



The Role of Qur'an and Sunnah in Implementing Transformation in Human Society

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The two primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, encourage following certain principles when implementing change and helping society to transform. This paper aims to highlight how these primary sources mention some of these principles and how the Prophet PBUH portrayed them so they can be used in transforming the Ummah.

Keywords: Al-Qur'an, Sunnah, Transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The two primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH), are rich with guiding principles in all aspects of the human life. The message of the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet PBUH have changed the world. Michael H. Hart in his book "100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History," chose the Prophet PBUH as the most influential person in history.¹ Revelations from Allah guided the Prophet's influence. It is of paramount importance to study and analyze those principles that the prophet PBUH followed when transforming the society. This paper aims to highlight some of these principles.

"The Qur'an is the supreme authority in Islam. It is the fundamental and paramount source of the creed, rituals, ethics, and laws of the Islamic religion. It is the book that 'differentiates' between right and wrong, so that nowadays when the Muslim world is dealing with such universal issues as globalization, the environment, combating terrorism and drugs, issues of medical ethics and feminism, evidence to support the various arguments is sought in the Qur'an. This supreme status stems from the belief that the Qur'an is the word of Allah, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH via the archangel Gabriel, and intended for all times and all places. The Qur'an is divided into 114 sections of varying lengths, Each chapter is known in Arabic as a Sura, each Sura consists of a number of verses each known in Arabic as an Aya."²

KU Sulaiman has explained in a comprehensive manner different transformations which can be produced by following the Qur'an.³

The word Sunnah refers to the overall teachings and way of life of the Prophet Muhammed PBUH. It includes the reported sayings, actions, and biography of the Prophet PBUH.⁴ As the Qur'an advises Muslims: "Say If you love Allah, follow me, Allah will love you..." [Al-Imran 3:31]. Also in another

place, the Qur'an states: "you who believe, obey Allah and the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day that is better and fairer in the end." [An-Nisa 4:59]. The Sunnah is the second primary source in Islam after the Qur'an.

While examining these sources, the principles of transforming human society could be found and analyzed, as S. AlZayed did on page 433 part 2 of her latest book.⁵ Transforming a human society is a result of allowing its individuals to reach their optimum potential as human beings and servants of Allah.

"Allah has been truly gracious to the believers in sending them a Messenger from among their own, to recite. His revelations to them, to make them grow in purity, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom before they were clearly astray" [Al-Imran 3:164]. In this verse, Allah is emphasizing Muhammed PBUH's role in understanding his companions and elevating them to reach their spiritual truth. This is the missing piece in society today, which this paper aims to address.

2. IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES IN THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMING A HUMAN SOCIETY

2.1. Mercy

The Qur'an strongly states that the only reason Allah sent the Prophet PBUH is mercy. "It was only as a mercy that we sent you to all mankind" [Al-Anbiyaa 21:107]. This mercy is embodied in the Prophet's interactions with everything, ranging from human beings to still objects.

It is narrated that Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "we were praying 'Isha' prayer with the Messenger of Allah PBUH. When he prostrated Al-Hassan and Al-Hussain

would jump on his back, when he rises with his head he picks them gently from the back and places them (on the floor) kindly, so when he returns (to prostration) they go back to what they do, and when he ended his prayer he would put them on his thighs.” [Al-Albani]

In dealing with servants, the Prophet PBUH set the bar high. Anas, who served him for ten years reported: “I served the Prophet PBUH for ten years, on his journeys and at home. He never said to me as much as ‘Ugh!’ He never said about something I did, why I did so, nor did he ever say about anything I left undone, why I did not do it. Never did he say to me that I did something badly, nor did he ever criticize anything I did. If I slackened in doing what he ordered, he never reproached me. If anyone of his family criticized me, he would tell them: ‘leave him alone. Had it been possible for that thing to happen, it would have happened.’” (Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Also, one of his companions reported: “We were on a journey and during the Prophet’s absence, we saw a bird with its two chicks; we took them. The mother bird was circling above us in the air, beating its wings in grief. When Prophet Muhammad PBUH returned, he said, “Who has hurt the feelings of this bird by taking its chicks? Return them to her” (Saheeh Muslim).

The Prophet’s mercy was clear even when he PBUH interacted with objects. Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah PBUH said, “Verily, the mountain of Uhud loves us, and we love it” (Sahih Muslim 1393).

2.2. Positive Attitude

The Prophet PBUH was a perfect example for positive attitudes. He shined with hope and love. He was always seen smiling and encouraged others to smile, as it is a sadakah (charity). Allah described him in the Qur’an: “O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness (Shahid) and a bringer of good tidings (Basheer) and a warner (Nazeer) and one who invites to Allah (Dae), by His permission, and an illuminating lamp (Sirajan Munira)” [Al-Ahzab 33:45–46].

The Qur’an states that “Good and evil cannot be equal. Repel evil with what is better, and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend” [Fussilat 41:34]. It also encourages arguing with the best of attitudes: “Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Argue with them in the most courteous way, for your Lord knows best who has strayed from His way and who is rightly guided.” [Al-Nahl 16:125.]

Also, in many of the sayings of the Prophet PBUH, he encouraged such positive attitude. “Give glad tidings, and do not scare people away. Make things easy, and do not make things complicated” (Abu Dawud). “Do not be people without minds of your own, saying that if others treat you well, you will treat them well and that if they do wrong, you will do wrong. However, (instead) accustom yourselves to do good if people do good and not to do wrong if they do wrong” (Tirmidhi). “Wondrous is the affair of the believer for there is good for him in every matter and this is not the case with anyone except the believer. If he felt happy, then he thanks Allah and thus it is good for him. If he felt harmed, then he shows patience and thus it is good for him” (Muslim). “If the Day of Resurrection were established, while one has in his hand a sapling (small plant), then let him plant it.” (Ahmad). “Whoever said the people had been led astray, he is the one who was led astray” (Muslim).

Optimism was his language PBUH. In perceiving, acting/saying, interacting and dealing with the components of the environment.

2.3. Tolerance

The Prophet’s understanding of sinners was a real example of empathy leading to tolerance. When a bedouin urinated in the mosque, he did not punish him but rather talked to him gently. When the people of Taif chased him and stoned him for delivering the word of Allah the angel of the mountains came and offered to punish them, but the Prophet PBUH refused the offer hoping that from their offspring would come believers of Allah. When a man came to him asking for the permission to commit adultery, he did not get angry but rather talked to him and convinced him with reason and compassion.

The Prophet PBUH worked peacefully in Makkah delivering the words of Allah for 13 years without using any violent means. He did not give up, and searched for all possible environments to deliver his message. He went to Taif and even sent his companions to Habshah to look for a place where he can deliver Allah’s message. Until finally he went to Madina where he established the state, where he included all factions of society.⁶

His relationship with his companions was unique and extraordinary. He lived with them throughout sad as well as happy times, during personal and public affairs. By having a special connection with each one of them, he PBUH was sharing everyday life while strengthening belief in their hearts. He was activating and enhancing every positive side of his companions and others around him. To do that he enforced patience, flexibility, forgiveness, mercy, and having empathy amongst them.

2.4. Love

“None of you truly believes (in Allah and His religion) until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” Hadith 13.⁷ The significance here is the connectivity between faith, love and brotherhood/sisterhood through emphasizing that empathy is paramount and conditional to being a believer.

Like the Prophet PBUH said: “The servant does not reach the reality of faith until he loves for others what he loves for himself.” So, a very vital principle of behavior for a truly Islamic community is to be built upon love and compassion amongst its members. Every member should care for and help one another. They should treat others in ways they want to be treated. Implementation of this Islamic concept of brotherhood and love leads to a community with no barriers among races, colors, groups or ranks. All these obstacles must be removed for this idea to be realized. Part of good treatment of others is excusing them and giving them fair chances. For example, if a person commits a mistake, then we should find excuses for him/her and not jump to conclusions. There are many possibilities or ways for us to excuse others who have committed mistakes, and hence enabling us to live peacefully and avoid confrontations internally as well as in society. Other barriers to be removed include jealousy, selfishness, and envy.

2.5. Building Bridges

When we deal with others in the community, we should act in the best manner. We should choose the best words in our conversation. The Qur’an says: “O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and always speak the right word”

[Al-Ahزاب 33:70]. Kind words can minimize quarreling and confrontations among the members of the society.

It has been reported that the Prophet PBUH said: “Let whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak good or be silent. Let whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day honors his neighbor. Let whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day honors his guest” Hadith 15.⁷ This hadith contains the rulings concerning the tongue as well as other the behavior of Muslims towards neighbors and guests. It also emphasizes that we be responsible for what we say. Therefore, if this and other hadiths are properly practiced and applied within groups established in ways similar to the ones the Prophet PBUH did, then there will be a strong bond and love. Within the society or community opening the door to reach needed solutions for existing problems.

It seems clear that in practicing a hadith, the various aspects of the hadith and the inter-related concepts must be observed. A concept cannot be observed in isolation as it may cause misunderstanding and incorrect application of the concept itself.

In her book, *Mukhtasar fi As-Sirah*, S. AlZayed describes Prophet’s efforts to build a harmonious human structure through solving existing social problems in (pp. 211–214 part 1).⁶ This was accomplished with individuals whom he has trained, reared, and taught previously; muhajireen (who emigrated with him from Mecca to Medina).

3. CONCLUSIONS

For Muslims to live in the modern world, maintaining their identity and moral values, there are significant challenges to be faced today, in a practical way. When we talk about Islam we usually

speak in the theoretical sense, e.g., what is taqwa (piety), ikhlas (sincerity)...etc. We need to be able to implement these concepts in our everyday life activities and practices especially as we face all these different challenges. Thus, we need to address Islamic concepts with reality. This implies we need to develop those principles mentioned in part 2 as well as other principles in our everyday life activities and practices within the context of the actual situations today. It is necessary to use treasures accumulated for us by Prophet Muhammad PBUH and his companions. Studying and activating those analyzed principles in small groups, each with a leader as he PBUH did, will help to transform societies to peaceful, productive Allah-pleasing communities.

There are efforts by different groups to do that. See an example of a global team of volunteers with the sole aim to help the Ummah become Productive again, by extracting lessons from the Qur’an, As-Sunnah, and history of Islamic civilization and collate them with modern tips and tools to live a productive lifestyle.⁸

References and Notes

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