150604 - Doubts about some Islamic teachings, from a female Muslim student

the question

This is really weird for me because I'm fifteen years old and a girl living in England sometimes things just get so confusing for me. I don't know what to do because slowly I think I'm losing my faith in Islam, but not in God, in Islam. I think the main reason is how sexist the people are. I mean, a boy can do anything and no one will say anything but a girl, if she goes out alone or something, then she's going to hell. I find it so unfair I get so angry just at the thought of it. I mean, why do people say that Islam is the greatest religion on Earth if it's so unfair and cruel?
I mean, some Muslims seem to think it's okay to marry off a fifteen year old girl to some thirty year old man she's never met before, why is that okay?
And why is it okay for a boy to go out and get so drunk he can't walk properly and sleep with a million different girls?
Why is it that when a Muslims girl strikes out on her own and wants to do something with her life she can't because Islam is holding her back?
Why is it not okay for a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man when she's fallen in love with him but it's perfectly fine for a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim lady?
Why do the men get to chose who they want to marry but sometimes the woman gets to say in it at all?
Why is it so unfair?
I'm so sorry for going on and on for ages, I just really need your help and I don't even know who you are but I don't want to lose my faith and become a non-believer and for me to not lose my faith is for my questions to be answered. I was wondering if you have the time to email me personally and just help through this?
Please, please, please get back to me.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

There are some preliminaries that we should talk to you about, and we hope that you will pay attention to what we say to you:

1.

We recognize that you are living in a country that is permissive in moral terms, in which things are allowed that are forbidden in Islam, and things have reached a state where they -- both males and females -- ride bicycles in the street in front of people when they are virtually naked. People are undoubtedly affected by their environment, hence there is a stern warning against settling among the mushrikeen and those who are morally bankrupt. We think that if you were living in a decent, conservative environment, you would not be feeling this way.

2.

We are sorry to see that in your question that you went beyond asking questions in seeking to understand, to the extent of impugning the laws and wisdom of Allah, and differentiating between faith in Allah, may He be exalted, and the laws of Islam. The laws of Islam came from Allah in the first place; they come from Him and from nowhere else. So it is better to phrase such objections in the form of questions that are aimed at removing doubt, and not in this style or form.

3.

You have mixed up the rulings of Islam and the actions of Muslims. The laws of Islam are pure and were prescribed by Allah, may He be exalted, to set straight the affairs of people and countries. Whatever the Muslims do that is contrary to the laws of their Lord can only be attributed to them, not to their religion. The religion of Allah does not permit males to drink alcohol or to make friends with non-mahram women or to commit zina (fornication or adultery). How can you attribute these evil deeds and major sins that are committed by the misguided youth to the laws of Allah, and claim that He permits that to them [males] and forbids them to females? You are mistaken and

confused. You have made a mistake by attributing their actions to Islam and you are confused in your belief that these actions are permissible for males and not females.

Secondly:

You said some objectionable words in your question, which are very wrong and pose a danger to your religious commitment, so you have to repent from them and regret them. Among the worst of them are your words, “why do people say that Islam is the greatest religion on earth if it’s so unfair and cruel?” These are words which, if they were spoken by one who understood their meanings, they would be tantamount to apostasy in his case. They imply impugning of Allah, may He be exalted, which is a serious matter. Perhaps your excuse is that you were confused between the laws of Allah and the actions of some Muslims. Islam is the religion of Allah and it is what He has prescribed. It is what He revealed to His Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah upon him). Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Truly, the religion with Allaah is Islam”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:19]

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:85].

Accusing Islam of being unjust and cruel is one of the falsest of falsehoods. Allah says, negating the first accusation (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, Allaah enjoins Al-‘Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allaah Alone — Islamic Monotheism) and Al-Ihsân [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allaah, totally for Allaah’s sake and in accordance with the Sunnah (legal ways) of the Prophet صلىالله عليه وسلم in a perfect manner], and giving (help) to kith and kin (i.e. all that Allaah has ordered you to give them, e.g., wealth, visiting, looking after them, or any other kind of help), and forbids Al-Fahshâ’ (i.e. all evil deeds, e.g. illegal sexual acts, disobedience of parents, polytheism, to tell lies, to give false

witness, to kill a life without right), and Al-Munkar (i.e. all that is prohibited by Islamic law: polytheism of every kind, disbelief and every kind of evil deeds), and Al-Baghy (i.e. all kinds of oppression). He admonishes you, that you may take heed”

[al-Nahl 16:90].

And He says, negating the second accusation:

“Allaah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you”

[al-Baqarah 2:185].

“So after the truth, what else can there be, save error?”

[Yoonus 10:32].

The Messenger of Allah (sa) said: “Allaah did not send me to make things hard for people in the hope that they would make mistakes, rather He sent me to teach and make things easy.” Narrated by Muslim, 1478.

It was narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: It was said to the Messenger of Allah (sa): Which religion is most beloved to Allah? He said: “al-Haneefiyyah al-Samhah (easy monotheism).” Narrated by Ahmad and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

Thirdly:

The basic principle with regard to the commands and prohibitions is that there is no differentiation between males and females with regard to them. There is no need to point out that this applies to all rulings, but we find that in the case of some prohibitions, Allah mentions both sexes, and this confirms what we say, which is that there is basically no difference between the sexes, especially with regard to things that are forbidden in Islam. For example:

(i)

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (as for) the male thief and the female thief, cut off (from the wrist joint) their (right) hands as a recompense for that which they committed, a punishment by way of example from Allaah. And Allaah is All-Powerful, All-Wise”

[al-Maa’idah 5:38].

(ii)

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them with a hundred stripes. Let not pity withhold you in their case, in a punishment prescribed by Allaah, if you believe in Allaah and the Last Day. And let a party of the believers witness their punishment.”

[al-Noor 24:2].

(iii)

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts). That is purer for them. Verily, Allaah is All-Aware of what they do.

31. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts)”

[al-Noor 24:30. 31].

Moreover, we should tell you that there are some things that are forbidden for men but permissible for women, because they are appropriate for women’s nature but arenot appropriate for men. It was narrated from Abu Moosa al-Ash‘ari (may Allah be pleased with him) that the

Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has permitted silk and gold to the females of my ummah, and has forbidden them to the males.”

Narrated by Ahmad (19184) and al-Nasaa’i (5265); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani.

We should also tell you that the differences in the physical makeup of both genders may dictate variation in some rulings, but in the context of reward and status with Allah, this variation becomes insignificant and each person will be rewarded in accordance with his effort and his situation; no one will be wronged and no deed will be undervalued; no one will be brought to account for something they did not do. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whoever does righteous good deeds, male or female, and is a (true) believer [in the Oneness of Allaah (Muslim)], such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a Naqeera (speck on the back of a date stone), will be done to them”

[al-Nisa’ 4:124]

“Whosoever does an evil deed, will not be requited except the like thereof; and whosoever does a righteous deed, whether male or female and is a true believer (in the Oneness of Allaah), such will enter Paradise, where they will be provided therein (with all things in abundance) without limit”

[Ghaafir 40:60].

Is this sufficient for you to realise how wrong you are in thinking that haraam things are permissible for males and not females? From this you will realise that your saying “why is it okay for a boy to go out and get so drunk he can’t walk properly and sleep with a million different girls?” has no basis in truth. Alcohol and zina (fornication) are major sins and no differentiation is made with regard to them between males and females; both of them -- if they do these things -- incur the burden of sin and deserve the prescribed punishment. If many people differentiate in this matter by allowing their sons to do this but not their daughters, that is due to the temptation of

the Shaytaan and does not stem from the laws of the Most Merciful.

Is there any reason or wisdom, is there any justice or fairness in anything if you regard the deeds of evildoers and immoral people and the filth of addicts and fornicators as the criteria to judge the religion of the Lord of the Worlds??

Fourthly:

Your saying, “some Muslims seem to think it’s okay to marry a fifteen-year-old girl to some thirty-year-old man she's never met before, why is that okay?”

These words are unfair and contrary to the reality that you want to judge.

Please take note of what we are going to tell you:

1.

A marriage can never take place between a thirty-year-old man and a fifteen year old girl, between that girl and a man of whatever age she wants, except with her agreement. What harm will it do you if a man of that age proposes marriage to you when you are at the age you are at, then you accept it and want to marry him, and you tell your guardian to go ahead with that? What if she is thirty years old and he is forty-five? So what? The fact that she did not accept this husband before does not mean anything. The matter is for her to decide, if she wants that and agrees to it after asking about him and making enquiries about him; and if she wants she can reject him.

2.

Moreover, if she has met him before -- as happens among those who act contrary to sharee‘ah and have haraam relationships -- that does not mean that their marriage will be happy; rather most of what you hear about husbands beating their wives, wives killing their husbands, divorce, separation and marital infidelity -- all of that, in the society in which you are living and others like it -- happens between spouses who knew one another and met one another before marriage, and

in many cases had a child or children. Did that meeting before marriage benefit them at all?

2.

As a thirty-year-old man can marry a fifteen-year-old girl, so too a man of twenty can marry a woman of thirty or even forty. So what? What matters is the fact that both agree and consent to the marriage. What harm does it do if there is a difference in age between the spouses? Is there any marriage that was happier than the marriages of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to Khadeejah and ‘Aa’ishah? His marriage to Khadeejah (may Allah be pleased with her) took place when she was nearly twice his age, and his marriage to ‘Aa’ishah took place when he was much older than her, but they were among the most successful of marriages on earth. So when did the difference in ages between the spouses in and of itself have a negative impact on the marriage?

Fifthly:

Your saying “Why is it that when a Muslim girl strikes out on her own and wants to do something with her life she can’t because Islam is holding her back?” is not correct, because Islam does not prevent a woman from going out on her own to the mosque or to the marketplace or to the houses of her family, relatives and neighbours. Rather what is forbidden is for her to travel on her own without a mahram, and the accompaniment of a mahram when travelling is only prescribed in order to protect her from those who would mess with her and cause her harm. Perhaps you see in the country in which you live that women are not safe if they go out alone to the marketplace or to work, and they are aware that the “wolves” of the streets are waiting for them. When Islam prescribes something that is aimed at protecting women, that is not mistreatment of them; rather it is because Islam holds them in high esteem and shows great respect to them, as well as paying attention to their weakness and their need for someone else who will protect and guard them against evildoers who would do them harm.

Moreover, every wise person realises that women need protection and care more then men, and the need to protect girls against going astray or falling victim to aggression is even greater. If she

loses her virginity or becomes pregnant or her honour is physically tarnished, that may affect her and her future, and it may be difficult for her to conceal it. As for boys, there is no differentiation between a boy and girl with regard to the shar'i punishment in this world or the recompense in the Hereafter, but a boy -- at least -- can conceal his misdemeanour, and its effect and shame are not apparent in his case. Moreover, he is not the one for whom aggression is feared; he is the one who is the aggressor and the girl is the target and victim. So which of them is more deserving of being protected, guarded, watched over and cared for? "if you but knew" [Nooh 71:4].

Sixthly:

As for your saying "why is it not okay for a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man when she's fallen in love with him but it's perfectly fine for a Muslim man to marry a non-Muslim lady?", this is a very strange comment! Can these be the words of one who believes in Allah, may He be exalted, as her Lord and describes herself as a Muslim? Where is the faith in the name of Allah al-Hakam (the Most Wise), and where is the belief in your Lord's attribute of wisdom? Where is the submission to His commands and prohibitions? Now you want any Muslim woman who falls in love with a Buddhist or Hindu man to be able to marry him! Do you believe that Islam allows men to marry female idolaters, Communists or Buddhists? This is a mistaken notion. It is not permissible for Muslim men to marry kaafir women, except those who are Jews or Christians; it is not permissible for them to marry women of any other religions.

In the case of a Muslim woman, it is haraam for her to marry anyone of any other religion apart from Islam. This is a matter on which there is scholarly consensus and there are no differences concerning that.

It is very strange that you want a Muslim woman be able to marry any kaafir she falls in love with, whilst many kaafirs do not allow their daughters to marry Muslim men even if they fall in love with them! Buddhists and Hindus do not give their daughters in marriage to Muslims. Indeed there are some Christian denominations who do not marry one another! How did it occur to you that Islam does not take care of Muslim women and allows them to marry men of any religion, so that could lead to them being driven away from their religion?

Please see the answer to question number 83736.

Seventhly:

With regard to your saying “why do the men get to choose who they want to marry but sometimes woman gets no say in it at all? Why is it so unfair?” your mistake is very clear and obvious. In fact the woman may choose just as the man may choose; in fact her right to choose is greater than his. The woman who receives marriage proposals can choose whoever she wants and reject all the others. In fact she may choose a man who suits her, whereas it may not be easy for a man to propose to more than one or two. All the choices made by men in fact create choices for the woman, because she has the right to refuse him.

The tradition is for the woman to be makhtoobah (proposed to) and not khaatibah (the one who proposes); for her to be mankoohah (the one who is married) and not naahikah (one who marries); for her to be matloobah (the one who is sought) not taalibah (the one who seeks). This is something that is deeply rooted in the nature of the sons of Adam and indeed other living beings: the female is usually the one who is sought.

Despite that, there is no reason in sharee‘ah, if a woman likes a man, for her not to express her wish to marry him. But that should not be done in an appropriate manner. So she should not propose to him or be the one who marries him; rather he is the one who proposes and she is the one who is proposed to; he is the one who marries and she is the one who is married.

Eighthly:

Finally, you should understand that Islam honour woman as a daughter, a mother and a wife: it protects her rights that have been taken from her. In its laws it pays attention to woman’s weakness and emotional nature. So it prescribes for her that which will protect her honour and dignity. What you see of loss of honour and transgression against women in the form of assault and rape is only because of the bad conduct of men who have lost all mercy and compassion, and who have lost all sense that Allah is always watching them; it is also because of women showing their adornments and being heedless about mixing, shaking hands, working and corresponding

with men. If women adhered to the laws of Allah in their clothing and by not mixing with men or travelling alone, and if they adhered to Islamic guidelines on talking to men and looking at them, a great deal of evil and mischief in society would come to an end.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There is no doubt that allowing women to mix freely with men is the basis of all calamities and evils, and it is one of the greatest causes of bringing punishment upon the entire community. It is also one of the causes of corruption in both public and private affairs. And mixing of men with women is a cause of many immoral actions and zina, and it is one of the causes of widespread death and ongoing plagues.

Al-Turuq al-Hukmiyyah, p. 405

Please also see the answer to question no. 40405

Our advice to you is to beware of the tricks of the Shaytaan, to venerate your Lord, may He be exalted, be proud of your religion and express your appreciation of the Prophet of Islam (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). You should understand that life is not sex, such that you should focus only on that issue. Islam is all great and its rulings are all in the interests of both individuals and societies at all times and in all places. Wise people in the West are entering the religion of Allah in crowds, not in order to flatter anyone, but because of what they see of the greatness of its laws and its suitability to all times and places. These wise people differentiate between what they know of Islam and what they see of the actions of some Muslims. So think again about what you said and take another look at your verdict on Islam: you will see the greatness of this religion and that you are enjoying a blessing of which millions of people are deprived.

And Allah knows best.