Approaching the Prophet Mohammad (pbug) Bioraophy: A Theoretical Framework

Abstract
There is a considerable space in perceiving the Prophet Mohammad (pbug) among Muslims and non-Muslims. The majority of Muslims implied the aspect of Wahi or prophet hood overlooking humanistic qualities and leadership skills while many non-Muslims studied him as a successful leader denying the aspect of prophet hood. Henceforth, the Muslims hardly learn from him the leadership skills, futuristic decisions as well as social intelligence whereas non-Muslims failed to learn the significances of his message to the world. This article, therefore, discusses the proper framework to approach seerah-prophet biography and elaborates the importance of Prophet personality as a messenger as well as a successful leader. Purpose of this research is highlighting different aspects of approaching seerah-hand Prophet Mohammad (pbug)' contributions to the mankind in constructing peaceful society with diversity.

Introduction
The biography of the Prophet is known as seerah meaning 'to travel' in Arabic. Even though the Arabs used 'seerah' for the biography of any person before the Prophet (pbug) period, Muslim scholars have used this term exclusively to the biography of the Prophet (pbug). It is because, the objective of learning the biography of the Prophet (pbug) is following him and his teachings, but not for any other purpose.

There are Muslims and non-Muslims studied the biography of the Prophet Mohammad (pbug) and his contributions throughout the history. Islamic awareness group has compiled a long list of people who studied the biography of the Prophet Mohammad (pbug) and admired from 622CE.1R Bosworth Smith(1874)2, Annie Besant (1932)3, Montgomery Watt (1956)4, Michael

2 Smith, R. B. (1874). Mohammed and Mohammedanism: Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in February and March 1874.
H. Hart (1978)5, Martin Lings (1997)6 and Bosworth (2009)7 are important among them in recent time.

The seerah of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), is different from others in term of records and authenticity. The information about the Prophet (pbuh)' birth, life, death as well as description of his physical appearance, shape and experience with his spouses, companions and others are closely observed by his wives and companions and recorded.8 Particularly, the Prophet (pbuh) life after 40s gained particular interest by many including his wives and companions.

The Seerah of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) is different from the biography of a person in term of sacredness and authenticity. Mohammad (pbuh) was a prophet chosen by God9 in his age 40s. He received the revelation (Wahi) from the God in two ways; verbal form which is known as the noble Quran and non-verbal form which is known as Hadith.10 The Quran was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) for 23 years in accordance with the incidences and issues in the process of mobilizing his society towards fulfilling the God wishes. Hadith is the reflection of this guidance as well as the experiences of the Prophet (pbuh) in organising his society as an ideal group in term of culture and civilization.

As latter part of seerah or the 23 years of history since the Prophet (pbuh) age 40 has legal validity, the information of this period has collected from only authentic personalities. Even though, the compilers of prophet biography used authentic sources, the record, last 23 years of history very sophisticated method11 to verify information. Hence, they applied five critical perspectives of analysis known as Al-jarhuWa- ta’deel.12 Hence, Hadith is considered the second level of scripture, after the Quran.13

Thus, the later part or last 23 years of Prophet’ biography plays a crucial role in human life, particularly Muslims. It is because, the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) received Wahi during this period and he mobilized his society towards

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9 The Quran, 44:29.
10 The Quran, 53:3-4.
11 Dirasat al-Asamid and DirasatMatan al-Hadith
a certain assignment under the guidance of God. Hence, the records of 23 years of the Prophet’s biography, is considered sacred and has legal validity.14

Furthermore, the seerahof the Prophet (pbuh) consists of Wahi (revelation) either in the form of verbal or non-verbal, as well as the history of realization of Wahi within his socio-political and economic context. In other words, seerah reflects the Wahi and the Prophet (pbuh)’ leadership in mobilizing a pagan society fulfilling this Wahion human history under God guidance. Thus, the seerah should be approached in term of Wahi as well as prophetic leadership to articulate the Wahi in real life.

Unfortunately, even though this approach to the seerah of the Prophet (pbuh) is quite popular in academic circles for long time, it is hardly understood by grassroots in this framework. In common, seerah has understood either from the perspective of Wahi or from the perspective of leadership only. Majority of Muslim masses approached the seerah from the perspective of Wahi and considered everything in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) as sacred and above the human capacities while non-Muslims studied the seerah from the perspective of leadership and considered everything in his life is acquirable. Hence, none of them approached the seerah from proper perspective.

**The seerah from the perspective of Wahi**

The Muslims who approached the seerah has the history of Wahi, tried to perceive the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as a messenger who was chosen by God, received Wahiand passed this Wahi to the people without any mistake. Hence, the duty of the Prophet (pbuh), from this perspective, is receiving the Wahi, conveying the message of God to the people as he received and showing the way of Ibadat (worship and rituals) to the people. Hence, the Prophet (pbuh) efforts to mobilise his society, whom were left out by superpowers during that time due to their extreme paganism even though it was under them,15 towards a cultured and civilized community was not understood properly. Thus, it is considered Mu’jizah or miracle and very particular to the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) but not for any other leader.

14 The Quran, 33:21.
This approach to seerah hardly recognizes the Prophet (pbuh)' intellectual and emotional capacities in articulating the revelation. Contrarily, it highlights following the Prophet (pbuh) literally without taking any scientific or material preparation, sometime his efforts was conceptualized within the context of Ibadat or worships and rituals. As the result, these Muslims did not find the Muslim society as a visionary society. They also hardly studied the Prophet (pbuh)' humanistic leadership skills, decision making skills as well as social intelligence in mobilizing a society towards an objective.

Particularly, Muslim political leadership has given minimum interest to learn the political and social strategies from the seerah to mobilise their society towards a mission in a secular and globalized world. The civil society leadership also did not approach the seerah to learn about the concept and policies on Muslim and non-Muslim relation. Similarly, The Muslim religious leadership hardly articulated their legacy of understanding Wahi from a particular socio-political context and to interpret this Wahi into another local and historical setting.

In brief, approaching the seerah from the exclusive perspective of Wahi considering Mohammad (pbuh) as just a receiver of Wahi and disseminator of God message to the humanity without recognizing his unique contribution to mobilize his community towards a visionary society, made many to ignore his humanistic qualities and exceptional leadership skills. Indeed, these qualities enabled him to organize his people towards an ideal society within the socio-economic fabric and political dynamism.

The Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) from the perspective of leadership

On the other hand, the majority of non-Muslims who studied the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) found him an extra-ordinary leader who gathered uneducated and barbarian pagans for a mission and guided them to construct a supreme culture and civilization within a short period. These non-Muslim scholars did not recognize him as a prophet of God and did not accept the Wahi, however, they recognized him as an exceptional leader.

Michael H. Hart (1932- ), the professor of astronomy, physics and the history of science listed best successful leaders in the history and has given the first place for the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). He said “My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world’s most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history
who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level."16 He admired the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as he was one and only leader in the world history who succeeded in his mission in term of secular and religious world within a short period of 23 years.

William Montgomery Watt (1909-2006), the professor (Emeritus) of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Edinburgh appreciated the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh)' uncommon leadership skills and wrote, “His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement – all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.”17 According to him, the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) prepared himself as a leader morally and physically and faced the challenges with his good qualities. Hence, he considered the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as extraordinary leader and could not found equal to him in the Western history.

Further, Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), French poet and statesman also considered the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as a great man in human history as he was a leader could not be measured his qualities by human standards. He said, the Prophet Mohammad was “Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?”18

Reverend Bosworth Smith (1794-1884), late Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford described the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) as “... Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope’s pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar: Without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue, if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by a right Divine, it was Mohammed; for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports.”19 According to him, the Prophet

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19 Smith, R. B. (1876). Mohammed and Mohammedanism: Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in February and March 1854. Smith, Elder London; p. 235
Mohammad (pbuh) had the quality of best religious leader as well as the king. However, he was ruling physical and religious worlds without army powerful economy or devotees.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) Indian thinker, statesman and nationalistic leader explained the best leadership qualities in the Propeller Mohammad (pbuh) and said that these qualities brought him the success in all walk of life. Zarabozo quoted from Young India (1928) and wrote Ghandi statement. Ghandi said, “I became more than ever convinced that it was the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These, and not the sword carried everything before them and surmount every trouble.”

According to him, Islam did not spread out to the world sword or power; however, it reached grass-root people in the world by the leadership qualities of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh).

Similarly number of non-Muslim scholars like Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), the greatest British historian, John William Draper (1811-1882), the American scientist, philosopher, and historian, David George Hogarth (1862-1927), English archaeologist, author, and keeper of the Ashmole Museum, Oxford, Washington Irving (1783-1859), Well-known as the “first American man of letters”, Annie Besant (1847-1933), the British theosophist and nationalist leader in India, Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), the greatest British historian of his time and many others appreciated the contributions of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) to the human history and pointed out exceptional leadership skills to learn from the seerah.

Even though they did not recognize the Wahi-revelation, they found the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) an extra-ordinary leader who was able to bring social change in a short period. They also found his leadership skills to organize an uneducated society to a supreme visionary community and to mobilize the

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towards an ideal society. Further, they were surprised with his skills to build a knowledge-based society during 23 years of life time.

This aspect of seerah, encouraged them to involve in research to find potentials areas to study and to develop management training scheme to expose human potential resources towards certain visions. This critical study motivated them to see the character, behaviour and skills of the prophet as exemplary and to empower their society with these qualities. Hence, non-Muslims studied the seerah for learning and training purposes while the Muslims studied seerah as just ibadah and to glorify the prophet (pbuh).

It should be noted that the modern scholars have explored the seerah and revived the legacy of Muslim scholars’ methodology in learning seerah within our context. These contributions of recent scholars not only highlighted the Prophet (pbuh) leadership skills and talents, but also interpreted in modern administrative and managerial perspectives. Beekun (2006), Ahmad Khaliq (2008), Siddique (1998) and Omar Khayyám (2013) are examples for this type of exploration and interpretations. Unfortunately, these modern researches and studies not have been adequately adopted within the text of common people as well as the curriculum of academic institutions. Hence, the lay community in general and the teachers in academic institutions in particular are not updated yet.

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

The proper framework to study seerah consists of Wahi and leadership perspectives. The seerah, in this framework, is a history of Wahi in which God revealed the verbal and non-verbal guidance to the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and monitored the proper application of this Wahi in mobilizing a pagan society towards extra-ordinary visionary society. Similarly, seerah is a history of actualizing the guidance of God by human leadership in an extra-ordinary socio-economic fabric with diverse nature. Hence, the seerah is sacred as well as critical; it is sacred because, it is a history of God-man communication in real life. Seerah, as the biography of an exceptional leader who mobilized a society from the status of paganism to the status of exemplary society. Hence, it is critical as the information and experiences in term of educating, preparing and training a community. It is because, the community of the Prophet (pbuh)

27 Beekun, R. J. (2006). Strategic planning and implementation for Islamic organizations. IIIT.
might be different from the community of our time in term of socio-political, educational and economic situations.

Further, as the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) was the best leader, mobilized the people into a vision and guided them towards this vision by transforming them from the grassroots to ruling community. Hence, the Muslim society and its leadership have to learn from him the method of mobilizing people into a vision and to change them into noble exemplars of the world. They also have to learn the method of building a knowledge and value-based society.

**Short Biography**

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