be tougher than boys, my dear - just think how they collapse with the slightest cold, and how useless they would be at having the babies!

It may be, however, because there is something in your attitude that is drawing them upon you. If you are always together and not mixing with the others, it will always probably be a problem. I think you need to gently organise yourselves so that you gradually make friends in some way or other with individuals who are not so bad as the worst tormentors. It may be you that has to start conversations, organise a meal to invite people to for some excuse, a party, anything to try to get to know the better ones. It probably wont cheer you up, but you would also be tormented if you were fat, or disabled, or ugly, or whatever..... I feel sorry for young people who have nothing better to do than make fun of others.

Try not to mind being called a Paki. It really is only short for Pakistani (which to ignorant people probably means anyone who is brown-skinned). I once cheered up an Iranian girl who reported schoolfellows for calling her 'piggy'. She had not realised they were saying Paki, and couldn't understand why they got her country wrong anyway. People are pretty stupid!

Just remember that you are Muslims and proud of it. Don't be arrogant or superior or stuck up; do your best to join in and not mind the insults. The more you show that you mind, the more they will do it. Practise a withering look, and replies like 'Oh dear- here we go again; another attack from the racist rent-a-mob.' Try and rise above it all, and not mind. Feel sorry for them, and on the lookout for ways that you can befriend or help them - an opportunity to show willing to be friends.

I wish you all the best. I think you would find objectionable people at any school - I get letters from girls being bullied at all-girl Muslim schools where everyone wears hijab. Just try not to mind, toughen up, and don't let yourselves get caught in situations where you are on your own and could be bullied. Good luck, God bless. Wasalaam, Ruqaiyyah.

Editors Note: Wearing a Hijab is not illegal; one should make a record of the abuse they and their friends are suffering from, note down the exact details of what has happened and take the evidence to a senior member of staff (teacher). If that does not help then seek help from your local Race Equality Partnership and the Race Hate incident unit at your local police station.

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