Prophet Muḥammad peace be upon him: a Role model for Modern Muslim Rulers

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Abstract

The Sīrah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him has been field of study and research since long. Various aspects of the sīrah have been studied. This paper deals with political aspect of the sīrah. The concerned sīrah literature was studied and material was gathered to evaluate this aspect of the sīrah. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has been recognized as a wise politician, a proactive ruler, and an organized administrator. He left a great role model for the Muslim Rulers to come. His whole success as a political leader and statesman is based on the Qur’anic injunctions that he practically followed. This paper focuses on this aspect of the Sīrah of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him.

Keywords: Sīrah, Prophet Muḥammad, Muslim Ruler.

Introduction

The life of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him is a role model for all the Muslims in the world. No matter what place and position they occupy in the society, they find before them the life of their beloved Prophet peace be upon him as an open book. This humanly book not only contains clear commandments but also a clear methodology to act upon them. The Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him has been role model in all spheres of life including, personal life, public life, justice, and politics. In fact, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him was commanded by Allah to implement the political system of Islam in the land. The hadith literature provides us the practical details embodied in the life of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him regarding this political system. The Holy Prophet peace be upon him clearly talked about the rights and duties of a Muslim ruler in an Islamic state.
Tamīm Dārī may God be pleased with him narrated that the Holy Prophet peace be upon him said: the religion is nothing but advice and sincerity. We asked: for whom? O messenger of God! He said: for Allah, for His book (Quran), for His messenger, for Muslim Rulers and for the public.¹

In this ḥadīth, sincerity with the Muslim rulers means to obey the Muslim rulers in all right-doings and to support them and not to take up arms against them (khurūj).²

Imām Khāṭṭābī maintains that sincerity to Muslim rulers means to offering congregational prayers behind them, fight in the ways of Allah under their command, pay alms to them and not to take up arms against them.

By the careful study of the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad peace be upon him it is evident that He was obeyed completely, Muslims never rebelled against Him rather they supported him in full, performed their congregational prayers behind Him, fought in the way of Allah under His command, paid alms to Him. The Following narrations evidently prove these facts:

**Ṣaḥāba’s obedience even in the matters of punishment like the punishment of adultery**

It is narrated that one of the Muslims came to the Holy Prophet peace be upon him while he was in the mosque. He called out the Holy Prophet peace be upon him and said: O messenger of Allah! I have committed adultery. The Holy Prophet ignored him. He then came in front of him and said the same thing: O messenger of Allah! I have committed adultery. When he repeated his confession four times before him then the Holy Prophet peace be upon him called him and inquired: are you insane? He said: No. he then inquired: are you married? He said said: yes. Then the Holy Prophet peace be upon him commanded: take him and to be stoned to death (rajm). Jābir b. Abdullah reported that he was one of those who stoned him to death. We stoned him to death near the ground where Eid prayers are performed (ʿīdgāh). When we started to throw stones to him, he ran away and then we found him near Ḥarrah (place) and stoned him to death there.³

**Ṣaḥaba’s obedience to Him in delivering His epistles to the surrounding Kings**

In the name of Allah, the most merciful the most gracious. From Muḥammad, the messenger of Allah, to Hercules the Great. Peace be upon the one who follow the right path. After the praise and glory to Almighty Allah, I invite you to Islam, embrace Islam, you will be safe. Embrace Islam, you will be granted the reward twice.

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¹ Imam Muslim, ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 54/1, Karachi, Qadīmī Kutub khāna.
² Al-Nawawī, Yaḥyā b. Sharaf, Sharḥ Muslim on ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, p. 54.
³ Imam Muslim, ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 66/1, Karachi, Qadīmī Kutub khāna.
⁴ Imam Muslim, ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 97/2, Karachi, Qadīmī Kutub khāna.
In the light of biography of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him it is evident that it is duty of a Muslim ruler should write invitation letters. In addition, the Muslim ruler may make peace agreement with non-Muslim countries and rulers to safeguard the interest of the Muslim Ummah.

The Duties of a Muslim Ruler in the light of Sīrah of the Holy Prophet PBUH

The careful study of the Sīrah of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him evidently portrays him as a great statesman and wise administrator. There are numerous verses in the Holy Quran that mentions him as a Ruler appointed by Allah to run the affairs of the Madinah State and to implement the teachings revealed in the Holy Quran. It is very important to note here that his office as a ruler and administrator was not given by the people rather it was due the virtue of his prophecy, though, he struggled to convince the people to obey him as being the messenger of Allah and he never overthrow any government to took over the government. As Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَمَا أُرِضِيَ مِن رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيَطَاعُ بِأْيَانِ اللَّهِ

We have never sent any messenger except that he must be obeyed by the commandment of Allah.\(^5\)

In another place Allah says in the Holy Quran:

مَن يَطَعُ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ اطَّعَ اللَّهَ

Whosoever obeyed the messenger it is as if he obeyed Allah.\(^6\)

Even though he was supremely successful in administering the state affairs with all its components, he was too far away from being a traditional clergy and cruel ruler. This was one of the reasons that people loved him and dedicated their lives for his mission. The agreement of Fuḍūl which took place before his prophecy indicates to his wisdom and administration. Another example of his wise administration and statesmanship is the incident of the placement of black stone (ḥajar-e-aswad) in Kaʿbah which could have been cause of bloodshed and unending tribal war. Being a Ruler of the Madinah state, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him always strictly observed the following principles which played a crucial role in the development of early Islamic state.

1. Rule of Law:

The Holy Prophet peace be upon him never kept him above the law, rather he was bound to follow the commandments of Allah revealed to him from time to time. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran as follows:

امَرْتُ ان اكُون اول المسلمين\(^7\)

\(^5\) Quran: Al-Nisa: 64
\(^6\) Quran: Al-Nisa: 80
\(^7\) Quran: Al-Anʿām: 14
This is evident from the sīrah of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him that every Muslim ruler must follow the law and he must not be kept above the law as it will cause the people not to abide by the law of the land, hence, will cause decline of the society.

2. **Free of indemnification:**

The remarkable and groundbreaking achievement of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him in the human history was the fact that he did not make himself indemnified. History tells us that generally rulers and kings have been indemnified even in today’s modern world many heads of the state have got indemnification.

It is reported that the Holy Prophet peace be upon him presented himself before the people to take revenge from him if he hurt anyone and harmed anyone. Although, he never hurt anyone due to personal grudges, yet he set this example to the future Muslim rulers. This example was strictly followed by the following rightly guided caliphs.

3. **Right Use of power and avoiding crossing the limits**

In fact, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him has got vast powers from Almighty Allah over people, however, He never crossed the limits and always used his political powers in the right way. This is why even the obedience to the commandments of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him is conditional with righteousness as is mentioned in the Holy Quran:

\[
\text{ولا يعصينك في المعروف} \tag{8}
\]

And that they will not disobey you in the righteousness.

Whereas the obedience of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him is conditional with righteousness what to say of other rulers. Therefore, no commandment will be obeyed if it is against the commandments of Allah. This is further elaborated by the Holy Prophet peace be upon him as follows:

\[
\text{لا طاعة في معصية إنما الطاعة في المعروف} \tag{9}
\]

There is no obedience in the disobedience to Allah, rather it is in the righteousness.

Furthermore, it is reported by Abdullah b. Umar may Allah be pleased with him to have said that the Holy Prophet peace be upon him said:

A Muslim must listen and obey concerning what he likes and hates unless he is ordered to commit a sin. If he is ordered to commit a sin, he is not under obligation to listen and obey concerning this specific order.

8 Al-Baihaqī, Aḥmad b. ḥussain, Al-Sunan al-Kubrā, 72/9, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah
9 Quran: al-Mumtaḥinah: 12
4. Freedom of speech and difference of opinion

The nature of the relationship between the ruler and the people during the Prophet's time was very different from the period of tyranny or dictatorship. The obedience to the Holy Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him was made obligatory by Allah, similarly the Holy Prophet peace be upon him was bound by Allah to actively engage himself for the well-being of the people of the state and to listen to their complaints and to resolve their day-to-day problems. Even if they have any objections, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him was required to satisfy them. The biographical literature present plenty of examples of these. One of these is the famous treaty of Ḥudiabiyah, during which the saḥāba, particularly Ḥaḍrat Umar, may Allah be pleased with them were worried about this treaty as to why this was signed accepting all the demands of Quraish of Makkah which seemed to be against the Muslims. On happening of this, The Holy Prophet peace be upon him satisfied them by his convincing answers. Likewise, after the battle of Ḥunain there was a dispute created by the Anṣār may Allah be pleased with them on the distribution of the booty. In this situation, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him listened to the grievances of Anṣār and gave clarifications and made them satisfied with his answers.10

In a nutshell, it is clear from the above instances that the public of the Islamic state at that time enjoyed freedom of expression and difference of opinion. However, It is very important to note that the saḥāba may Allah be pleased with them never crossed their limits in expressing their views and difference of opinion. On certain occasions, they used to ask the Holy Prophet peace be upon him as to whether such decision made by Allah or it was his personal opinion. In case of the former, they used to remove their misunderstanding. This can be verified by the situation of Battle of Badr when the Holy Prophet peace be upon him selected a place to camp over there to fight against the infidels of Makkah. When Ḥubāb b. al-Munẓir may Allah be pleased with him differed with the selection of place and suggested to camp in a certain place. The Holy Prophet peace be upon him not only listened to him but also changed the place of camping according to the suggestion put forward by Ḥubāb b. al-Munẓir may Allah be pleased with him.11

From the above discussion, it seems to be clear that the Muslim ruler must ensure freedom of expression and difference of opinion to the public so that they may feel free to exercise it.

5. Selection of the competent persons on public posts

By the study of the sīrah literature, it is evident that the Holy Prophet peace be upon him always appointed the competent, professional, righteous persons on public posts. On their appointment on public posts, The Holy Prophet peace be upon him used to advise them that these posts are not for attaining power, wealth, and respect in the world, rather they are meant to be source of public service. Therefore, people must not wish for these public posts. He is reported to have said:

11 Daḥlān, Aḥmad b. Zainī, al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah, 2/72
إن أخونكم عيننا من طلبه

In our view, the most corrupt person is the one who demanded for the post.

On one occasion, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him is reported to have advised Abd al-Rahmān b. Samurah may Allah be pleased with him in the following words:

O Abd al-Rahmān! Do not wish for a public post. If it is given to you without your demand them Allah will help you to shoulder it and if you get by your demand, then you will left with yourself.14

6. Intelligence and wisdom

Muḥammad Alī Kurd reports the intelligence and wisdom of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him in the following words:

Before the prophecy, the people of Makkah used to call the Holy Prophet peace be upon him as truthful and trustworthy. The reason why the people of Makkah used to call him as truthful and trustworthy is that they have keenly observed his truthfulness and trustworthiness throughout his life and saw how perfectly he resolved very sensitive issue of them like settlement of dispute over placing of the black stone in the wall of Kaʿbah.15

Furthermore, the policy of adopting passive and peaceful struggle in Makkah also indicates his wisdom and intelligence which played a crucial role in saving of the lives of Muslims and in stopping meaningless bloodshed, which could have possibly caused the suppression of Islam and Muslims in the world.16

These instances mentioned above clearly show as to how a Muslim ruler should be wise and intelligent to not only safeguard the lives of the people but also run a state smoothly. With these qualities of wisdom and intelligence a Muslim ruler can face the challenges and make astonishing progress in the state.

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12 Al-Qushairī, Muslim b. ḥajjāj, ṣaḥiḥ Muslim, Beirur: Maktaba al-Asriyyah, 3/1456
14 Al-Sijistānī, Sulaimān b. Ashʿath, Sunan Abī Dāʿūd, Beirur: Maktabah al-Asriyyah, 3/130
7. **establishment of brotherhood**

The Holy Prophet peace be upon him, being a political leader, showed his great skills of statesmanship in organization and administration of the society up to modern standards of wellbeing and sustainable development. The holy prophet peace be upon him took several steps towards the achievement of these goals. One of the biggest problems in this newly established state was the settlement of migrants in Madinah. To settle these migrants in Madinah Islamic State peacefully, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him gave a new concept of brotherhood and established it between migrants and the local anṣār. This concept was shaped in a way that one migrant was made brother to a local anṣār so that the latter may help the former in the settling his financial and social problems. By this measure, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him successfully resolved the biggest problem of the state.\(^{17}\)

8. **Political Administration**

At the time of arrival of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him at Madinah, there was no central political authority and system. In this regard, the following issues were very important to be addressed by the Holy Prophet peace be upon him:

- a) Determination of the rights and duties of migrants and local people
- b) Financial arrangements for migrants from Makkah
- c) Agreement with non-Muslim Arabs specially the Jews
- d) Political structure and military defense of the city
- e) Financial compensation to the losses to migrants caused by the infidels of Makkah

For the achievement of the above-mentioned goals, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him prepared a charter, may be called a constitution, to administer and govern the city of Madinah. This charter is known in the history as “Charter of Madinah”, which was signed by the newly arrived migrants, i.e., Muslims and Arab non-Muslims especially the Jews. By this agreement, the central authority of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him was accepted by all the citizens of Madinah to control the city.

By the signing of this written agreement, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him established fourteen hundred years ago a society wherein all the citizens enjoyed the freedom of religion, the sanctity of human life and the security of human wealth and property. The rule of law with ensured, thus, this newly established state became abode of peace and tranquility.\(^ {18}\)

This charter clearly shows the leadership qualities of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him. Simultaneously, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him paid attention to the internal stability among the Muslim community. For this, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him said:

\(^{17}\) Al-Baṣrī, Muḥammad b. Saʿd, al-Tabaqāt al-Kunrā, 203-207.

\(^{18}\) Haikal, Muḥammad Hussain, Hayātu Muḥammad, Iqbāl Afaqī Urdu Kutub Khāna, 2010, p. 227
Narrated by Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī may Allah be pleased with him that the Holy Prophet peace be upon him said:

المؤمن للمؤمن كالبنىان يشد بعضه ببعضم ثم شبك بين أصابعه

A faithful believer to a faithful believer is like the bricks of a wall, enforcing each other. While (saying that) the Holy Prophet clasped his hands by interlacing his fingers.

As an administrator and a political leader, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him achieved two major goals as follows:

a) **Internal Affairs**

b) **Foreign Affairs**

a) **Internal Affairs:** In this regard, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him pay special attention towards peace, stability, and moral training of the Muslim community. For this purpose, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him established educational centers and institutes. Ṣuffah is one such great educational center established in Masjid-e-Nabawī from where great scholars and professionals were being graduated who played vital role in strengthening Islamic State. Besides this, the Holy Prophet peace be upon also established educational institutes to suburbs of Madinah.

In addition, the Holy Prophet gave honor to all those people who were notables and honorable in the society before Islam. In this regard, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him said:

Those who were the best amongst you in the pre-Islamic period are the best amongst you in Islam if they comprehend (the Islamic religion).

One of the important elements of the internal politics of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him was honor and dignity of humanity. The Holy Prophet peace be upon adopted the policy of stopping bloodshed and ensuring peace and tranquility. In fact, He battled against his enemies, however, all those battles were launched in self defense as pointed out by Dr Muḥammad Ḥamīdullah. He said:

In the time of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, ten hundred thousand square miles were conquered, and hundreds of thousands were the population of the whole conquered region. This data shows that two hundred and seventy-four square miles were conquered per day averagely in which only one enemy was killed. This was the principle regarding dignity of humanity and sanctity of life that he adopted in his politics.\(^\text{20}\)

Furthermore, another goal concerning internal stability was economic reforms introduced by him. In this regard, he implemented Zakāt system on wealthy Muslims and Kharāj (Land Tax) on non-

\(^{19}\) Al-Bukārī, Muḥammad b.Ismāʿīl, ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī, First Ed. 1422, 8/12

Muslim citizens as an obligation. Beside this obligation, He also introduced a complete package of charity and alms for self-sufficiency and preventing deficit of the State budget.

In order to get all these reforms implemented in true letter and spirit, He appointed competent administrators and officers on various portfolios on merit who ensured the internal stability of the Islamic State.

**b) Foreign Affairs:**

At foreign front, a very important principle of the politics of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him put economic pressure on his enemy and broke up the power of his enemy by making peace treaties with possible allies of the enemy. The pledge of Aqaba and the charter of Madinah are examples of that principle. The people of ʿAqabah came to Makkah to make peace treaty with the Quraish, but they made peace treaty and pledge with the Holy Prophet due to strategic qualities.

The treaty of Ḥudaibiya is another example of such strategic quality by which the Holy Prophet peace be upon him closed the doors of battle and bloodshed and opened the doors of trade and commerce for the Muslims. This eventually paved the way of the victory of Makkah and complete downfall of the infidels of Makkah.

To extend his message of Islam to the neighboring states and regions, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him adopted two methods as follows:

**a) Letters of invitation to Islam:**

After the treaty of Ḥudaibiya, the Holy Prophet peace be upon him wrote letters of invitation to Islam to neighboring states including Rom, Persia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Bahrain, and Yemen. For this he selected best person having great talking skills to deliver these letters to the concerned Kings.\(^\text{21}\)

In addition, The Holy Prophet peace be upon him adopted another great principle of conquering the hearts of the people was to talīfe-e-qalb by financial assistance to neutralize his enemies. For this, he gave financial grants to the enemies from the Zakat.\(^\text{22}\)

**Conclusion:**

The above interpretation of the data and its discussion shows the great qualities of the Hole Prophet peace be upon him as statesman and political leader and proactive administrator, who not only faced the internal challenges but also the external threats. As a ruler and political leader, he transformed his society into an emerging strong state and regional power. This whole historical practical example of the sīrah of the Holy Prophet peace be upon him sets a model for modern

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\(^{21}\) Muḥammad Kurd Alī, al-Kāmil, al-Islām wa al-ḥaḍārah al-Islāmiyyah, Tarīkh al-Insjā, 2019, 100.

Muslim rulers, which can again resolve all their problems and issues to not only strengthen them but also emerge them as regional powers.

References