

END MISUNDERSTANDINGS THROUGH SOUND ARGUMENTS

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*How should Muslims respond to BLASPHEMY
against the Prophet of Islam?*



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In Islam, blasphemy is a subject of intellectual discussion rather than condemnation, protest and retaliation. Several verses in the Quran show that ‘abuse of the Prophet’ is not a subject of punishment. Instead, sound arguments should be presented to address the mind of people.

God sent more than one lakh prophets to different regions. Their contemporaries almost always responded negatively by using abusive language. (The Quran 36: 30, 16: 101, 7: 66) However, the Quran does not prescribe physical punishment for them. Rather the Quran commands the Prophet to refrain from using abusive language in retaliation:

“But do not revile those they invoke instead of God, lest they, in their hostility, revile God out of ignorance.” (The Quran 6: 108) There are many such verses in the Quran guiding us that we have to abstain from negative reactions until the last moment in such situations.

Incidents that are termed today as abusing the Prophet were prevalent during the life of the Prophet. When the Prophet presented his message before the Arabs, they misbehaved with him.

Here are some of the epithets given to prophets as mentioned in the Quran: “a liar” (40: 24), “possessed” (15: 6), “a fabricator” (16: 101), and “a foolish man” (7: 66). However, nowhere does the Quran prescribe any physical punishment for these offences.

It clearly shows that ‘abuse of the Prophet’ is not a subject of condemnation or seeking punishment; rather, it is a subject of removing their misunderstanding through sound arguments in order to address their mind. In other words, peaceful persuasion should be used to help the person understand the truth of the matter rather than trying to punish him.

There is ample evidence that tells us what to do in such cases. For example, once, when the Prophet was in Mecca, a person came to him and told him face to face, “O Muhammad, you are a condemned person”. The Prophet smiled. This smile was a moral response and was bound to hit his conscience. So, he fell into introspection and took no time in accepting him as a Prophet and became one of his followers.

It is interesting to note the response of the Prophet and his Companions on such occasions. When such issues arose, they never indulged in aggressive activities against people of other faiths. Instead, they prayed for them and tried to remove their misconceptions by engaging in discussion with them, adopting a peaceful method.

In ancient times, people generally gave expression to their thoughts in poetry. The opponents of the Prophet used to recite abusive couplets directed against him. In order to counter such couplets or poems, the Prophet would ask his Companion Hassan ibn Thabit, whom Encyclopaedia Britannica calls ‘poetic defender’, to counter literary attacks on him in the form of couplets. Hassan was Islam’s first religious poet.

We find many such incidents in the life of the Prophet. The Prophet peacefully countered their arguments with arguments. He attempted to satisfy the other party at an intellectual level. With these examples of the Prophet and his Companions, can resorting to violence be justified? Muslims, therefore, must deal with such cases by reasoned arguments rather than seek to mete out punishment.

All Islamic teachings are based on reason and argument. As per this Islamic injunction, **if a person commits ‘blasphemy’, the responsibility of Muslims is to meet the concerned person and try to remove his misunderstanding by peaceful means. If they fail to understand, then according to the teachings of the Prophet, Muslims are left only with one option, that is, to pray for them in all sincerity.**

P.T.O.

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CPS International aims to promote and reinforce the culture of peace through mind-based spirituality. Throughout his life, Maulana kept on emphasizing the peaceful message of Islam. He also drew the line between Islam as is preserved in its Scriptures and the practices of Muslims. He said that Muslims should be judged in the light of Islam and not vice versa.

Through his speeches and writings, he painstakingly pointed out the instances where the practices of Muslims were quite opposite to the teachings of Islam as contained in the Quran and the practical model of the Prophet.

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