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Islamic Beliefs in Action

5.1 Being a British Muslim

Learning Objectives

In this unit we will:

- Identify some of the key beliefs that Christians have about God
- Consider some of the proof given for the existence of God
- Compare your beliefs with those of others
- Evaluate the arguments people give for the existence of God

What words can be used to describe God?

Do you think there is ‘anybody there’?

Starters

Learning Objectives

In this unit you will:

- explain what it means to be a British Muslim
- develop an understanding about how British Muslims link their identity and religion
- reflect on what ‘British’ means to you.

When the early Muslims migrated to other countries, the Prophet Muhammad encouraged his followers to remain close to their faith, whilst still trying to fit in to their new communities. Many Muslims believe that they must obey the law of the country in which they live.

Some British Muslims might have moved to Britain from another country, but others might have lived in Britain for their entire lives. Some British Muslims do not even come from Muslim families, because they decided to convert to Islam as adults.

Whatever their heritage or family life, British Muslims try to make sure that they can practise their faith within the context of Britain. For example, many Muslim men will try to organize their working day on a Friday so that they can go to the mosque for jumu’ah prayers. In Muslim countries, this would not be an issue.

Today, around 4% of people in Britain are Muslim, and almost half of these live in London. There are a growing number of facilities for prayer and worship, as well as more halal meat shops and places to buy Islamic clothing, Qur’ans and so on.

To be Muslim is to submit your life to Allah. To be British is somebody who makes their home in Britain. I may not accept everything that people around me do, but I do consider this my home. This is where I was born. This is where we are raising our children.

For me, being British is mixing with people and being part of the community. There are certain things I can’t do, for example I’ve never been to a nightclub and I’ve never drunk alcohol. I know it plays a huge role in the community. Those things I don’t do, but I do everything else. I’ve got friends of all different races and I’m part of the usual culture, like eating fish and chips, etc!

Many Muslims shop for groceries at halal stores. What ‘British’ things do you think a Muslim can or cannot do?

Activities

1. Imagine that you are a town planner. What facilities would you include for Muslims?
2. Create a guide for a Muslim who is planning to move to Britain, which explains British culture and what he or she may have to consider about being Muslim in Britain.
3. How easy is it to be spiritual in modern society? Discuss your thoughts with a partner.

Reflection

How important is it for a person to feel ‘British’ when they live in Britain?

These are images of the Queen of England and Daniel Craig as James Bond. Who or what do you associate with the word ‘British’?
5.3 Nature or Nurture? The Muslim Family

Learning Objectives

In this unit you will:

- learn about and explain the Islamic attitude to the family
- evaluate how Muslims respond to the challenges faced by families in modern society
- reflect on whether these values should apply to everyone.

Muslims value family life and most would say that ‘family’ includes their extended family – grandparents and other relatives. Islamic laws and Sunnah support the importance of family.

As well as this, family in Islam is used to refer to all Muslims worldwide, and Muslims often call each other (even strangers) brother or sister. This is the ummah and the community tries to take care of each other.

Starters

Learning Objectives

In this unit you will:

- learn about and explain the Islamic attitude to the family
- evaluate how Muslims respond to the challenges faced by families in modern society
- reflect on whether these values should apply to everyone.

Aims of a Muslim family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims of a Muslim family</th>
<th>Issues in Britain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raise children with Islamic values</td>
<td>Not everyone in Britain shares the same values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate children in Islam</td>
<td>Finding time, and those who can teach well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage children to grow up to make good choices about relationships</td>
<td>Children wanting to fit in to another culture, for example by accepting the practice of ‘dating’, even though many Muslims believe they should not do this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having fun together</td>
<td>Long working hours; busy lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending the main religious festivals/events together</td>
<td>Many relatives live far away, and working hours do not always fit in with festivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Be kind to your parents, whether one or both of them live to an old age.’</td>
<td>Busy working lives, and the challenges of caring for elderly relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bury family members in accordance with Islam; personally take care of the funeral rituals</td>
<td>A lack of facilities for Islamic burial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activities**

1. Choose one of the aims and issues in the table above and write a letter to an advice column explaining your problem and seeking help. Swap with someone in the class and answer each other’s letters.

2. Many Muslims think that the family is the first place where children can experience and develop the qualities that Allah wants them to have. Look at the ‘aims’ in the table. What qualities are families trying to develop in them?

3. ‘The world would be fixed if we all treated each other as family’. Can you think of an argument that agrees and one that disagrees with this? Then, express your own opinion creatively, either as a poem, collage, or poster.

**Reflection**

Religious people sometimes say ‘The family that prays together stays together’. What does this mean? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Muslims in Britain may face issues that they might not in countries where there is a majority of Muslims.
Objectives

- Demonstrate knowledge of how Muslims apply rules in their lives.
- Apply knowledge to designing facilities and services for Muslims and making sure their needs are met.

Task

Imagine that you are the mayor of your town, and you have been given the task of improving the facilities for Muslims. Using what you’ve learned, produce an action plan for your town, with reasons to back up your suggestions. What new or improved facilities or services would be needed?

A bit of guidance...

This task will help you to showcase your skills of empathy and application, as well as your ability to record decisions clearly and demonstrate thinking skills in your decision-making processes.

You are aiming to show your understanding of the laws and habits of Muslims that you have studied. Don’t just focus on what you think (and why), but also on finding and using appropriate evidence that you can explain and expand upon as reasoning for the decisions you make.

Hints and tips:

To help you tackle this task, you could do some of the following:

- List all of the Islamic rules you know about.
- Use examples from the news, TV and ‘real life’ to support your views, as well as from a range of other sources.
- Research your local area to find out what facilities are already provided for Muslims and whether they can be improved.

I can...

Level 3
- describe what guides Muslims in their daily lives and decision-making, recognizing similarities and differences between Islamic lifestyles and my own.

Level 4
- use relevant quotations and religious words to describe an Islamic lifestyle
- show understanding of the importance of following the Prophet Muhammad’s lifestyle and teachings, and the impact of this.

Level 5
- identify, explain and evaluate some relevant quotations and examples from life or the media to illustrate my interpretation of Islamic rules
- communicate my views creatively and with a range of religious reasons.

Level 6
- use religious and philosophical vocabulary to relate actions to key Islamic beliefs
- express insight into the complications of having to balance lots of rules
- consider the challenges of building an Islamic community where the existing rules may be different
- communicate my views creatively and persuasively.

Guidance

What level are you aiming at? Have a look at the grid below to see what you need to do to achieve that level. What would you need to do to improve your work?

Ready for more?

When you have completed this task, you can also work on your skills for Levels 6 and 7, and perhaps even higher. This is an extension task.

‘People migrating to a country should always try to fit in.’ Do you agree?

- Reflect upon the above statement and use your understanding from the task to inform a short essay (three or four paragraphs).
- Consider evidence for and against the statement before reaching a conclusion.
- To achieve a high level, you will need to justify your arguments by referring to what it means to live in a multicultural society – and the importance of beliefs and values to people.