

Discuss the changing balance of ethnic and religion identity for young

British Muslims today.

Aristotle (384 BC-322BC) considers that the Creator is “*the First Mover*” of all the existence, an essential start for the continuation of conscious and unconscious being. (Russell 1991 p; 216) Moving is carried on with changing balances of cause and affect towards an ultimate goal. The physical unconscious worlds have an automated changing balance that needed for their survivals, including man’s body. Man, who has “*Human will (and)...sense perception...*” is the only conscious being with the freedom of choice to evaluate, monitor and keep the needed changing balance under control for his self-identity and survival. (Mahdi 1962 p; 129) However, selected changing balances need to fit every individual, group, national and universal values which prove to be rather problematic.

Objective knowledge and its exercise is the main factor for managing constantly changing balances in life, and keeping it on fairly equal terms for all. However, the authenticity of its original source and the authority of decision making for required changes are also proving to be quite problematic, especially in multi cultural and religious societies. Who is to decide what is right or wrong; what is good or bad for the others? Where and when is the equilibrium to be adjusted? What must be taken or put on the scales to keep it in balance that will be just for all? Keeping the title in mind this essay will take a little different angle involving historical and philosophical aspects to this ethnicity and religion involved social issue that make some young British Muslims inclining towards Islam today.

Citizenship Survey in 2007-08 indicates that “*most people (93% agreed that they personally felt a part of British society with just over half (53% strongly agreeing...*” (Com. Local. Gov. Survey 2008 P; 33) this shows that the balance has already changed for young British Muslims, producing a different mind-set from their elders to assess and identify themselves. The meaning of Britishness is also changing balance. It was used to identify English culture and Christianity only but now it demands a rather different definition to accommodate the multi cultural, multi religion Britain of today.

Young British people today as a whole do not have the exact situations in relation to ethnicity and religion as their forefathers had. None the less, they still share the same knowledge of the past which is full of historical characters. Such as; men on horseback with turbans on their heads and swords in their hands doing battle against men on horseback with helmets on their heads and spears in their hands and a cross on their chest, both parties are fighting each other in the name of religion. (Heer 1961 P; 96-122)

At the time of colonization and modernization the dress codes and the reasons for fighting changed balance. It shifted away from religious values to materialistic motivations as economy and the politic involved, from religious identities to the identity of nationalities as the sociology concerned. The values of appearances and reasons for fighting were changed and shifted away from Muslims and Christians to East and the West. (Roberson and Garrett 1991)

Authority and wealth changed balance and tilted towards the West, especially after the break-up of the Ottoman Empire in the first part of the twentieth century. Wealth, raw materials and people, including Muslims, were brought from the colonized countries to Britain. When fighting British men returned back home needing work, the home work force and ethnic work force came face to face, along with the female work force who had worked in the factories whilst the men were away fighting. Increase in wealth and workforce gave way to an economic boom alongside the hostility between different cultures of workforce in Britain. Soon the chain reaction of industrialization opened the door to the value of 'isms' within the Western countries, such as individualism, racism, Semitism, secularism, capitalism and fundamentalism (Sauvain 1987)

Fighters were wearing overalls, caring similar tools, living in the same country with different religion, ethnicity and gender. *"Modernity has been interpreted too quickly destroying and replacing traditions."* (During 1993 P; 113) Panic of fast change lost balance and a chain of serious riots took place, in Britain and other countries that *"1960s inner-city riots caused by inter-ethnic competition..."* (Beckford 2006 p; 132) Thus, the psychology of young people today, especially in the West are the product of this historical turmoil.

Today young British Muslims have no language or cultural barriers and do not hope or wish to return to their parents' countries of origin, but they still do not feel completely at home either. The feelings of not completely belonging coupled with perceived social victimisation for the acts of terror perpetrated in the name of Islam has forced young British Muslims to search for a new identity. The unifying identity of Islam provides, in their opinion, a better option with greater benefits than the divisive and isolating ethnicity. (UK Statute Law Database)

They can establish a strong *"... historical construction of self"* that overrides the limitations of cultural differences and give them the feeling of security. (Gay, etl 2000 p; 313) What is lacking is a unified source of authentic knowledge provided by an accredited education system in a society respectful of their beliefs. Without this, fragile minds could be exploited by unscrupulous internal and external factors.

Victimisation today is also changing balance shifting away from the biological appearance back to religion and religious appearance. This is a Western phenomenon. Muslims, wearing Islamic dress, are singled out and identified as 'other' in the same way as black or coloured

people in the past. A lack of knowledge and ignorance, fostered by the media, lead to assumptions which produce discrimination and victims and contribute to a climate of hate.

Psychology of *“Perpetrators of hate crimes see their victims as a type ‘them’ not ‘us’- rather than as individuals with rights and feelings.”* (Williams 2004 p; 97) Unfortunately, defining ‘them’ and ‘us’ is a two-sided coin, dependant on the side one is looking at. Each side is ‘other’ for the other which causes ambiguity in classification. Therefore, the 9/11 and 7/7 incidents are staying in a chicken and egg situation without any proper answer.

British logic of thinking today is mainly based on the western philosophy of thought. Plato says that *“...knowledge is to believe, thinking is to conjecture (assumption)....”* The knowledge is authorised with believing, physical man relying on metaphysical factors as an authentic source of knowledge. (Plato 2000 p; 242 534a) On the other hand, Descartes says that *“I think, therefore I am’ makes mind more certain than matter, and my mind more certain than the minds of others,”* shifting the balance of authenticity from believing ‘I’ to the thinking ‘I’. Even though both self centred, Plato’s self believes in others than self, but Descartes’ self believes in self only which gives way to individualism and liberalism, ‘you’ and ‘I’.

John Locke, (1632-1704) on the other hand, says that *“the mind at birth is like a blank slate, waiting to be written by the world of experience.”* (Stocks 2004 p; 83) He opens a door for both metaphysical and physical sources of knowledge coming from outside of self but he replaces the name of religion with ethics. The following period of Romantic Movement went even further into fantasy *“which meant a proneness (prostrate) to emotion, and more particularly to the emotion of sympathy.”* (Russell 1946 p; 651) It is a period of ‘you ‘and ‘I’ again but with the tolerances under the name of freedom that man was yearning for. ‘You think and do what you like and I think and do what I like.’ In reality it was digging more into individuality, liberalism and the world selfish ignorance.

Nearly worshiped new science at the time is used to produce Frankenstein monster that has no mind of his own, gentle in the heart, ugly in appearance, could be driven into violence, without any care of others to gain the love of his maker that his survival depends on. Master man, who seemed to do whatever he did in the name of religion, nation, east or West. Now, turned into mindless selfish monster man of science seemed to be powered by master capitalism. (Russell 1946) The equilibrium was here and there every where, almost without any countable value to weigh, balance tilted away towards materialist secular, individual selfishness more than ever before.

“Christianity has succeeded, to some extent, in taming the ego, but economic, political, and intellectual causes stimulated revolt against the churches, and the romantic movement brought the revolt into the sphere of morals. By encouraging a new lawless ego, it made social cooperation impossible.” (Russell 1946 p; 659)

This time religion and secularism were put on the scales and it was heavily tilting towards secular empirical ideologies. David Hume (1711-1776) says that *“... personal identity is*

nothing but the continuous succession of perceptual experience... I am nothing but a bundle of perception...” (Stokes 2004 p; 85) He rejects the source of religion and emotion totally and offers empirically tested and justified ‘pure reason’ knowledge by repeated experiences through senses. On the other hand, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) takes a rationalist view, intending to safeguard knowledge and virtue from the secular, empiricist and individualist doctrines. He puts the religious, empirical and cognitive values together in two categories, saying that “...*these laws are either laws of nature or laws of freedom...natural and moral philosophy ...can each have its empirical parts.*” (Beck 1988 p; 244)

According to George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) knowledge is recovered slowly from the accumulated history of true and false, which he calls “‘*thesis*’ and ‘*antithesis*’ that has an equal claim of legitimacy.” (Stoke 2004 p; 103) He also claims that this is a progress towards the absolute truth that includes universal mind and spirit. However, Karl Marx, (1818-1883) “*rejects Hegel’s idealism and his notion of truth unfolding towards the absolute, in favour of purely atheistic ‘dialectical materialism’.*” (Stokes 2004 p; 133)

Marx opposes to all rationalism, romanticism and capitalism completely. He refuses some part of empiricism and tries to make socialism scientific. He thinks that “*both subject and object, both the knower and thing know, are in a continual process of mutual adaption*” and this adaption is never fully completed. (Russell 1946 p; 749) The driving force behind this continual process is based only on mind and matter. He also argues that politics, religions and philosophy are all biased and used as instruments to manipulate and exploit the mass work force.

British education, social and political systems today are generally base on these philosophical values. These theories used as mile stones to make suitable balancing changes for relating matters. Each has beneficial points to be considered. However, they do not offer any practical unifying solution that works in one religion and one culture, let alone in multi cultural and multi religious societies. Therefore, Islam, with its authorised original religious text and the recorded traditions of the prophet, offers young British Muslims a means to build, unite and clarify their identity.

Islamic Philosopher Ibn Sina (980-1037) agrees with Aristotle that “The First Mover” is the actual source of all being and says that “*If there was no essence existed, there would be no matter existed...*” (Demirli Vol. I p;80) His theory connects and combines the physical and metaphysical existence together, unlike the materialistic approaches where only matter exists. As far as knowledge concerns al-Kindi, (801-873) he emphasises that ‘*the First Mover*’ is also ‘*the First Intellect*’, the actual source for ‘*the acquired intellect*’ of man. (Nasr and Leaman 2001p; 165-174)

Unlike, Aristotle’s and Descartes’ self centred approach, Al-Kindi replaces the self source with ‘the First Intellect’ putting Him into the centre as the original source of knowledge and the final evaluating power of authority. He places individual self into the heart of equal responsibility of learning, evaluating and balancing the required developments. He attempts to free man from self oppression to have an independent individual as well as unified self identities. This is another aspect drawing some young Muslims towards Islam, freeing them from an egotistical Western philosophy which badly needs wider and deeper researches into it. (Kaya 2002 p; 22-25).

Classical Islamic philosophy took the flag from Western Platonic and Hellenistic period and weighed in balance quite heavier in the East, living its golden age between 8th to mid 13th century. However, “...*the spectator is indeed force to notice that the Muslim world is... today lagging behind*” (Ramadan 2001 p; 59) Despite the encouraging base of classical philosophy, modern Islamic philosophy is struggling to keep up with the universal scientific and social developments of today. “*The Muslim world abounds with trained personalities who have authority...locked up in theory or at best, deal with a precise question in a specific content. Far from realities and social dynamics...*” (Ramadan 2001 p; 119) Not only lost balance but also lost consciousness with the demand of ever changing development and values of present and future, let alone to offer any balanced help for young Muslims.

Young British Muslims have to deal with individual self, religion, ethnicity, Britishness, individual background cultural and Islamic differences, divisions within Islam, as Sunnis, Shiites. Yet, they also have to deal with anxiety of the Orientalist stereotyping and humiliation of Muslims in the West, as well as the occidentalist dehumanising and demoralising of the West in the East. After 7/July/ 2005 bombing in London Muslims were judged, juried, persecuted and blamed collectively for it by the West which was unjust. The humiliating cartoons of the Muslim prophet were published by ‘Jyllands-Posten’ in September 2005 followed with worldwide demonstrations and condemnations and the West altogether was judged, juried and persecuted which was not deserved either. (Direct.gow 2009)

Despite all, Citizenship survey indicates that “*in 2007-8 the two common chosen values important to living in Britain today were respect for law (57%) and tolerance to politeness towards others (56%)*” (communities.gov. 2007) There are individual societies and youth clubs set up to help British young Muslims. However, individual self-interested and self-protective bodies can fall into the danger of acting biased without any independent united head office. If the problem of differences in all parties not diagnosed and cured from the roots, there will be no authentic value for young British Muslims or others on their scales to balance it justly for all. Then simple differences can become obstacles which a simple trigger of evil will tilt the balance toward creating fear and hate even terror for all.

Finally, values of globalized world of today indicate that worldwide democratically chosen international independent research institutions are badly needed to look into ever changing balance of young Muslims in the world, not only in Britain. The values of the academic world of today indicates that worldwide objective researches, as far as the authentic knowledge concerned, are essential without dividing the world into East or West, religious or scientific, Muslim or Christian or other. The values of the culturally mixed societies of today indicate that democratic, objective and just law and order operating systems are vital to keep, not only British society in balance, but the entire world. The values of the natural world of today indicate that human beings have power strong enough to affect the balance of the natural world as well as the supernatural and social world. Now, it is high time for the conscious man of free will to choose gaining balance or loosing it forever.

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