

Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and Social Welfare Activities: A Research Based Study

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Abstract

Islam is a divine religion that focuses on the prosperity, facilitation and assistance of humanity. The theoretical and practical teachings of Islam convey the same message in order to transform the societies through cooperative interaction.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) practically implemented the theoretical teachings of Islam. The life of Muhammad (PBUH) is a complete package of social welfare activities that encompasses welfare activities for humans, animals, plants and even non living things. Hence the Holy Quran says about the Holy Prophet (PBUH) "And we have not sent you, (O Muhammad), except as a mercy to the worlds¹."

The social welfare activities of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) have touched every aspect of the life. Some of the activities of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) designed to benefit an individual where as some are designed to benefit groups or societies. In this article social welfare activities of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) have been discussed scholarly.

Keywords: Prophet Muhammad, Social Welfare Activities, Practical Teachings

As the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a great messenger, similarly he remained an active member of social welfare activities. The details of some of the social welfare activities of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) are as follow:

1. Rehabilitation services

The main road or street that is used by majority of the people need cleanliness and fairness for the facilitation of the people. Sometimes minor obstacles disturb the passage of the people across the road or street. The Holy Prophet (PBUH)

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practically performed such activities and stressed upon the people to be got involve in the performance of such activities as these are considered to be the welfare activities.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said that once a person was crossing a road where he saw a branch of thorn so he said that swear in Allah I will remove this from the road to avoid affliction of the Muslims, for this act of welfare he was sent to the paradise².

In Islamic perspective, such acts of removing obstacles from the main road or street are considered as acts of social welfare because majority of the people uses roads or streets. The obstacles in the roads or streets may damage the passengers, in case of emergencies, the patients are very much troubled, it may cause time wastage of the passengers and it may cause serious damages to the children. Such obstacles include

- i. Thorns, Stones, bricks,
- ii. Garbage, ditches

These minor acts enable an individual to become active member of the society by providing support and assistance to the people that is in his capacity. These acts on one hand keep an individual in touch with the humanity and on other hand; it promotes strong human bonds amongst the people.

2. Construction of community Places

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) enhanced the idea of constructing community places in order to gather people of the community in one common place and let them share different information with one another. On one hand, this effort enabled Muslims community to maintain interpersonal relationships and on other hand facilitated them to exchange their sorrows, difficulties along with other communal ideas. This place was given the name of Masjid e Nabwi where in the construction process not only every single member of the community participated but also the Holy Prophet (PBUH) himself worked as a member of community.

The purpose of the constructing community place to promote

- i. Interpersonal communication
- ii. Information sharing
- iii. Enhancement of participatory approach

Interpersonal communication was very much enhanced by the construction of the *Masjid e Nabwi* as community members attended the community place five times a day where they had a chance to meet community fellow members regularly. This strong interpersonal communication developed unity and feelings in that community. One of the sayings of Holy Prophet (PBUH) is:

" Muslims for one another are; like a wall; as its part strengthens the other³."

Information sharing center was established due to the construction of this community place as members of the community regularly attended community place so the leader easily conveyed different information as per the requirements and needs of the days as well as the members amongst themselves.

Participatory approach was enhanced with in the community by the construction of the community place as all members took active participation even the Holy Prophet (PBHU) himself. In this regard, the Holy Quran says:

"And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.⁴"

The idea of constructing mosque is presented by the Holy Quran which is crystallized the Prophet of Islam (PBUH).

3. Educational Services

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) stressed upon education in his teachings. In this regard, he established educational institution for the mental and logical development of the community people. The institution was named as "*Suffah*" which means a "Platform" where the Holy Prophet (PBUH) served as a resource person. The services included

- i. Elementary education
- ii. Residential Facility
- iii. Religious Teachings

These services were provided free of cost to the people of the community. This institution ensured the provision of elementary education where students learned reading and writing along with the teachings of the Holy Quran.

The institution was on one hand ensuring the provision of education to the students by the day while on the other was

serving as a hostel for the students who had no other place to live. Dr. Hamidullah calls it the first residential university of Islam. According to him residential facilities were subsidized by the state and as well as private citizens as reported by Dr. Muhammad Sharif Khan.

The establishment of *suffah* is of course a milestone in the sector of social welfare activities. The activities also show the interest, vision and mental flexibility of the Holy Prophet(PBUH) of Islam in the welfare of humanity⁵.

The sphere of the educational services of the Prophet was not limited to a specific community, region or religion in spite of the very limited resources. After the establishment and success of the Suffah many other such educational spots were opened which ensured educational services to the people of their respective communities. These educational spots were nine in number reported by Baladhuri whereas according to Tabari one of the duties of the Mu'adh bin Jabal who was selected as governor of the Yemen by the Prophet(PBUH) and was stressed to ensure provision of education to the people under his jurisdiction⁶.

4. Social Security

Social security refers to the state of being free from dangers or threats in the society. The central theme of all the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) revolves around the social security of the people in general and specially the people of the community.

In regard to provision of social security for the community: the Holy Prophet (PBHU) signed an agreement or memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the neighboring opponent community⁷ for minimizing dangers and threats to the people of the locality. History reveals that the said agreement played a vital role in ensuring of social security of the people of those communities. That is of course a great milestone in the field of social welfare activities. In the implementation of this social welfare activity the focus was given to the following aspects

- i. Union with opponents with religious freedom
- ii. Self economic responsibilities of different communities

- iii. Combine action of communities of the locality against the external dangerous elements
- iv. Inter communities relationships based on cooperation, Philanthropy and humanism
- v. Assistance of weak and needy
- vi. Violence and killings will be strictly forbidden within the locality of respective communities
- vii. Decision making ensurance in case of any controversy between communities will be ensured through unanimous leadership and universal rules⁸
- viii. Territorial security ensurance must be ensured by the respective residents of the communities

The above mentioned aspects were successfully implemented by the respective communities; this act is a marvelous chapter not only in the life of Holy Prophet (PBUH) but also a path for the other communities of the world to ensure social security of their concern communities⁹.

5. *Livelihood services*

Livelihood refers to "the means of securing the basic necessities food (water, shelter and clothing) of life. Livelihood is defined as a set of activities, involving securing water, food, fodder, medicine, shelter, clothing and the capacity to acquire above necessities working either individually or as a group by using endowments (both human and material) for meeting the requirements of the self and his/her household on a sustainable basis with dignity¹⁰.

Livelihood Services means the provision of help, assistance and support to secure the necessities; food, water, shelter and clothing etc.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) developed such an environment for social welfare activities particularly in the sector of livelihood services that every single member of the community was highly motivated.

In this regard, the provision of free clean drinking water facility was one of the historical acts for the community where the holy Prophet (PBUH) himself lived. When the holy Prophet (PBUH) migrated to Madina there was only one well of fresh water in the town owned by a Jew who used to sell the water at

high price. The people of the community were extremely poor and were struggling for free clean drinking water. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) discussed the situation with his companions. One of His companions Hazrat Usman (RA) a businessman went away quietly and bought half of the share in the well from the Jew. After some time he purchased the other half of well.

The holy Prophet (PBUH) proclaimed to the people of the community, which enabled all the members of the community to get free and easy access to clean drinking water facility¹¹.

This approach of the holy Prophet (PBUH) identifies the following aspects

- i. Free of cost services to the needy people
- ii. Easily accessible services
- iii. Sustainable services

6. *Counseling and Guiding services*

The eminent quality of the life of the Holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the provision of free counseling and guiding services to the people. The psychosocial counseling of Holy Prophet (PBUH) enabled many people to overcome their problems and enjoy normal life in the society.

In this regard once a woman came to the Holy prophet (pbuh) with a problem that her husband had told her that she is like his mother; these words were considered to be the words of divorce in the era of ignorance. The woman came to the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and told; to save her life as she had to nourish her children and there was no guardian except her husband. The problem of the woman was solved with the verses of the Holy Quran which explored that the tradition of ignorant era has been demolished. These words gave a new life to the woman and she went away happily¹².

7. *Awareness session*

One of the most prominent and spectacular feature of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in his lifetime was the approach of delivering lectures. Those lectures had tremendous impacts on molding the behavior of the people at that time where as for the

present time all those lectures are complete package of guidelines for human life.

In the context of improving human behaviors, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) adopted the method of conducting awareness sessions. These awareness sessions were regularly conducted on Friday where as very often to the large gatherings at funeral, pilgrimage etc.

The contents of the all those sessions were different on different occasions but the last address of awareness session covered many aspects of human life which encompassed the following areas¹³.

- i. Human Dignity
- ii. Trust maintenance
- iii. Economic affairs
- iv. Women rights
- v. Deviance
- vi. Brotherhood
- vii. Equality
- viii. Religious Obligations
- ix. Standards for fellowship¹⁴
- x. Rights of the servants

8. *Provision of Services for individuals*

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) as an individual performed such activities which were great examples of the provision of services to the people in need, weak segments of the society particularly women in the locality. Some activities of philanthropic nature are given below.

i. Respect of Women

The Prophet of Islam ensured high status and position of women in the society through his teachings. In order to ensure implementation of the theoretical teachings he himself performed welfare activities of such a nature that could not only help women to achieve high status but also laid down the foundation of social welfare activities for the betterment of women.

The individual level efforts of the holy Prophet (PBUH) are glorious examples of welfare as his companions strictly followed him in their social life. One of those activities is that Once Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was going somewhere across the desert in a hot afternoon. He (PBUH) saw a woman on the way with her luggage on the head. He (PBUH) took her luggage from her in order to help her because she was an old woman and the luggage was heavy.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked the woman that where she was going and why? She said that I am leaving this town as I have heard that a magician named Muhammad is in town.

As Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was very patient and kind, He (PBUH) didn't say a word and kept listening. The old lady kept complaining that why she was leaving the town. In short the basic reason of her to leave the town was her misconception about Muhammad (S.A.W), who was walking beside her and she didn't knew it.

While walking with the Holy Prophet (peace be upon Him), that old women noticed that this young man have a brightness on his smiling and humble face. And she also noticed that His sweat is perfumed. She was very impressed.

When they reached the destination, Muhammad (PBUH) put down the bag and was about to leave when the old woman said,

"O, kind person! At least tell me your name!". Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) replied, "I am the person because of whom you left the town."

The old lady was amazed to listen that and said that such a kind, helping and true person can never be wrong and therefore she accepted Islam¹⁵.

These acts were strictly followed by the companions in their social lives where as Muslims across the world do follow them according to their capacity.

Sociological aspects of such welfare activities are

- Restoration of status of women
- Respect of the opinion of women

ii. Care of Old Age People

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) stressed upon the care of old age people. In order to familiarize society with social welfare activities of individual nature he himself performed such activities.

Once an old man was carrying water in leather jacket but due to his old age he was trembling under that weight. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) saw the old man struggling, so took his load and carried that to his place, this behavior developed and promoted the philosophy of "give respect and get respect".

The impact of such activities spread over the whole Muslim world due to which old age people are given respect everywhere in the society¹⁶.

The logic behind such welfare activities was establishment of

- Respect for the old age people
- Discouragement of solitary life of old people

iii. Help of Weak Segments of the society

The sphere of welfare activities of the Holy prophet (PBUH) encompassed each and every segment of the society particularly the weak segments in order to encourage them to become efficient members of the society.

In this regard Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) performed many activities as;

Once the prophet (PBUH) saw a slave driving grinding mill for grinding grains but along with the work the slave was weeping. The prophet (PBUH) asked the reason; the slave replied that his master had been a cruel individual in spite of sickness he forced him to grind the grains which he can't due to sickness. The Prophet (PBUH) stepped forward and grinded the grains for the slave while finishing the work the Prophet (PBUH) told the slave always call me if you have any grains to grind I will grind that for you¹⁷.

The above mentioned activity of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) highlighted

- Rights of slaves
- Respect of slaves

iv. Self sustaining employment guidance

The prominent aspect of the life of Holy Prophet (PBUH) was; he (PBUH) encompassed every walk of the social life in order to facilitate and support people. The times the Holy Prophet (PBUH) lived, the scarcity of resources were affecting the lives of the people particularly the economy class due to the unavailability of job opportunities.

About economic enhancement of the people, the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) guided people to avail self-sustaining jobs. Once a young man came to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and asked for alms. The holy Prophet (PBUH) replied; do you have something? The young man responded positively with a piece of carpet and a bowl was all the things he had.

The holy Prophet (PBUH) told him to bring his appurtenances, which were sold for two Darhams¹⁸ in auction. The holy Prophet (PBUH) gave the breakup of that amount to the young man as

- i. Buy food stuff of one Darham
- ii. Buy adze of one Darham

The young man did the same as advised. So after buying adze he was told to go to jungle, collect woods with the help of his adze, and sell them. The young man actively did what the holy Prophet (PBUH) told. After few days the young man came back with ten Darhams which enabled him to buy food stuff, clothes and other accessories¹⁹.

This approach of the holy Prophet (PBUH) involved

- i. Self help and self reliance
- ii. Sustainable approach for employment
- iii. Logical approach for combating social disease(Beggary)

The above mentioned aspects were great efforts of the holy Prophet (PBUH) in the field of social welfare for the individuals of the communities.

Conclusion

The *sirah* of the Holy prophet (PUBH) is a complete package of guidance for the whole world in general and specifically for the Muslim world. The approach and logical activities of the Holy prophet (PUBH) not only enables the people to become an active member of the society but also

creates strong bonds of human relations through participatory approach.

The activities of the holy Prophet (PUBH) also identify the love for humanity, philanthropy and transformation of societies through cooperation and coordination.

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