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Veiling a kindergarten-age girl? - Children and emotional abuse - Labelling children with the faith of their parents is obscene

Friday 24 February 2017, by [NAMAZIE Maryam](#) (Date first published: 6 February 2008).

Since I began calling myself an ex-Muslim, there have been quite a number of people questioning me on whether I was ever a 'real Muslim' to begin with. The BBC Asian Network host (can't quite remember his name) even wanted to know whether I had prayed 5 times a day; attended a mosque; wore the hejab. And some commentators have questioned whether a Shia can ever be considered a Muslim.

But everyone and their uncles are deemed 'Muslims' just by the nature of where they were born or their family background - no questions asked.

And this is particularly true about children.

Frankly, I think it's obscene to label children with the real or imputed religion of their parents. We wouldn't dream of labelling a child as an 'extreme right' one because his father belonged to the BNP or a Labour or Conservative child by parental association but we as a society have very little problem doing so when it comes to religion.

We have come a long way from the days when children were seen to be the property of their parents to do with them as they liked. Today, in Britain at least, a child cannot be denied medical attention because her parents don't believe in blood transfusions, can't be beaten and starved to 'exorcise demons' or be genitally mutilated and married at nine because it is her parents' religion.

But we obviously haven't come far enough to stop the more subtle, but just as harmful, forms of emotional abuse like sending children to Islamic schools and child veiling.

How can it be anything but abusive when girls are sexualised at a young age, kept segregated from boys, taught that they are different and unequal?

And it has nothing to do with choice. It's interesting how children don't have the choice to go to school or smoke for example but when you question religion's role in their lives, it suddenly becomes a matter of their choice - as if they really had any.

As Mansoor Hekmat, the late Iranian Marxist has said:

"The child has no religion, tradition and prejudices. She has not joined any religious sect. She is a new human being who, by accident and irrespective of her will has been born into a family with specific religion, tradition, and prejudices."

It is indeed the task of society to neutralise the negative effects of this blind lottery. Society is duty-bound to provide fair and equal living conditions for children, their growth and development, and their active participation in social life. Anybody who should try to block the normal social life of a

child, exactly like those who would want to physically violate a child according to their own culture, religion, or personal or collective complexes, should be confronted with the firm barrier of the law and the serious reaction of society.

No nine year old girl chooses to be married, sexually mutilated, serve as house maid and cook for the male members of the family, and be deprived of exercise, education, and play. The child grows up in the family and in society according to established customs, traditions, and regulations, and automatically learns to accept these ideas and customs as the norms of life.

To speak of the choice of the Islamic veil by the child herself is a ridiculous joke. Anyone who presents the mechanism of the veiling of a kindergarten-age girl as her own 'democratic choice' either comes from outer space, or is a hypocrite who does not deserve to participate in the discussion about children's rights and the fight against discrimination.' [1]

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P.S.

* Children and emotional abuse - Labelling children with the faith of their parents is obscene:
<http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-faith-column/2008/02/children-parents-religion>

Footnotes

[1] ESSF (article 40389), [Islam, Children's Rights, and the Hijab-gate of Rah-e-Kargar - In Defence of the Prohibition of the Islamic Veil for Children.](#)