

Muslims in Britain: changes and challenges

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Week 3

Rehanah on Gender

One of the things as I was growing up-- and certainly I've seen great changes as time has gone on-- is that there were many, many Muslims who have misconceptions about Islam as well. And one of them was about whether a woman was allowed to go out to work.

I knew that there were a lot of young women who had potential to be able to go on to further education that were not being permitted to go on to further education because their parents didn't think that they ought to do. Or it wasn't for women to do. That they'd learnt what they needed to learn up to the age of 16, and now really they just needed to learn how to be good wives and mothers.

And this certainly wasn't the way that I was brought up and with the way that my parents taught me. But certainly much of our community used to feel and think that. And it wasn't until I started to learn about Islam that I discovered, well this is not the case at all. And I felt that it was important that I should speak about this.

I used to go in to do assemblies at schools. And it was so interesting. And some of these young children who were Muslim in the schools that I used to go into used to say, Oh, my mommy doesn't go to work because she's a Muslim. And so they were actually brought up to really think and feel that a woman's place was only in the home. And that she wouldn't go out to work because she was a Muslim. And that used to be really interesting for me to see that wow, there are a lot of people being brought up actually believing that Islam says that we should go out to work or they shouldn't be educated. And here now I had started learning about Islam, and I had learnt from the scriptures that this was not the case at all. And so I was very keen to go out and share this with others.

But what's really very, very important for me to understand and remember, is that yes people have misconceptions about Islam. And it's not people who are not necessarily Muslims, but it's Muslims as well. It's because they've not necessarily had that opportunity to engage in the field of Islam. And to know what's actually scripture says.

In fact there was one Hadith-- one saying of the prophet, peace be upon him, and I really seriously wanted to write it up on a plaque. And walk down the streets to show my Muslim community. And that Hadith, that Hadith was basically about-- the

prophet, peace be upon him, had said, whoever had a daughter and he did not bury her alive-- that was about a custom that used to be done pre Islamic days-- he did not bury her alive, and he did not insult her, and then the third bit-- which was the bit I was really keen to tell others about-- was and that he did not favour his son over her, God will enter him into paradise.

So it was so incredibly strong and I used to think to myself, why don't people know about this? That's something that I find is very interesting because in fact, it's very easy for people who are not Muslims to make assumptions when they see Muslims behaving in a certain way. An assumption to say that this must be part of their religion. Whereas it isn't always.