

## Comments on cartoons about Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

By Tariq Mustafa

Recent developments following the publication in the Danish press of pejorative cartoons concerning the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are moving ominously in the direction of increasing tensions between the Western and the Muslim worlds. Tempers are rising, collateral damage is increasing and the longer-term effects on both sides will be entirely negative. Our world, which is fast becoming one world, can ill afford this kind of a development. What we need is more discussion and dialogue and certainly cannot afford confrontation, accompanied by death and destruction.

While tempers are rising and the shouting match is getting shrill and ugly, no serious attention seems to be given to the real issues involved, Viewpoint of the perpetrators is that they must defend freedom of the Press, which they contend to be one of the hallmarks of the western political system. Granted that be so, but isn't that freedom subject to fairness, good taste and circumscribed by accountability, which is surely an equally cherished value, and that is getting totally ignored in this debate

Let us set aside for a moment that this caricaturing has deeply injured the feelings of a large part of the worlds population, the question that needs to be asked is how close is this caricature to the generally accepted and recognized historical personality of the Prophet Muhammad. To establish this let us not go by the Muslims view of their prophet since that is likely to be a biased one. Let us instead see what, non-Muslim scholars, have to say about the personality and character of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

**-William Draper in 'History of Intellectual Development of Europe' says**

Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569, was born in Mecca, in Arabia, the man who, **of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race... To be the religious head of many empires, to guide the daily life of one-third of the human race, may perhaps justify the title of a Messenger of God.**

**Alphonse de LaMartaine in 'Histoire de la Turquie,' Paris, 1854, says**

**Never has a man undertaken a work so far beyond human power with so feeble means, for he (Muhammad) had in the conception as well as in the execution of such a great design, no other instrument than himself and no other aid except a handful of men living in a corner of the desert. Finally, never has a man accomplished such a huge and lasting revolution in the world,** because in less than two centuries after its appearance, Islam, in faith and in arms, reigned over the whole of Arabia, and conquered, in God's name, Persia Khorasan, Transoxania, Western India, Syria, Egypt, Abyssinia, all the known continent of Northern Africa, numerous islands of the Mediterranean Sea, Spain, and part of Gaul.

**If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astonishing results are the three criteria of a human genius, who could dare compare any great man in history with Muhammad?** The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only. They founded, if

anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples, dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls.

**Philosopher, Orator, Apostle, Legislator, Conqueror of Ideas, Restorer of Rational beliefs... The founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"**

**-Bosworth Smith in Mohammad and Mohammadanism, London, 1874, p.92 states He was Caesar and Pope in one:** but he was Pope without pope's pretensions, Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue. **If ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Muhammad,** for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports.

**-Mahatma Gandhi, statement published in 'Young India,' 1924, said**

I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind.... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle. When I closed the second volume (of the Prophet's biography), I was sorry there was not more for me to read of that great life.

**-Annie Besant, The Life and Teachings of Muhammad, Madras 1932, p.4, stated** It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel **anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme.** And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I reread them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher

**-Sir George Bernard Shaw in 'The Genuine Islam,' Vol. 1, No. 8, 1936, states that** "If any religion had the chance of ruling over England, nay Europe within the next hundred years, it could be Islam."

**"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him - the wonderful man and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Savior of Humanity."**

"I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much needed peace and happiness: **I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be**

**acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.”**

**-W. Montgomery Watt in Mohammad at Mecca, Oxford 1953, p52, states**  
None of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.

**-Michael Hart in 'The 100, A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons In History,' New York, 1978, says my choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the secular and religious level. It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence that I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history.**

**All this is from the pen of non-Muslim scholars and thinkers. Need one say any more?**  
Can one say anymore? Should this not be enough to indicate, even to the critics, that this mighty benefactor of humanity does not deserve the comments made about him. It is like spitting on the sun

**At the same time I would humbly point out to my Muslim brothers that the reaction shown by the Islamic world is also not worthy of the illustrious Prophet.** He could never have approved of the threatening language used in expressing your feelings. The Prophet taught us to speak to others in a good way. He left behind the incomparable example of forgiving even his vilest enemies when he victoriously entered Mecca and by all standards of conduct he could have taken the lives of his enemies who had violated his person and taken the lives of his uncle and close associates in brutal fashion. Although **Quran, like the Old Testament allows “eye for an eye” to the aggrieved but it adds that forgiveness is better,** as taught also by the honorable Prophet Jesus, and that is the example that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) chose to leave behind for his followers to emulate. Let us be true to the spirit of our revered Prophet and behave in a manner that would win the approval not only of the Prophet but of Almighty God Himself.

To the Danish paper and all those in Europe and elsewhere who tried to show solidarity with their press colleagues, in a mistaken way, one would ask them to review what the above scholars, and many others, have said about the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and then honestly ask themselves whether these Cartoons were appropriate and justifiable.

We need not insist on apologies, but surely we have a right, given by your own traditions of a fair press that both sides should get an equal opportunity to present their case in a fair manner and then let the public decide. May we therefore expect all these papers and especially the Danish paper to publish, without any amendment the views of the non-Muslim scholars given above? Is it too much to ask?

We believe it is time to close this controversy before further damage is done to our fragile civilization. Instead, let us get on together with real challenges facing mankind.

Note:-Anyone interested is welcome to publish this article or parts thereof, provided

1. The source is acknowledged and
2. The spirit of the article is maintained and respected

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