

Good News

And give good news to those who do good (to others)

–Holy Quran 22:37

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The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s)¹

A Mercy to the Nations!

By Ebrahim Mohamed

‘And We have not sent thee (Muhammad) but as a mercy to the Nations.’ – Holy Quran 21:107

‘As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?’ – A tribute to the Prophet Muhammad (s) by celebrated French Historian Alphonso de Lamartine

The ‘Charlie Hebdo’ incident in France has once again highlighted the fact that extremism, no matter the source, leads to catastrophic consequences. It destroys all serious efforts at nation building. The display of indecent caricatures of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) in the name of

secularist ‘freedom of speech’ by French publicists Charlie Hebdo is a form of such extremist liberalism that we see emerging in the West. It is a movement based on a kind of ‘free for all’ philosophy that seems to take pride in treating ‘morality and decency’ as impediments that suppress freedom.

Muslim *extremists*, too, have once again shown that they simply do not care for the rule of law and justice. We strongly condemn the brutal murders of innocent people committed by them. We also condemn the reckless provocation that triggered the inhumane behaviour that took place in this horrific saga that is still simmering in France as we speak.

Rather disappointing, too, is the French President’s ill-timed defence of the right to publish and display such vulgar caricatures in the name of ‘freedom of speech’ without due regard for the sensitivities of millions of his subjects. His rather one-sided approach to the crisis has NOT helped to douse the flames of

¹ *Sallalahu alayhi Wassalaam* – Peace and blessings of God be upon him

hatred that is threatening to cause havoc in his country; rather it has set off more sparks and emboldened the fanatics on both sides of the dispute.

French Praise for Muhammad

On a more positive note, if one look back at French history, it is not surprising to find many accolades paid to Muhammad (s) by prominent Frenchmen such as Alphonso de Lamartine, Henri De Boulainvilliers, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Jeanne Jacques Rousseau who had greatly influenced French politics.

Celebrated historian Alphonse de Lamartine wrote in his *Histoire de la Turquie* (1854)

‘If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad?..His forbearance in victory, his ambition which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire, his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death – all these attest not to an imposture, but to a firm conviction, which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was two-fold: the unity

of God and the immateriality of God...Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational beliefs, of a cult without images; 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?’²

Equally respected French historian Henri De Boulainvilliers (1658 – 1722), wrote in one of his famous works *Vie de Mahomed (The world of Muhammad)* that Muhammad was ‘a divinely-inspired messenger who God had sent to liberate the Near East from the despotic rule of the Romans and Persians and to spread the message of the Unity of God.’³

Renowned composer and writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who had a great influence on French politics, wrote in his *magnum opus, The Social Contract* (1762), ‘Muhammad (s), was neither an imposter nor a sorcerer, but an admirable legislator who successfully combined spiritual and worldly power.’⁴

² www.iHistory.co

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

Then there are the memoirs of Napoleon wherein he declared that ‘Muhammad was a great man.’⁵

This goes to show that the dark picture of the Prophet Muhammad (s) sketched by Charlie Hebdo may not be the only version the French has of the Prophet Muhammad (s).

Muhammad (s) is the last of a long line of prophets that preached Islam which means ‘Peace’. Its seeds were planted when the very first Divine revelations were granted to Adam and all the Prophets of God that followed him, finally culminating in a perfect moral code embedded in the Holy Quran, revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s).

If we now explore the teachings of the Holy Quran and see if we can come up with solutions to the social problems in France (and elsewhere in the world), we will see that it indeed contains a message of ‘mercy’ for the nations from Almighty God, as demonstrated by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) and which the vast majority of Muslims subscribe to:

1. Belief in all the Prophets of God

‘Say: We believe in Allah and (in) that which has been revealed to us, and (in) that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in)

that which was given to Moses and Jesus and (in) that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, **we do not make any distinction between any of them and to Him do we submit.**’ – (2:136)

Thus a Muslim, besides showing reverence to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s), must believe in all the prophets of God; those mentioned in the Holy Quran and the Bible as well as those not mentioned such as Krishna, Rama, Buddha, and Confucius. Thus, a Christian, a Jew, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian, a Taoist etc. will feel completely at home within the *House of Islam*. All fair-minded Christians and Jews will testify that, historically, it was such freedom of worship that they enjoyed under Muslim rule. Thus the Prophet Muhammad (s), in obedience to this Divine command, laid down the foundation-stone of interfaith harmony that truly unites peoples of different faiths and makes it easy for them to co-exist in peace and harmony in a multi-religious society such as France.

2. Reverence shown to Jesus and his mother, Mary

Muslims have the greatest reverence for Jesus and Mary and will never denigrate their characters even if given the freedom by a secular State to do so. This is so because the Holy Quran describes Jesus as ‘*worthy in this world and in the*

⁵ *ibid*

Hereafter, and is of those who are drawn near (to Allah)' - (3:45); and says of Mary, the mother of Jesus, 'Surely Allah has chosen thee and purified thee and *chosen thee above the women of the world*' – (3:42).

3. A Muslim must protect all places of worship

Besides it being incumbent on all Muslims to show such reverence to all the Founders of different Faiths, including Jesus and his mother, it is a duty of every Muslim to treat all places of worship as sacrosanct and to protect its security if it is threatened with destruction by un-Godly forces. The Holy Quran is very clear on this:

'And if Allah did not *repel* some people *by others*, cloisters and churches and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down.' – (22:40)

It is thus the duty of all Muslims to ensure the safety of all worshippers that gather to remember Almighty God in their prayers in their cloisters, churches, synagogues, and mosques.

Thus, it is with great sadness that we see these days that even the sanctity of the mosque is not spared the violence perpetrated by fanatical extremists. Muslims should expose such criminal elements to the law enforcement agencies

and ensure that the law comes down hard and fierce on them.

4. Religious tolerance a priority in Islam

We have seen thus far that Muslims are called upon by the Holy Quran to respect all the Founders of different Faiths. Thus, it goes without saying that civility and respect should equally be shown to all peace-loving members of such other Faiths for this was the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s).

Muhammad (s) once received a Christian delegation from Najran, a town situated a few kilometres from Madinah. They sought to seek dialogue with him on matters of faith. When they arrived in Madinah they did not have a place to say their prayers. So the Prophet (s) offered his mosque to them wherein they could say their prayers. Despite the fact that Christians worship Jesus as the son of God, a doctrine that contravenes the Islamic doctrine of *Tauheed*, the Unity of God, *the* most important pillar of Islam, the Prophet (s) nevertheless allowed the delegation to perform their prayers uninterrupted as it was not for him to judge.

Even more interesting is the fact that, for the sake of social harmony within a society of diverse cultures and beliefs, the Holy Quran commands Muslims, 'And *abuse not* those whom they call upon besides Allah.' – 6:108.

This injunction now takes religious tolerance to a higher level that admittedly supersedes the secularist values as depicted by the uncaring Charlie Hebdo by leaps and bounds and makes one wonder which of the two sets of values (Islamic or Secularism) are really potentially a threat to social harmony?

5. No compulsion in religion

Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) have for a long time been the proverbial ‘whipping boy’ of Christian missionaries supported by British and European colonialists. A new attack emerging is the vain attempt to politicise Islam by dubbing it as ‘Islamist’, ‘Islamism’, ‘Islamist separatists’, and now ‘Islamist Fascism’.

As pointed out already, Islam is a Universal Religion of Humanity revealed by God for the moral and spiritual upliftment of mankind. It cannot be likened to some fascist, dictatorial ‘political faction’. These false claimants should ask themselves the question, if there is neither a monolithic authoritarian, nor a hierarchical clerical or rabbinical system in Islam as we find in other Faiths, how can such assumptions be true? This is nothing but cheap propaganda no doubt aimed at perpetuating a sinister Islamophobic agenda. There seems to be just no end to the bigotry!

Nay! Far be it that Islam is a form of austere, dictatorial fascism. This might be true for a few pockets of fanatical cowards completely out of touch with the Holy Quran and the majority of Muslims across the world; but to paint Islam and all Muslims with the same filthy brush is completely misplaced and dishonest to say the least.

The Holy Quran makes it quite clear that there **shall be no compulsion in religion** and everyone has the right to believe or not to believe:

‘There is **no compulsion** in religion.’
– (2:256)

‘The truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe, and **let him who please, disbelieve.**’ – (18:29)

‘And you (O Prophet) **are not one to compel them.** So remind by means of the Quran him who fears My warning.’ – (50:45)

‘Call to the way of thy Lord with wisdom **and goodly exhortations** and argue with them **in the best manner.**’ – 16:125

6. A Muslim must obey the rule of law

It does not matter who the Government of the day is or whether one agrees or not agree with them, or whether the laws of the land are not conducive to one’s own principles, a Muslim, nevertheless, is required to obey the law

and not to take the law into their own hands. The Holy Quran is very clear on this, ‘O You who believe obey Allah and obey the Messenger and **those in authority from among you** (these include the Government of the day).’ – (4:59) and ‘He **forbids *indecenty* and *evil* and *rebellion***.’ – (16:90).

7. Humanitarianism, Good Neighbourliness, Altruism are but some of the social attributes all Muslim citizens are required to uphold

Besides being faithful to God, Muslims are called upon to extend goodness to *‘parents, family members, orphans, the poor, the neighbour of their own kind, the neighbour not of their own kind, fellow travellers, the homeless refugees, and those whom they have contractual ties with such as contract workers for example’* – (4:36).

This is what all peace-loving Muslims of France should put to practice in order to foster social goodwill with all other communities.

8. Freedom of Speech

Islam is opposed to all forms of harmful utterances; anything that can be classed as ‘hate speech’. This makes absolute sense in a country where differences can be easily exploited to the disadvantage of minorities. The Holy Quran thus disapproves of the ‘public utterances of hurtful speech, except by one

who has been wronged’ - (4:148). It also condemns those who ‘spread lies’, ‘defame’, ‘slander’, ‘exceed the limits of decency’ etc., - (68:11-13). It also prohibits mockery, faultfinding, backbiting, false accusations based on suspicions, spying, etc. – (49: 11, 12).

A world devoid of just these basic social rules of mutual respect as contained in the Holy Quran, all sober-minded will agree, from what we have witnessed happening around us with utter dismay thus far, is NOT a world of PEACE that Islam offers, but a world plagued by constant conflict and violence.

9. Islam teaches restraint of anger and forgiveness – not revenge!

The Holy Quran calls on all Muslims to restrain their anger in conflict situations and to pardon men.

‘Those who restrain their anger and pardon men’ – 3:134

This was the example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) as well. History bears out that he and his followers suffered much at the hands of the tyrannical Quraish in Makka. Many of his followers were cruelly tortured and killed. Many of them had to flee for their lives to neighbouring Abyssinia. The Prophet (s) himself was forced to emigrate to Madinah. Yet several years later after many hard fought defensive battles, when he returned to Makka with a strong

contingent of ten thousand saintly warriors, the Quraish surrendered without putting up a fight. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s), **now in a powerful position to avenge** his own suffering and the merciless killings of his companions, forgave his enemy and granted them unconditional amnesty. Thus of all the prophets of God from Adam to Jesus, Muhammad (s) **by way of practical example**, showed what **true compassion and love for humanity was**.

This is the example all Muslims should follow if they wish to make any impactful contribution to peace in the world.

To all biased critics of Muhammad (s) we would like now to present some more *unbiased* views to reflect on:

‘The lies which well meaning zeal has heaped round this man (Muhammad) are disgraceful to ourselves only.’ – Thomas Carlyle ⁶

To those who believe secularism on its own without morality and spirituality will bring peace to the world should think again. From what we have seen thus far, it is failing miserably. What the world needs is *a balanced system* that functions on a *secular and spiritual level*. This system,

⁶ Carlyle, Thomas, ‘*On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*’

according to recent studies done by Dr. Michael Hart, was successfully introduced by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s), which proves he was indeed *‘sent as a mercy to the nations.’* Michael Hart writes:

‘He [Muhammad] was the only man in history who was supremely successful **on both the secular and religious level** ... It is this unparalleled combination of **the secular and religious influence** which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered to be the most influential single figure in human history.’⁷



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⁷ Hart, Michael Dr, ‘*The 100*’