

Holy Prophet as Commander

1 - Introduction:

Holy prophet (P.B.U.H) has left valuable lessons for Muslims Ummah and the entire humankind in all areas of life. As a military commander, his values and character are a source of light for the entire human race. He followed the principles of merit, equality, and justice in the appointment of his army. He always preferred peace over war and practiced forgiveness after winning the battles. He strictly prohibited the use of any cruel or immoral tactic during the battle. Preparing an integrated army, pressurizing the enemies economically, sending espionage mission and observance of secrecy were his key military strategies. All the battles in which he participated are a noble manifestation of his military ethics and tactics.

2- Principles of Prophet Muhammad () as a commander:

1- Appointing competent People for Specific Roles:

Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) always observed merit policy while making important appointments in the army. He never preferred a soldier over others due to tribal superiority or favouritism. For example, he appointed his slave Hazrat Zaid Bin Hartha (رضي الله عنه) commander in the battle of Motah in the

presence of great commanders like Hazrat Jafar Bin Abi Talib (رضي الله عنه) and Hazrat Khalid Bin Walid (رضي الله عنه).

2. Cordial connection with the army:

The Holy prophet (ﷺ) had very good relations with his army. He knew every soldier personally and used to take care of their needs. He made arrangements for the funeral of the martyrs and used to take care of their families. He even went on to marry some of the wives of the martyrs with the intention to provide for them and encouraged his companions to do the same.

3. Consulting advisory Council:

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) always consulted an advisory council before launching any expedition. Even during the battle, he used to follow the useful advice of his companions. The result of acting on Hazrat Salman Farsi's advice in the Battle of Trench and Hazrat Khabab Bin Manzar's advice in the Battle of Badr proved the importance of consultation in military matters.

According to Holy Quran:

"And consult them in affairs"

(Quran 3:159)

4. Good treatment of War weapons:

Holy Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) took part in 28 battles during his lifetime. The total number of war prisoners in all the battles ^{were} 4564 out of which only two prisoners were sentenced to death due to gravity of their crimes. Otherwise, criminals were treated in a very good manner and the needs of their food, health, shelter, and rehabilitation were properly fulfilled. For example, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had set conditions for the prisoners of the battle of Badr who could not pay the ransom to teach reading and writing to ten Muslim children in order to be set free.

5. Forgiving the Enemies:

Holy prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was an embodiment of tolerance and forgiveness. At the conquest of Makkah, Holy prophet (ﷺ) forgave his bitter enemies in the following words:

"I shall speak to you as you speak unto his brothers: there is no reproach against you today; God will forgive you. He is the most merciful and the most compassionate"

— (Quran 12:92) —

6. Preferring Peaceful over war:

The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was a messenger of peace. He always preferred peace over war. He always first invited his enemies toward peace and Islam and only waged war in extreme conditions.

7. Prohibition of killing innocent citizen and destroying civilian property or crops:

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had strictly forbidden his army to kill innocent citizens. They were not allowed to kill or harm children, old people, women, and monks (ذوي الفرائض). Similarly destroying civilian buildings, cutting trees, or burning crops was also not allowed. When the prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) entered the city during conquest of Makkah, he said to his army:

"Those who shelter in Kaabbah are safe; those who shelter in the house of Abu Sufyan are safe, and those who remain confined to their houses are also safe."

— Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) —

8- Respecting the treaties:

The life of Hazrat Muhammad (ﷺ) is full of incidence where treaties and promises were always given serious importance. He returned Hazrat Abu Jandal to Makkans in light of the Treaty of Hudaibiya. Similarly, He did not allow Hazrat Huzayfa (رضي الله عنه) and Hazrat Haisel (رضي الله عنه) to participate in the battle of Badr as they were released by enemies only on the condition to not to participate in ~~the~~ any battle & against them. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) never violated any treaty and always kept promises. The treaty of Hudaibiya was abolished by Quraysh first and then Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) proceeded with the conquest of Makkah.

3- Strategies of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) as commander:

1. Preparing a united and integrated army:

Holy prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) always first prepared a well integrated army before leaving for any expedition. He always was well aware of the importance of a strong army. Thus he gave good facilities and wages to the soldiers so they could focus on their training and drills without any stress.

2. Keeping the operation secret and covert:

One of the key military strategies of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was to keep his operations secret and covert. Even the army was not informed of the exact target before leaving. For example, when Muslims left for the conquest of Makkah, the muslim army, as well as Makkans, were not exactly sure of the plan of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H).

3. Getting Control of important routes:

Another important strategy of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was to acquire important routes and special areas before starting the battle. He used to reach the battleground well before the enemy to take control of wells and other strategically important spots.

For example, in the battle of Uhud and Ditch, he stationed his army at ideal spots which proved valuable.

4. Putting economic pressure on Enemies:

The holy Prophet (ﷺ) put a blockade on the trade routes of Makkans to put economic pressure on them. After the battle of Badr, he blocked the route to Syria on Quraysh. Such actions proved fruitful and they made enemies agree on peace treaties.

5. Sending Intelligence missions:

As a commander, the Holy prophet (ﷺ) always kept a keen eye on the enemy's army, its strength, weaknesses, weapons, and plans. He, therefore, appointed many spies to keep an eye on the planning and movement of the enemies.

6. Organization and arrangement of troops:

Hazrat Muhammad (ﷺ) used to position his army on the best strategic maneuvers. He used to appoint soldiers based on their skills and knowledge of location.

7. Examples from Battles:

A glance at the battles of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) shows that he was an expert military commander. His military and political judgment were second to none. In the battle of Badr, he took the bold decision of fighting with the armed forces of **قبائل** with just 313 men against 1000. In the battle of Uhud, he wisely stationed his army at the best spots. Even when ^{the} Muslims were overpowered by the army, he remained steadfast and a source of inspiration for his soldiers. He effectively dealt with the Arab tribes in the Battle of the Trench. He broke the strong fortifications of

Jews and expelled them from Madinah due to their treacheries and finally defeated them in the Battle of Khyber. He bravely launched expeditions against the powerful Roman Empire and remained quite successful in those expeditions.

5- Conclusion:

To sum up, the Holy prophet (ﷺ) was a great military commander and strategist. He bravely fought against the enemies but never compromised on his principles and missions. He trained his army in the best possible way and imparted well. He always preferred peace over war and kept the doors of negotiations open for enemies. His military strategies like gaining control of important resources, putting psychological pressure on enemies, and breaking them from inside proved successful in uprooting the pagan beliefs from Arabia.