

Denmark the Cartoon Plaza

Muhammad Zafrullah at Pocatello

I do sympathize a little with the Danes. They were living in their paradise quite content with their lives and their ways, but these Muslims started muddying their race with their color and started talking about one God and all sorts of strange values. It is one thing for some females going to Morocco to have some romantic flings with some Moroccans, but it is quite another for them to start giving birth to Moroccans' or Arabs' children. Then being a member of EU started attracting unwanted folks. This was quite a serious predicament.

Now they do not like the tag of being racists and they do not want to appear to be unjust. The ploy that seemed to be right and useful was to create an atmosphere where the Muslims were looked down upon for being uncivilized. They did not get something like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, like the Dutch, but they tried until they hit the jackpot. (You may Google for "Ayaan Hirsi Ali" to find out about the exploits of this enterprising lady.) They found out what would hurt the Muslims' feeling the most. Targeting the Prophet was the worst they could do and they started doing it. This way they would not be perceived as being the racists, that they are, but they would be seen as hoisting the banner of freedom of speech.

Upholding freedom of speech is quite a good cause, but no free society should permit saying or printing hurtful things; the fair ones do not. But when you have the notion that whatever you can get away with is right, you get up to doing things the Danish government and the Danish press have done. They recently claimed that the Danish police foiled a plot to kill the cartoonist, the person who drew those cartoons in September 2005 for Jyllands-posten.

It appears that the "plot" involved two Tunisians, who are conveniently deported, and one Dane, of Moroccan origin, who is released pending investigation. So, nobody is in jail at present for that serious offence, but one of the cartoons has appeared again (February 13, 2008), as a reprisal, in several Danish news papers. The set up smells bad, but the Danes think they can get away with it. My main objection is: if there was a serious murder plot, it must have involved the use of weapons. And if some weapons were involved why isn't anyone in jail?

The reaction to the new prank of Danes the cartoon people, as that is the only name I can remember them by, is as expected. A lot of the Muslims are fuming; and a lot of the Westerners are congratulating the Danes on their courage. The rest of the non-Muslim crowd are wondering as to what the heck is all this about. Sadly, it appears that, the reaction of the rest of the non-Muslim crowd is on the sensible side, though it is a bit close to apathy and lack of concern.

Let me describe what is happening, as I see it. The Western media are covering every aspect of Muslim reaction, as they did before in 2005. One of the electronic news paper actually devoted a full session to pictures of Pakistani protests. The protesters were

dubbed as “Islamists”. In some pictures there were some Mullahs presiding over the burning of the Danish flag. The mullahs rarely get a photo op by international press. So could it have happened by invitation?

I found the pictures of Pakistani reaction somewhat surprising, for I know Pakistanis to be sharp people and as far as I know some of them regretted that things got out of hand in the aftermath of September 2005. Another reason why I was surprised is that the February 18 elections were getting near and a majority of Pakistanis did not really have time for a stale story.

Somewhat more surprising is the coverage of the reaction, to the reprinting of cartoons, of the Palestinians in Gaza. My God, folks you should be covering their misery as a result of the strangle-hold of Israel on their everyday life’s necessities. You should be going to the hospitals where people are getting worse and dying because of the shortage of medicine and spare parts of various machines. The only news that came of the plight of the Palestinians was from the coverage of a visit to Gaza strip by John Holmes. John Holmes is the UN under secretary general for humanitarian affairs. Holmes said that the eight-month closure of Gaza has created “grim and miserable” conditions that deprive Palestinians of their basic dignity. (I found this news on February 16, 2008, in the news tribune.com.)

Indeed this kind of apathy to the plight of Palestinians is not just the Western media’s fault; the whole of the West is to blame. It was the Western Powers who carved Palestine to create Israel, in complete disregard for the misery it would cause to the Palestinians. And it is the Western Powers that are supporting Israel to the hilt in suppressing the Palestinians. If the Western nations have any humanitarian record, the current state of the Palestinians is a blemish on it. What the Danes and the Dutch are doing in their countries is similar to what has been done in the Middle East, and in other parts of the world, to Muslims.

While the West is guilty of suppressing or trying to suppress the Muslims all over the world I do hold Muslims responsible too. They are reacting somewhat irrationally in this matter. What good would it do to burn a few flags or stage a few protests or say kill some non-Muslims over some crazed Danes’ reaction to a growing Muslim population in their midst? Similar was the reaction of the people of Makkah to the Prophet in his day and similar was the reaction of the people of Taif, but the Prophet did not want even to put a curse on them; because he hoped that the future generations of his persecutors will be Muslims.

Now throwing stones and the then prevalent forms of persecution were far worse than making a few caricatures of the Prophet. Besides, God Almighty’s love for the Prophet is much more than the love, for him, of all the Muslims put together. He made the children of the Prophet’s enemies devout Muslims. He can make that happen now. So, what is your worry? Instead of worrying about the Danes’ blasphemy, think what is wrong with you that makes your enemies take a shot at your prophet? Could it be that you are weak and poor, could it be that you tend to flare up easily, or could it be that you have

forgotten the teachings of the Quran that says that when you see some frivolous activity pass by with dignity?

Also the Muslims should ponder over the reasons behind the uproar against them or against Islam. I would first look at the reasons in view of the cartoon. The cartoon depicts the Prophet with a turban shaped like a bomb. If we ponder over the possible reasons behind such a depiction one stands out and that is Modern Muslim's often irrational propensity for violence. A lot of flare ups start with: Someone has called Islam a violent religion, let us protest. During the protest someone comes up with the idea of attacking some church and there we go. The participants of ensuing atrocities seem to say "Islam is a religion of peace, if you do not agree we will kill you." This kind of attitude can only attract ire and ridicule.

Then there is this strange phenomenon of suicide bombings. Committing suicide is telling God that we do not care about the gift of life that He has given us. In fact, in view of the traditions of the Holy Prophet, committing suicide is a sin even if there is apparently no hope of life. Now who is the target of the suicide bomber? Usually ordinary folks, who just happened to be there, are the victims. When a Bomb goes off it does not discriminate. So if a Muslim "Mujahid" detonates himself in the middle of a crowd of his/her Muslim brothers it will only kill Muslims. Now a Muslim killing Muslims is promised hell by the Prophet himself.

Oddly enough what the cartoon drawing Danes are doing has not much to do with what the Muslims are doing to themselves, or to others. What the Danes and the Dutch are going through is happening all over the Industrialized West. The reason is that with the wealth that the industry and/or commerce had brought them they grew out of doing some menial jobs, WWII also had an effect. To get those jobs done they had to turn to the Third World countries offering equal opportunity and citizenships, in addition to better living conditions. People came and settled down.

This settled down part was something the big brains had never thought of. Now they feel stuck, especially with those who would not be "culturally" assimilated. Making life harder by discrimination does not seem to work as the immigrants have rights and when pushed they start pushing back (ask the French). So, now the mood is of hitting them where it hurts; in order to get rid of them. This can be gleaned from the usual comment in reply to a complaint about insensitivity, "If you do not like it, go back to where you came from."

Is there a way out of this predicament? Offering money to those who may wish to leave is not effective, the British can tell you. They floated that idea in the seventies. Putting them in slums and forgetting about them has not worked, the French can testify to that. What remains is to go back a few hundred years and do away with the unwanted folks, but the rhetoric on the Western Values would be in the way. The other and apparently the only one approach could be to go colorblind and develop some tradition of tolerance and respect for other faiths and cultures. The US is a good example of a somewhat colorblind society, though it has still to work on the tolerance bit.

Now what should the poor Danes do? “Grin and bear it” would not be pertinent advice, it would in fact be downright insensitive. So, I suggest the following approach. The people legally admitted to Denmark are a part and a responsibility of the Danish Society whether they are assimilated culturally or not. Hate, ridicule, or violence can only exacerbate the situation and earn Denmark international notoriety. The Danish society must find an amicable solution that takes into account the sensitivities of the newly admitted part of the population. Ridicule usually inspires entrenchment and resort to violent means. Of course my recommendation to the Muslims population of Denmark, or any country that does not have a predominantly Muslim population, would be that they should help the host society by becoming a productive part of it. Flaunting one’s link with Islam and disregarding the basic tenets of Islam can only attract ridicule.

Addendum dated February 29, 2008:

I had written this in the heat of the moment (around February 18) and decided not to put it up, thinking that it was a storm in the teacup – Danish style. But apparently some Muslim countries have decided to take action, by boycotting Danish goods. But still, no one has taken notice of the plight of the Palestinians; neither any non-Muslims for their love of humanity nor any Muslims for their love of Islam. Israeli blockade is stifling life in Gaza strip, a whole population is suffering for the crimes of the few and no one seems to budge. So I thought I should at least put this up, on behalf of the whole world, especially now that at least one Israeli minister is promising the Gazans a “bigger holocaust”.

Note: I must submit to the fact that there are some wise and kind hearted Danes who do not support the pranks of their hateful compatriots. I have used some generalities which may imply that all the Danes are like the editors and cartoonists of Jylland-posten. If anyone’s feeling are hurt I apologize in advance, with the comment that if you do not take action to curb the worst among you, you may be counted with them.

Muhammad