



Salaams All,

We have finally put online some answers to many common and not so common FAQs regarding Islam and homosexuality, transexuality, adoption, marriage and many more.

These were put together through reading the Qu'ran AND consulting Islamic scholars, as well as research on the on the internet (see Bibliography). They are largely as FACTUAL (i.e. simply what the Qu'ran says) as possible.

The FAQs are based on the Qu'ran, NOT personal interpretation. However, as such topics are only recently being discussed openly in Islam, it is a 'work in progress' and there are some grey areas which may be 'subject to change' – i.e. insh'allah the FAQs will become more accurate with more research.

So, please feel free to contact us if you have more questions, or indeed if you think you can throw more light onto any of the FAQs. Even if you disagree and have contrary evidence regarding a certain point, do let me know. The aim of these FAQs answers are to help dispel any myths and allow people to feel more confident whenever facing Islamophobia and / or homophobia.

WS.



QURAN

HOMOSEXUALITY & STORY of LUT

Being Gay

There is no term, technically, for homosexuality. Certain words in some passages refer to certain *acts*, and these are open to interpretation.

Fahisha (7:80, 27:54) Lewdness, indecency, gross.

Khabaidh (21:74) Improper

Sayyi'aat (11:78) Evil

Certain sura refer to *fahisha*, and this has long believed to refer to homosexuality. For example, Sura 7:80: '*And Lot, when he said to his people, 'Do ye approach an abomination which no one in all the world ever anticipated you in?'*'. Recent thorough interpretation suggests that *fahisha* more correctly refers to 'illicit sexual behaviour' of any type – it is not clear in Sura 7:80 whether anal sex is the act, but some 'abomination' has taken place. This 'abomination' may well be rape, among other things. Such an act is therefore completely separate from homosexuality - that is to say, sex between two consenting adults. Such an act is also completely separate from the notion of love between two homosexual adults, and all the positivity that comes with it.

Several sura refer to the story of Lot (Suras 7, 11, 26, 29). In these sura, the behaviour of the people towards the guests are mentioned several times. The preference of the people for the guests over the women is referred to in certain verses - Sura 7:81: '*Verily, ye approach men with lust rather than women – nay, ye are a people who exceed*', Sura 11:78: '*And his people came to him, rushing at him, for before that they used to work evil. He said, 'O my people! Here are my daughters, they are purer for you; then, fear God, and do not disgrace me through my guests; is there not among you one right-thinking man?'*'

Traditionally such verses have been used to state that homosexuality is sinful. Again, there is a clear distinction between love between homosexuals – which the aforementioned verses do not refer to – and just the act of sex (having sex outside marriage and other sexual behaviour will be looked at closer under **MARRIAGE**). The above verses also seem to state that choosing men over women is sinful – this needs more analysis.

Lesbianism

Little work has been done, but groups such as Safra Project are addressing this. There are few Quranic references to lesbians. Some scholars have made parallels with Quranic references to male homosexuality to female homosexuality, but this is not always possible. Sura 4:15 refers to women committing *fahisha* (again mentioned) but exactly what is lewd is not certain.



Male Beauty

One area in the Quran that is not often discussed but should arguably have just as much attention is the concept of male beauty. There are references to this that may help in understanding the Quranic, and therefore Islamic, view of love and attraction. Sura 52:24 states, '*And there shall wait on them [the Muslim men] young boys of their own, as fair as virgin pearls*'. And in Sura 76:19 it says, '*They shall be attended by boys graced with eternal youth, who will seem like scattered pearls to the beholders*'.

While it may be far-fetched to equate this with direct references to male homosexuality, as Quranic text it should be taken into account in any interpretations that serve to condemn homosexuality without question.

TRANSEXUALITY

There are no direct Quranic references to transsexuality or being transgendered. However, as with homosexuality, there are some texts which may be portrayed as such.

Sura 24:31: '*Ghair oolaa il-irbati min ar-rijaali*', some men are 'without the defining skills of males'

This is possibly a reference to men with female gender identity, though it must be stated that it does not mean that women are less equal than men.

Sura 42:49,50 '*Lillahi mulku us-samaawaati wal'ardhi. Yakhluqu ma yashaa'u. Yahabu liman yashaa'u inaathan wa yahabu liman yashaa'u adh-dhukura. Aw yuzawwijuhum dhukraanan wa inaathan; wa yaj'alu man yashaa'u 'aqeeman: innahu 'Aleemun Qadeerun*'. 'To Allah belongs the dominion over the heavens and the earth. It creates what It wills. It prepares for whom It wills females, and It prepares for whom It wills males. Or It marries together the males and the females, and It makes those whom It wills to be ineffectual. Indeed It is the Knowing, the Powerful'.

This verse has been interpreted by many as relating to having offspring. Some scholars believe the term 'ineffectual' refers to people with a transgendered identity. However, Faris Malik (*Queer Sexuality and Identity in the Qu'ran and Hadith*) also suggests that the verse describes varieties in sexual orientation and gender, 'which Allah, the All-Knowing and All-Powerful, creates as Allah wishes' The 'females' and 'males' for 'whom It wills' being counterparts or objects of desire, and 'whom(ever)' being male or female.

Safra Project state in *Sexuality, Gender & Islam*, 'One scholar has noted that commentaries on Surah 13.3 which refers to "every kind of fruit being made in pairs" also acknowledged that there is a third sex in plants. This scholar believes that it is possible to conclude that as there is a third sex in plants there may also be a third sex 'unisex' in animals and humans (unpublished paper)'.



Sex Change Operations

Many Islamic countries permit sex reassignment surgery. Hermaphrodites – people with both male and female genitalia – are allowed in many Islamic regions to have surgery to help determine the sex of the person, also bearing in mind the person's gender identity. It has not been allowed for Muslims to have sex change operations otherwise. However, the Iranian Ayatullah Khomeini permitted such operations for transsexuals in 2004 – therefore for Shi'a Muslims this is allowed.

MARRIAGE

Marriage in Islam is a great *sunnah* (that which gives spiritual reward). This union between man and woman is seen as a celebration of love, mutual companionship and respect. Maybe in Islam more so than with other religions, the importance of such love and of fulfilling sexual desire is not ignored.

Sura 30:21 *'And among Allah's signs is this: that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, so that you might find rest in them; and he has set between you love and compassion. Truly there are signs in this for people who reflect'*

Sura 51:49 *'And we have created everything in pairs, that perhaps you may remember'*

Marriage is also seen as a source of comfort.

Sura 2:187 *'They are a garment for you and you are a garment to them'*

Forced Marriages

So as we have seen, the idea of marriage – if forced – would go against the mutually binding *nikah* (contract) of love between a man and a woman. Therefore, such a union is not Islamic. Forced marriages are often publicised in many countries with Muslim populations – but this is more due to the cultural background of the people; culture is separate from religion. The origins of such behaviour stem from the family's interest in the welfare of their daughter / son, rather than wanting to cause harm. This is normally known as 'arranged' or 'assisted' marriage, a totally different concept to 'forced' marriage.

It is customary for parents / guardians to be involved in *helping* to choose the partner, this is a sign of love and involvement in their child's life. However, any force exerted over either party to achieve consent of marriage is not a true marriage. A marriage without the consent of both people is no marriage in the eyes of the Quran.



Can Gays Marry?

In many Western countries there is a growing trend to recognise same-sex relationships, 'civil partnerships' as they are known in the UK. This act enables many gay and lesbian couples to affirm their commitment to each other if they so wish. As importantly, they are also 'married' in the eyes of the law, and therefore receive the same rights as a heterosexual married couple, where before they did not.

The Quran's references to marriage obviously relate to heterosexual couples. But could Islam bless homosexual loving relationships? As discussed previously, traditional Islamic views have condemned homosexuality without much thought. However, the analysis at the top of the page has showed how the Quran may well not condemn homosexual love. Taking this into account, the principles of love, companionship and comfort in marriage may be applied to Muslim gays and lesbians.

To say that Islam accepts gay marriage is not only controversial, but certainly needs more discussion than the few lines written here. However, in discussing such an issue, it is certainly important to note that there are gender-neutral areas in the Quran that refer to companionship and love (e.g. Sura 30:21). Such acknowledgement can help many Muslim gays and lesbians in accommodating such loving relationships with Islam.

GAY & LESBIAN PARENTS AND HAVING CHILDREN

Children, in accordance to Islam are entitled to various and several rights. One of the principle rights are is the right to a decent upbringing. This includes religious, ethical and moral guidance to last them for their entire life

Sura 66:6 *'O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones'*.

Parents are to take responsibility over children; the moral, ethical and the basic and essential religious teachings of their children. Parents are deemed to be assessed on this on the Day Of Judgement.

Sura 52:21 *'And those who believe and whose families follow them in Faith, to them shall We join their families: Nor shall We deprive them (of the fruit) of aught of their works: (Yet) is each individual in pledge for his deeds'*.

Adoption

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) took child welfare very seriously. Not only was he an orphan, he adopted a former slave as his son. He once said that a person who cares for an orphaned child will be in Paradise with him, and motioned to show that they would be as close as two fingers of a single hand.

The Qur'an mentions specific points about adoption, and the child's biological family is not cut off:



Sura 33:4-5 '*...Nor has He made your adopted sons your (biological) sons. Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths. But Allah tells (you) the Truth, and He shows the (right) Way. Call them by (the names of) their fathers; that is juster in the sight of Allah. But if you know not their father's (names, call them) your brothers in faith, or your trustees. But there is no blame on you if you make a mistake therein. (What counts is) the intention of your hearts. And Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.*'

The Islamic word for adoption is **kafala** which in essence means 'to feed'. This Quranic reference to this relationship leans more to a foster-parent relationship. There is emphasis on the adoptive family not taking the place of the biological family, but nevertheless their roles are very valued and important.

In Islam, there is a large extended family network. It is rare for a child who is orphaned to have no family member to care for him or her. Islam places emphasis on locating a relative to care for the child in the first instance. Otherwise family friends are important, before others in the community or country. It is seen as preferential to keep with the child's familial, cultural, and religious roots. However, this practice may owe itself to the way of life in areas with war, famine, or economic crisis - when families may be temporarily uprooted or divided.

Sura 93:6-11 '*Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? And He found you wandering, and He gave you guidance. And He found you in need, and made you independent. Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness, nor drive away a petitioner (unheard). But the bounty of the Lord - rehearse and proclaim!*'

Gay / Lesbian Parents

Many gay and lesbian couples who want to raise children either adopt them or use artificial insemination techniques to have biological children. This works well for many, and there is often a large supportive network with good male and female role models for the child. But what about gay and lesbian Muslims who want children? Certainly, many have adopted or had biological children. But could this be reconciled with Islam? One could use the Quranic references above and apply it to homosexual couples, but of course, this comes with controversy and more discussion is needed.

However, it is important to look at many cases where children are orphaned, perhaps affected by great poverty or left in war-torn countries. In some instances, the child may have been subjected to neglect or abuse while under the care of a heterosexual couple. Now, clearly, and abusive parent can be straight or gay – the sexuality is irrelevant. But for those against gay parents, they would be hard-pressed to justify preventing a gay or lesbian couple (Muslim or non-Muslim) who want to adopt a child in a loving environment, free from neglect or abuse – especially when Quranic verses refer to adoption. As for the Islamic stance on gay and lesbian couples who want biological children, as mentioned before more discussion is needed, but the idea isn't necessarily sinful, it just needs more research.



CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Islam and other world faiths hold life as sacred.

Sura 5:32 '*...If anyone kills a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all people. And if anyone saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all people*'.

How can Islam hold life sacred, yet support capital punishment? Another quote from the Quran says:

Sura 6:151 '*...Take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law. Thus does He command you, so that you may learn wisdom*'. (6:151).

Firstly, it must be explained that 'justice and law' are imperative in determining the due punishment. Killing someone as punishment is not something to be dished out lightly, and it should *only* be in *exceptional circumstances*. Secondly, the idea of capital punishment is to serve as a harsh deterrent. There are other forms of punishment, and 'the spirit of the Islamic penal code is to save lives, promote justice, and prevent corruption and tyranny' (<http://islam.about.com>).

<http://islam.about.com> also say the following (under *Capital Punishment in Islam*):

'Islamic philosophy holds that a harsh punishment serves as a deterrent to serious crimes that harm individual victims, or threaten to destabilize the foundation of society. According to Islamic law (in the first verse quoted above), the following two crimes can be punishable by death:

- *Intentional murder*
- *Fasad fil-ardh ("spreading mischief in the land")*

Intentional Murder

The Qur'an legislates the death penalty for murder, although forgiveness and compassion are strongly encouraged. The murder victim's family is given a choice to either insist on the death penalty, or to pardon the perpetrator and accept monetary compensation for their loss (2:178).

Fasaad fi al-ardh

The second crime for which capital punishment can be applied is a bit more open to interpretation. "Spreading mischief in the land" can mean many different things, but is generally interpreted to mean those crimes that affect the community as a whole, and destabilize the society. Crimes that have fallen under this description have included:

- *Treason / Apostasy (when one leaves the faith and joins the enemy in fighting against the Muslim community)*
- *Terrorism*
- *Land, sea, or air piracy*
- *Rape*
- *Adultery*
- *Homosexual behavior*

Actual methods of capital punishment vary from place to place. In some Muslim countries, methods have included beheading, hanging, stoning, and firing squad. Executions are held publicly, to serve as warnings to would-be criminals.

It is important to note that there is no place for vigilantism in Islam -- one must be properly convicted in an Islamic court of law before the punishment can be meted out. The severity of the punishment requires that very strict evidence standards must be met before a conviction is found. The court also has flexibility to order less than the ultimate punishment (for example, imposing fines or prison sentences), on a case-by-case basis'.

HONOUR KILLINGS

'Honour killing' describes the practice of taking someone's life (usually a woman's) due to her bringing shame on her family. This practice contradicts the teachings of the Quran - it is murdering without trial. Such practices often have their roots deep seated in cultural or tribal traditions, often pre-dating Islam. A devout Muslim who follows true Islam would not take another person's life.

Honour killings have been reported in the media as occurring for a wide variety of reasons, from someone eloping with an undesired suitor to committing adultery. Clearly, much of this 'guilty' behaviour cannot even be considered a 'sin', e.g. such as in cases where someone chooses to marry someone of their own free will. However, even in cases of adultery, honour killings are no excuse. The Quran places emphasis on Muslims taking responsibility for their own actions, on Muslims accepting the consequences from Allah.

Sura 17:15 'Whoever chooses to follow the right path follows it but for his own good; and whoever goes astray, goes but astray to his own hurt; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden'

An individual's guilt cannot be transferred to another persons. The concept of killing someone due to shame brought on the family is a form of domination and hatred to women who are seen as less equal – this could not be more un-Islamic. Those accusing a woman of adultery must, in the eyes of Islam, give sufficient proof and must not deny the accused her right to a fair trial. Mankind is equal in the eyes of God.

Sura 5:32 '...if any one slew a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people; and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people...'



In short, there is no place for honour killings in Islam, and it is a Muslim's duty to campaign against this barbaric practice, which is incorrectly claimed by some to be in the name of Islam.

Sura 4:135 'O you who believe! Stand out firmly for injustice, as witnesses to god, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: For God can best protect both. Follow no the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that you do'

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