

Hasan's Story

Hasan is a Muslim and Hasan identifies as non-normative in terms of sexuality, intersex by biology and male by gender.

I live in London and I grew up in Birmingham. My background is Balkan Muslim and I was born intersex male and raised as male.

Reconciling being LGBT+ and Muslim implies that the two things are separate, therefore I don't have an issue reconciling my sexual, gender and religious identities, in fact the issue is wholly with the way we are represented by heteronormative Muslims.



“I am out and when I was younger it was more difficult as I was very religious and Salafi so although I didn't suffer violence or outright exclusion, I knew I wouldn't change my sexuality and gender identity and so I had to find places to belong. Now I am involved in a Sufi movement where I am totally accepted and loved. They are called the Threshold Society.”

There have been some issues as the issue of gender segregation has been of particular relevance to me as my biological sex doesn't match my gender assignment. I am an intersex by biological sex and male gender. This means that sometimes the ways in which gender is framed as binary causes me to question my visibility. It also means that because I am largely attracted to males and non-binaries and so where I stand when praying is problematic.

“My experiences now as a Muslim are not negative, I do not face discrimination or overt prejudice, my religious community is open minded, traditional and I feel at home. Islam and the particular emphasis on the spirituality of Imam Ali, Hajji Bektash Veli and Jelaluddin Rumi empowers me and helps me connect to the Divine (Allah) and to feel whole and present in whatever my gender and sexuality expression is.”

Things are changing for LGBT+ Muslims. When I was a teenager and began practicing my religion I never met anyone who was ok with non-normativity of sexuality and gender. We were pathologised and labelled with a “condition” that needed fixing. We are lucky to live in a secular multicultural society because it affords us rights and education which empowers us. But the reconciliation of our cultures and religion within that secularism remains complex. My role models are people like Mona El-Tahawy, Reza Aslan, Hasan Piker, Siraj Al-Haqq Kugle and Kabir Helminski. Organisations like Hidayah are important for people to find community and to learn about their agency and rights, and as places to explore religion on their own terms.”