

## A reply to Tanveer Ahmed's article

I found the article "Draw back the veil" by Tanveer Ahmed that was published in the Courier Mail (15-Oct-2006), rather interesting. Finding a correlation between a tragic event (**stabbing death of a Gold Coast woman in a domestic dispute**) that occurred on the Gold Coast with religion or culture is naïve. It is regrettable to see that someone is misinterpreting a tragic incident that has nothing to do with migrants, religion, Australian values or so called 'learning English'.

It is worth reading any article that is coherent with knowledge based viewpoints on various issues from writers, journalists, academics, critics or from general public, but this article is not substantiated by facts. It is the duty of a writer to base his or her arguments on solid facts and with relevant merits especially when the article is about a community or a nation as a whole.

Interestingly, the story had overturned as Gold Coast police had ruled out any religious motive in this domestic incident. Unjustified allegations that Muslims or migrants do not let their children integrate, should not be made. Integration has no relation whatsoever to this incident.

There are reports of many such cases of domestic violence happening in Australia and all around the world. According to a recent National Domestic Violence Hotline survey, "4 million American women experience serious assault by a partner during an average 12-month period" (article by Yvonne Ridley in the Washington Post <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/10/20/AR2006102001259.html>).

Yvonne also boldly notes that honour killing, child brides, forced marriages, female circumcision are all cultural practices. These cultural issues and customs have nothing to do with Islam.

"The debate on integration and Australian values is one worth having" – Yes indeed, but that debate should be instrumented by people who have adequate knowledge, expertise and research on various social issues. The debate is one way of gathering different viewpoints from debaters, but integrating a community is a PROCESS. And I believe that the process should be unbiased and neutral.

I also believe that one of the mainstream Australian values is "Respect others, irrespective of their religion, culture, background, colour or race" – however, unfortunately it is fading out from the broader community, due to media bungles and politicisation of issues with religion and culture for political gains.

It is not an offence wearing the veil, having beard or wearing long dresses as it is also not an offence wearing mini skirts or shorts with singlets. It is not an act of disrespecting a particular value, rather choosing a way of life that provides an individual the inner peace that we all seek. This is in no way creating a cultural shield or rejecting the adopted country by the migrants.

The author also claimed that most of the Muslim migrants came from village based clans-groups. Their ideologies are derived from such backgrounds; therefore they place “importance on honour, shame and the obsession with saving face at the expense of family members”. It is a ridiculous claim. Issues should not be generalised. Majority of the Bangladeshi community have migrated as skilled professionals. They came from urban backgrounds and are contributing to the broader Australian society at various professional levels. They work as academics, doctors, engineers, IT professionals, senior executives, researchers and many other professionals.

Surely we are in Australia for a better life and most migrants are proud to be connected to their roots and culture, at the same time upholding the Australian values. Becoming an Australian does not require us to disrespect our backgrounds, upbringing or religion.

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