

# Revival of Prophetic educational model: A study of some salient features of Prophetic Education

**Ab Manaan Khan, Sheraz ahmad Mir, Rayees Nazir**

*Doctoral Candidates, S. H. Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar.*

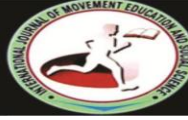
## **ABSTRACT:**

*As per the Qur'anic dictum wa yuallimhum al kitab wal hikmah, one of the important purposes of Muhammad's (ﷺ) prophethood was to enrich and acquaint humans with true knowledge, the knowledge which as per the divine commandment guides humanity towards the comprehension and establishment of justice both at the individual as well as at the collective (social) level and helps them in the attainment of salvation. Since knowledge guides action and whether a person or society is just or unjust in its approach depends hugely upon the fact whether it is knowledgeable or ignorant. It is due to this fact that Holy Qur'an, being the revealed book on Muhammad (ﷺ), outwardly rejects any notion of equality between the approach of one who is knowledgeable and the other who is ignorant. Here, one must not equate the notion of Knowledge in contemporary times with the concept of knowledge in prophetic model; unlike the various knowledge theories in present times the prophetic conception of knowledge is all inclusive and highly panoptic. Likewise the prophetic way of disseminating this knowledge i.e. Education, is very interesting and highly relevant for all times. The reason behind its relevance for all times, is due to the fact that it is not the model given by some educationist on the basis of his limited knowledge and experience, it is the model given by a perfect human who was divinely guided in his endeavor and who was declared by the Lord of this entire universe as the perfect model for the whole humanity. It is the model given by the person who in his lifetime not only remained confined with the dissemination of knowledge at theoretical level but was able to fetch its results at the operational level also and this got manifested with the establishment of a society which was based on lofty principles of God-consciousness, Equality, Justice, brotherhood and so on. This paper is a humble attempt to discuss Prophet as an educator and study some of the prominent features of his educational model.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Education, Humanity, Justice, Knowledge, Prophet, Qur'an, Salvation*

## **1. INTRODUCTION:**

At the very outset it must be clear that Muhammad (ﷺ) was essentially a Prophet and not an educator but in order to fulfill his Prophetic responsibilities and bring in social change throughout the whole of Arabia (and subsequently to the entire world) he employed education as an instrument so beautifully and with such intensity



that before the advent of prophet there were hardly seventeen or eighteen people throughout Makkah<sup>1</sup> (which used to be the hub of all intellectual, religious, cultural and commercial activities) who were able to read and write, but within the period of only about twenty three years, the annals of history got changed and there came about more than a million people at the farewell sermon of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) who could not only read and write but were so highly intellectual that afterwards they were able to surpass the well established and refined civilization of Romans and Persians which in the then existing world were the forerunners of humanity as far as the civilizational march and intellectual vigour is concerned as is testified by the historical records. It was only because of the charismatic personality of Muhammad (ﷺ) shaped under the divine guidance that transformed the Arabs from *Ummis* (which hitherto were not only unlettered but largely uncivilized) to torchbearers of humanity.

Since the purpose and purport of all education in Islamic weltanschauung is the instilling and inculcation of *Adab*—the recognition and acknowledgement of such lights in man which necessarily entails in an attitude expressing true reverence, love, respect, humility and above all knowing one's proper place in relation to him who sheds such light.<sup>2</sup> Obviously this is more supreme and much higher than the present day scenario where 'learning for earning' has become the end and all of education. Alongside this there is a proper way to impart education and if appropriate approach isn't employed education will not be fruitful and desired results may not be produced. Prophet being divinely guided in his methodology was able to impart education in an excellent way and his features and guidelines may be highly beneficial for all times. Some of the sa of Prophetic educational model are as follows:

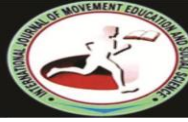
## 2. SALIENT FEATURES OF PROPHETIC EDUCATION

### 2.1 Education for all:

Since the Prophet was sent with a universal message towards the entire humanity without the distinctions of caste, color or race, and as the basic purpose and purport of prophethood as per the divine commandment is to purify humans, so in order to purify humanity of all evil and dross Prophet addressed every class of society and education was the main instrument through which the transformation was intended by the prophet both at the individual level and at the collective level. Unlike the situation of other civilizations during those times, where it was only the elite class of society who had the privilege of getting education or even listen to their sacred scripture the message and teachings of prophet were open to all. In fact, during the Makkan period the majority of the people who got benefitted from the teachings of the prophet were either slaves (like Bilal & Khabab) or those who didn't enjoyed the authoritative position in the society. It is important to note here the starting few verses of chapter 79 which starts as:

<sup>1</sup> Biladhuri, Ahmad ibn jabir., (1978), *Futuh al-Buldan*, Beirut, Maktaba al-hilal, pp. 457-58

<sup>2</sup> Al-Attas, Syed Naquib (1987) *Islam and Secularism*, Malaysia, Art Printing works, pp.91-110



“He frowned and turned away when the blind man approached him, for how can you know that he might seek to purify himself, or take heed and derive benefit from [Our] warning?”<sup>3</sup>

At the time of above revelation, the prophet was busy in conveying the divine message to the elites of Quraysh that a companion named Abdullah ibn Ummi Maktum came up with some query. Prophet with this notion that he can be answered later didn't respond to this companion as he was busy. No sooner the divine message with the commandment that one who is sincere and more interested in prophetic teachings is worth being educated and admonished than the one who is hardly concerned with any admonition or purification. This amply substantiates the equal opportunities including the educational opportunities which were provided to each and every person in the society irrespective of any bias or any distinction on the basis of any superiority or inferiority by the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Likewise after the end of battle of Badr when some prisoners of war were not able to pay their ransom money they were asked to teach ten people the art of reading and writing as an alternative for their ransom.

## 2.2 Usage of Simple, Precise, and Eloquent Language:

As a teacher it is pertinent to adopt very simple and lucid language during the whole process so that everything taught must not become hectic or cumbersome on the part of addressee. The learner should not feel it difficult to grasp the content and meaning of lesson during the whole process of learning, otherwise the process of learning will lose its significance. In order to facilitate the understanding of the people, the prophet used to employ very simple and eloquent language whenever he used to teach or convey any message to people. Regarding the Prophetic way of speech Prophet's wife Aisha says:

“The speech of Messenger of Allah was so clear that all those who listened to it would understand it”<sup>4</sup>

At times there used to be huge gathering around Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and it seemed to be difficult for everyone to listen and understand the Prophet, so in order to make everyone listen and understand, Prophet used to repeat his speech several times.

“Whenever prophet used to speak [in front of people] some sentence, he used to repeat it thrice so that people could understand properly from him”<sup>5</sup>

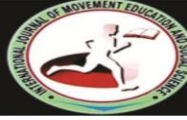
Likewise Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) used to be very brief and precise in his speech and there was hardly any lengthy discussion on his part but this brevity didn't affect the meaningfulness of the Prophet's statements as the

---

<sup>3</sup> Al-Qur'an, 79:1-4, (Throughout the paper, the English Translation of Qur'anic Verses have been taken from *Tadhkir al Qur'an of Moulana Wahidudin khan*)

<sup>4</sup> Abu Dawud, Sulayman (2010) Sunan Abu Dawud, Riyadh, Dar as Salam, Hadith No. 697

<sup>5</sup> Bukhari, Muhammad bin Ismail (1999) Ja'mi' Al-Sahih, Riyadh, Dar as Salam, Hadith No. 95



Prophet was divinely bestowed with “*jawami al kalim*”<sup>6</sup>. This prophetic feature can be found in almost all of his sayings. Below are some of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) where the Prophetic eloquence is highly evident:

‘*Man la yarham la yurham*’<sup>7</sup> One who does not show mercy Allah will not be shown mercy upon him

‘*Al Mara ma man ahaba*’<sup>8</sup> A person is with the one whom he loves most.

‘*Kullu dhi ni’matin mahsuda*’<sup>9</sup> People become envious of every blessed person

The above statements of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) eloquently substantiate the meaning of ‘*jawami al kalim*’. Any detailed discussion on this aspect is beyond the scope of this paper.

Thus, it is imperative upon a good teacher to highlight the important points and repeat the lesson until and unless students are able to comprehend the meaning of lesson completely besides avoiding any indulgence whatsoever in any lengthy discussions as that may result in losing the attention and interest of the learner. A teacher needs to be very simple, precise and coherent in his approach as is being portrayed by the Prophetic methodology.

### 2.3 Education by setting an example:

‘Actions speak louder than words’ is a well known proverb. Words hardly carry any meaning if one’s own actions are not in accord with them. It is because of this reason that Holy Qur’an admonishes believers not to indulge in this disgraceful act. It states:

“Believers! Why do you say one thing and do another. It is most hateful to God that you do not practice what you preach”<sup>10</sup>

Similarly the scholars of Bani Israil are vehemently criticized and their sense of understanding is questioned over their act of preaching something which they don’t practice themselves. Allah says:

“Do you admonish others to do good and forget this yourselves? Yet you read the Book. Will you not then understand?”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> The shortest expression carrying the widest meanings as is being reported by Bukhari in his Sahih

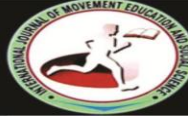
<sup>7</sup> Bukhari, *op.cit* Hadith. No.2597

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, Hadith. No.1770

<sup>9</sup> Al-Albani, Nasiruddin (2009) *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah*, Riyadh, Marif al-Nashr, Hadith No.1453

<sup>10</sup> Al-Qur’an, 61:2-3

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 02:45



Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) throughout his entire life adhered to this principle strictly. Whether giving a lesson in mosque, at market or at battlefield he never asked anyone to do anything which he himself didn't practice. The Prophet being the role model for all times to come always set an example himself. To recognize the importance of this, we can cite as an example an incident from the Treaty of Hudaibiyah:

When the writing of the peace treaty was concluded, the Prophet said to his companions, 'Get up and slaughter your sacrifices and get your head shaved'. None of them got up, and the Prophet repeated his order thrice. When none of them got up, he left them and went to Ummi Salmah and told her of the people's attitudes towards him. Ummi Salmah replied, 'O the Prophet of Allah! Do you want your order to be carried out? Go out and don't say a word to anybody till you have slaughtered your sacrifice and call your barber to shave your head.' So, the Prophet went out and didn't spoke to anyone of them till he did slaughter the sacrifice and called his barber who shaved his head. On seeing that, the companions of the Prophet got up, slaughtered their sacrifices, and started shaving the heads of one another.<sup>12</sup>

#### **2.4 Making the learner curious before the commencement of lesson:**

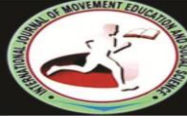
Before starting a discourse it is important to stimulate the learner in order to divert his complete attention towards the lesson. The Prophet throughout his mission used various methods for wherein we see the learner being prompted to learn. Sometimes, the Prophet used to raise questions in a way to raise the people's interest in the matter at hand or to draw their attention to the importance of something he intended to handle. In addition, he often used this way to revisit the terminology adopted by people and to incorporate new meanings in old terms. Abu Hurairah reported Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) as saying,

Do you know who the bankrupt is? They (the Companions) replied, 'A bankrupt man amongst us is one who has neither dirham nor wealth with him.' He said, The bankrupt of my *Ummah* would be he who would come on the Day of Resurrection with prayers and fasts and *Zakah* but (he would find himself bankrupt on that day as he would have exhausted his funds of virtues) since he would have hurled abuses upon others, brought calumny against others and unlawfully consumed the wealth of others and shed the blood of others and beat others, and his virtues would be credited to the account of one (who suffered at his hand). And if his good deeds fall short to clear the account, then sins would be transferred (from the abused accounts') and entered in (his account) and he would be thrown in the Hell-Fire.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Bukhari, Muhammad bin Ismail (1999) Ja'mi' Al-Sahih, Riyadh, Dar as Salam, Hadith No. 5997

<sup>13</sup> Muslim, Hajjaj ibn (2000) Ja'mi' Al-Sahih, Riyadh, Dar as Salam, Hadith No. 2581



## 2.5 Being very kind and humble towards the learner:

For a teacher it is pertinent to adopt a very kind and humble approach towards the learner, if a teacher is harsh or unkind it affects his teaching and learner doesn't feel attracted neither towards teacher nor towards his teaching. It is due to this fact that prophet is being reminded by Almighty:

“It is by God's grace that you were gentle with them—for if you had been harsh and hard-hearted, they would surely have deserted you”<sup>14</sup>

Similarly Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

“Be kind, for whenever kindness becomes part of something it beautifies it and whenever it is taken from something, it leaves it tarnished”<sup>15</sup>

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) himself always used to be very kind and gentle with everyone. Anas bin Malik who had the privilege of spending about ten years of his early life under the prophet's guidance narrates his experience as:

“I served Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) for ten years and during this period prophet never ever scolded me, he didn't even said [about some work] why you did this or why you didn't did that”<sup>16</sup>

## 2.6 Keeping the individuality and Psychology of Learner under consideration:

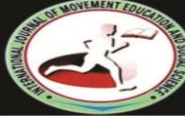
Since the individuals as well as their temperament vary and a well known proverb 'No two men are equal' is experienced by us almost every day. Humans differ in thinking, liking, behavior and all other aspects of their personality. Education being addressed to an individual, therefore one has to consider the overall personality of the learner for the process of education to be effective. If the psychology and individuality of the learner isn't clearly understood by the educator he may not be able to impart education in a desired way and subsequently may fail to fulfill his responsibilities. So, an educator is bound to be well aware of this principle and prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) being divinely trained was supremely able to understand the Psyche of the learner and accordingly educate him effectively. This is evident by many of the traditions which highlight and delve upon Prophetic approach while coming across different people of different temperament.

---

<sup>14</sup> Al-Qur'an, 03:160

<sup>15</sup> Muslim, *op.cit* Hadith No. 2594

<sup>16</sup> Muslim, *op.cit* Hadith No. 2330



### **2.7 Education without embarrassing the learner:**

The Prophet sometimes used to say in his public addresses, what has happened to people that they do so? Naturally, the person who was supposed to hear it did hear it, was ashamed in his heart and went about getting rid of that shortcoming. Certainly, education intends to develop the personality in a desired way and for the attainment of this it is essential not to enumerate the person's shortcomings or drawbacks in a way which may result in his annoyance and ultimately he may not pay heed towards the lesson.

### **3. CONCLUSION:**

Thus from the above discussion it is quite clear that the prophet employed a very comprehensive and vibrant methodology as far as educating humanity is concerned. Not only the fortunes of Arabs got transformed but the access towards learning, which hitherto was the prerogative of elite class of society only, was made available to everyone irrespective of any distinction of class or caste. Moreover, the Prophetic model of education came out as more fundamental and comprehensive in its aims and teaching methods. The study was focused on the dictates of the Holy Qur'an and Ahadith and the embodiment of their guidance in the personality of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). At a time when Muslim world is suffering from crisis in the educational field it is imperative to seek guidance from the Sirah of Prophet so that the malaise of the *Ummah* may get its treatment.