

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH 'MANJI'?

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the US and in the wake of the aftermath of 7/7 in London, there have emerged a number of opportunists suddenly claiming to be able to interpret Islaam for communities.

They claim that Islaam has a number of flaws which need to be re-assessed for the modern world and they prop themselves up as viable authorities to advise Muslims on how to practice Islaam, from whence *they* do not practice!?

One example of the propagation of an extremist fringe understanding towards Muslims is in the Canadian lesbian and gay rights activist Irshad Manji who has risen to fame due to her attacks on Islaam and Muslims.

An aspect of the insidious way in which she operates is the fact that she presents herself as a Muslim, and thus in a ideal position to advise on Islaam. After 7/7 for instance it was only the media that gave her a voice and she thus seized the opportunity for more exposure in order to promote her fringe and extremist beliefs. Some sections of the British media in the UK relish in hearing the extremist view and the way in which the opinions of Aboo Hamza, Omar Bakree, and al-Mas'ari were aired demonstrates this.

An example of her lack of Islamic knowledge was demonstrated live on BBC2's *Newsnight* in July. She said that the Qur'aan can be used to condone terrorism, yet she could not recall or name the verses that could be used and twisted in this way! Here then, Manji exposed herself by not knowing how

the Islamic texts can be used by terrorists and the verses that terrorists try to manipulate. Therefore, how can Manji even attempt to interpret Islaam when she herself does not have the required knowledge to do that?! As a result, on live TV, she got herself into something that she did not have the essential knowledge to back up!

Furthermore Manji, like Tariq Ramadaan, also calls for *ijtihad* yet *ijtihad* can only be conducted by Muslim scholars of the *Sunnah*, not by the ignorant, and definitely not by those who encourage extremist fringe elements such as Manji, Amina Wadud and others. So how can Manji call for *ijtihad* and yet not even know how to read the Qur'aan properly and quote from it!!

She defined *ijtihad* as being: **“the Islamic tradition of independent reasoning which allowed every Muslim...to update his or her religious practice in light of contemporary circumstances.”** Yet this is not what *ijtihad* actually means. *Ijtihad* is only for the scholars of the *Sunnah*, wherein they apply independent reasoning of the *Sharee'ah* for current circumstances, so it is not for every ignorant person to undertake. This is in fact an indication of Manji's extremist designs for the Muslims which is in fact the same methodology of those who call for terrorism and suicide bombings as she places an unqualified person as one able to interpret the Islamic source texts.

Some of Manji's more extremist ideas, which we will not mention here due to the extremist nature of such statements, indicate that she is employing the non-Islamic methodology of publicity stunts and sensationalism in order to build up a reputation. Furthermore, she is not known for her work with Muslim youth in the West or any contributions to help the Muslims. Rather,

she rises to the occasion claiming to be from the 'Islamic tradition' when in fact she has no Islamic credentials, doubtful Islamic adherence and questionable knowledge of the Qur'aan and *Sunnah*.

Others have noted how Manji outlines her ideas in dishonest fashion, demonstrating a **“very poor quality research, unbalanced writing and sweeping generalisations”**.¹ Indeed, much of her ideas and premises are based upon what she has gathered from either the sources of the tabloid press or other anti-Islamic source references.

An example of this disparity is in the way she simplistically criticises Muslim countries for not treating its minorities well, yet when it comes to Palestine's occupiers she only brings herself to say about the situation that they are “at a disadvantage”. Yet when looking at the Muslim countries she utilises a whole host of derogatory terms, based largely on the works of Zionists, and applies them to Muslims or accuses Islaam as being responsible.

Therefore Manji and her ilk seem to have ignored, either purposefully or out of ignorance, the history of how Muslims have interacted with non-Muslims in the past. This history of Islam's tolerance has even been attested by non-Muslims and demonstrates that Islaam is in no need of the kind of 'reform' that Manji and her ilk demand:

- The scholar and polyglot Thomas W. Arnold in his *magnum opus*, *The Spread of Islam in the World*, notes about the Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*), **“...But it is important to show that Muhammad, when he found himself at the head of a band of armed followers, was not transformed at once, as some would have us believe, from a peaceful preacher into a fanatic, sword in hand, forcing**

¹ Bina Shah, *The Trouble with Irshad Manji* (October 3 2004 CE)

his religion on whomever he could.” (p.34) Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad, *peace be upon him*, when Tufayl ibn ‘Amr of the Banu Daws tribe accepted Islaam Tufayl tried to get the rest of the tribe to become Muslims also. Tufayl besought the Prophet Muhammad, *peace be upon him*, to curse the tribe and wage war against it. Even though the Prophet Muhammad had all the means to do so at the time he merely mentioned: *“Return to your people and call them to the faith but deal with them gently.”*² Therefore, even during war Muslims are commanded to be compassionate and merciful. The Prophet expressly forbade Muslim armies from attacking women and children, the sick and elderly, monks and rabbis. He also outlawed the wanton killing of animals and livestock, the burning of crops and vegetation, the polluting of waters and the destruction of homes and sanctuaries. As the Qur’aan notes, **“For were it not that Allaah checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques wherein the Name of Allaah is mentioned much would surely have been pulled down.”**³ When news reached the Prophet Muhammad that children had been killed in a battle, he exclaimed *“What is it with some people that the killing today caused them to go so far as to kill children?!”* A man answered *“But they are just children of polytheists O messenger of Allaah!”* The Prophet replied, *“The best of you are just children of polytheists. Do not kill children! (I say again) do not kill children!”*⁴ In one battle there was a corpse of a women from the polytheists, the Prophet Muhammad said *“This is not one against whom war should be fought.”*⁵ These narrations are found in the most authentic

² *Ibn Ishaq's Biography*, pp.252-254

³ al-Hajj (20): 40

⁴ Musnad Ahmad

⁵ Bukhaaree

books in Islam after the Qur'aan, from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

- Thomas Arnold noted in another of his books *The Call to Islam*: **“The aim of imposing the poll tax on the non-Muslim subjects was not – as some people wanted to believe – some sort of penalty for not adopting Islam. It was in return for the protection given to them by the Islamic state because their religions prevented them from the military service.”**
- Ibn Asaakir in his *History of Damascus* noted that when the Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab felt that he was near to death, he recommended that the non-Muslim subjects should be taken care of, treated well, their promises kept and not to be burdened.
- Michael the Great, the Patriarch of Antioch in the second half of the twelfth century CE mentioned the good treatment of the Christians during the Islamic conquests and at the same time talking about Heraclius’ persecutions of the people of Syria via destroying churches, plundering the peoples’ wealth and the Byzantine’s lack of mercy and kindness, as opposed to the excellent treatment of the Muslims.
- Al-Asfahaanee recorded that during the reign of Alee ibn Abee Taalib a Jew complained against to the judge of Basrah who ruled in favour of the Jew against the Caliph in this particular case. This made the Jew adopt Islaam and later fight on the side of Ali Ibn Abee Taalib.
- The West Indian scholar, Edward Blyden noted: **“There is nothing in the original teachings of Islam that requires hostility to Christians. There are, no doubt, bigots and fanatics among Muslims, as there have been and are now, bigots and fanatics**

among Christians; but the spirit of Islam, as taught by in its original records, is tolerant.”⁶

- Adam Metzifi in his book *The Islamic Civilisation* praised Islamic tolerance towards the non-Muslim subjects which was not known in Europe. He stated: **“The existence of the Christians among the Muslims was the reason for the appearance of the principle of tolerance for which the new reformers called. There was a need for co-existence and harmony that should prevail in all countries. This caused from the very beginning a kind of tolerance which was not known in Europe in the middle ages. The result of that tolerance was the birth of the science of comparative religion.”**
- Jan Molia also said that **“Islam was a heavenly religion and one of love, affection and honour it was the most tolerant religion.”**⁷
- Alexander Powell says in his book *The Struggle for Power in Muslim Asia*, **“In their wars of conquest, however, the Muslims exhibited a degree of toleration which puts many Christian nations to shame.”**

Manji also calls for *Sufism* within her corrupted reasoning and it has also been claimed that she is of an *Ismaili/Agha Khani* background. Her parents were originally from Uganda who had fled to Canada after being expelled by

⁶*Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, p. 297

⁷ Quoted in Ali Zahi Ramadan, *Islam's Attitude Towards Heavenly Religions* (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab, n.d.).

Idi Amin in the 1970s.⁸ As a result of being raised without any Islamic knowledge she resembles the Iranian critic of Islaam, Ali Dashti.⁹

Manji also gives the impression that her own personal upbringing, which may not have been conducive to promoting authentic Islamic teachings and more concerned with culture, may have been pivotal in leading her to some of her excessive views. She noted once: **“I could not quite reconcile the open and tolerant world of my public school with the rigid and bigoted world inside my madrassah.”** This statement indicates that maybe the *madrassah* where she claims to have studied was at fault, as it may have been modelled on ignorant cultural ideas from a certain country or continent. Therefore, it cannot be said that all Islamic education itself is a problem!

There are many *Salafee* mosques in London, Luton, Leicester and Birmingham that have excellent examples of Islamic schools working in the

⁸ Idi Amin expelled many Hindus and *Shee'ah* who he believed were usurping the wealth of the Ugandan people. After Idi Amin was overthrown he was given safe haven by the government of Saudi Arabia and he remained in Jeddah where he died in 2005 CE.

⁹ The Iranian Ali Dashti was mesmerized by the west, which he deemed as superior, and began to become entrenched in Marxist-Leninism. His book *23 Years* is actually used by Christian evangelical missionaries in order to aid them in their polemics against Islaam! They even refer to him as being an “Islamic scholar” or a “Muslim scholar”. Dashti was fascinated by the West and was an adherent to Marxist-Leninism, he became so engrossed in the works of Lenin that he even compared Lenin to the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*)! Dashti criticised the literary style of the Qur'aan yet was not in qualified position to do that due to his own lack of scholarship. Dashti was a Persian speaker and not an Arabic speaker and so was definitely not specialised in Arabic grammar, morphology, prose or syntax. His writings demonstrate that he was a confused individual that was raised with little Islamic education or knowledge. In the case of Dashti he was raised as a *Shee'ee* and thus had inadequate recourse to authentic Islamic teachings. In fact many of those who apostate from Islaam are either those who were raised with little or no Islamic authentic education or those who were raised within the heretical *Shee'ah* traditions. Manji has obviously based much of her style on the like of Ali Dashti and this is evident in many ways.

community and maintaining admirable standards in education,¹⁰ secular or Islamic. We do not need any lessons on how to live as Muslims in the UK from those who are themselves confused or wish to compromise the main characteristics of Islaam.

Furthermore, the fact that she (like Tariq Ramadaan again!) considers public schools as being inherently “open and tolerant” is also questionable. It seems as if Manji is bowing to a certain audience.

Another example of her distance from the Muslim community is the fact that she is only given a platform by a bizarre variety of Zionists (of the liberal brand, yet Zionists nonetheless), right-wing fanatics and other peculiar elements. She was even sponsored to visit Jewish occupied Palestine by a Canadian Zionist organisation!! Tariq Ramadaan is also commended by certain Zionist elements.

One of her books, the name of which will not be mentioned as readers should stay away from all of her works, was specifically marketed to non-Muslims and not to Muslims. The fact that it has been translated into French, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Urdu, Arabic, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Dutch and other languages not only indicates that she is receiving sufficient funding for her ideas but also that she is more concerned in making a profit via sensationalism, extremism and publicity stunts as opposed to developing anything beneficial for the common Muslims.

¹⁰ Such as the *Brixton Mosque (Masjid Ibn Taymeeyah)* and *Masjid us-Sunnah* in London; the *Call to Islam Education Centre (Masjid ul-Ghurabaa)* in Luton; *Masjid Tayba* in Leicester and the work of the *Salafee* brothers in Birmingham.

The fact that this particular book was also promoted within European countries that are either oppressive or opposed to Islaam and Muslims is also insidious. Holland for example had a major re-assessment of its treatment of Muslims and began to be much more oppressive towards the Muslims after a *fitna* which began at the hands of a Somaalee apostate pseudo feminist.¹¹

The fall of Manji will no doubt be her own self as she struggles to reach the common everyday Muslims. Not only is Manji alienated from the Muslim youth but she also shows disdain and insolence to Islaam and its sources and sensibilities, not exactly the most effective method of trying to build a rapport with Muslims!?

Indeed, Manji may not want to actually “build a rapport with Muslims” and it seems as if her main designs are to foster extremist ideas to Muslims while at the same time promote herself as able to teach non-Muslims about Muslims, as opposed talking to Muslims about Islaam. Both of which however, she is not qualified to undertake due to her lack of knowledge as we have highlighted here. Manji therefore, is not a sincere or serious

¹¹ The Somaalee apostate pseudo-feminist had fled from Somalia due to being forced her into a marriage, as she claims. Firstly, forced marriages have nothing to do with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (*sallallaahu alayhi wassallam*) and are rooted in the ignorant cultures that Muslims follow over the teachings of Islam. This woman however, due to her own ignorance of Islaam, presumed that Islaam condones such cultural interpretations and thus initiated books and writings denouncing the Qur'aan itself. She helped in the production of a play wherein verses of the Qur'aan were used in a despicable manner, and she is thus in hiding within Holland and the artist who made the play was subsequently assassinated. Her similitude is that of an ignorant woman who considers Europe to be inherently 'liberated' and 'open' and they rush to such western countries wherein they think they can get away with mocking and criticising Islaam. It also frustrates them when they find people in the west accepting Islaam and following it, clinging to Islaam by the molars and holding to it strictly, this inflames their irritation against Islaam and leads them to initiate more sinister and crass incitements against Islaam.

proponent to help and educate Muslims and this is evident whenever she writes sensationalist and extremist literature full of misconceptions and scant research. The facts that have been mentioned here are important issues that can be levelled against her ilk.

“That is because they disliked what Allaah revealed, so He rendered worthless their deeds.”

{Mubammad (47): 9}