

# The Case Against: The Boyfriend/Girlfriend Culture amongst Non-Muslims

## Pre-amble

Young Muslims in the UK are naturally faced with struggles of preserving their Muslim identity amongst the many non-Muslim influences around them. Many may do well to observe certain obligations of our Deen such as staying away from alcohol, performing Friday prayers, and fasting and abstention during Ramadhan, it seems they are much more likely to fall down when it comes to refraining from the temptation to 'date', and beginning premarital relationships with members of the opposite sex. Therefore the issue of abstaining from 'the girlfriend/boyfriend' lifestyle proves to be a real weak point in striving to be Muslim.

This article takes a look at the reasons why there is no room for this lifestyle choice for anyone who wants to call themselves a believer.

## Premarital 'relationships'

### ***The concept and practice of premarital relationships goes against Islam***

"Dating" as it is currently practiced in much of the world is usually where a young man and woman (or boy/girl) engage in a one-on-one intimate relationship, spending time together alone, "getting to know each other" in a very deep way before committing to that person IF AT ALL. This is not advised and should be avoided amongst Muslims because it goes against the way Islam prescribes a man and woman (not Boy or Girl) should be inter-relating to each other. Islam recommends relations between the sexes to occur for the sake of honest, long term and honourable commitments between mature minded adults in, and for, the union of marriage.

### ***Much of the Boyfriend/girlfriend relations practised ignore important moral values***

Moral standards are disregarded in much of modern, secular society which places less emphasis on them, and so those that follow these dating practices begin to follow the behaviours of a society with a fickle moral fibre, only to their detriment. The forever documented troubles that play out are the well known teenage pregnancies (*which the UK leads Europe in*), the dangers and degradation of women/men 'out on the pull' on weekend nights that end up being prone to being taken advantage of, humiliation through promiscuousness, drunken or intoxicated behaviour, in extreme cases even drawn into rape.

The frequency of intimate relations and fornication leads to the abuse of an activity meant for procreation, and to be conducted within the bounds of marriage, becoming engrained by society. It also forms part of the crooked lifestyle of self-annihilation and hedonism common amongst primarily young adults fracturing the health and civility of themselves and others.

Further more to the point of civility<sup>1</sup>, the very act of courtship, or seeking a partner in the non-Muslim world is imbued with the act of luring the opposite sex towards oneself, through dressing provocatively, through enticing intimate emotions and tempting others to – again not for a long term commitment but more for short term, self fulfilling acts of lust, more than for what is termed as 'Love'.

Cultural inventions such as Valentines Day, prom nights, weekend nights at clubs and bars commonly associate with this problem, as well as popular media and advertising constantly promoting such lewd and undignified attitudes and behaviours. This stimulates a cycle of immorality, behaviour devoid of ethics and any truly self beneficial purpose – we are all familiar with the common 'one night stands' which result from such acts and in themselves are problematic and abusive of emotions.

***The attitude to relationships and the intentions behind them aren't always honest or wholesome***

Dating begins for some from around the age of 10 years or even younger, but what does a child of 10 or even someone up to the age of 18 know about 'Love' in the first place, when what they practice neglects the true compassion, support and long term union which it should? Teenagers are not mature enough mentally to be responsible for or within such a real relationship. It would also be admitted by such people (or even their parents) that this is 'just a bit of fun'. Such 'Fun', when practised even at the common ages of mid-late teenagers leads to the problems mentioned above, and again, cannot be the basis of a fulfilling and lasting relationship if it is based on the wrong reasons.

Moreover, even if no such harm comes to those within the 'relationship', this attitude does nothing more than advocate the abuse of emotions and partners as a means to an end/self satisfaction (objects of sexual pleasure, desire) where peoples 'Love' for others is recycled time and again, before each person has built a record of number of partners/sexual conquests which in the end are meaningless and in many cases a cause of regret afterwards.

Another common example is the known conduct amongst teenagers and students who take advantage of the age of consent laws and indulge in intimate relations. The law here is rendered futile as it allows immorality and risks to teens and also adults, however this is considering those that adhere to the age limit stipulated by the Law. There are many that commit under aged offences quite freely. In consequence Governments around the world must spend millions each year 'educating' society and youngsters of the health risks associated with this – clearly this has become a serious problem.

One explanation given for dating amongst youth is that it serves as a way to 'meet' and 'get to know' the opposite sex. Clearly this can be done in a much healthier and effective way without such emotional and behavioural indiscretion and harm, and the alternative to this will be discussed later. The main point here is that the intention must be wholesome, and done by mature minded adults – and frequently is not.

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<sup>1</sup> The Western world frequently describes itself, through its own media, as 'civilised' society. However this goes against the behaviour of that society in reality around us.

This problem also applies to those who continue to practise indiscretions even into their 30s and 40s (and upwards) – again, such conduct has become habitual and accepted as the norm - but this in no way means the dangers are gone.

***These relations stir conflict between families, men and women and promote distrust between the sexes***

The stories of relationships started and which have then ended due to family/inter-partner conflicts they have enticed are many. They all commonly include: Lack of true commitment from either partner, adultery bought on by poor attitudes to relationships, dishonest behaviour in starting the relationship, disagreements between parents and children about the people within the relationship, thus causing animosity within the family. No couple can really envisage a happy marriage/future together if the union fosters bad family relations and the very faithful nature of a real relationship is constantly tested.

Furthermore, any disputes arising from past relationships may linger on and build up the 'battle' of the sexes frequent in modern society. This in turn will upset the strength of the couple as a unit which itself has negative implications for society, which needs to be based on solid unions between couples and their eventual children.

***A union between males and females needs to be based on more than just emotions***

It is not a sin if you feel a special affinity or inclination towards a certain individual since human beings have no control on such natural inclinations. We are, however, definitely responsible and accountable if we get carried away by such feelings and take specific actions or steps that might be deemed as **Haraam**<sup>2</sup> (outlined above).

In such ways, it is no exaggeration to state that private meetings, whether for the intention of marriage or not, can easily lead to the dictates of the head, and the heart (i.e. 'qalb') being ruled by passions. In short, your emotions can cloud your judgement. This will often lead to difficult situations ranging between the various extremes described earlier, but all very damaging in their own way.

***Modern societal behaviour provides the wrong influences, which in turn have negative impacts on us and we should not follow these***

Society promoting relationships amongst the sexes from an early age is at odds with the sober and balanced love/attachment (**muwaddat**) promoted by The Qur'an, (The 'Criterion (**Al-Fur'qaan**)').

These Memes has devastating impacts. We are constantly fed "romantic"<sup>3</sup> messages (Hollywood 'chick flicks', the Indian Bollywood hype, soap operas and teen drama's, pop/rock and R'n'B songs heavy with the theme of sexual

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<sup>2</sup> Sheikh Ahmad Kutty, Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

<sup>3</sup> What is the meaning of 'Romance'?; to be ROMAN-tic – A greek word, effectively meaning to use Roman language, their arts, their culture, to act/be like the Romans – given their history and Godless social norms it follows that being romantic is itself contrary to the way of Islam

relationships<sup>4</sup> and the constant boyfriend/girlfriend melodrama's being played out in the lives of young people from a junior age onwards) which advocate indiscriminate mixing and interrelations based on lust and self-satisfaction, and as mentioned before between boys and girls not mature enough to take on the real responsibilities of a union, let alone a marriage.

Further, the notions of adultery – as serious as this is, is taken lightly, being the subject of many common jokes and publicity, and also a common factor in the 'breaks ups' of girl/boy relationships and also marriages today.

### **Seeking partners in Islam**

#### ***Seeking partners should be for marriage only***

Relationships can and must only exist in the context of marriage; therefore the issue for me is ascertaining the right and wrong way to go about seeking a marriage partner. Any 'partner' gained with no intention of marrying them, for the sake of a casual relationship and 'for fun' is unacceptable as it inevitably becomes damaging.

As with many things in Islam, if the correct boundaries are defined and respected, there can be flexibility and choice within seeking partners and it need not become restrictive and prescribed purely by parents upon children. The following is an exploration of recommended and 'best practice' methods which many currently observe.

When seeking a marriage partner meeting people with the consent of their families/guardians/etc - in PUBLIC places only and on the condition that correct **adab** (etiquette) is observed is diligent. We have seen the effects of the sexual laws of attraction, which is why having chaperones is advisable. It is very much the issue of meeting girls/boys outside of the family environment, or rather, without any supervision, which proves a sticking point.

It is also lawful to see a potential partner and meet them formally in the presence of family members in order to avoid any situations that may otherwise lead into indecent behaviour between them, or that which may de-sanctify the union of marriage.

#### ***It is something which needs to be treated seriously and considered by the whole family***

The choice of a marriage partner is one of the most important decisions a person will make in his or her lifetime. It therefore should not be left to chance or the hormones. It should be taken as seriously as any other major decision in life - with prayer, careful investigation/consideration, and family involvement. Relationships started outside of Islam lack this – and thus build on their problematic nature.

The type of focused courtship advocated above helps ensure the strength of the marriage, by drawing upon family elders' wisdom and guidance, ensuring that the choice is involves a careful, objective evaluation of the compatibility of the couple.

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<sup>4</sup> Forty percent of early adolescents' music contains sexual content. In specific genres, 57% of R&B music (e.g., Destiny's Child, Janet Jackson), 48% of Rap lyrics (e.g., Snoop Dog, Ludacris), and 19% of Heavy Metal music (e.g, Incubus and Metallica) was identified as sexual

## Exploring what the Quran says

***'Love' has a different meaning in Islam, thus should be treated as differently to that which is practised by non-Muslims***

The Qur'an has described the etiquette of social conduct between opposite sexes governed by a union only in the bonds of marriage (versus couples that choose to remain unmarried), and one which stipulates that both the man and the woman have mutual Love (**muwaddat**) for one another, that both protect each others best interests and that together they should help to live better lives together.

Exploring the definition of Love<sup>5</sup> is important here. **Muwaddat** is the closest Arabic word to this, taken to mean attachment, affection and friendship towards someone or even something. Looking at its use and context in the verses below enforces that it is a balanced, sober union with meaning and beneficial long term purpose:

(30:21) And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may  **dwell in tranquillity**  with them and He has put  **affection/attachment**  and  **compassion/mercy**  between you; verily, in that are Signs for those who reflect.

(7:189) It is He who created you from a single person and made his mate [i.e. complementary opposite] of like nature in order that he might  **dwell**  with her (in a state of calm).

Looking at the same meaning for the word 'Love' in the Oxford minidictionary<sup>6</sup>, the extreme differences of opinion become evident: "warm liking or affection; sexual passion;...In Love: feeling (esp. sexual) love for another person".

So this goes beyond relationships in the 'responsible affection' sense to those purely in the 'passionate/strongly emotional' sense, which lends itself towards irrational, self-gratifying behaviour, which is completely harmful and haraam.

Another explanation of how the relationship between men and women should play out, and therefore which shows the contradiction to the 'relationships' carried out by non-Muslims, is:

(2:187) [Your wives,] they are your  **garments** . And you [their husbands] are their  **garments** ...

This is generally understood to imply the "closeness" of the husband-wife relationship. However, The Qur'an states that the best  **libaas**  (garment) is that of  **TAQWA**  (7:26), which originally referred to "that which affords preservation of self".

Furthermore, read in 21:80, an additional meaning to (2:187) which is revealed connected to the idea of 'provision of protection in a potentially life threatening situation':

(21:80) And We taught him [i.e. Solomon] the art of making  **garments (of mail) to protect/fortify you in your daring** . Are you then thankful?

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<sup>5</sup> 'muwaddat' word mentioned 5 times in The Qur'an: 4:73, 5:82, 29:25, 30:21, and 60:7

<sup>6</sup> J. M Hawkins, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 1990.

This shows the importance of a spouse manifesting such a trait, viz. being "fortified" (**muhsana**) – which is usually rendered as "chaste", this is also made explicit in 5:5, along with referring to the harmful behaviours of non-Muslims:

(5:5) This day are (all) good things made lawful for you. The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. And so are the **fortified women of the believers** and the **fortified women of those who received the Scripture before you** (lawful for you) when ye give them their marriage portions and live with them in honour, not in fornication, nor taking them as secret concubines. Whoso denies the faith, his work is vain and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter.

***Social conduct between men and women must be governed by modesty and with the right moral intentions***

When young people are getting to know each other, being alone together is a temptation toward wrongdoing. At all times, Muslims should follow the commands of the Qur'an (24:30-31) to "lower their gaze and guard their modesty...." Islam recognizes that we are human and are given to human weakness, so this rule provides safeguards for our own sake. Therefore, couples agreeing to meet in chaperoned, group environments act within this guideline.

The rules governing the dress and appearance of men and women in public/social occasions must be kept in mind in all situations, even when one is looking for a partner in marriage. Muslim men and women must not attract each other's towards themselves and both should dress modestly – contrary to the provocative dressing between couples on dates and in courtship.

Another guideline laid out in the Qur'an, which governs that the intentions of anyone meeting to find out about prospective partners, concerns Allah (**swt**) being wise to knowing the true intentions behind all our actions, and so the onus is on us all to act in accordance with His guidelines.

(33:51) Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest: and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside. This were nigher to the cooling of their eyes, the prevention of their grief, and their satisfaction - that of all of them - with that which thou hast to give them: and **Allah knows (all) that is in your hearts**: and Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing.

Again these are examples of a safeguard being taken when two people have agreed to honourable intentions to meet and find out about each other.

***Married couples should embody certain characteristics that are beneficial for them and others***

We earlier touched on discussion of long-term commitment between a man and women in marriage. Crucially, The Qur'an describes the more general relationship between believing men and believing women as one that is characterised by this joint commitment, and it being one that is to a common social, political and moral programme of action:

(9: 71-72) **The believers, men and women, are protectors (*awliya*) one of another: they enjoin what is recognised [by The Criterion of right and wrong] and forbid what is not recognized [by The Criterion of right and wrong]: they uphold *as-salaat*, render *az-zakaat* and obey Allah and His apostle. On them will Allah pour His mercy; for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise. Allah has promised to believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow to dwell therein and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss in the Good Pleasure of Allah: that is the supreme felicity.**

The Qur'an also lays down a number of regulations concerning marriage that bear on the issue of '**sakina/taskeen**' [=calm, stability, harmony] in relationships between men and women, note how these also stress the problems with 'believers' marrying 'non-believers' and how this indeed becomes a source of conflict and dis-harmony, and therefore should be avoided.

This is also a response to the transgressions of so-called Muslims that court obvious non-Muslims (e.g. A 'Pakistani' going out with an 'English' person), but also, moreover, to any so called Muslim who courts another so called Muslim (e.g two Pakistani's courting each other) whilst both people actually pay little heed of Qur'anic guidance:

(60: 12) O Prophet! If believing women come unto you, taking oath of allegiance unto you that they will ascribe nothing as partner unto Allah, and will neither steal nor commit adultery nor kill their children, nor produce any lie that they have devised between their hands and feet, **nor disobey you in what is right**, then accept their allegiance and ask Allah to forgive them. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

(4: 25) If any of you have not the means wherewith to **wed free believing women** they may **wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess**: and Allah hath full knowledge about your faith. **You are one from another**: wed them with the leave of their owners and give them their dowers according to what is reasonable: they should be chaste not lustful nor taking paramours: when they are taken in wedlock if they fall into shame their punishment is half that for free women. This (permission) is for those among you who fear sin; but it is better for you that you practice self-restraint: and Allah is Oft-forgiving Most Merciful.

(2: 221) **Wed not idolatresses till they believe**; for lo! a believing bondwoman is better than an idolatress though she please you; **and give not your daughters in marriage to idolaters till they believe**, for lo! a believing slave is better than an idolater though he please you. These invite unto the Fire, and Allah invites unto the Garden, and unto forgiveness by His grace, and expounds thus His revelations to mankind that haply they may remember.

***Muslims should guard against conflicts between couples and men and women in general***

However, consistent with (2:102), The Qur'an also states that enmity/hostility ('**aduwwat**') between believing men (and, by implication, women) and women (and, by implication, men) is quite possible and something about which to be wary. Here it is worth expounding the commonly held believe by Muslims and non-Muslims about a marriage or relationship being something with which you have to 'work at' and invest in. Again, at odds with any temporary and self gratifying union practiced in secular environments:

(64:14-15) O you who believe! Lo! **Among your wives and your children there are enemies for you.** Therefore, beware of them. And if you efface and overlook and forgive, then lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Your wealth and your children are only a temptation, whereas Allah! With Him is an immense reward.

Nonetheless, the actual source of hostility, and the one with whom believers - men and women alike - should maintain a condition of hostility is **ash-shayth'aan**, that is, the personality type that is alienated from God/Allah (**swt**), and, alienates others from God/Allah (**swt**). As The Qur'an clearly states:

(35:6) Verily Satan is an enemy to you: **so treat him as an enemy.** He only invites his adherents that they may become Companions of the Blazing Fire.

It follows from this, therefore, that believing men and women should:

- Unite on the basis of a shared transcendental objective, that is, Al-Islam or comprehensive self-surrender to God/Allah (**swt**);
- Reconcile themselves to each other, especially as a married couple; and
- Maintain a mutually defensive position in relation to ongoing threats posed by their real enemy – The Satanic Personality, which will manifest itself in temptations to commit harm to the relationship or any other general transgression whilst within marriage or as a 'believer' (i.e. adultery).

Moreover, guidelines such as this are laid down so men and women DO NOT view each other as objects of any form of sexual or other mere pleasure, and in order to purify their intentions towards the opposite sex. Moreover, man and women are together for a reason and this transcends way beyond the physical aspect.

Furthermore, Allah (**swt**) says in 2:208: "O ye who believe! **Enter into Islam whole-heartedly**; and follow not the footsteps of the evil one; for he is to you an avowed enemy."

So here it emphasises the hypocrisy of so called Muslims to engage in this behaviour whilst seemingly adhering to other aspects of the faith. You cannot be a 'Muslim' (i.e. one who is in *active submission* to Allah – through *obeying* the laws laid out in the Qur'an) and follow only selected parts of that faith. Either 100% of Islam is to be strived for or else none of it at all.

## **Islamic matrimonial methods**

### ***Islamic matrimonies work better by negating the dishonesty, risk and dangers of the boy/girl relationship***

There is a lot more that is to be judged when getting married. For instance, the most important criterion would be the religious orientation and piety of the prospective partner. On top of that, many people look for additional, secondary, things including beauty, financial situation or status of the family. In order to find a partner with these qualities, one does not necessarily need to meet in private. Having geared the intention of meetings with prospective partners around ascertaining if a life time commitment together will be successful, the conversations and observations undergone in these situations will be enough to find out about WHO the person is and within THEIR own environment.

This way, the most important predicators to how good a partner that person can be will be evident and once they become known and liked by the other person, all other factors become irrelevant and will ensure lead these to a successful and very happy marriage.

Finding out about likes, dislikes, relationships within families, the families themselves and personality can all be done as effectively here as in private meetings, but moreover with more honesty too. On the other hand, wanting to find out how they dance, seeing a movie with them or needing to have a private dinner with them will NOT make a difference to this.

### ***The proven ingredients of a successful relationship are paid attention to***

Islam teaches us that a male and female can build up a good relationship founded on marriage. Stories in the media and in movies are not helpful to make a person comply with the teachings of Islam, but are instead helpful in making people desire apparent fairytale relationships, which in reality prove to be anything but (i.e. 'Hollywood break ups'). In short they believe the false hype surrounding them.

It has also been proven that, (and many Muslims and non-Muslims alike can testify to this), Marriages that are usually good and lasting are those that start at the least affection. That affection grows after marriage and maybe it will grow until the couples continue their companionship in the hereafter. This adds an important dimension – relationships should not be as fleeting as other things in this 'earthly' life. This in no way suggests marrying people you do not know or do not feel an affection for. As expressed above, once the most important factors of someone's character are known this provides the basis for progressing onto a solid and happy union.

Arranged marriages are still regarded as more successful than conventional marriages, and part of the reason for this is because of the ensuring of common ideals between partners. More importantly, it is because of the concentration on bringing up a strong family after marriage, based on the commitment and affection built up between the couple themselves. In short, these types of couples have the most important priorities and values agreed upon.

Any such marriage will maximise these benefits, as opposed to other forms of marriage where the couples persist with self indulgence (i.e. its about the couple first, and the family afterwards), do not focus as much on bringing up children in the same way and who ultimately jeopardise their future happiness and also the

contribution a couple could make to society through: sending the wrong examples to children, not focusing them towards common goals, and ultimately a couple's offspring end up carrying out the flaws and deficits influenced by the non stable marriages and incorrect attitudes of their parents. In other words, a couple's success in marriage will be seen by looking at the (immaterial) success of the children they have raised, to see how well rounded they become and the quality of life they themselves can provide for future generations.

### **Conclusion**

From this we can see that the Boyfriend/Girlfriend culture – that is, the premarital and explicit relations that exist between Men and Women from youth to adulthood - does not exist within the bounds of Islam, and goes against the more wholesome and pure attachments between Men and Women which is advocated for mature and responsible believers, and for which a distinct purpose is meant - ultimately leading to the most successful relations between the sexes.

Anyone engaging in these types of non-Islamic activities will inevitably find themselves following the whims of an immoral and imbalanced society which perpetuates such behaviour to the detriment of its people and risks to society. The consequences of such actions are evident: engraining conflict between men and women, the break up of families and family relations and tearing the fabric of a healthy society through the pursuit of their own lusts, passions, and fornications. It is evident that crime, prejudice and disharmony in society are fuelled by these actions.

Instead, men and women seeking partners should seek a long term commitment in the form of marriage, and with partners that share their beliefs, so that both will enhance each others lives through striving in the way of Islam. They should do so with the correct, focused intentions and with modesty, but not for mere 'fun', their own desires or under the misguidance that dating or other such activities are acceptable. In turn, this more harmonious relationship will in turn be the most stable, happy and have the most benefit to all involved both now and in the future.

### **References**

1. Teen Media Study – Explicit Content Media Diet

[http://www.unc.edu/depts/jomc/teenmedia/pdf/key\\_findings\\_from\\_the\\_teen\\_media\\_study.doc](http://www.unc.edu/depts/jomc/teenmedia/pdf/key_findings_from_the_teen_media_study.doc)

2. The Holy Qur'an (See:) <http://www.openburhan.com>
3. Based on research by S. M . Ali: Battle of the Sexes

### **Further information**

For further information on what The Qur'an has to say about a number of issues, please visit the following website: [www.bandung2.co.uk](http://www.bandung2.co.uk)