

Why Is Muhammad Mocked?

By

Dr Arafat K EL Ashi

Stoney Creek, Ontario, Canada

Muharram 1427 H

February 2006

Dedicated to

The Islamic Society of St Catharine's

Masjid al-Noor

Ontario

Table of Contents

Why Is Muhammad Mocked:	
Who is a Prophet?	
Why hate prophets?.....	
Who was Muhammad?	
Divine Revelation:	
Muhammad’s visit to Taif:.....	
Emigration:	
Muhammad and the Sword:	
Muhammad and Women:.....	
Polygamy in Islam:	
Muhammad’s Special Mark:.....	
Muhammad in the Quran:	
More about Muhammad’s Character:	
Testimonies about Muhammad:.....	
Gems from Muhammad:	

Preface

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Compassionate

As much as I am angry and grieved as a Muslim due to the unfair and disgusting caricatures published recently as an insult to my beloved Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, the Prophet of Islam; by the same token, I am also angry and grieved due to the violent, uncivilized reaction of some Muslim masses in some countries. In the same breath, I, for one, condemn both and clearly state that Islam, as I understand it, is innocent of these crimes as I think it to be the religion of peace that categorically rejects them both.

I have written this booklet to defend my Prophet, who never reacted violently to personal insults from his enemies, but observed patience and control. May God forgive all those who committed this sin on both sides and may He restore us all back to the right path of peace, respect, tolerance and love. Ameen.

Dr. Arafat EL Ashi
February 2006

WHY IS MUHAMMAD MOCKED?

Why Is Muhammad Mocked?

A wave of mockery against Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam has been recently started by some papers in the West. This manifested itself in a number of caricatures of this man of God published by some European papers. They depicted him as a terrorist carrying bombs in his turban and claimed that was Muhammad the Prophet of Islam. This was met with rejection and protest all over the Muslim world. Both governments and peoples all over the Muslim world expressed their anger and dismay by withdrawing ambassadors and boycotting goods of the said countries. No Muslim on any level, however, ever thought of mocking prophets of the Western world whose people are mainly Christian .No one even on the individual level mocked Jesus Christ or Moses because both are held with love and respect by all Muslims. This shows the extent of tolerance observed by Muslims even when their beloved Prophet is mocked and attacked in such an uncivilized manner which the offenders and their supporters claim to be part of freedom of speech.

The question here is: does Muhammad deserve this mockery? Is it the first time a man of God is mocked? Who was Muhammad and what type of person was he?

As a matter of fact, both the mockery and the response looked to me like a funny debate between two deaf parties. There is still no link or fruitful communication between them. On the one hand, you find those few who mocked a well known figure whom they scarcely know and those who yell at them because they love that figure. So there is a missing gap between the two. We Muslims have to fill that gap and establish that link. As one intelligent young Muslim put it, it is ignorance resulting from that pathetic lack of understanding that is at the root of the present crisis, which I think will be repeated over and over again; unless some thing is done to spread the truth.

As a Muslim, I am trying to establish that link in my own way. To begin with, the name “Muhammad” in Arabic was not a common name in Arabia before the Prophet of Islam was called by it. It simply means “the praised one”. The question then, how can the praised one be mocked and become the laughing stock for others? If we compare now between the number of those who tolerated the mockery for Muhammad and those who detested and protested it, we will be astonished; while on the one hand, the name of Muhammad among Muslims world wide runs into millions; so that you can safely say it must be a favorite name; you will find that those who mock him do not exceed the number of the fingers in our hands. You will almost find this name in every Muslim household all over the world. This looks like an exaggeration, but it is not. Ask about it if you do not believe me.

A quick view at history will show us that almost all Prophets of God were met with mockery, sarcasm and hatred that sometimes led to attempts on their lives. This was committed by their own people and not by outsiders.

Who is a Prophet?

Before we embark on an analysis of this phenomenon, let us first define what a prophet means, a title Muslims attribute to Muhammad peace be upon him.

A prophet of God is a human being who is chosen by God Almighty to deliver a message to people. For indeed, God created man for a certain purpose namely to worship Him. This worship can only be fulfilled through guidance from God to humanity; and the prophet represented the link between God and man. Hence the choice of a prophet of God, a man among men. The choice of a prophet, however, is not based on race, tribe, language or color, but rather on piety and good conduct. The prophet himself is mostly taken by surprise when God sends him the first message. One example is Prophet Moses who lived a normal life and was traveling with his wife across Sinai, when he saw from a distance a fire, which he approached to get a torch of it to warm him up and his family. There God spoke to him to his great surprise. He then

delivered to him the message, which he hesitated much to undertake in the beginning. He expressed his great fear to accept it and God removed many difficulties from his way before Moses started conveying the message.

Thus a prophet of God never expects this message and never looks forward to it. He delivers the message at all risks sometimes paying his life for it. Prophets of God started from Adam, the father of humanity and ended with Muhammad the last prophet of God. The long chain of prophets included Abraham, Noah, Moses, and Jesus Christ among numerous others. We shall explain, in due course, why Muhammad concludes the chain of prophets of God.

Why hate prophets?

So why prophets of God, including Muhammad, should be hated, mocked and resisted? There are many reasons for this among which are the following: not every human being was ready to follow in the footsteps of the prophets. Majority of humans wanted to live their lives without any check or control to their desires. They considered prophets to have interfered in their personal lives; so they hated and resisted them.

Sometimes this hatred and resistance is due to ignorance of the message of the prophet; and people, in general, are inclined to hate and resist what they are ignorant of. One example might help here. Take the case of Prophet Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). Why was he faced with that attitude of hatred from many of his contemporaries until there was an attempt upon his life? Due to vested interests of some people of his time, they thought his call was a danger against them; so they took that attitude. The same thing applies to every prophet of God.

Who was Muhammad?

After this brief introduction about prophets in general, let us now see what type of man was Muhammad, whose life history is recorded from birth to death.

Muhammad was born an orphan for a poor but noble family in Arabia from a tribe called Quraish. This took place in Makkah, a well known town in the south western part of the Arabian Peninsula at the crossroads of the route of trade in the year 570 after Christ. He lost his mother two years after his birth; thus he was orphaned from both sides. His grandfather first took care of him, then after his grandfather's death his uncle Abu Taleb became his guardian.

Muhammad became famous for his honesty and uprightness. He led an uneventful life; got married at twenty five and had a number of children until the age of forty. Though poor, many people in Makkah made him trustee of their wealth. That was the early life of Muhammad. It was Muhammad's habit to retreat in an isolated cave near Makkah for a whole month each year contemplating and reflecting on the fundamental issues of his life.

Divine Revelation:

While he was doing this one night, a person unknown to him before, appeared to him suddenly, embraced him and commanded: *Read!* As he never went to school, but was unlettered like most people of his town, perplexed he answered, "*I cannot read.*" The person, however, pressed him more and insisted: *Read!* Again he said, "*I am not a reader.*" For the third time the person ordered: "*Read in the name of your Lord Who created; created man from a hanging clot. Read and your Lord is the Most Bountiful; who taught by the pen; taught man what he knew not!*" (Chapter 96, v. 1- 5)

Perspiring and exhausted, Muhammad repeated these words with difficulty. He found them inscribed in his mind; and so the visitor released him and said: "*O Muhammad! You are the Messenger of God; and I am Gabriel.*" The visitor then disappeared.

Tired beyond description, Muhammad emerged from the cave, his feet scarcely carrying him, and staggered home a few miles away. He pleaded to his loving wife: cover me, cover me. Rushing to him, she felt as though he had a strong fever. So she covered him up until his shiver stopped and he warmed up. Inquiring from her

husband about what happened to him, he recounted to her the strange story upon which she exclaimed: By God! He will not scandalize you at all; for you establish the bond of kinship, you carry the helpless; and you support others in the event of misfortunes.

Khadijah, and that was the name of Muhammad's wife, then took him to a blind old cousin of hers called Waraqah, who became Christian, to consult him about the event. Hearing the story Waraqah exclaimed: That is the Divine Revelation sent to Moses. Your people will expel you. I wish I would be transformed into a young man to support you. Muhammad asked: Are they going to expel me? Waraqah answered: Yes indeed for no Prophet came before with what you received but was rejected and expelled. On the way home Khadijah pacified her dear husband saying: I pray that you are the new Prophet of this nation.

Thus Divine revelation continued to descend upon Muhammad. He always had difficulty in receiving it, perspired and was completely exhausted. So he covered himself up in his bed. Then again the celestial messenger appeared to him and said: *"O you wrapped up! Rise and warn and your Lord magnify, your clothes purify, don't worship idols like the rest, do not over estimate your prayer and unto your Lord have patience."* (Chap 74-v 1-7)

So Muhammad had no other choice but to convey the message secretly in the beginning. His wife Khadijah was the first convert, followed by his close friend Abu Bakr, his young cousin Ali, and his adopted son Zayd. As he continued to receive new revelations and conveyed them, more people embraced the new religion. They were mostly laborers and poor people. Most chieftains of his tribe and its masters saw a great danger in the new religion which would liberate their slaves thus make them rebel against them and change the whole fabric of people's life. So they started to persecute Muhammad and his followers who observed patience and perseverance. Some of his followers were killed under persecution. Seeing them suffer, Muhammad would encourage them saying: *"Patience! Your appointment is Paradise."* Thus they persisted and resisted persecution.

Muhammad's visit to Taif:

Taif was another important town near Makkah. When Muhammad had little hopes in the Makkans' acceptance of the new religion, he walked bare footed to neighboring Taif. Once he reached it, he started to call its leaders to Islam. They, however, rejected him and instead encouraged their fools and young teenagers to attack him. The latter chased him with stones and verbal insults and drove him out of the town. He took some rest near the fence of a garden with bleeding feet and exhausted body and made the following prayer:

“My Lord! I complain to you for the weakness of my body, for my helplessness and for my humiliation by the people. You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord. To whom will you forsake me? To a relative who frowns to me; or to an enemy who is in control of my affairs? I don't mind this if you are not angry with me. Your care is more spacious to me. Unto you is my repentance until You are pleased. There is neither power nor strength except with your help.”

He then went back to Makkah looking for a change to these desperate affairs of his and his followers. This state of affairs continued until some leaders of Quraish embraced the new religion and challenged the persecutors. When people like Omar ibn al Khattab and Hamzah ibn Abdel Muttalib became Muslims, persecution almost stopped and the call to the new religion went public. Most of the people of Muhammad's tribe rejected the new call. They tried every method to crush it to such an extent that they imposed a total boycott upon him and his family for three long years, during which time no one in Makkah was allowed to deal with them or approach them. This was extremely hard for Muhammad and his family members and followers to such an extent that they had to eat leaves of trees to survive; and yet Muhammad and his followers abided by patience.

From the very beginning every time Muhammad received a segment of the new message, he had scribes around him who immediately committed them to writing. Also once the message was received, he would recite it to those around him of his followers who committed them to memory. So from day one two processes were taking place: the complete record in writing of all revelations and their immediate memorizing by those around.

These revelations continued for twenty-three years until they became complete. By then, they were both recorded in writing as well as committed to memory. These revelations are believed by Muslims to be the word of God revealed through Prophet Muhammad. They are now called “The Glorious Quran” which means the Great Divine recitation. They are distinct from the speeches of Muhammad, which are also documented today.

Muhammad never interfered in those Divine utterances so much so that even when he is criticized nay sometimes disciplined and threatened, he also conveyed honestly what was revealed to him thanks to his absolute honesty. Let me quote a few examples that prove this.

Once, as Muhammad was busy conveying the message to some leaders of his tribe and he was keen to win them over to the new faith, a blind man unknowingly interrupted the session. Thus Muhammad frowned. So the Divine revelation descended blaming him why frown. We have a whole chapter in the Quran under the title “He Frowned”.

On another occasion, Muhammad was trying with an adopted son of his called Zayd to keep his marriage, which proved from the start to be a failure. As Islam abolished adoption replacing it with guardianship of orphans who have to be called after their real fathers, Muhammad was ordered to call his adopted son Zayd after his real father. Not only this but to accept the divorce of Zayd’s wife from him and to make Muhammad marry her. This would start a scandal for him for people would accuse him of incest because he married the wife of his adopted son. So Muhammad

hesitated to convey this order. Hence God rebuked him in chapter 33, verse 37 insisting upon him to listen to the orders of God and fulfill them and never fear the blame of other people. Here are the orders that were conveyed and abided by:

“When you said unto him whom God favored and you also favored “hold your wife to yourself and fear God; and you hide within yourself what God is going to reveal; and you fear people, though God is more worthy of your fear. Thus when Zayd had his time with her, we made you marry her so that there is no awkwardness for believers to marry the ex- wives of their adopted sons when they leave them; and remember God’s orders have to be fulfilled.”

So Muhammad complied against his personal desire though. He, in fact, wished that such an order was never revealed to him. This is another proof that the Quran is divinely inspired and not the word of Muhammad. Muhammad himself is the first person subject to the Quran as is clear from the above story. Finally here is an example of how the Quran, sometimes, threatens Muhammad as in the following strong words about him:

“Should he fabricate some lies against Us, We would snatch him by the right hand, and would cut off his jugular vein, and no one of you would prevent Us from doing this to him” (Chapter 69, verses 44 to 47).

Muhammad continued to suffer in Makkah due to conveying the new message for thirteen long years and he never faltered or hesitated. He had on his side two main supporters – his wife Khadijah and his uncle Abu Taleb, who was like a father to him. But things do not continue the same forever. His wife and uncle died in the same year and Muhammad was saddened beyond description. Rejection of his message became fiercer and stronger while his call spread like light in and around Makkah. Not only

this but many people from the northern city called Yathreb later called the city of lights embraced Islam and started to spread it among the citizens of Madinah as it started to be called.

There was a new Muslim in almost every household in Madinah. Under the circumstances, Muhammad received a great gift from God Almighty in return for his patience and to boost his morale. He was thus taken by a celestial steed on a journey to Jerusalem where he led all other Prophets in prayer and then to the seven heavens where the five daily prayers were ordained. He was in fact granted a presence with God All Mighty in the seventh heaven. Muhammad's opponents seized this chance to attack him and his call and claimed that he was a liar. Many halfhearted Muslims left Islam while sincere Muslims were firm more than ever in their belief. When for instance Abu Bakr al-Siddiq was told about the story, he said if Muhammad said this then he said the truth; for I believe him when he tells me that he receives revelation from Heaven in no time. So the story fits in properly.

Emigration:

A few years later, Muhammad emigrated from his hometown Makkah to Madinah 400 kilometers to the north. He was received as the new leader of that city. Once in Madinah, he did three things:

- He forged a brotherhood of faith among every two Muslims in Madinah: that brotherhood was composed of one brother from among the emigrants and one from among the supporters i.e. the original inhabitants of that city .Thus an unparalleled spirit of sacrifice and solidarity was started.
- The second thing Muhammad did in Madinah is to write a constitution for that city state where not only Muslims were considered as citizens but also Jews who enjoyed under the new constitution equal status with Muslim citizens.
- The third important thing Muhammad did when he moved to Madinah is the establishment of his mosque, which

acted like the parliament, the leader's office, and the centre of Islamic call all in one. In that mosque all activities of the new state were performed.

In Madinah, however, Muhammad faced new challenges he never face like them before. Non-Muslim tribes in the city coveted his leadership and started to support his enemies secretly from day one. A new category of enemies also was evolved namely the hypocrites. This group was led by a man called Abdullah ibn Ubay ibn Saloul, an Arab leader of Yathreb who claimed to be a Muslim but at heart he was a bitter enemy of Islam and Muslims. He had behind him the second largest faction in Madinah. His attitudes of enmity were also clear from the start as well as his machinations against the new state.

Although hypocrites led by Abdullah ibn Ubay ibn Saloul were clear enemies of Muhammad and his Muslim followers in Madinah, he did not act against them.

On the contrary one day one boy from among the emigrants quarreled with a boy from the Ansar, the original inhabitants of Madinah. Both boys asked help from their respective groups. Thus a fight was about to start between the two groups. Then Ibn Saloul appeared on the scene. When he was briefed about what happened he said: *"fatten your dog until it eats you"*, meaning that he and other inhabitants of Madinah helped the emigrants to such an extent that they want now to attack them. He also added: When we return to Madinah the honourable, meaning himself and his group, will expel from it the humiliated, meaning Muhammad and the emigrants to Madinah. This statement was reported to Muhammad. Some of his companions asked his permission to kill Ibn Saloul whose son, himself a believer unlike his father, pleaded to the Prophet saying: If you want to order any one to kill my father, I shall bring you his head. The Prophet, however, said: *"Not in the least. On the contrary, we will deal with him nicely as long as he is among us."* He then turned to the other followers and said: *"Do you want people to say that Muhammad kills his companions?"*

As everybody approached Madinah, Ibn Saloul's son stopped his father from entering it until Muhammad entered first. He said to

his father: *“It is you who are most despicable and Muhammad is the most honorable.”* He prevented him from entering Madinah until Muhammad entered first. What an unlimited tolerance on behalf of Muhammad!

When Ibn Saloul died a few years later, he was clothed, at the request of his son, with the gown of the Prophet who was also asked to pray upon his body, which he did; although Muhammad was rebuked in the Quran by God who warned him against doing it again with any other hypocrite. Thus ended the relationship between the Prophet on the one hand and one of his bitter enemies who claimed to be Muslim but was a disbeliever on the other. It clearly shows the noble character of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of God are upon him.

The other challenge Muhammad faced in Madinah was that of the three non-Muslim tribes there. The moment Muhammad set foot in Madinah and established the Islamic state there he included them as full citizens of the state just like Muslim citizens in the city. They, however, started to plot against him. They did this first by sending a delegation to Quraish, the original enemy of Muhammad in Makkah and expressed their support to them. When the latter asked them: *“You are the people of the previous scripture and you know the truth; so who is following the right path, we or Muhammad?”* Their answer was, *“Of course you”* and they promised to give them their full support against Muhammad. The Quran records this event in the following verses from Chapter 5, verses 51 – 52:

Do you see those who received a share of the Scriptures, how they believe in idols and oppression and say to those who disbelieved: ‘you are more rightly guided than believers.’ Those God has cursed; and whoever God curses, you will find no supporters for them.”

Again when Muhammad went once to them and wanted to negotiate with them to pay their share in the blood money of a

victim according to an agreement with them; as he was resting against a wall of one of their houses, they plotted to throw a rock on his head from the roof of that house to kill him. To their bad luck, however, he walked back to Madinah before they could do it, after he was inspired about their plot by Gabriel, the angel of Divine Revelation.

Another attitude of these non-Muslim tribes of Madinah was their clear support to disbelievers during the battle of the Ditch in the 5th year after Hijrah. As the name of the battle indicates, Muhammad and his followers dug a ditch in the valley to the south of Madinah thus completing the circle of natural fence around it, the rest being a series of mountains surrounding Madinah. So when Muhammad wanted to make sure of the support of those non-Muslims of Madinah, they promised him to defend the city from their side; while they secretly gave their allegiance to Quraish and its attacking alliance. Again the Prophet was inspired concerning the attitude of these traitors and no sooner the battle was over, in favor of the Prophet against the Alliance, than he marched to his defectors and evicted them from the city after he besieged them and defeated them in battle. Thus Madinah was relieved from those secret enemies after many years of treachery against the Muslims.

Muhammad and the Sword:

Many enemies of Islam accuse Muhammad to have spread his religion using the force of the sword. They claim that 'Jihad' is the Islamic outcry to launch holy war against heathens. This accusation is not new. A quick answer to this false claim is that the word 'Jihad' occurs in the Quran mainly to refer to making an effort to fulfill something. It encourages Muslims to persevere in life. So it refers to peaceful efforts rather than declaring war as is falsely claimed above. It is, however, a big lie against the Prophet and Islam to claim that this religion spread through the sword. For had this been the case, how then did the people of Indonesia, the country that accommodates the largest Muslim population in the world today; how did Indonesians embrace Islam when no Muslim

soldier ever set foot on those far off islands? It was, in fact, through peaceful sharing of the faith and through the good example of Muslims who lived in peace and dealt with the Indonesian people centuries ago. For, indeed, Islam declared from day one: *“There should be no compulsion in religion”* (Chapter 2, verse 256).

It is also clear in the Quran that fighting can and should only be in self defense and not in any way in transgression. Accordingly the Quran says: *“and fight in the way of God those who fight you and do not transgress, for God loves not transgressors”* (Chapter 2, verse 190).

Again the Quran commands Muslims to fight against those who expelled them from their homes in order to expel them and restore their usurped right as in Chapter 2, verse 191 it says: *“And kill them (the transgressors) wherever you get hold of them; and expel them from where they expelled you”*. This is exactly what Muhammad did when he resorted to fighting. He and many of his companions were expelled from their hometown Makkah leaving behind their homes and wealth, which the Makkans confiscated. Thus, when Muslims could have enough power in Madinah, they challenged the Quraish and fought the first battle of Islam called the Battle of Badr, a place between Makkah and Madinah.

God did not allow Muslims in the beginning to fight their enemies. He revealed to the Prophet in the Quran: *“Have you seen those to whom it was said hold back your hands and establish prayer.”* This continued for thirteen years as long as they were weak and persecuted in Makkah. They held their arms and never used them in Makkah even in self-defense. When they could establish a state of their own in Madinah and the plots of Quraish against them continued and the forces of the enemies were mobilized to crush the new born Islamic state, the Muslims led by Muhammad had no other choice, other than fight in self-defense. In all the battles Muhammad fought, he and his followers did so in self-defense. Thus peace prevailed not only in Madinah and around it, but in the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. The price of that peace was a few hundred soldiers who were killed on both sides.

This reminds us of a new principle introduced by Islam namely that Muslims should not accept humiliation. They are not encouraged to give the left cheek to those who strike them on the right cheek; rather they are commanded with what the earlier scriptures ordained namely: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. So the Quran blames Muslims in case they would accept humiliation when it says in Chapter 4, verses 97 to 99:

“Those whose lives angels take at the moment of death; they (angels) ask them: how was your state of affairs in worldly life, they would say: we were persecuted in the land; angels would ask: was not the earth of God spacious enough for you to immigrate in it? These will have their abode in Hell fire. What an evil abode indeed! Except those men, women and children who had no means nor were they guided to any path out of their dilemma. Those God will perhaps pardon them for indeed God is Pardoner, Most Forgiving.”

As the leader of Muslims, Muhammad distinguished from the very beginning between terrorism and resort to force to restore one's rights. Once a man came to him and asked: *“Suppose a person wants to take my wealth without right. What should I do?”* *“Don't give him your wealth,”* Muhammad answered. The man continued, *“Suppose he fights me?”* *“Fight back,”* Muhammad said. *“Suppose he kills me,”* the man asked. *“You become a martyr,”* was Muhammad's reply. *“Suppose I kill him?”* the man said. *“He goes to Hell,”* Muhammad answered.

According to this principle, Islam justifies fighting to restore one's right or to defend it. Thus resistance of occupation is not an act of terrorism in Islam; provided that it is against elements of the military occupation. In other words killing civilians is completely unacceptable in Islam.

Every time Muhammad was seeing an army off for battle, he used to warn them saying: “*Don’t cut trees, nor kill children, nor women, nor any old man, nor a monk, or a nun in a monastery.*” The Holy book of Muslims the ‘Quran’ shows clearly how Muslims hated fighting. This is clear from the following verse in Chapter 2, verse 216:

“Fighting is prescribed upon you although you detest it; and yet perhaps you may hate something that is good for you; and perhaps you may love something that is bad for you; and God knows while you know not.”

Even after Muhammad passed away, the Muslims resorted to fighting in self-defense. It is a big lie to claim that they took the wealth and homes of the people they defeated. On the contrary, they only took prisoners of war those vanquished soldiers who encountered them in battle, but never touched any civilian in any conquered country. Muslims left these people alone and charged them a nominal fee in return for defending their country against outside enemies. The fact that there are still Christian and Jewish minorities in the Arab world that was for many centuries under Islamic rule is clear proof even today of the absolute tolerance of Muslim rulers.

Also Muslims established a huge empire under the Mongols in India, which they ruled for about five centuries, and yet as we see today the majority of Indians are Hindus, which is another proof of the tolerance of Muslim rulers wherever they might be.

Let us contemplate the following incident that has no parallel in history. It so happened once that a Muslim army led by a companion of the Prophet called Abu Ubaidah ibn Al-Jarrah, could not defend the city of Ammouriah, north of Syria near the border with present day Turkey. Before withdrawing from the said city, Abu Ubaidah returned the nominal fee, which he took from the people of the city in return for defending them. So he gave them back the money apologizing for his inability to defend them. Fair

enough. This is how Muhammad taught his followers to behave with other people.

Muhammad and Women:

Some opponents of Muhammad like to accuse this Prophet of God to be unjust towards women. They like to quote him saying that women are inferior to men in their minds and in their commitment to religion. When Muhammad was asked: how could he justify deficiency of reason among women, he replied: *“Is not their testimony half of that of men?”* Also he explained their deficiency in religion to be due to their monthly period.

Before analyzing this Statement on the part of Muhammad, let us see how the Quran looks at women and their relationship with men.

At a time when the world questioned the very humanity of women; when people doubted whether women had souls at all; and if they had whether they were like souls of animals, the Quran declared the absolute equality of both men and women when it said in Chapter 4, verse 1:

“O mankind! Fear your Guardian Lord Who created you from a single self; and created from it its mate; and spread from them twain numerous men and women.”

Also the Quran declares in Chapter 49, verse 13:

“O mankind! We created you from couples of male and female and We made you nations and tribes; so that you know one another. The noblest of you in the sight of God are the most God fearing.”

Thus according to Islam, the two genders are basically equal in terms of their humanity and dignity. So their rewards with God are also equal. We read this in Chapter 3, verse 195 that says:

“Their Lord granted their prayer saying that I will not suffer the nullification of the good deeds of any one of you; whether male or female; for you are one from the other.”

To come now to the attitude of Muhammad towards women. In fact, Muhammad was always the first Muslim to abide by the teachings of the Quran. First of all women in general were among the few most beloved enjoyments of this worldly life for Muhammad.

In one saying of his he declared: *“I prefer three things in your worldly life: perfumes, women and the pleasure of my eye lies in prayer.”*

On another occasion he said: *“The best among you are those best to their women, and I am the best of you to my women.”*

While people of the time of Muhammad used to hate having daughters to such an extent that they even buried their daughters alive, Muhammad acted according to the Quran when he said:

“Whoever has four daughters whom he educates and brings up well as Muslim women, they will be a protection for him from Hell fire. Hearing this one companion asked, ‘even if they are three daughters?’ Muhammad said, ‘Even if they are three’; the man asked, ‘what about two daughters?’ Muhammad said, ‘also two daughters; still the man asked, ‘what about one daughter?’ Muhammad said, ‘Even one daughter’.”

Suffice it here to quote another saying to show the position of women in Islam, the religion of Muhammad.

In one of his sayings he said, *“Paradise lies under the feet of mothers.”* Thus when a man asked him once: Who of the entire world deserves my best company? Muhammad answered, *“Your mother.”* The man asked twice then who. *“Your mother”* was the answer. In the fourth time Muhammad said, *“then your father.”*

This is in brief Muhammad's and, for that matter, Islam's position concerning women.

Let us now analyze the earlier saying where Muhammad says that women are deficient in reason and religion. How can we understand this in the light of the above? First of all, we have to comprehend the context of Muhammad's saying that about women. In Islam men and women complement each other. They are not supposed to do the same jobs in life. Women's main mission in life is to be mothers who take care of the most precious capital of any nation namely children. As one Arab poet put it: "woman is, in fact, a school, if you prepare her well, you prepare a civilized and an advanced nation."

Now looking at both sexes' essential nature, one discovers that women, being ready by nature to be mothers, are the source of emotions. In whatever capacity man might be, he continues to be like a baby to woman. This is so in relation to his mother until his wife takes over that role. So when women concentrate their attention on their household affairs, they become unfamiliar with the world outside.

Thus when their testimony is required about the affairs of that world, Islam requires in the absence of men witnesses, two women for each man. Justifying this, the Quran says: "*For in the case one of them errs, the other woman would remind her.*" So, as much as women are deficient in the affairs of the outside world, men are equally deficient in the home affairs. They can in no way take the role of women, not even for a few hours. Thus it is a question of division of responsibilities rather than putting down women. So according to Islam, if women are deficient in the affairs of the outside world, men are deficient in the home affairs. This is the right context to understand the deficiency of women in reason.

What proves this is that when women's testimony centers on matters within her responsibility and domain, there is no need for two witnesses and the testimony of one woman alone is enough. So here a woman's testimony is equivalent to that of two men.

Here is an example to clarify this issue. When a baby is breast fed in his first two years five times by a woman who gives him a full meal each time; then she becomes his mother in breast-feeding. Her children become this baby's brothers and sisters. To testify for this, all that is needed is the testimony of one woman, not even two women, to uphold the testimony and thus issue the required document.

As for Islam's view about the deficiency of women in religion, it is not an insult, but rather an appreciation of women's position as far as women's monthly period is concerned; for her period makes her unfit for prayer or to perform any worship as physical purity is a requirement for worship. So when Muhammad said this about women, he only found an excuse for her out of appreciation of her situation during the monthly period.

If we remember that one of the things Muhammad remembered on his deathbed was women. His last words were: "*Take good care of women.*" He repeated this three times before he breathed his last breath.

Some people might raise another issue concerning women. They would ask: Why does Islam give women half the share in inheritance of that of males? Again let us not take this question out of its context. Women's relationship to man is one of four: as a mother, as a wife, as a sister, and as a daughter. In all four capacities man is bound to spend on women. They don't have to seek a job for their livelihood, but it is the bound duty of man to provide for them. Even if a woman is rich, she is not bound to spend on her family unless she volunteers to do so. So in inheritance, it is true that man gets double the share of woman, but the half a woman gets from inheritance is for her alone. She does not have to spend any part of it on anybody; she keeps it for herself while man has to spend on her in any or all of her four capacities in relation to him. So what remains in his pocket by the end of the day will surely be much less than the half a woman gets from inheritance. So if any of the two sexes is favored in the sight of Islam, surely it is the woman and not the man.

A friend of mine said when I told him about the position of women in Islam: How can you say this when your Quran says clearly men have the upper hand above women? I said please complete the verse you are quoting, you will then get the answer. I said, before you quote the said verse, let me first share with you another verse that clarifies the relationship between men and women. In Chapter 2, verse 228 we read:

“For them (women) is due what is equally required of them, and for men is due upon them one degree.”

It is now appropriate to quote the other verse you mentioned, I said to my friend. In Chapter 4, verse 228 we read:

“Men have the upper hand above women thanks to what God has preferred some of them above others; and due to their spending upon them (women). Then the righteous women are obedient, preserving the unseen secrets (of marriage) as God ordained them to be preserved.”

Now in every group there should be a leader or a boss; otherwise there will be chaos. On the other hand, leadership in Islam is not an honor but rather a responsibility. This is what Muhammad says:

“Every one of you is a shepherd and every shepherd is responsible for his herd. Man is a shepherd of his house hold and he is responsible for his flock, woman at home is a shepherd and she is responsible for her flock.”

In Islam, children have to be called after their father. Thus there is organization and distribution of responsibilities. My friend did not leave it at that; he said but your book allows you men to spank your wives, which you do. So how can you defend that? My dear friend, I said, the same verse I quoted above says the following:

“As for those wives whom you fear would rebel, then counsel them (in a systematic and effective manner), then if it does not work then boycott them in bed (and give this a chance to work); (if again this does not work) then spank them. But if they obey you, don’t exceed the limit in disciplining them. Remember that God is Highest, Most Supreme.”

This privilege of fearing the rebellion of a spouse is geared to safeguard harmony and love in the family so that children can grow up in a wholesome and loving environment. It is also given to the wife as much as it is granted to the husband. The Quran says this:

“Should a woman fear rebellion or boycott on behalf of her husband, there is no blame upon them both to reform the situation among them in a suitable reform; for indeed reform is the best”
(Chapter 4, verse 128).

So spanking one’s wife is the last resort if other efforts fail. They are rarely resorted to except with a furious, rebellious and obstinate wife. Spanking also is controlled. It should avoid the face and leave no physical marks. It is, in fact, a sort of reminder to the arrogant wife that she has to listen. Muhammad warned his companions in spanking to use only a tiny little stick similar to the size of the toothbrush. And whoever exceeds this is committing a grave sin in the sight of Islam.

Polygamy in Islam:

My friend then said now I have a question you will not be able to justify. I said what is it? He said the question of polygamy in Islam. Why does Muhammad allow Muslims marry up to four wives, although you continue to say that women are favored in your religion?

First of all, I answered, if you look at Muslims here or anywhere in the world, you will find the great majority of them having one wife for one husband. My father, for instance, married one woman. When she died as she was delivering her first baby, he married my mother from whom he got thirteen children, i.e. ten boys and three girls. He never married or thought to marry a second wife. This applies to the great majority of Muslims today as well as in the past.

So the system of marriage in Islam allows more than one wife in exceptional cases with one condition namely to establish justice in dealing with them equally. If a man cannot establish the required justice, he should be barred from doing it.

It happens, sometimes, that the number of women exceeds that of the number of men in a given society. This takes place as a result of wars or epidemics where numerous men die leaving behind young widows with orphans. So Islam allowed in this case having more than one wife to prevent prostitution or the loss of orphans who get another father through the second marriage of their mother.

To tell you the truth, I said to my friend, as a Muslim I am never shy of Islam itself, but some Muslims may abuse the religion. And in this case, the blame goes to the individuals rather than to the religion itself.

My friend did not give up. He said why then did Muhammad himself marry several wives? I said, my friend this, again, has its valid reasons. For, indeed, if you review the numerous marriages of the Prophet, you would discover the following:

That all of them were either divorced middle aged wives with some children, or widows who are, sometimes, very old. One wife of Muhammad only was a virgin namely Aishah, daughter of his close friend Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq. That is why very briefly Muhammad had numerous wives. Sometimes there were political reasons behind the practice.

Here is one example. Muhammad's first wife Khadijah was fifteen years his senior when he married her at the age of twenty-five while she was forty. She was not a virgin but was married before him and had children. He never married a second wife as long as

Khadijah lived. She bore for him six of his seven children. When she died he was fifty-one years old with minor children. He then married an old woman called Sawdah bint Zamaa, the widow of one of his companions who died as an immigrant in Abyssinia. He married her, among other reasons, to mainly take care of his minors' children.

All the other wives of Muhammad were either divorced or widowed middle-aged women with the exception of Aishah, daughter of his friend Abu Bakr whom he loved most but always divided his time equally among his wives and dealt with them all with fairness and love.

One other example of the several marriages of Muhammad gives us another perspective behind these marriages. A tribe called Bani al Mustaliq fought against Muhammad and was defeated. They were taken prisoners of war. Muhammad proposed to the daughter of the head of that tribe who accepted and married him. Seeing this new relationship, the companions honored it and released all prisoners of war from that tribe. It was said then that that woman called Juwairiah bint Al-Harith was a blessing to her tribe.

I cannot resist here telling a story reported by Aishah, the favorite wife of Muhammad. She was asked which of the affairs of Muhammad you admire most. She said, "All his affairs are admirable." When it was my turn one night, she continues, Muhammad reclined on the bed beside me and I felt his dear intimacy for a little while. Then suddenly he stood up, made the ceremonial ablution required for prayer and started to pray; reciting verses from the Quran and crying. He cried standing, bowing and prostrating until his beard was soaked with tears. He continued his prayers all night until Belal, the caller to prayer in the mosque, knocked at our door and entered the room. When he saw Mohammad, he asked, "Why do you cry when God promised to forgive you all your sins?" Muhammad answered, "Should I not be then a thankful servant of God?"

When Muhammad's contemporaries found him poor although he was married to a rich woman, they discovered that he shared most of what he had with poor and needy people whom he loved most.

They then wondered why this Quran is not revealed to an influential, wealthy man of the two cities. The Quran answered their question as follows, *“God knows where best to entrust His message.”*

The Quran records another challenge when it says:

“Why does this prophet eat food and walk in the markets; why does not he have an angel who would be his minister; or that a treasure is sent to him; or that he had a garden out of whose fruits he would eat. You actually follow a man bewitched. Say: Glory be to my Lord: am I not but a mortal messenger?”

As a matter of fact, from the very beginning Muhammad was offered by angel Gabriel to have all mountains surrounding Makkah transformed into treasures of gold. He refused and said: I would rather live the life of a poor person who would be hungry one day and one day full. Thus he lived that poor life until on his death there was nothing left for his heirs. On the contrary, his personal weapon was in the custody of a Jew in Madinah as collateral for a loan Muhammad took from him.

Muhammad’s Special Mark:

One special mark about Muhammad and his religion is that we are told by one companion of his that whenever he has to choose between any two things, he would always choose the easier one of the two, unless it is a sinful choice, then he would be farthest from it. Thus he used to say: give glad tidings rather than spread bad news that repel other people; make things easy rather than difficult.

The best path is the middle path. No extremes in Islam, the religion of Muhammad.

The Quran stresses this policy when it declares: *“Thus We made you a middle nation, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in God”* (Chapter 2, verse 143).

Muhammad in the Quran:

“Say I am not a new invention in messengers; neither do I know what is going to befall me or befall you. I, only, follow what is revealed to me; and I am nothing but a clear warner.”

“Say: you see if the Quran is from God and you reject it; while a witness from among the children of Israel testifies to what is similar to it; thus he believed while you showed arrogance. For, indeed, God does not guide the offending folk.” (Chapter 46, verses 9, 10).

Whenever Muhammad received new segments of the Quran to convey to his people and the rest of the world, he felt extremely sad about the rejection of his message and felt hesitant to convey more of it .The Quran describes this in the following words:

“Are you going to abandon part of what is revealed to you; and do you feel narrowness in your breast due to it that they should say why not a treasure should descend upon him ,or that an angel should come with him .You are but a warner and God is trustee over all things.”

“Or do they say: he fabricated it; say bring ten verses fabricated like unto it and call upon whomsoever you can apart from God, if you say the truth. If, however, they do not respond to you, then know that it has been revealed with the knowledge of God; and that there is no deity except (Him) God. So are you going to be Muslims? (Chapter 11, verses 12 – 14).

Part of the message of the Quran to Muhammad is that it tells him stories about previous messengers and their people. At the end of such accounts the Quran turns to Muhammad and says:

“Thus We recount to you parts of the stories of messengers so that We make your heart firm; and remember that there has come to you the truth in this chapter, an admonishment and a reminder to believers” (Chapter 46, verse 120).

When some people asked: If Muhammad was indeed a messenger of God why did he marry and have children .The Quran answers this question saying:

“We already sent messengers before you and made for them spouses and children; and no messenger could produce a verse except by the leave of God; there is a record for every appointed term .God erases and establishes what He wills; and with Him is the source of the Book. (Chapter 13 verses 38-40).

Some companions of Muhammad noticed that he started to have grey hair. So they asked him about it. He replied: Chapter 46 and its sisters caused this to me. When he was asked what exactly did this to him he said the following verses:

“Be upright, as you have been commanded as well as those who repented with you; and do not exceed limits for He is Seer of what you do. Do not compromise with those who do wrong lest Hell fire should touch you; and thus you will have no guardians apart from God; and then you will have no helpers” (Chapter 46, verses 112, 113).

The Quran guides the footsteps of Muhammad and chalks for him and his followers the right course of action like when it says:

“Say this is my path that I call to God with insight I and those who follow me and glory be to God and I am not one of the polytheists. We have sent before you only men whom We inspire among the inhabitants of townships. Why don’t they look around the earth so that they may see how was the lot of those before them; for, indeed, the Hereafter is much better for those who have piety. Are you not in your senses?”

“Until when messengers become desperate and they think they have been rejected, our support then comes to them and so we save whomsoever we will. Our punishment cannot be stopped against criminal peoples.”

“Thus in their stories there is an eye opener for those who have reason. It is not a fabricated narration, but a confirmation of what has gone before it, a detailed account of every thing, a guidance and a mercy to people who believe.”
(Chapter 12, verses 108 to 111).

Sometimes the Quran criticizes Muhammad and threatens him as we hinted earlier. Here is more of it to remind ourselves that the Quran is not Muhammad’s; but a Divine revelation from God.

“And if you think their turning away from you is too much, then if you can seek a tunnel in the earth or a ladder into heaven so that you can produce for them a miracle. For if God so wills, He would gather them upon guidance. So be not among the ignorant ones” (Chapter 6, verse 135).

Muslims are reminded also that Muhammad is the first subject of the Quran. He is the example and the role model for Muslims in his character, his sayings and his approvals. The Quran says in this context:

“There has been for you in the Messenger of God a good example for those who have great hopes in God and the Last Day and those who remember God much” (Chapter 33, verse 21).

Time and again, the Quran tells Muhammad to remind people that he is a man among men and never claims any super human capacity. Like the following:

“Say: I am only a mortal just like you, but I am inspired that your God is but One God. So whoever looks forward to meeting with his Lord, let him do righteous deeds and never ascribe any one to God” (Chapter 18, verse 110).

Despite this human capacity of Muhammad stressed in the Quran, God, however, honors him in a number of ways expressed in the Quran. Here are a few examples:

In Chapter 33, verses 56, 57 we read:

*“God and His angels shower graces of mercy upon the Prophet. So O you who believe pray for him and send him your right greetings.
Those who insult God and His messenger, God curses them in this life and in the Hereafter and has prepared for them a humiliating doom.”*

Again Muhammad is well defined as well as his companions in the Quran as in the following words:

“Muhammad is the Messenger of God; and those with him are hard on disbelievers, but merciful among themselves. You see them often bowing, prostrating seeking the favor and pleasure of God. Their mark is in their faces as a trace of prostration. This is their example in the Torah; and their parable in the Gospel is like a crop that

extended its shoots, grew thicker and became straight on its stems; it strikes admiration in peasants' minds and so it angers disbelievers. God promises those who believe among them forgiveness and great reward”

(Chapter 48, verse 29).

Another promise to Muhammad by God in the Quran is when God promises to grant him the river of abundance as in the Chapter 108:

“We have given you (the river of) Abundance. So worship your Lord and slaughter you ransom. He who hates you is the one who is cut off (deprived of any remaining successors).”

The Quran keeps reminding Muslims that Muhammad is but a mortal who will die one day. So do not raise him above this capacity. Here are the words of the Quran:

“And Muhammad is nothing but a messenger, before whom messengers passed; so if he dies or is slain, will you turn back on your heels? For whoever turns on his heels will do no harm to God; and God will reward those who give thanks” (Chapter 3, verse 144).

The Quran then makes another reminder when it says:

“No soul will die except by the permission of God; this is a delayed appointed term; and whoever seeks the reward of this world We will give him a share of it; and whoever seeks the reward of the Hereafter, We will give him a share of it; and We will honor the grateful ones”(Chapter 3,verse 145).

God clearly commands Muhammad in the Quran to convey the message and assures him that He will protect him from people when He says:

“O Messenger! Convey what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. Remember that God will protect you from other people” (Chapter 5, verse 67).

Here are the credentials given to Muhammad in the words of the Quran that say:

“O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, giver of glad tidings and as a warner; and as a caller unto God by His leave and a shining lamp. And give glad tiding to believers that they will have a great grace from God. Obey neither disbelievers nor hypocrites and desist from harming them and put your trust in God; for God is enough as a guardian” (Chapter 33, verse 45).

Some leaders of Quraish once asked Muhammad a few questions, which he promised to give them their answers the following day. He forgot to say: “*God willing*”; so Divine revelation stopped descending upon him for fifteen day until his opponents said Muhammad’s God abandoned and hated him. This was very hard upon him and he was extremely grieved for the stoppage of Divine revelation; which since it started was like his soul. So he could not bear separation from it. That is why one description of the Quran is that it is “a soul from the command of God” (Chap 42 v52).

At last he was relieved by the revelation of the following consolation

“By the morning hours, and by the night; your Lord never abandoned you; nor has He hated you; and He will give you until you are satisfied. Did He not find you an orphan and He sheltered you; and He found you misled and He guided you; and He found you poor and he made you rich? Then

suppress not the orphan, repel not the beggar; and the graces of your Lord mention and acknowledge” (Chapter 93, verses 1-11).

In the Quran God promised Muhammad to lend him his support at the proper time. This was fulfilled on many occasions recorded in the Quran. Here are a few of them:

“If you do not support him God supported him, when disbelievers expelled him the second of two; when they were in the cave; when he said to his comrade grieve not, for God is with us; thus God sent down upon him His contentment and helped him with troops you do not see; and made the word of disbelievers the nether most while the word of God is the upper most and God is All Mighty, Wise” (Chapter 9, verse 40).

Again the Quran records another occasion in which God helped Muhammad and his followers as we find hereunder:

“God supported you in numerous locations and on the Day of Hunayn, when you were deceived by admiring your great numbers, but it did not avail you much, and the earth narrowed down upon you although it was spacious; then you took to your heels. He then sent His contentment upon His Messenger and upon believers and He sent down troops you could not see; and He punished those who disbelieved and that are the reward of disbelievers” (Chapter 9, verse 25).

The third example of God’s support to Muhammad and his companions is in the following verses from Chapter 33, verses 8 – 17 describing the situation during the critical moments of the battle of the Ditch:

“O you who believe! Remember the grace of your Lord upon you when hosts came to attack you then We sent upon them a strong wind and troops you could not see; and remember that God sees well what you do. When they came upon you from above you and from below you and when eyes were dazzled and hearts reached the throats of fear and you strayed into many unbecoming thoughts about God There believers were deeply tested and were extremely shaken to the core.”

Then the Quran described the attitude of hypocrites when it says:

“When hypocrites and those in whose hearts is sickness said: what God and His messenger gave us is nothing but vain promise. Some of them even said: O people of Yathreb! You have no place here to stay in, so return back. A large number of them presented their excuses to the Prophet. They said: Our homes are easy targets exposed (to the enemy) although they are not exposed as claimed. They only wanted to flee. If the city is entered upon them from all directions and then they are asked mischief, they would rush into it and would not hesitate from that except for a short interval.”

“This they did although they already made a covenant before with God that they would not take to their heels; and the covenant of God is accountable Say: Escape will not avail you from death or slaughter and then you will not enjoy your selves except for a little while. Say who can protect you from God should He want for you evil or mercy and they will in due course find apart from God no guardian or helper.”

Muhammad’s name is mentioned in the Quran only a few times of which we quoted one time referring to his death. The Quran however is mostly addressed to Muhammad and to mankind

through him although his name is often not mentioned. Here are the few other times where Muhammad's name is expressed in the Quran:

“Muhammad will not be the father of any one of your men, but the Messenger of God and the seal and the last of all Prophets” (Chapter 33, verse 40).

The above verse was revealed on the occasion of abolishing adoption; so people understood from it that he cannot at all be the father of Zayd in Harithah, his ex-adopted son. It has, however, a deeper meaning namely that none of his male children would survive to become a man whose father would be Muhammad; and this is exactly what happened. All Muhammad's children died in childhood as the Quran predicted.

Here is another time the name of Muhammad is mentioned in the Quran:

“Those who disbelieved and repelled from the way of God, He misled their deeds; while those who believed and did righteous deeds and believed in Muhammad, which is the truth from their Lord, He has abolished their sins and reformed their temperament” (Chapter 47, verse 2).

So here there is no grey area between belief and disbelief. It is either one or the other. One more time Muhammad's name is mentioned in the Quran as Ahmad, which occurs in the following verse:

“When Jesus son of Mary said: O children of Israel! I am the Messenger of God to you confirming what passed before me of the Torah and giving glad tidings of a messenger after me whose name is Ahmad. When he brought them the

clear signs, they said this is clear magic” (Chapter 61, verse 6).

Among the names of Muhammad in the Quran are the following “Taha” which occurs at the beginning of Chapter 20 thus:

“Taha, We have not sent down the Quran to you so that you become in trouble; but rather as a reminder to those who fear; it is, in fact, a revelation from Him Who created the earth and the high heavens; the Beneficent Who prevailed on the Throne. Unto Him belong all that is in heavens and all that is in the earth and all that is between them and all that is under the soil.”(Chapter 20, verses 1 to 6).

Another name of Muhammad in the Quran is “Yassin” meaning “O man” or “my beloved one”. There is a chapter in the Quran called “Yassin” which begins as follows:

“Yassin, by the Wise Quran; you are one of the messengers; on a straight path; a revelation from the Almighty, the Merciful; so that you warn a people whose fathers were not warned and thus they are oblivious; most of them deserve a severe judgment as they do not believe” (Chapter 36, verses 1 to 7).

In addition to the above the Quran quotes God as swearing once by the life of Muhammad when it says in Chapter 15, verse 72:

“By your life, they are in their state of intoxication blindfolded.”

Let us now review some verses that show the role of Muhammad in the world. Chapter 9 of the Quran is concluded by the following two verses:

“There has come to you a messenger from amongst your selves, who is extremely concerned about your hardships, keenly interested in you, most gentle, kind and merciful to believers. If you turn your backs, say my Lord is sufficient for me, there is no god but He; in Him I put my trust and He is the Lord of the Glorious Throne” (Chapter 9, verses 127, 128).

Again the Quran asserts in the name of God:

“We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds” (Chapter 21, verse 107).

In another context the Quran says about Muhammad:

“There has come to you from God a light and a clear book, by both of which God guides those who follow His pleasure to paths of peace, takes them out of layers of darkness and ushers them into light, and guides them to a straight path”
(Chapter 5, verses 15, 16).

Time and again the Quran reminds Muhammad that it is not for you to force people to accept your religion; you have only to convey the message and We take care of accounts. Here are a few examples:

In Chapter 10, verses 99, 100 we read:

“If your Lord so wills, then absolutely all people on earth would believe. Are you going to force people to become believers? No self is going to believe except by the leave of God; and He casts disbelief upon those who have no sense.”

Again the Quran says:

“So remind, for you are only a reminder; you have no power over them” (Chapter 88, verses 21, 22).

Again the Quran asserts:

“And if We show you part of what We promise them or We cause you to die, then all that you do is to convey the message, and upon Us is the settlement of accounts.”

This shows the spirit of tolerance in Islam, which also declares:

“And say the truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills can believe; and whoever wills can disbelieve” (Chapter 18, verse 29).

More about Muhammad’s Character:

As a husband he was loving, caring, cooperating, and appreciating. He used to help in the household affairs; would mend his garments, and repair his slippers.

As a father he was kind, loving and merciful. He was once told by a father of ten children that he never kissed any one of them; hearing this Prophet of Mercy exclaimed: *“He will not have mercy that does not show it.”*

As a neighbor he used to share his food with them and used to warn those around him saying: *“By God, he is not a believer whose neighbor is not immune from his harm.”*

As a merchant he was honest to such an extent that his partner in trade offered herself up to him in marriage; and his honesty gained him the title of the trustworthy; so people even before Islam entrusted him with their wealth.

Once a companion of his called Hateb ibn Abi Baltaa wrote a secret letter to the Quraish disclosing to them a plan that the Prophet was about to invade them. Muhammad was inspired this information; he sent two of his close companions to get back the

letter from a woman traveling to Makkah to deliver it. When Hateb was faced with the letter, he apologized and Muhammad accepted his apology and appreciated his weakness; for the man was, otherwise, a sincere companion of his.

Once a Bedouin came to him to ask some provisions and said to him harshly: I am not asking you from the wealth of your father. Muhammad smiled and gave him much then he asked him: Did I do well to you? The man said harshly: not in the least; and yet Muhammad pardoned him and gave him more until he was happy.

Muhammad used to act as a father to Muslims and used to say: "Whoever leaves wealth, then it is for his heirs; but he who leaves debts or wretchedness, that is upon me."

He showed mercy even to animals. He recounted the story of a woman, who was a prostitute, but she provided drink to a dog almost dying of thirst; and so God forgave her. On the other hand, another woman qualified to go to Hell because she imprisoned a cat to death.

He remained grateful to his first wife Khadijah until his death and used to praise her all the time. When Aishah, his wife said: "*What do you admire in that old woman; God has given you better wives in her place.*" Hearing this Muhammad said: "*Not at all! She believed me when other people rejected me; she consoled me with her wealth and God gave me children from her.*" Aishah kept silent because she had no children from Muhammad and she said to herself, "*I shall never mention her to him again.*"

The greatness of Muhammad was not only manifested with his companions and followers, but also with his enemies. One clear example is when he entered Makkah victorious after years of hostilities and wars with his enemies who tried their level best to exterminate him; he got the unique chance of punishing those surrendering and helpless vanquished foes, who came to him in all humbleness and made themselves subject to his reprisal. Muhammad, however, again made history when he asked them: What do you think I am going to do for you? Their meek voice

declared: “You are only a good brother, the son of a good brother.” To their astonishment and that of the whole world, he said: “Go you are free.”

This was one of the rare bloodless victories the world has ever witnessed. Thus amnesty international was well practiced by Muhammad long before it was ever initiated. Is it then strange to say that Muhammad was a mercy to humanity?

Finally Muhammad was extremely humble in his social life and used to say: “*Any one of you, who has a servant under him, let him feed him from what he eats, clothe him just like himself, and if he asks him to do something difficult, let him help him.*”

He never said no to his servants as his long time servant Anas remembers. A few days before his death, Muhammad appeared before his companions in the mosque and said: “*O people whoever of you, whom I have spanked on his back, this is my back let him spank me on it; whoever of you I have taken his wealth, I am here to pay him back.*” To the surprise of the audience, a man stood up and said: “Yes, you once pinched me in my tummy.” Smiling, Muhammad exposed his tummy and the man rushed to kiss it and cry. When he was asked why he did that, he said: “*I wanted my skin to touch that of the Messenger of God.*”

Three times on his deathbed he repeated: “*Take care of women; take care of women; take care of women!*”

That was Muhammad, the last messenger of God. But why on earth, it may be asked, was he the last messenger of God? For two reasons because his message is still complete and perfect as he left it embodied in the Quran; and because he was sent to all people. In other words his message is universal. That is why he is the concluding messenger of God.

Testimonies about Muhammad:

Here are some testimonies of a number of non-Muslim leaders both from the East and the West acknowledging the supreme character and unparalleled greatness of Muhammad.

The Encyclopedia Britannica makes the following statement about Muhammad:

“A mass of details in the early sources shows that he was an honest and upright man who had gained the respect and loyalty of others who were likewise honest and upright men.” Volume 12.

In his book “The Genuine Islam” Sir George Bernard Shaw wrote:

“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 it 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, he continues, 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.”

Sir George Bernard Shaw then adds:

“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. He was by far the most remarkable man that ever set foot on this earth. He preached a religion, founded a state, built a nation, laid down a moral code, initiated numerous social and political reforms, established a powerful and dynamic society to practice and represent his teachings and completely revolutionized the worlds of human thought and behavior for all times to come.”

In his book “The Hundred” where he rated the greatest men in the world according to their achievements and benefit to humanity and to their people, Michael Hart, the well-known American author wrote:

“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 religious and secular levels.”

Speaking about the essentials of human greatness, the renowned historian Alphonse de Lamar tine wondered:

“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 ? The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only. They founded, if any thing at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man, moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples and 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 souls...”

“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; the former telling what God is; the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword; the other starting an idea with words.”

Startled by the unique greatness of Muhammad, Lamar tine then beautifully added:

“Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images, the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad.”

Lamar tine then concluded:

“As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask: Is there any man greater than he?!”

Speaking about the character of Muhammad Mahatma Gandhi writes in “Young India”:

“I wanted to know the best of one who holds today’s undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind...I became more than 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 his 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 the great life.”

Thomas Carlyle, the well-known British historian philosopher was simply amazed as to:

“How one man, single handedly, could wield warring tribes and wandering Bedouins into a most powerful and civilized nation in less than two decades.”

“The lies which well meaning zeal has heaped around this man are disgraceful to ourselves only...”

“A silent great soul, one of that who cannot but be earnest, he was to kindle the world, the world’s Maker has ordered so.”

Back to the east, Diwan Chand Sharma writes:

“Muhammad was the soul of kindness, and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him.”

Speaking about the testimony of faith in Islam, Edward Gibbon and Simon Ockley wrote:

“I believe in One God and Mahomet, an apostle of God’ is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image

of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honor of the Prophet has never transgressed the measure of human virtues; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion.”

Sarojini Naidu, the famous poetess of India wrote:

“It was the first religion that preached democracy; for, in the mosque, when the call to prayer is sounded and worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and the king kneel side by side and proclaim: ‘God alone is greatest’...I have been struck over and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam, that makes man instinctively a brother.”

In the words of Professor Hurgronue:

“The league of nations founded by the Prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity and human brotherhood on such universal foundations as to show candle to other nations.” The fact is that, he continues, “No nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done towards the realization of the idea of the League of Nations.”

In his booklet “Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam”, K.S.R. Ramakrishna Rao, an Indian professor of Philosophy calls Muhammad, “the perfect model for human life.”

He then explains his point in the following words:

“The personality of Muhammad, it is most difficult to get into the whole truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes! There is Muhammad the Prophet; there is Muhammad the warrior; Muhammad the businessman; Muhammad the statesman; Muhammad the orator;

Muhammad the reformer; Muhammad the refuge of orphans; Muhammad the protector of slaves; Muhammad the emancipator of women; Muhammad the judge; Muhammad the saint. All in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is alike a hero.”

These are only a few out of numerous other ever increasing testimonies from non-Muslim thinkers acknowledging the greatness of Muhammad who always insisted that he is nothing but the servant and the messenger of God. Muhammad’s greatness is, after all, not merely manifested in him honestly conveying the message of the Quran and applying it himself; but the same greatness is clear also in the gems of wisdom he uttered which are luckily recorded and documented to this day. Let me share some of them here.

In one of his traditions he rightly says:

“I have been granted five things no other prophet got any of them: I have been gifted with the genius of expression; the whole earth has been made a mosque and a source of purification for me; thus any man can pray any where on earth wherever the time for prayer comes; spoils of war have been made lawful to me; earlier prophets were sent to certain people, and I have been sent to all mankind; and I have been granted universal intercession on the Day of Judgment.”

Gems from Muhammad:

Here are more samples of the gems of wisdom from Prophet Muhammad:

“A person is valued by his tongue and his heart.”

“Seize five things before five : your youth before your seniority; your health before your illness; your richness before your poverty; your leisure time before being busy; and your life before your death.”

He once advised a young man saying:

“Young man! Keep God in your mind, He then will protect you, keep God in mind and you will find Him in front of you (meaning His help); if you ask, ask God; if you want to seek help, seek the help of God. Know that should the whole world gather to benefit you with something, they will not benefit you except with what God has prescribed for you; and should the whole world gather to harm you, they will not harm you except with that which God has judged for you. Pens are dry and records are rolled.”

In a sacred saying Prophet Muhammad quotes God in the following words:

“Son of Adam! As long as you pray to Me and beg Me, I shall forgive you whatever you committed and I don’t care; son of Adam! Should your sins reach as high as heaven, then you seek My forgiveness, I shall forgive you and I don’t care; son of Adam! If you come to Me with an earth full of sins; and you meet with Me ascribing no partners to Me, I shall grant you an earth full of forgiveness.”

Again Prophet Muhammad quotes God in still another moving saying as follows:

“My servants! I have made injustice prohibited for Me; and made it forbidden amongst you; so do not

commit injustice to one another: my servants! All of you are misled except those whom I guide, so seek My guidance so that I guide you: my servants! All of you are hungry except those whom I feed; so seek my feeding and I shall feed you; my servants! All of you are naked except those whom I clothe; so ask Me for clothes and I shall clothe you; my servants! You commit sins by night and by day, and I forgive all sins; so seek My forgiveness and I shall forgive you. My servants! It is beyond your capacity to do Me neither harm nor good. So My servants should your first and last, both humans and spirits were gathered around the most pious man amongst you, this will not increase my dominion by one iota. My servants! Should your first and your last, both men and spirits gather around the most evil person amongst you, this will not decrease My dominion with one iota. My servants! Should all of you men and spirits stand together in one location and ask Me and should I grant each one of you what he asks for, this will not decrease my dominion by what is equivalent to what a needle dipped in an ocean would take; my servants! It is only your actions which I calculate for you; so those of you who find good results let them thank God; and those who find otherwise let them blame themselves only.”

When the first reporter of this saying used to narrate it, he would fall to his knees.

As a guide for one’s health here is a Prophetic gem:

“Man will not fill any container worse than his stomach; it is enough for man to take a few morsels. Should he insist otherwise then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath?”

“Fear God wherever you might be, and do a good deed after each sin. The former will, in this case, erase the latter; and observe a good conduct with people.”

“The smart one is he who blames himself and controls his passions .He works for what is after death. The helpless is the one who follows his whims and has unlimited vain wishes from God.”

“If you trust God as you should, He will provide for you as He does provide birds that emerge hungry early in the morning, and return full in the evening.”

Once the Prophet gave the following advice to a companion of his. He said:

“When you go to bed say the following prayer: My Lord I surrender myself unto You; I direct my face to You; I entrust my affairs to You; I look forward to your support in a spirit of anticipation and fear; I have no refuge nor safety apart from you. I believe in your Book and I believe in Your Prophet whom You sent.”

“Whenever a Muslim emerges from his home and says: In the name of God. I put my trust in God; there is neither capacity nor power except with the support of God; it will be said to him: You will be rightly guided, you will be protected and the evil one will abandon him.”

A man once asked the Prophet:

“Tell me in Islam some thing I would not ask about it any one else. The Prophet Muhammad said: Say I believe in God and be upright.”

The Prophet again quotes God to have said:

“God said: I will declare war against any body that shows enmity to one of my close servants. No one can please Me more than he who discharges what I made obligatory for him. My servant continues to approach me with voluntary worships until I love him. Once I love him, I become the hearing he hears with, the eyesight he sees with, the hand he punishes with and the leg he walks with. Whenever he would ask Me, I shall give him, and whenever he seeks refuge in Me, I shall grant him refuge.”

“A strong believer is better and more beloved to God than a weak believer, though both of them are good. Be keen to get what is useful for you and seek the help of God and don't give up. If some thing bad should befall you, don't say: if I did so and so, then so and so would have happened; but say I accept God's decree; whatever he wills, He will cause to pass. For, indeed, 'if' opens the work of the Devil.”

The Messenger of God stressed the importance of behavior in Islam when he said:

“Shall I tell you about the most beloved ones of you to me and the closest to me in their seats on the Day of Judgment? The people present were silent. He continued: They are the best of conduct, those who lower their shoulders in humbleness; who easily love and are easily loved.”

“Seven categories of people whom God will shade under His shade on the Day of Judgment are the following:

- *A just ruler,*
- *a young man who grows up worshipping God,*
- *a man whose heart is attracted to mosques,*
- *two people who love each other for the sake of God they meet and disperse for His sake,*
- *a man whom a woman of authority and beauty invites to commit adultery but he says: I fear God,*
- *a man who gives a charity in secret so that his left hand does not know what his right hand did, and*
- *a man who remembers God in privacy and his eyes overflow with tears.”*

“I have no interest in this worldly life; I am in this world like a driver who rests under a tree, then, he departs and leaves it.”

“Son of Adam! Live as much as you anticipate, but remember that you will die; love anyone you wish but you will leave him; and do what you want, for you will be accountable for it.”

It is time now to conclude these gems with the following one:

“I have left among you something you will never be misled if you hold fast to it: the Book of God (the Quran) and my way of life.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Al Nawawy, Riyaad al Saliheen.

Carlyle, Thomas. Heroes and Hero-worship.

D.C. Sharma, *The Prophets of The East*, Calcutta, 1935, pp. 12.

Edward Gibbon & Simon Ockley, *History of the Saracen Empires*,
London, 1870, p. 54.

K.S. Ramakrishna Rao, "Muhammad, The Prophet of Islam."

Lamartine, *Histoire de la Turquie*, Paris, 1854, Vol II, pp 276-277.

M.H. Hart, The 100: A Ranking Of The Most Influential Persons
In History, New York, 1978, p 33.

Mahatma Gandhi, Young India.

Pickthall, Muhammad Marmaduke, *Translation of the Glorious
Koran*.

S. Naidu, *Ideals of Islam*, vide *Speeches & Writings*, Madras,
1918, p. 169.

Sir George Bernard Shaw, The Genuine Islam. Singapore, Vol. 1,
No. 8, 1936.

The Encyclopedia Britannica, Volume 12.

ABOUT THIS BOOK:

This book is mainly intended to establish a link of understanding and love based on tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims who happen together to be citizens of many countries in the world.

I was thinking of writing such a book about Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, a long time ago. It was, however, postponed due to other commitments until I had to give it priority in view of the present crisis between many Muslims worldwide and some Western countries, due to some caricatures that mocked the Prophet of Islam .Hence this book.

It is thus an attempt to introduce Muhammad to all those who scarcely know any thing about him. I am in all hopes that my attempt would be successful in removing the hatred and the bias against this man of God .If I succeed, then my thanks are due to God. Mistakes are mine and I always stand to be corrected, Let us join hands to establish bridges of tolerance and appreciation between different peoples.

The author