

THE HOLY PEN

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“THE WORK OF THE SWORD WE HAVE PERFORMED WITH OUR PEN.”
HADHRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD OF QADIAN^{AS}

FIRST READ: BEHEADINGS - IS ISLAM TO BLAME?

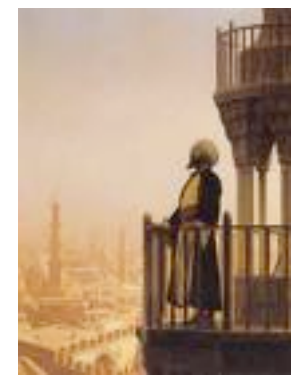
ZAHID M. MIAN - FITCHBURG, MA

When I first saw the headlines Wife Beheaded, my first reaction was how terrible it would be if a Muslim were involved. I wasn't surprised, then, to learn that not only was a Muslim involved, but it was the founder of Bridges TV, a station dedicated to breaking false stereotypes about Muslims. The couple was going through a messy divorce and in a fit of rage Muzzammil Hassan decapitated his wife's head. He turned himself into police shortly thereafter.

It didn't take critics long to attack Islam. They argued that the actions of Mr. Hassan were directly linked to Islam, even going as far as calling it an honor killing. The irony wasn't lost on them that a man who sought to break negative stereotypes was himself caught in one of the most gruesome acts recently to be associated with Muslims.

The reality is that this story concerns a crime that has, unfortunately, become all too common in this country. According to the US Department of Justice, there are nearly 15,000 homicides each year (nearly two-thirds of the victims are females). Why are only Muslims asked to defend Islam in the face of such a tragedy? What part of this story is sanctioned by Islam?

The fact is that Islam, more than any other religion, aims to promote and strengthen the bonds of marriage and family. The Holy Quran reminds us that we need to be mindful of our duties towards family members. We are asked to pray for virtuous spouses and children. It is a shame that the majority of Muslims haven't been able to emulate the beautiful teachings of Islam.



MUHAMMAD PAVED WAY FOR SLAVES TO BE LIBERATED

OP-ED FINGER LAKES TIMES

ANEES AHMAD - ROCHESTER, NY

FEBRUARY 9, 2009

A common objection levied against Islam is that Prophet Muhammad did not immediately liberate slaves when he came to power. In reality, Muhammad ordered for a gradual emancipation of slaves because if slaves were not trained to be completely independent citizens, they would never be considered a part of society. Muhammad's liberation of slaves did not injure a slave's psyche and simultaneously refined freemen's character, as they looked upon slaves not as 'slaves', but as brethren. Reformation, of the slave and the freeman, and abolition of slavery was the objective. If this procedure was ignored, former

Muhammad's liberation of slaves did not injure a slave's psyche and simultaneously refined freemen's character, as they looked upon slaves not as 'slaves', but as brethren.

slaves would become paupers, resorting to crime, and eventually become slaves once more - the American Reconstruction Era serving as a prime example. The means of address captured the essence of the 'slave-master' relationship. Muhammad forbade anyone to be referred to as 'master' or 'lord' (Bukhari) or 'slave' (Sahih). Instead, the 'slave owner' was referred to as maula (friend, helper). A maula was responsible for the clothing, feeding, education, etc. of his 'slave'.

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CHAIRMAN, MSQ USA: AMJAD MAHMOOD KHAN

EDITOR: AHMAD NAWAZ CHAUDHRY

MSQ@MKAUSA.ORG



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For example, a prominent Muslim named Abu Dharr was once seen wearing a cloak like that of his slave. He explained that Muhammad had said to him, "O Abu Dharr ... You still have some characteristics of ignorance. Your slaves are your brothers ... So whoever has a brother under his command should feed him of what he eats and dress him of what he wears. Do not ask (slaves) to do things beyond their capacity and if you do so, then help them" (Bukhari). Moreover, beating a slave was tantamount to damnation (Sahih).

Furthermore, it was illegal to meddle in any slave-related marriage, even if it be with a freeperson (Ibn Majah). Muhammad himself emancipated and married Maria al-Qibtiyya, thereby raising the status of a slave to equal that of any freeperson. Moreover, because of the bond established between a slave and his maula, if the maula had no next of kin, on his passing, the slave would receive all his property, and vice versa (Mishkat). To protect slaves', these inheritance rights were not transferrable to any non-slave (Bukhari).

While reformation was in order, what of abolition? In fact, freeing of slaves was not only a means of salvation (90:13-14) but a duty (9:60). In this regard, the Quran (24:34) ordered Muslims to observe a deed of manumission. Under this system, a predetermined amount of money was agreed upon which the slave paid off. The court alone, not the maula, had the power to accept or deny the slave's request. The deed ensured that the slave was capable of earning a living, thus avoiding becoming a burden on society once freed. Consequently, all psychological,

social, and economic interests of the slave, and society, were protected. Accordingly, a truly conservative estimate records that Muhammad and a mere seven companions freed 32,320 slaves (Subul al-Salaam).

Indeed, of all messages he could have conveyed on his death bed, Muhammad's last words were, "Stick fast to the prescribed prayers and to my injunctions with regard to slaves" (Ibn Majah).

Liberation aside, these former slaves made great advancements upon emancipation. Umar, who Dr. Michael Hart includes in history's 100 most influential people, accorded Bilal the Ethiopian the seat adjacent to him and always referred to him as 'Chief' and 'lord'. Other former slaves became generals of armies over highly respected Arabs, experts on jurisprudence, world authorities on history and biography, or were granted the status of being one of Muhammad's four select Qur'anic instructors.

It is no wonder then that during Muhammad's farewell address, he declared, "an Arab has no merit over a non-Arab" (Ahmad). Indeed, of all messages he could have conveyed on his death bed, Muhammad's last words were, "Stick fast to the prescribed prayers and to my injunctions with regard to slaves" (Ibn Majah). The reformation that took place in the mere twenty-three years of Muhammad's prophethood is unprecedented. A society which denied slaves their progeny, beat slaves mercilessly, and forced slaves into prostitution, now looked upon these very people with awe, even naming their children after them – an attitude that continues to this day.



MEMBERS URGED TO PERFORM MSQ OUTREACH

Creating a personal relationship with a journalist can go a long way in achieving our goal of defending Islam. A journalist who regularly writes an Op Ed in your local paper, an editor for the paper, local public TV or radio station, or NPR are all possibilities. Convey your sincere greetings and enlighten them on what a gold mine Islam/Ahmadiyyat is. One goes into such meetings nervous and shaky but comes out thrilled and excited because Allah takes care of so much. Let them know that you will be interested to write on these lines, show them your work, share a copy of the MSQ compendium. If you have already had an opportunity to reach out, share your experiences with us at msq@mkausa.org.