

## Freedom and Sacredness

*Discuss how an ethical relativist would estimate the situation in contrast with a soft universalist. What are the merits and downsides of accepting the view of the ethical relativist? What are the pros and cons of accepting the soft universalist's stance? Where do you stand on this issue and why?*

### Introduction

The apparent clash between the western values of freedom of the press and the sacredness of the Muslim religion has not been a recent topic of discussion since quite a few incidents have been reported and commented upon as falling under this discussion. For example, the short film 'Submission' made by the Dutch director Theo Van Gogh caused a conflict, the book Satanic Verses by the British Author Salman Rushdie resulted in a death fatwa, and the cartoons of the prophet Muhammad led to violent demonstrations across the world.

One could also mention the quotations made by the Pope which led to church bombings to 'protest' the idea that Islam is a violent religion. In all of these cases, the ethical viewpoint of soft universalism would be different from the viewpoint given by an ethical relativist (LaFave, 2006). Therefore, to understand how both these viewpoints can be taken on the same situation, we must first analyze what the viewpoint is and then see how it can be applied to the situation under discussion.

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