**Why Muhammad (PBUH)**

- **A Historical Analysis of the demystification of the Prophet of Islam through blasphemous lies and fiction (by M Arshad Khan Safi)**

Character assassination through biased and subject narratives of history, fiction, cartoons and now films:- all the known elements in history of the information media have been used to distort the image of a man whom Michael H Hart in his famous 1978 book *The 100* declared as the most influential person in the history of mankind. Muhammad (PBUH): a man born in the deserts of Arabia away from the Christian World in a society of tribal idolaters, who was raised as an orphan and never had any literary skills but still knew all the Biblical tales in details; a man raised in a society where infant girls used to be buried alive but who married a woman much older than him as the most eligible bachelor of the city, made her richer, remained faithful to her till her last breath and who was known for the extreme affection towards his daughter and grand children. Why to target a man whom nearly all accounts of history confirmed to be known as the most trustworthy and honest even among his foes, as the first formal law giver and the first to enforce a universal charter of Human Rights? Whenever there is another boisterous row over an act of blasphemy against the Prophet of Islam, there is always a fierce debate both among Muslims and across other faiths and intellectual circles about the issues like Freedom of Speech and religious sentiments, Blasphemy Laws and Human Rights, the right to protest and damage to public property, loss of innocent lives and most importantly the "ulterior motives" behind the act of contention. A number of conspiracy theories also emerge about the hidden hands behind that act and everyone tries to interpret the event according to their faith and political inclination or ideology.

Due to the consequent backlash, many important questions are always raised and debated. Is this yet another fall out of War on Terror? Is this part of the so called “Clash of Civilizations”? Is it the product of some sick Islamophobic individuals or part of a well thought campaign or any larger conspiracy? Is there any method or specific purpose behind all this or it is just yet another display of hatred towards Islam or Muslims? Is it an attempt to incite the sentiments of Muslims for some ulterior motives? Are Muslim justified in their severe protest even if violent protests can never be justified? But one basic and fundamental question is nearly always missing and that is, "Why always Muhammad (PBUH)? Why would someone not attack Karl Marx’s personality or life if they want to attack Marxism as an ideology? Why won’t they even attack Jesus (PBUH) or Moses (PBUH) if they wanted to attack Christianity or Judaism or even Christians or Jews? The answer to this basic question is actually either an indirect answer to most of the other relevant questions or at least make many of them irrelevant.
Muhammad (PBUH) that literally means the **most praised one** in Arabic is the last prophet and messenger of God according to the Muslim/Islamic belief who completed the Message that was revealed by the Almighty on earlier prophets like Jesus and Moses (PBUJT) comprehensively for all the times and societies to come. By way of clarification it should be stated immediately that in Islam the practical role of a prophet or a messenger is far more important than in Christianity or any other religion nevertheless no divinity is attached to him in the Christian sense of Trinity or Hindu sense of Personification of God/gods. As a matter of fact Muhammad (PBUH) is unique among all those who are considered the founders or founding exponents of major ideologies due to the fact that he not only taught or preached but practically lived the ideology that he stood for in his individual life as a common man and implemented it in the community of his believers that he led in his life time as a leader and teacher. Quran, the sacred book of Islam, which in Arabic literally means **recitation or the most recited (book)** is the Muslim equivalent of Bible but Muhammad (PBUH) is not simply the Messenger who communicated this word of God to his followers but in fact he is Quran personified as his words and actions are the practical manifestation of or exegesis of the holy book itself. Even non-Muslim historians like Denis Gril believes that the Quran does not overtly describe Muhammad performing miracles regularly, and the supreme miracle of Muhammad is finally identified with the Quran itself (J Wensinck, M u d iza, Encyclopedia of Islam).

Now this unique and pivotal status of Muhammad (PBUH) is known to both Muslims and all those who attack Muslims or Islam through his character assassination using filthy rhetoric, indecent images or movies or through the attempts of “demystification” of his amazingly powerful personality by using biased narratives of history or plain fiction. The general public in the non-Muslim world who are largely very non-religious or even some so called self proclaimed “liberal Muslims” however need to understand these fundamental facts before making an opinion. For Muslims, it is not just the question of disrespect towards their most sacred person or of being so called “fundamentalist” or “moderate” when it comes to the blasphemy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as these are mere political terms where the status of Muhammad (PBUH) is a question of their fundamental belief made very clear by the Quran itself.

uran explicitly tells its believers, “O Holy Prophet (SW) say to the believers, if your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your clan, the wealth that you have earned, the business in which you fear loss and your chosen houses are more dear to you than Allah and his Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and struggle in his cause then wait until Allah brings forth his command punishment”(9:24)

“You have indeed In the Messenger of Allah, a beautiful example of conduct and manners” (33:21)

“He who obeys the Messenger, has indeed obeyed Allah” (4:80)

Irrespective of the any conspiracy theories about the possible ulterior motives behind the actions of these blasphemers and their intellectual caliber or status, they can be broadly divided into two categories. The first category consists of the creators or exponent is the historical “literature” that attacked the Prophet of Islam due to their religious rivalries with Muslims or Islam obviously knowing his importance in making Islam a threat to most of the religions that preceded it. This literature was more or less an attempted rebuttal of the accounts of critics of all faiths and schools of the thought who could not deny the greatness of Muhammad (PBUH) as a reformer, rulers, and the most significant human being in
development of human civilisations. Before discussing these categories, the following quotes from a variety of personalities with different credentials, reasons of fame and backgrounds from different times of history can give an idea of status of Muhammad (PBUH) when judged by non-Muslims with intellectual honestly and true context of the environment in which he was born and preached his universal message that changed the World for ever:

Reverend Benjamin Bosworth Smith, the American Protestant Episcopal bishop, in his book Muhammad and Muhammadanism (1874) comments: 
“...if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Mohammed, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life...In Mohammedanism everything is different here. Instead of the shadowy and the mysterious, we have history......We know of the external history of Muhammad ....while for his internal history after his mission had been proclaimed, we have a book absolutely unique in its origin, in its preservation ..... on the Substantial authority of which no one has ever been able to cast a serious doubt "

Alphonse de Lamartine's Histoire de la Turquie, the French philosopher and politician (1854) says:  
“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and outstanding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad.”

Napoleon says, “Moses has revealed the existence of God to his nation. Jesus Christ to the Roman world, Muhammad to the old continent...I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of Qur'an which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness.”(- Napolean Bonaparte as Quoted in Christian Cherfils, 'Bonaparte et Islam,' Pedone Ed., Paris, France, 1914, pp.105, 125)

Now one can argue that these observers were mostly priests or autocratic leaders of the Middle Ages. Let’s see what the humanist democrat Gandhi observed, “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”

Annie Besant, the renowned anti-colonialist,socialist and women’s rights activist in The Life and Teachings of Muhammad (1932) wrote “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 most importantly, modern historians like Watt and Bernard Lewis argue that viewing Muhammad as a self-seeking impostor makes it impossible to understand the development of Islam (The Cambridge History of Islam p37, 1993).

The first category of blasphemers took their inspiration from the views of some of Middle Ages European—primarily Latin-literate scholars—who had access to fairly extensive biographical material about Muhammad (PBUH). They interpreted that information through a Christian religious filter that associated “Satanic powers” with the mighty personality of Muhammad (PBUH) simply because of fact that the social and political revolution that he brought about, put an end to the existence of the corrupted and distorted form of Christianity.
in Middle East and part of Roman Empire and abolished the corrupt despotism of theocratic regimes. The very fact that a great deal of the Old Testament and New Testament is a prophecy of future revelation of one kind or another, added to animosity of these "religious rivals" who knew that Muhammad (PBUH) claimed to be the promised future prophet as confirmed in these verses of the New Testament:

And I [Jesus], will ask the Father and he will send you another Paraclete to be with you forever (John 14:16). I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come (John 16:12-13).

William Muir famous or rather infamous work “Life of Mahomet”(1858) was the latest and most modern example of this category. The book was written at a time when the British India witnessed its worst rebellion against the British Raj for which the British imperialists held Muslims primarily responsible and the views of Mr. Muir being a colonial officer at that time about Muslims and Islam do not need a lot of speculation besides the fact that he was Christian believer not a secularist in modern sense who represented an empire that replaced the Muslim Mughal Empire in India. It was criticized in a contemporary review in The Times as “propagandist writing” with Christian bias and for "odium theologicum". Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan, a renowned Muslim scholar and reformer at that time, wrote a great rebuttal of William Moir work with title “I Khutbat al ‘hmadiya (1870) that went unchallenged throughout the history. Another such work of even lower intellectual quality added by filthy language was Rangila Rasul, a book published during the time of Hindu Arya Samaj and Muslim confrontation in Punjab during the 1920s. It was written by Arya Samaji, Pt. Chamupati in 1927, whose name was never revealed by the publisher Rajpal of Lahore. Raj Pal was stabbed to death by a young man now known as Ghazi Ilmuddin Shaheed who was then hanged to death despite the fact that he was represented at the appeal court by the most renowned Muslim Barrister of that time-Mr Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan who argued for extenuating circumstances.

The second or more modern category of blasphemers emerged with the pagan secularisation, irreligiosity and godless liberalisation of Western society and the consequent notion of more or less absolute Freedom of Expression. This category gets further encouragement from the current wave of Islamophobia after the anti-West Islamic Revolutions like that of Iran and the so called War on Terror after the 9/11. The media coverage and the fame and financial gains in some cases provide even more incentives to such “adventurism” Some of these blasphemers with some intellectual or literary ability use their so called “Freedom of Expression” for monetary or even political gains and others with no such skills only rely on filthy rhetoric, dirty images or cartoons or films which are so easy to publish in today’s age of internet and media revolution. Sulman Rushdie through his infamous work “The Satanic Verses” (1988) not only a set a precedent but also an example of a “success story” that can provide an inspiration to the potential blasphemers. In his work he relied on William Muir’s mischievous notion of satanic influences added by his fictional imagination. The latest cartoons and the filmed that caused so much mayhem are just the latest episodes of the same campaign by different actors.

Now what the Muslims need is not just protests or violent demonstrations that in most cases serve the purpose of the blasphemers but to reach out to the general masses of the West who are largely non-religious, secular and liberal without any understanding of the fact that Muslims do not take religion the way a Christian may take Christianity or even a Hindu may take Hinduism in today’s world. Muslims and their governments need to convince the West that for them the blasphemy of the Prophet is a much more sensitive issue than homophobia
for gays, racism for blacks or the Holocaust for the Jews. The so called “Muslim liberals” who only represent themselves or their identity crisis or intellectual confusion and naivety have to be taken out of the equation as they are part of the problem as usual not any solution. The Muslims governments and organisations like OIC that are normally toothless when it comes representing the sentiments of their people in front of their Western patrons should play their role at least in the interest of the West and the world peace. Only an end to the double standards on Freedom of Expression by the Western governments can put an end to the conspiracy theories and any abuse of the conflict by extremists on both sides. Otherwise the nightmare of the “Clash of Civilisations” may come true if we fail to build the bridges as the citizens of the global village.