The conflict over Islam and the West began many years ago and the ignorant viewpoints on Islam are historical ones. Since 11 September panic has set in, and from the debate that emerges the question of how such a ‘civilized’ part of the world could be so blind. Information is everywhere, from academia to the media: becoming properly informed demands no great effort. But ironically it does not matter how much you have in terms of luxury or financial security, as these do not equate to common sense. Such a void is not the monopoly of the West; it is alive and well in every society. What is wrong with Islam? What is its problem with the West? Why cannot Islam just be peaceable? This question goes on and the answers are seemingly in ‘recycle’ mode.

Indeed, we have baptized ourselves. The current events and our opinions show that we do not fear confrontation and that we are willing to debate on an equal basis. Let me say that Fun Da Mental is not entirely a Muslim band. Our members come from many different faiths. Nation Records works with people who, like us, have many colours, cultures, and religions – or no religion. The music industry in general failed to engage with artists in an honest way and provide musicians the platform to represent their music and politics. At Nation Records the integrity of the music is paramount, whereas politics is an option for the musicians. They know they have a label that will not restrict them in aising their opinions. On the contrary, Nation Records encourages this. Asian Dub Foundation, Transglobal Underground, Natasha Atlas, Joi, Loog Gane, and all the others have something to say about the situation in which we live, all of them taking different stances. This attitude from the label has also made enemies and has forced it to operate in a very underground way. Shops have restricted our products and radio/television stations have been inactive.

Acts of injustice

There is a grave paranoia in the West, and what it does not understand it wants to destroy; any attempts to take a stance against its domination will now officially be tackled. History documents the domination and it continues on. If a culture cannot be subverted or a selectable commodity, it is a threat to the Western lifestyle.

In the current climate, we see a demonizing of over a billion people around the globe – something not new to humankind. But what is it about this religion, this ‘Islam’, that causes so much conflict for the self-elected ‘civilized’ world? Is this the trial in religion’, as the Qur’an clearly states. Islam is a test, not a dominating ideology. ‘There is no compulsion in religion’, as the Qur’an clearly states.

All my life in the UK I have witnessed Muslim minorities never being embraced and even to this day we are reminded what status the system expects us to adhere to. Some do, and some refuse to entertain an ounce of it. The blindness of the injustice is unbelievable and this needs to be confronted. Day in, day out engagement in any meaningful dialogue is suppressed. We are allowed but seconds on the media channels to suddenly say everything we wanted to for the last 20 or 40 years. We are invited into the boxing ring for 12 rounds, both hands tied; in the 12th round one hand is freed, nonetheless we survive the 12 rounds.

The debate that generally take place are with people who have absolutely no knowledge of Islam. They pick up on the weaknesses and failures of Muslims as if that is what the religion represents. A religion cannot be judged by its followers but a follower can be judged by his religion. Islam cannot be questioned, only understood: this is the belief of Muslims. It is divine word, no discussion and no debate, only a questioning of how to understand it and act according to it. Islam covers not only the spiritual element of life, it touches every aspect, from science to capitalism, from materialism, and most of all justice based on absolute equality.

But how can one who has rebelled to the maximum, and continues to do so, have no problem with religion? The Qur’an, once looked into, can reveal some very anarchic views and non-conformities. The problem in the West with religion is that it uses its own guilt complex and failings of Christianity (people have let the religion fall) to judge other faiths. Does this mean we have to have a perfect society? This is not possible, as the Word reveals. Islam is a test, not a dominating ideology. ‘There is no compulsion in religion’, as the Qur’an clearly states. Where do our music stand with respect to Islam? The best way to explain it is to highlight our observations of minds, manufactured, and manipulated contemporary music – the epitome of which is MTV culture. In a simple explanation, Islam forbids this (and other sorts of exploitation).

Fun Da Mental, Radical Music, Political Protest