

The Depiction of Prophet Muhammad by non-Muslim Authors in Urdu Texts in the Context of 20th-Century Indian Communal Tensions.

Mohd Zaid

PhD Scholar, Central University of Punjab

Abstract

The study investigates how non-Muslim poets honoured and depicted Muhammad in their lyrical works during communal tensions in 20th-century India. This study examines the historical causes of rising communalism and how non-Muslim poets coped with difficult times while honouring the Prophet. This representation helps us comprehend non-Muslim viewpoints and shows Muhammad's lasting impact on different religions. Some critics praised Muhammad's global leadership and social transformation despite the sectarian conflict. Jagan Nath Azad, Dilu Ram, Gurudutt Singh, Abhay Kumar, Hari Chand, Darshan Singh, Kunwar Sooraj Narayan, Prof. Tajwinder Kaur, and Hari Kumar, from varied backgrounds, analyse Urdu literary community dynamics. The prophet's lifestyle, virtues, compassion, justice, aid to the poor, and advice to the pious have been praised in poems. Muhammad influenced non-Muslims in spirituality, social dynamics, and politics. This encourages non-Muslim authors to study Muhammad. The study finds Urdu poetry eulogies to Muhammad produced by Indian non-Muslims of many religions.

Keywords: *Communalism, Prophet Muhammad, non – Muslims, Poems, Portrayal.*

Introduction

Literature also depicts community conflicts. Rangeela Rasool "Colorful Prophet" was published in Punjab in the 1920s during Muslim-Arya Samaj conflicts. Arya Samaj member Pandit M. A. Chamupati (Krishna Prashad Pratap) wrote the book in 1927. However, Lahore publisher Mahashe Rajpal purposefully withheld the author's identity. The controversial book first appeared to be a beautiful and laudatory account of Muhammad and his teachings. It focused on his marriages and sexual encounters¹. The 1920s second book, "Shaitan," portrays Muhammad as the opposite of prophetic ideals.

Despite theological differences, numerous non-Muslim authors tried to honour the Prophet Muhammad. Urdu, a language that has unified civilisations despite community divides, was used by these poets to praise the Prophet. These authors emphasised the Prophet Muhammad's role in promoting justice, equality, and compassion as a religious figure, reformer, and moral advisor. Their efforts promoted societal cohesiveness and human values in the context of rising religious strife. *Rasool-E-Arbi* by Sardar Gurudutt Singh of Punjab and *Hindu ki Naat* by Dillu Ram of Haryana was written in 1924, and Sundar Lal's 1942 book *Hazrat Muhammad aur Islam* displays non-Muslims' adoration for Muhammad.

In 1988, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* caused community discord. Many nations banned *The Satanic Verses*, but Iran was the most noteworthy. The work was heretical to most Muslims because Rushdie satirised Islam. Later, Kar Sevaks razed the Babri mosque in 1992, claiming it was an ancient ram temple. Non-Muslim literature also praises Muhammad and Islam. Prophet Muhammad is revered as a spiritual mentor, model leader, ambassador of peace, and promoter of selflessness and kindness in many works. He stresses social responsibility and religious faithfulness in these books. Muhammad's teachings influenced many non-Muslim authors who wrote in Urdu. This was done despite 20th-century Hindi-Urdu language strife and communal tensions. This shows strong community dynamics and cross-cultural responsiveness across religions. It shows shared aims and literary expression.

RESEARCH GAP

Although a considerable amount of literature discusses the influence of the prophet Muhammad within the Islamic community, further investigation is required to explore his depiction by non-Muslim poets in Urdu literature, particularly in the context of the communal conflicts that arose in 20th-century India. Many previous studies have frequently disregarded how non-Muslim authors have interacted with the historical impact of Muhammad. Writers of various religious backgrounds and geographical origins can offer a diverse and thorough perspective on global prophethood and its influence outside the Muslim community. This research seeks to solve the existing void by analysing the Lyrical compositions in Urdu literature authored by non-Muslims that explore social concerns and portray Muhammad, a social reformer and leader, as a symbol of love and other related themes.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1. To explore how Prophet Muhammad has been depicted in Urdu liter-

ature authored by non-Muslim writers amidst the communalism of the 20th century.

2. To investigate the historical and cultural context behind non-Muslim poets' admiration for Prophet Muhammad.

3. They were investigating how Islamic principles of charity, equality, and social welfare were integrated into the works of non-Muslim poets.

1. Muhammad: A Universal Prophet

a) Prophet for Everyone- Muhammad is renowned for his profound empathy and benevolence towards every conscious person. He exhibited benevolence towards others irrespective of their societal standing or convictions. Before him, the preceding prophets were dispatched to specific individuals or regions, such as Moses for the Jewish people and Jesus for Christians. However, he was not limited only to Muslims. Instead, He said, 'Every prophet used to be sent to his nation only, but I have been sent to all mankind'³. Kunwar Sooraj Narayan Sinha, a writer from Awadh, began composing poetry in the 1950s. Kunwar Sooraj Narayan Sinha, a writer from Awadh, started his poetic endeavours in the 1950s. Within his poem 'Ishq khulus', he devotes a stanza to praise the exceptional qualities of Prophet Muhammad-

***'Muhammad ek firqe ke nahi hain
Muhammad sab ke hai aur ba-yakeen hai'***
Muhammad does not belong to any sect;
Muhammad is for all and no doubt.

Muhammad's characters and personalities influenced the writer. He saw Muhammad as suitable for all sects without any uncertainty. He was dispatched to the entire planet. This concept offers insight into the viewpoints of persons from the 1950s, a time of heightened communal conflict following the partition of India.

b) Global Leader- Gur Saran Lal was born in 1907 in Lucknow. He used to participate in Urdu meetings and in different rituals of Islam where he learned about the Prophet, and the leadership of the Prophet urged him, and he wrote-

***Fakhar E Adam, Ahmad Mukhtar ki bat karein
Do Jahan ke sarwar-o-Sardar ki bat karein***
Let's talk about prophet Muhammad,
Let's talk about the leader and head.

Adam is considered the first man on earth, according to different religions.

Here, the title of Fakhar E Adam was given to Muhammad, which means the pride of Adam. Also, Mukhtar, the one who is being liked, is one of the names of the prophet Muhammad. He was the head and leader of do Jahan (the world) in the perspective of Muslims and Non-Muslims. Under his guidance, wild and aggressive people became one of the world's most civilised nations. People who were once violent and had fallen to the lowest levels of humanity were uplifted to the pinnacle of human virtues.

c) Gateway for All- Ramesh Narayan Saxena was born in Bareilly in 1937. During his youth, he witnessed the horrific acts during the division. Due to the formal recognition of Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism as separate ethnic groups during the British Raj, there was an increased recognition of the ethnic inequalities between Hindus and Muslims in British India. Amidst the tumultuous circumstances, when no governing body could reach a resolution to resolve the conflict, Ramesh Saxena reminisced about the prophet's leadership and proceeded to document his thoughts-

***Khali koi palta hi nahi dar se nabi ke,
hindu ho muslamaa ho sikh ho ya koi aur,
yad ati hai jab daur-e-sarkar madina,
badh jati hai gulshan mari ankho me nami aur.***

*No one returns with empty hands from the door of the Prophet,
whether he is a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or from any community.
When I remember the time of governance of the Prophet,
My eyes fill with tears.*

He said that Prophet Muhammad never practised discrimination based on race or religion. He treated everyone equally. There was no barrier to bringing someone before him for justice. He welcomed everyone with open arms. Writers cry when they think of this prophetic period.

2 Muhammad: A beacon of unity and fraternity

a)Fraternity- Jagan Nath Azad, a poet and litterateur who walked on both sides of a contentious dividing line, spread the message of peace and unity. Being a Hindu who dedicated his life to contributing to the corpus of Urdu literature, he is known equally for the controversy of Pakistan's 'first National anthem. When the Babri Masjid was destroyed in December 1992, Azad was flying from Jammu to his son's home in Delhi when a nearby sitting person told him about the incident; this news pained him deeply. He writes-

Bade chhote mein jis ne ik ukhuwwat ki bina daali,

zamane se tamiz-e-banda-o-aaqa mita Daali
who has grown the seeds of brotherhood,
Has eradicated the slave-master tradition.

Prophet Muhammad aimed to remove discrimination based on socio-religious, linguistic, and ethnolinguistic differences. Humanity is universally regarded as the most treasured creation of Allah, without any exceptions. As per the Quran, humans traces its ancestry back to Adam and Eve, portraying humanity as a unified entity. Speaking during the Farewell Pilgrimage, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “O people!” The Absolute and your forefathers are unquestionably the same, and neither Arabian nor non-Arabic are superior to the other, nor are red and black superior to each other unless via good acts⁸.

b) Equality for enslaved people- The treatment and protection of enslaved people shaped the views of many Indian and international thinkers. Poet Hari Chand was from Hoshiarpur, Punjab. Sharma wrote Persian and Urdu well. He began writing in the 1930s and 1940s, referencing Muhammad and celebrating downtrodden people and orphans.

Kisi ki hikmat ne yateemo ko kia durre yateem,
Aur gulamo ka zamane bhar ka mola kar dia
With wisdom, Muhammad made orphans as
shining pearl and freed the enslaved people for eternal.

Muhammad preached fraternity. He promoted equitable treatment of everybody regardless of rank, class, etc. Arabia, like many other places, practised slavery before Islam. Previously, people treated them. As penance for crimes, Jesus advised his followers to treat their slaves decently, protect their dignity, be fair, and release them.

c) Harmonious living- Dr. Ramesh Prasad Garg was born in 1943 in Varanasi. His writing began amid India’s partition. Partition generates religious and communal strife. The writers utilised Muhammad to encourage unity. He says Prophet Muhammad’s message of equality, brotherhood, eradicating race and colour problems, tranquillity, and truthfulness most influenced him. He wrote in one poem-

Paigam ekta ka dia apne humein,
Ulfat Sikhati sae-e-alam ki zindgi
Mohd gave the message of unity,
love teaches us a peaceful way of life.

Muhammad serves as a symbol of harmony and togetherness across all communities. In the prophet's last address, it was proclaimed that every individual is inherently interconnected as siblings, and people were urged to unite under the guidance of Allah, refraining from factionalism. He also instructs us that love is the method of attaining tranquillity through which we may create a lovely environment around us.

3. Muhammad: A legacy in socio-economic welfare

a) Service for Destitutes- Businessman Shiv Charan Das from Bhangal (Punjab) wrote poems under the pen name 'Akhtar'. Tafseer-e-Hayat was his Muhammad biography. He composed after being inspired by the Prophet-

*Gareebo ki khidmat ho tera shia'ar,
Isi me hai mastoor raz-e-waqar
It's your habit to service the poor,
The secret of your eternity is hidden in it.*

Prophet Muhammad often helped the poor. His practice made him renowned among Muslims and non-Muslims forever. Since he always helps others, the lines make him eternal. He also advised being compassionate to the underprivileged and doing what's needed. In a Hadith, he said, "The one who looks after a widow or a poor person is like a warrior.

b) Needy and helpless- Jagan Nath Azad says that Muhammad deeply cared for everyone's well-being and empathised with those struggling.

*Madadgar-o-mua'wan bebaso ka zir dasto ka,
Zaeefon ka sahara aur Muhsin haq parasto ka
Helper and supporter of people in need,
The proponent of old people and benefactor of genuine persons*

Jagan Nath Azad said Muhammad cared sincerely about everyone's well-being and understood their struggles. Muhammad lived out God's characteristics to the utmost. His giving it to all living and inanimate things benefited them tremendously. Muhammad always offered something to those who pleaded for help, but if he had nothing, he promised later. He also led truth-seekers on the truthfulness route.

c) Humanitarian Aid- Zakat is vital for people, specific communities, and humanity to lead fulfilling lives. Muslims are obligated to give zakat, a

charitable giving, from the blessings God has graciously bestowed upon them. This act serves to achieve several spiritual, ethical, and societal objectives. Radha Krishna Azad Sonipati, a writer from Sonipat (Haryana) born in 1938, engages in writing. -

***Isi ne hi humein jazba Raza O sabr ka bakhsh
Dikhaya hai isi ne sadqa O khairat ka rasta
He bestowed enthusiasm and patience and
guided us towards charity and alms.***

Muhammad also propagates the tradition of alms. He warned people about being sluggish when giving alms. In a hadith, he said, ‘Do not show lethargy or negligence in giving alms and charity till your last breath’ and noted, ‘ Give charity without delay, for it stands in the way of calamity.’

d) Lack of Avarice- Historically, greed for money destroyed many nations. Therefore, prophet Muhammad commanded people not to be greedy as well don’t be a miser at the same time. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said ‘it is clear that greed never ends.

***Dil awaiz hai qabil dar hai, Muhammad ka kya khoob farman
hai,
Khulasa hai quran ka, lalach na kar maal-o-jaan ka.
What a message of Muhammad and,
The essence of the Quran is not to be greedy for money.***

Shiv Charan Das reiterates that people possess an inherent inclination towards greed. It is consistently drawn to pleasurable things. Human beings are inherently inclined towards desiring opulent possessions. When a person gets consumed by greed, the inevitable consequence is their demise, and no number of worldly possessions can satisfy their desires as long as they are alive.

4. Muhammad: The Harbinger of Love and Happiness

a) Love- Gur Sharan Lal was a famous writer from Lucknow. He was a very humble and lovely person. So, he liked the personality of a prophet. In his poem, he writes-

***Prem ki ganga bahai jisne Registan mein,
Rooh taza foonk di mit-te hue eeman mein
He spread love in the desert and
revived our souls with faith.***

The Prophet was born in the deserts of Arabia. An intense enmity and hatred permeated the tribal society of pre-Islamic Arabia, known as the Jahiliya (“Age of Ignorance”). Tribal conflicts were common, and loyalty was valued. Though Jews, Christians, and other religious groups were present, paganism predominated. Religious differences sometimes intensify group hostility. Prophet Muhammad preached love and called for peace. He helped eradicate Arabian tribalism.

In a hadith, He said, ‘He is not one of us who calls to tribalism. He is not one of us who fights for the sake of tribalism. He is not one of us who dies following tribalism.’”

b) Peace and happiness- Communalism has already established itself as a potent force in Punjab. In 1924, Lala Lajpat Rai publicly supported the division of Punjab into separate provinces for Hindus and Muslims. The Hindu Mahasabha incited disorderly circumstances by chanting the slogan ‘Akhand Hindustan’. During this unrest, a poet from Punjab, Sardar Gurudutt Singh, wrote the below lines in the advent of prophethood.

Hue mahbe Alam se ashar e zulmat, ki tala’e hua mahe barj saa’dat
Na chatki magar chandni ek muddat, ki tha barj me Aftab e risalat
The darkness has gone, and the shine of happiness and peace came, the hidden light of prophethood has brightened.

For a prolonged duration, no prophet was able to establish peace among the people. The society was engulfed in a pervasive atmosphere of violence and hatred. The arrival of prophethood to Muhammad brought forth a radiant aura of joy and tranquillity among the people, dispelling the gloom of discord and hatred.

d) Friendship- Historically, Prophet Muhammad lived peacefully with different faiths. He lived with Christians and Jews in Makkah and Madinah. Despite apparent conflicts with some Madinah Jewish tribes, the Prophet maintained relations with the Jewish community. Jagan Nath Azad penned these lyrics to promote friendship. -

*Salam us par jo aya Rahmat ul alimeen banker,
Payam dost lekar, sadiq al wa’da wa ameen banker
Praise to the one who came as a grace for all mankind,
They brought the message of friendship and came as a man of
honesty and promise.*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Among the most dutiful of deeds is that man nurture relations with the people his father was friends with²¹” The notion that Islam forbids Muslims from socialising and

Forming social relationships with others is entirely incorrect. The message of camaraderie motivated Non-Muslims in India. They characterised Muhammad as somebody of integrity who consistently honours his commitments.

CONCLUSION

Finally, non-Muslim Urdu writers’ depictions of Muhammad throughout the 20th century’s intercommunal violence demonstrate India’s inclusive culture. Despite religious diversity and societal upheaval in this century, Prophet Muhammad’s life, teachings, and character influenced many non-Muslims. Their poetry emphasises his empathy, justice, and social transformation and is a light of togetherness and brotherhood for everyone. These poets honoured the Prophet as a religious leader and a global figure who promoted equality, social welfare, and society’s progress.

Non-Muslims like Jagan Nath Azad, Chaudhary Dillu Ram, Abhay Kumar, Hari Chand, Kunwar Sooraj Narayan, Darshan Singh, and others contributed to Urdu literature with Naat or Prophetic poetry. These works honoured the Prophet’s morality, character, and efforts to address female infanticide, slavery, and superstitions. The research also illustrates how these non-Muslim poets promoted peace and respect via their poems during religious and social tension. Their works show how Urdu poetry became a tool for social unification and cross-cultural understanding. How non-Muslims portray Muhammad in Urdu literature reminds us of how universal human principles can unite people and inspire individuals from all backgrounds, regardless of religion.

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 best way of delivering his lessons, make known his exemplary life and to convey to their contemporaries the message that the prophet’s followers would, be able to connected with these