

Prophet Muḥammad ṣall-Allaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam was the most respected man in Makkah before his appointment as the Messenger of Allaah. Not only was he famous for his impeccable honesty, truthfulness and trustworthiness, he was also recognized for his wisdom, brilliance and business acumen.

When a messenger of Allaah starts his Islamic mission at the command of Allaah to give the message of Islam, his job entails pointing out the errors in the current views, beliefs, goals, practices and lifestyles of his society and highlighting how Islamic views, beliefs, goals, practices and lifestyle are more sensible, accurate and beneficial for them. This starts a debate in the society. Many people are offended by the messenger’s constructive criticism. They respond with personal attacks, baseless accusations, and violence against the messenger. Even his excellence is subjected to hateful speech, behaviour and condemnation. This is exactly what happened to the Prophet, when Allaah commissioned him to serve as His Messenger.

Suddenly, the person who was called an embodiment of truth was called a liar for telling them that Allaah had appointed him as His Messenger. The most beloved of the Makkans became the most hated just for asking them not to worship idols and false gods. The heart-winning excellence of his personality became “magic” to be protected from. And, so on and so forth.

When the annual Hajj (pilgrimage) season came, the Makkans were worried that if some preventive measures were not taken, the Prophet would be able to win converts because of his sensible, rational teachings and because of the excellence of his personality and style. Therefore, some character-assassination teams were prepared who would go to the camps of the pilgrims and warn them against Muḥammad’s magic and to advise them as to how he should be completely avoided lest his magic spell works on any of them.

This actually worked in favour of the Prophet and his mission. He would not have been able to reach all those people with his message, regardless of how much he tried. He became known to many people from all over Arabia. Many people became curious and wanted to meet him and hear his side of the story. All he had to do was to share with them the truth instead of the falsehood propagated to them.

Such attacks and campaigns continued throughout his mission in Makkah. The most

damaging were those launched by his own uncle Aboo Lahab when he would follow the Prophet during his visits to the pilgrims and would literally be throwing dust on him while yelling, "Do not listen to him, he is crazy/a liar". He was more damaging because Arabs could not have imagined an uncle saying something about his own nephew unless it was valid.

The Prophet was, after all, a human being. He felt much hurt by such totally false attacks on him. But Allaah would console him and assure him "Did We not raise high your renown for you?" (Sharh 94:4) This was not only about what had just happened but also a prediction of the future. Although the disbelievers' propaganda was negative, it was helping the mission spread throughout Arabia. For the future, it was a prediction that within a short period of time, he would be the most loved and adored throughout Arabia, and people would feel proud to declare, "I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allaah". This did happen within two decades. It was also a prediction that billions of people throughout the world would be proudly making the same declaration with love and adoration, as it has been happening till now and will continue to happen till the Day of Judgment.

These hurtful campaigns continued even in Madeenah where he was the ruler of the state, in addition to being the Messenger of Allaah. But the citizens of his own state – the hypocrites and the Jews – would relentlessly create opportunities to spill their vile against him. When, due to the leniency and kindness of the Prophet, they became too aggressive and hurtful, Allaah SWT announced:

"Allaah continually confers his blessings upon the Prophet and His angels also ask him to do so. O believers! You too wish blessing upon him lovingly and peace upon him abundantly. As for those who abuse Allaah and His Messenger, indeed, Allaah has cursed them in this world and the Hereafter and prepared for them a humiliating punishment." (Al-Aḥzab 33:56-57)

The points to note are that: Firstly, Muslims cannot be oblivious to the way their Prophet is treated. It would be a hypocritical behaviour that one claims to believe in and love the Prophet but does not feel hurt by the offensive and baseless attacks on his personality and by the manner with which the ignorant bigot(s) express their vile against him -- the most excellent and superb man of all humanity. It is not only evident from the context in which these verses appear, but also from Hadeeth such as: "No one can be a believer until the Prophet becomes more beloved to him than his parents, his children and the whole humanity"; and "The essence of Deen is having good wishes for Allaah, His Messenger, for the Muslim leadership and for the Muslim masses".

Secondly, the Muslims cannot react aggressively or violently, taking the law in their own hands. They should counter the attacks on the Prophet by increasing their love and devotion for him and obedience to him; leaving disciplinary action against the perpetrators of the offense with Allaah and the Islamic state, as commanded to the state in verses 60-62 of the same Soorah.

The attacks on the personality of the Prophet have been going on since the beginning of his mission and continue to this day. We cannot ignore them. If we are true believers, react we must! But only in the Islamic way, the way of our beloved Prophet.

People must understand that burning flags and storming embassies is not the Islamic way. Be warned that those who kill innocent people are not friends of the Prophet, Islam, or Muslims!

Muslims also need to understand that even peaceful protest marches are not effective. They let out frustration and give a false sense of doing something. But at the end of the day, nothing is accomplished. Rather, the criminal perpetrators get more publicity, sell more books and gain more audience.

The Prophetic and Islamic way is that:

- We educate people on a regular basis by providing true, authentic and relevant information.
- We utilize the opportunity provided by the negative propaganda and reach out to people to provide the true picture.
- We emulate the model of the Prophet so that people notice the excellence of our behaviour and see the beauty of the Prophet's work in our characters.
- We increase our Salaah and salaam on the Prophet. The more they malign him, the more we pray for him.
- We work on a long term strategy to gain power and influence so that we can bring the criminals to justice through proper legal and judicial means.

In view of the above, let us pledge that, in addition to adopting his model of excellence in our life:

1. Each of us will devote time and resources to educate non-Muslims around us about the wonderful personality of the Prophet by personal chit chats as well as providing them with leaflets and short documentaries about the Prophet. One well-written introductory leaflet that we can use to introduce him is by Mr. Pasha called “We Must Know This Man – Muḥammad”. Some Islamophobes have announced the screening of this vile movie in Toronto. It will be a good opportunity to spread the truth if people can go to the venue of the movie and peacefully and amicably distribute valid material about the Prophet, so that people who watch the movie also have an opportunity to know the other side.

2. Each of us will dedicate time and resources to make our community powerful and influential in our society by using the five prong strategy that I have been recommending. We must attain enough clout to be able to defend against the libelous and slanderous character assassination of the Prophet and hate-filled bigotry against Islam and Muslims, at least to the same level of protection as enjoyed by other communities in Canada.