

Submitted by Dr. Abid Khan, aik190000@aol.com

Outcry over the Cartoon Issue - A Psychological Analysis

To understand the psychology of the cartoon incident one must understand what religion means to the human mind and why?

All individuals are capable of withstanding criticism even at a super-ego level called "individual consciousness". This is due to the ability to rationalize via open dialogue and form the concept of "difference of opinion". In the western world any religious topic can be discussed and criticized on an individual basis due to the relative individualized interpretation of faith from person to person. Even while sharing the same faith there is individual consciousness which is operational. In wealthier secular countries, this has been made somewhat possible by economic indulgence and fortified by the separation of church and state but for the most part this is applicable in the west as free expression is promoted.

However when it comes to the Muslim interpretation of the faith, for the most part, there are certain universals. They share the basic essentials (such as belief and practices). No matter what culture they identify with, many feel they belong to a larger community called the Umma as their faith represents "collective consciousness". Criticism of one Muslims faith is tantamount to criticizing the collective consciousness of the people. **The problem is that when you take on the collective consciousness of the people, the response may be global as it may not allow conflict resolution on an individual basis.** The collective consciousness takes over especially amongst people with economic disparity.

One needs to understand and appreciate the power of the collective consciousness especially in those areas of the world where faith plays a big role. If one were to go back in history; the Holocaust, the Balkan massacres, Somalia and more recently the genocide in Africa are all examples of collective consciousness unleashing chaos, indifference and at times mass murder.

In summary from a psychological point of view any contradiction or insult against any organized religion is an attack on the super-ego and the collective consciousness of the people. The west may be less susceptible to this due to their economic superiority and free expression. However, in an environment of uncertainties, economic and otherwise, these kinds of depictions will be often be perceived as another attack and can only be met with chaos and rejection. **We have to learn to accept all religions and refrain from any disrespect and insult.** We can envision a situation where similar effects could occur amongst the Christians of India or even South America if insulting cartoons of Jesus Christ were published.

We need to learn from our predecessors to be better Muslims and to adapt to our environment where we live. We need to be accepted for our human value and labor potential and not rejected because of our faith. We need to set an example to the world and be not only accepted but embraced and celebrated as "different and equal".