

Freedom with Responsibility

Just because one has a legal right, does it mean that one must always exercise that right? We should all be free to think and free to express our views but surely there is a moral imperative that such actions should be exercised with a view to promote dignity, respect, trust and mutual harmony?

While freedom of speech is rightfully an important part of democracy, it is not an open license to ridicule others. All rights come with responsibilities and the right to free speech is no exception. People should have the right to express themselves as they wish, but to avoid undermining social harmony such rights must be tempered with respect and responsibility so that they do not violate the rights of others.



It is important, therefore, that nations which are fortunate enough to enjoy the treasured right to free speech do not misuse such rights so as to create disorder. Making this point emphatically, the world-wide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad stated:



“Let it not be that in the name of freedom of speech the peace of the entire world be destroyed.”

(Friday Sermon, 21st September 2012).

The recent film and cartoons that constitute nothing more than crude attacks on the character of the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him (pbuh) have, once again, highlighted how free speech, if left unmoderated, can play havoc with the sentiments of others. This is not an issue peculiar to Islam, as followers of all faiths hold their beliefs and prophets in high regard. In light of this, insults hurled at anyone who is greatly loved and revered by millions can hardly be deemed conducive to the public good. Clearly this is an issue that governments and policy makers would do well to consider further.

That said, as was made crystal clear by His Holiness Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, it is absolutely wrong for Muslims to take the law into their own hands and commit acts of violence under the guise of defending the honour of the Prophet (pbuh). Islam does not condone such violence, vandalism and murder.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) – A Messenger of Peace

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also set a very clear example on this issue. When he was insulted, ridiculed, mocked and treated in all manner of disrespect what was his reaction? It was a reaction of peace par excellence, for he always reacted peacefully by either removing himself from the situation or responding with reasoned intellect. This is in perfect consonance with the Holy Qur'an that instructs the righteous to act with this very resolve, stating:

And the servants of the Gracious God are those who walk on the earth in a dignified manner, and when the ignorant address them, they say, 'Peace!'

(The Holy Qur'an Ch.25:V64).

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also made clear that **respect for all religions and all prophets was a key principle of Islam** and he reminded his followers that they must never belittle other faiths as it may lead to others belittling Islam, in other words mutual respect must always be maintained even when debating religious issues with others.

As Muslims we are deeply aggrieved whenever the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), or indeed any beloved prophet of God (peace be on them all) is insulted or ridiculed. We pray for peace and will continue to work for the honour, dignity and respect for all prophets.

Loyalty

Freedom

Equality

Respect

Peace



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