

Look before you, think, before you look!

By Natasha Chandra

“Isn’t it against your religion to do drugs and drink?” was the innocent and ignorant question asked. “Isn’t it against anyone’s religion to do that?” was my confused reply. “No but yours is more serious isn’t it coz... coz... you’re Muslim.” On what basis, may I ask, do people make these sorts of assumptions? The answer to that question is quite obvious- your skin is brown and therefore you are Muslim. When I protested against this ignorance and automatic assumption, the person in question simply said, “oh yeah! You don’t wear a scarf do you?” How can we call ourselves a multi-cultural society when we remain so ignorant? And it doesn’t end here. “You are from India and therefore you are not Muslim” are the thoughts of a few British Muslims. I am what they call “Indian”.

I am not trying to insult anyone here; I am simply trying to raise awareness about people’s prejudices. And one way or another it must be done. And if it means doing it now I will be the one to do it. My mission- “Educate and destroy all ignorance!”

Four of the major world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism originated in India, while Islam and Judaism and Zoroastrianism arrived in the first millennium. To date 80.5% of India’s population is Hindu. 13.4% are Muslim, 20.3% are Christian, 1.9% are Sikhs and the rest comprise of Buddhists, Jains, Jews Zoroastrians and others. So now tell me! If you call me “Indian” because I am from India what does that make me? And how many people have originated from the Indian sub continent are brown? And by the Indian sub continent I mean, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh... and

India. Am I Muslim because I am brown? Imagine what it would be like if everyone assumed you were Christian because you were white?

So, what must we do to remedy the situation? No, I do not ask you to take out text books and research about different religions and people all over the world. I am only requesting that a person should not be ignorantly “defined” or “categorized” on the basis of the color of their skin. I am requesting that people take a general interest in the varied beliefs and religions. I am requesting that people stop thinking that all white people are Christian and all brown people are Muslim. I am simply asking people to learn more about the world. I am asking people to accept and respect each other. Get up and look beyond the color and beyond the scarf! Embrace! Acknowledge! Respect! And always remember to look before you think and think before you look!