



## Battle Management insight of the Prophet (SAW): Wonderful Instances of Modern Management Practiced in Islam

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### Abstract

*This study is an attempt to outline how the techniques and strategies of modern management were applied by the Prophet (SAW) in his administrative activities. About fifteen centuries ago during the golden age of Islam, different strategies of modern management were applied after proper evaluation in the organizational activities of Prophet (SAW) and during the Khilaphat of Khulapha-E-Rashedin(Four righteous Chaliphs). To make a comparative analysis between the techniques applied by the Prophet (SAW) and Khulapha-E-Rashedin and those of modern management, an attempt has been made to present the case of the Battle of Trench (Khandak). In this battle, as the student of management, we find some management strategies and techniques which are worthy to be followed in modern business world also. Among these techniques remembrance of Allah and organizational preparation, tribal and racial classification for effective management and discipline, scope of the role of a leader and complete dependence on Allah are mentionable. From one incident of the Prophet (SAW) the students of management can learn different indicative lessons. If every dimension of his life is discussed thoroughly, the fact will come out that in every incident of his life there is an example of good management and he is the best manager for all times.*

**Key Words:** Management, Islam, Battle of Trench, Management Strategies

### INTRODUCTION

Management is a social science in which an organization consisting of some people, is taken ahead to goal-oriented activities (Rashiduzzaman,1994). For this purpose all managers perform some fundamental activities, such as planning, organizing, directing, co-ordinating, motivating, controlling etc. To make these activities more effective, modern

management scientists suggest adopting some strategies. Consultative management, formation of separate planning division, giving importance to informal organization, participation of a leader etc. are the mention-worthy strategies among them. The importance of these strategies is increasing day by day in the era of postmodern industrial revolution. Once management scientists did not recognize these activities as vital for success. But surprisingly fifteen centuries ago during the golden age of Islam, these strategies of modern management were applied after proper evaluation in the organizational activities of the Prophet (SAW) and during the Khilaphat of Khulapa-E-Rashedin (Mohiuddin,1999). To make a comparative analysis between the techniques applied by the Prophet (SAW) and Khulapa-E-Rashedin and those of modern management, an attempt has been made to present the case of the Battle of Trench (Khandak).

### **STRATEGIES OF ISLAMIC MANAGEMENT**

The ever-most successful manager of the world Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) tried his best to establish a welfare society in his own motherland - Mecca but he was forced to migrate to Madina due to strong opposition of the opponents. His usual activities were countered in Madina too. His small organization, consisting of the Muhajirs and the Ansars, faced with extreme resistance. Consequently, after his migration to Madina, the Prophet (SAW) had to encounter the Battle of Badar in the next year, the Battle of Ohud in third year and the Battle of Khandak in the fourth year. The Battle of Khandak was the greatest military attack of the evil opposition on the small Muslim organization of Madina. To achieve the victory with three thousand unarmed Muslim soldiers against fifteen thousand armed soldiers of the pagans, the Prophet (SAW) applied some management strategies, which are worthy to be followed by any organization of the present world. These strategies are as follows (Shafi, 2015):

1. Remembrance of Allah and organizational preparation
2. Mutual consultation
3. Formation of separate division for planning
4. Distribution of responsibility
5. Tribal and racial classification for effective management and discipline
6. Emphasis on informal organization
7. Participation of a leader
8. Scope of the role of a leader
9. Encouraging the workers to perform their duties
10. Firm determination and excellent patience
11. Adopting strategy
12. Complete dependence on Allah.

**1. Remembrance of Allah and Organizational Preparation:** A large combined force was coming to attack Madina, this news spreaded all over the Arab territory very rapidly. All of the tribes of the nonbelievers embraced in friendship and eradication of the Muslims from the Madina was just a matter of time. The news that the nonbelievers were coming to surround them from all the sides did not perplex the Prophet (SAW) rather he took steps in a calm and composed manner to co-ordinate the small organization consisting of the Muhajirs and the Ansars. Hearing this deadly news the Prophet (SAW) uttered:

*"Allah is enough for us and He is the greatest controller."* (Murad, 2014). After that, on the basis of 'Do or Die' policy, all of the disciples of the Prophet (SAW) stood by his side with all of their belongings.

**2. Mutual Consultation:** The management scientists of modern era have come to a decision after a long research and observation that there is no alternative of mutual consultation to achieve success for any business organization. But the reality and effectiveness of this policy was established first in the history by the Prophet (SAW). Its main philosophy can be attributed to Islam only.

Having the divine oracle, the Prophet (SAW) did not need any advice from others because he worked according to the direction and permission of Allah (SWA) Himself. But he never took any important organizational decision alone. As a result, in the light of historical documents we find the organization of the Prophet (SAW) a unique and successful one. The Prophet (SAW) adopted this consultation principle according to the direction of Allah (SWA). In the Battle of Ohud, when some disciples left their assigned place by violating the order of the Prophet (SAW) to collect the booty from the defeated soldiers, the Muslims were defeated terribly by the attack of the pagans from behind. Most of the disciples left the battlefield. After returning to Madina, the Prophet (SAW) was interrogating them for violating his order, then Allah (SWA) sent the divine message:

*"It is part of mercy of Allah that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe of harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee, so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them, and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then when thou has taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)"* (AlQuran, Surah Al-Imran-159)

By citing the example of working through mutual consultation, Allah says to the Muslims:

*"Those who respond to their Lord, and establish regular prayer, who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation."* (Al Quran, Surah Ash-Shura-38)



It is to mention that no group can achieve full strength until its members are allowed to participate in decision-making. Among the many examples of mutual consultation by the Prophet (SAW), the decisions taken in three big battles are mention-worthy.

**(a) Battle of Badar:** Before the battle of Badar, he called the Muhajirs and the Ansars and briefed them about the situation. One of the Muhajirs, Hazrat Mikdad Ibne-Aamar said,

*"O Prophet of Allah! Let there, where you're God direct to go, we are with you. We shall never say like Bani-Israil, "Go you and your God, and fight, we shall stay here." (Murad, 1992, P-99)*

The Prophet (SAW) did not declare his decision on this matter but he waited to know the opinions of the Ansars. When one of the Ansars Sa-ad-Bin Moaj said,

*" O Prophet of Allah! What ever you want. Promise of that Almighty, who sent you with truth. If you say to jump in the sea, we shall do that . Nobody will disobey this order."* (Murad,1992, p-100) Then the facial expression of the Prophet (SAW) got illuminated and he declared to fight against the armed force of the unbelievers.

**b) Battle of Ohud:** When the nonbelievers reached near the mountain of Ohud, the Prophet (SAW) sat down for consultation with his disciples. In this consultation meeting the elder disciples suggested to defend themselves by staying within Madina. But the younger disciples were insisting upon fighting the battle moving forward from Madina. The Prophet (SAW) restrained himself from expressing his own opinion. But he gave order to take preparation for the battle. The younger disciples were the main spirit of the battle. And the messenger of Allah wanted to raise the victory flag of Islam through their hands. So the decision of battle was accepted giving priority to the opinion of the younger disciples and the Prophet (SAW) went out of Madina on Friday after the jumma prayer with one thousand soldiers (Mohiuddin, p-82,1999).

**c) Battle of Trench (Khandak):** The time of Battle of Khandak was very sensitive. All the Arabs appeared as enemy. Thousands of Arabian soldiers surrounded the holy city of Madina. Even in that case the Prophet (SAW) adopted the defense strategy in consultation with his disciples. Trench digging strategy was taken according to the suggestion of Hazrat Salman Al Farasi (R.A.). The castles and military outposts of the Jews were behind the city. There was an apprehension of betrayal from the part of the Jews at any time .The Quraesh kept communication with the Jews. The Quraesh even attempted to break their commitment with the Muslims. Understanding the fragile situation, the Prophet (SAW) initiated a talk for negotiation with Banu-Gathfan. He wanted to make them receive one third of the crops produced in Madina and make them sign agreement with Muslims

leaving the association of Quraesh. But he consulted with his disciples about this event too and rejected his own decision on the basis of opinion of his followers. (Shafi, 2015, p-98). In this way, instead of imposing decisions like a powerful dictator, the Prophet (SAW) made his followers participate in every activity and decision-making. (Murad, 2014, p-101). If there had been any right for any leader to impose the decision taken by him, it would have been only for the Prophet (SAW) and not for anybody else. Because he was not a leader like any common man, he was the Rasul of Allah (SWA). The objectives of this principle of consultation taken by the Prophet (SAW) are as follows (Mohiuddin,1992, p-82).

- a. To teach the *Ummah* consultation policy.
- b. To raise the realization of mutual unity and solidarity in the mind of organizational members and to motivate them to revive the sense of mutual help.
- b) To grow confidence among the members of the organization.

**3. Formation of separate division for planning:** He formed a planning division with his chief disciples for this purpose of transforming a small force into a victorious power against a large well-organized force. Here they discussed their own tactics. Salman Al Farasi (R.A.) was also present in the counseling meeting. He prepared himself to serve Islam just after he had become free from the chain of slavery of a Jew. He delivered a stirring speech full of wisdom and experience on the emerged situation. He advised, "*In this situation to protect them from attack of the enemy, the strategy of the Persian is to close the entrance of the enemy by digging trench.*" The Prophet (SAW) recognized the plan of this experienced disciple as the most intelligent one and ordered to dig a trench as per the plan. ( Shafi, 2015, p-101).

**4. Division of work and responsibility:** Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) divided the Muhajirs and the Ansars into small groups each consisting of ten members and assigned each group the responsibility to dig a forty-yard long trench. After determining the duties and responsibilities of each group, the Prophet (SAW) inaugurated the trench digging with the leaders of each group. Rasuluallah (SAW) distributed the responsibilities among the small groups especially considering their ability, strength and above all the time constraint, it was noticed that all the groups had been able to finish their assigned duties successfully. In the modern management, distribution of responsibilities, even after a lot of calculations, is fraught with irregularity, flaws and deviations. It will always be an example for the mankind to follow the disciplined and fair system of distributing organizational responsibilities introduced by the Prophet (SAW) (Shafi, 2015, p-101).

**5. Tribal and racial classification for effective management and discipline:** For the



distribution of responsibilities, Rasulullah (SAW) divided the Muhajirs and the Ansars into separate groups and selected a leader for each group. At that time, the ties of brotherhood among the Ansars and the Muhajirs were very intimate and strong and they were like brothers. For avoiding management inconvenience and maintaining discipline, the leadership of the Ansars and the Muhajirs were separated. From the above discussion it becomes clear that tribal and social classification in management is not against Islamic unity and nationality. Rather, distinct assignment of responsibilities on each group strengthens mutual belief and sympathy ( Shafi, 2015, p-102).

**6. Emphasizing the importance of informal organization:** We know that informal organizations develop mainly out of personal and social relation and in which brotherhood, sense of responsibility and awareness about job become much stronger than those of formal organizations; and the goal can be reached easily through teamwork. This practical reflection of research-oriented thought in modern management was demonstrated by the Prophet (SAW) fifteen hundred years ago. And he got the instruction to build such an organizational structure from Allah (SWA) Himself.

*“The believers are but a single brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers, and fear Allah, that ye many receive mercy.”* (Al Quran, Surah-Huzrat-10).

Describing the organization of Muhammad (SAW), Allah (SWA) says, *“Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah, and those who are with are strong against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other...and their similitude in the Gospel is: like a seed which send forth its blade, then makes it strong, it then becomes thick and it stands on its own stem, filling the showers with wonder and delight.* (Al Quran, Surah Fath-29).

In informal organization all member of the same maintain close relationship and they become compassionate amongst each other which was a common phenomenon in the organization of Prophet (SAW). In the above verse, it is evident that believers (disciples of the Prophet) were very aware on maintaining brotherhood, sense of responsibility and awareness which are must for informal organization.

**7. Active involvement of a leader:** The management scientists of the modern world are continuing their research and experiment to find out the way of reaching the goal by activating the human resources in an organization. Employees are motivated sometimes by fixing higher or lower wages, sometimes by imposing compulsory punishment and sometimes by providing additional recreational facility. But the desired result is not achieved most of the time. If we look at the organizational wisdom of the Prophet (SAW), we can easily identify its source of basic inspiration. To change the society, he had to encounter twenty-seven armed battles besides the domestic (internal) strokes and

counterstrokes. It has been noticed that he himself was present and acted as a leader in most of the battles. We also know about such incidents as: as a leader he never left the battlefield even though his companions went away due to terrible battle; instead he called upon his fleeing companions to stay by standing resolutely like a mountain. Such incidents happened in the battlefields of Ohud and Hunaiun (Mohiuddin, 1999, p-84).

In the battle of Khandak, the Prophet (SAW) had to undergo so hard labor with his companions that his belly was about to stick to the spinal **chord**. Observing (seeing) such an incident, the stamina and work-speed of the disciples increased so much that the trench digging was completed within six days though it was supposed to take one month as per the notion of the specialists.

Leader will be the main entrepreneur of work; this idea was also expressed through his established activities. Sometimes it was noticed that the Prophet (SAW) alone indulged in a challenging role and this kind of endeavoring spirit of the Prophet (SAW) influenced his disciples and compelled them to follow him (Mohiuddin, 1999, p-84).

**8. Scope of the role of a leader:** In fact, the leader is also a member of an organization. But there should be a limitation of his role. It is noticed in some business organizations that the leaders keep themselves sitting in the air-conditioned rooms and finish their duty only by giving instructions, and in most of the cases their role is limited to policy making only. It has been proved through experience that this limited role of a leader spoil the spirit of an organization. Again, in some organizations there is no difference between a leader and a worker, which is also contrary to effective leadership. So the scope of the role of a leader should be of optimum level and this expected level was first delineated by the Prophet (SAW). This mater will be clear through the following example (Mohiuddin, 1999, p-84).

In the famous Battle of Trench (Khandak), the Prophet (SAW) distributed the duties among the Muhajirs and the Ansars dividing them into groups, each consisting of ten members. But every group wanted to have the original planner of the battle, Hazrat Salman Farshi (RA) in their group. As a result, some bitterness was about to start among them. Then the Prophet (SAW) included him in his own group and declared "*Salman belongs to my family*".

Then he inaugurated trench digging by demarcating working area for the whole organization. The work was going on in full swing. Suddenly, a large piece of stone appeared in the part of the main planner Salman Al Farasi (RA), and the stone was too big to be moved by any one of them. When all of them failed and informed the Prophet (SAW) about the matter, he himself made arrangement to remove it. From this incident, we find some indications of a leader's scope of participating in activities. And the indications are: (Mohiuddin,1999, p-84).

a) A leader must participate in the formulation of plan and policy.



- b) The leader can participate with the general workers as per his ability.
- c) If an organization faces any complicated task, the leader himself must be present there to solve it.
- d) The leader must take the responsibility of reconciling any controversial matter.
- e) The limit of the role of an eligible leader should be such that the followers find their
- f) Leader equally tired and worried like them.

**9. Encouraging the followers:** Muhammad (SAW) tried to make the Muhajirs and the Ansars active and enthusiastic (lively) by reciting poems and singing songs ‘Kasida’ during the hard labor of this long trench digging period. It is known from the history that electricity was sparkling from the large stone by the stroke of the messenger of Allah (SWA) during the demolition of that stone and he inspired the disciples by saying, “*I see the palaces of Rome and Persia from the spark of this electricity*” (Shafi, 2015, p-104).

By inspiring his disciples in this way, the greatest successful manager of all time completed the trench digging within six days, though it was supposed to take one month. Allah (SWA) encourages the believers to proceed to the good deeds in the following way "Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord and for a garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous ( Al-Quran , Sura Al-Imran-133).

**10. Firm determination and utmost patience:** It is said that no great virtue has been given to human beings like patience. If we observe the histories of world-victory, we find modesty and patience are two main qualities by which these were possible. Despite the existence of other effective materials, the limitation of firm determination and patience among the concerned persons may be a great bar to the attainment of objective in an established organization and that is what is exactly happening. Now-a-days, if we look at the production organizations, the truth will come out that there is no durability in earning profit. Whenever an organization achieves excessive profit, the management spoils its steady profit through careless treatment and consequently the organization falls down.

On the other hand, we find epoch-making virtues of firm determination and patience among the followers of the organization of the Prophet (SAW). There are hundreds of instances like this. Such as, Hazrat Belal (RA) did not forget Allah (SWA) even when he was dragged over the extremely hot sand by tying with the legs of a horse (Mohiuddin, 1999, p-84).

How a force of only three thousand soldiers fought in a confined position showing firm determination and patience for one-month against a large force of fifteen thousand soldiers in the Battle of Trench (Khandak) has been described in the Holy Qur'an as:



*" Behold! They came on you from above you and from below you, and behold, the eyes swerved and the hearts gaped up to the throats, and ye imagined various (vain) thoughts about Allah." (Al Quran, Surah Al-Ahzab-10).*

Again Allah (SWA) says about the Battle of Ohud:

*"How many of the Prophets fought (in Allah's way) and with them (fought) large bands of goodly men? But they never lost heart if they met with disaster in Allah's way, -- nor did they weaken (in will) nor give in. And Allah loves those who are firm and steadfast. All that they said was, 'Our lord forgive us our sins and anything we may have done that transgressed our duty, established our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist faith, And Allah gave them a reward in the world, and the excellent reward in the hereafter. For Allah loveth those who do good ( Al Quran, Surah Al-Imran- 46:148).*

This is an example of firm determination and patience in an organization and its reward.

**11. Adopting strategy:** 'Hikmat' or strategy is a word, which has been mentioned many times in the Holy Qur'an. Through this word, the Muslims are ordered to resort to prudence in all their activities.

Allah (SWT) says, *"I have sent the Prophets to teach the Holy book and strategy (Hikmat)".* Again it is advised to take help of strategy at the time of inviting people towards the path of Allah. Allah says:

*"Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching. (Al Quran, Surah Nahl-125).*

The Muslims were in an unequal war at Khandak. The dwellers of Mecca, the Jews and the other tribes of adjacent areas were united and trying their best to put off the light of Islam. Then the Prophet (SAW) desired to apply the strategy of *" Divide and rule"*. The situation was like this that the fighters of Gathfan tribe also joined the opposition in severe attack against the Muslims. The Gathfan tribe was greedy for the sweet dates of Madina. That's why the Prophet (SAW) proposed to give one-third portion of dates of Medina to the Gathfan tribe if they withdrew their blockade. The Gathfan tribe agreed, and the unity of enemy came to a virtual collapse.

Under the above circumstances, Sayad (R.A), a great disciple, tells in a consultation meeting if Allah does not say to adopt such steps, then we are not interested to give them (Gathfan) this share. The Prophet (SAW) says, *"It is neither the order of Allah (SWA) nor*



*the natural desire of mine; rather considering your grievances we are proceeding in this way. Because you are surrounded from all sides. I am planning to demolish the strength of the opposition without any delay through this step” (Shafi, 2015, p-110).*

Sayad (R.A.) says –*“Oh! the messenger of Allah (SWT) while we were the idolaters, we neither knew Allah (SWA) nor worshipped Him, then they didn't dare to wish a pip of fruit even; unless they came to us as our guests and we fed them as guests or they bought from us. But now when Allah (SWA) has mercifully revealed His knowledge and has made us proud by giving the dignity of accepting Islam, shall we give them our fruits by making a treaty? We don't need to sign an agreement with them. We will not give them anything excepting strike of sword, till Allah makes final solution between them and us. ”* The Prophet (SAW) changed his opinion by observing the morale and Iman (deep faith) of Sayad (R.A) and he declared, *“You can do whatever you wish.”* (Shafi, 2015, p-110). The leaders of Gafan tribe, who came for negotiating an agreement, became perplexed and got oscillated psychologically after seeing the steadiness and strong morale of disciples. The lessons of management that we learn from this incident are:( Mohiuddin, 1999, p-88).

- a. Islam supports adopting strategy if necessary.
- b. But the opinion of the concerned individuals is given importance.
- c. The confidence of the concerned persons may change the decision of the leader.
- d. Showing valor and heroism is the best strategy to weaken the morale of the opposition.

**12. Complete dependence on Allah:** It has been mentioned before that the Prophet (SAW) didn't get puzzled at all after hearing about the preparation of a huge force to attack Madina, rather he uttered: *“Allah the Almighty is enough for us and he is our best regulator”*.<sup>32</sup> This is called 'Tawakkul' which is the main weapon of the Momeen(believer) for achieving the objective. Its real meaning is to believe and rely completely upon Allah (SWT) in one's every sphere of life. The Prophet (SAW) says in this regard: *“Twakkul does not mean sitting without concern to meet one's own needs leaving the main object and its assistance; rather the main objective is not to consider main materials, belongings and other assistance as enough in gaining the real success, but to believe, after using necessary things as per the strength and ability, that the result is in the hands of Allah (SWA), and that Allah(SWA) Himself has created those things (belongings) and He is responsible for the fate of these belongings. That will come true what he wants or desires. Only the dependants of Allah will succeed to reach their goals directly with the help of Allah (SWA).* (Shafi, 2015, p-110).”

In the unequal Battle of Trench the Prophet (SAW) could prepare only three thousand soldiers without necessary equipment and weapons against the preplanned well equipped fifteen thousand soldiers of unbelievers. Moreover, the time of the battle was a bitter winter. This incident was very critical for the Muslims, and at the same time Tawakkul of

the Prophet (SAW) and his followers caused the invisible help of Allah (SWA) to bring forth a great victory and success for them. Such a glorious victory shattered the morale and courage of the unbelievers and frustrated them to remobilize the army for attacking the Muslims in future. As a result the backbone of the force of opposing pagans, Jews and hypocrites was crushed down. Thus, they lost the stamina to launch any more attack on the Muslims in future (Mohiuddin, 1999, p-88).

**Strategic Experience of Battle of Trench (Khandak), in Today's Muslim Managed Organization** (Interview has been taken from the CEO of company):

A) As usual practice, these theoretical knowledge needs to be clearly applied in one or more companies or organizations in today's businesses. For this, authors have visited two business organizations in Bangladesh, to conduct interviews of CEO or company Director. The purpose is to test the strategic experience of Battle of Trench (Khandak), to be adding to the Islamic management practices literature of today's Muslim managed organization. The author visited two organizations in Bangladesh (A) BRB Cables Ltd, Kushtia, Bangladesh; (B) Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd. The following observations have been noted:

- a) State policies are not favorable to implement Islamic Management in these organizations;
- b) Workers and officers are very greedy which hampers the dedicated environment in organization;
- c) CCTV camera and the provision of supervisor are prevailing in these organization. But employee and supervisors are not sincere to attain the mission and vision of these organizations;
- d) Different conflicts and greediness of employees and supervisors hamper the optimum output of these organizations;
- e) The CEO of the BRB cables industry once thought that he will administer his industry staying in the Masjid, but the employees are not practicing Muslims. Some time they offer Salat, but they are reluctant to be responsible member of these organizations;
- f) Both of the organizational heads feel that in the Muslim world there are lacking of the exemplary leadership practices of Prophet Muhammad (SAW);
- g) When CEO and other Islamic minded officers try to instruct the workers to follow the Islami rules and regulations, they become angry and they are not familiar about the concept of Islamic Management.
- h) In BRB industry, there are the provision of high salary, but without imposing fear of job employee are not be so serious in the assignment.

**CONCLUSION**

The development of the discipline of management greatly owe to Islam. From one incident



of the Prophet (SAW) one can learn much about management. If every dimension of his life is discussed thoroughly, the fact will come out that in every incident of his life there is an example of good management and he is the best manager of all times. The present world is suffering from mismanagement and searching for suitable strategies and policies to face the challenges of the present time. It is essential to build up the organizational structure and implement the techniques in the light of divine knowledge to face the management challenges of the twenty first century.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

- a. What are the lessons of Suratic Management we learn from the battles of Prophet (SAW)?
- b. What are the indications of modern managerial techniques learnt from the battle of Trench?
- c. What are the Strategies applied in the battle of Trench by Prophet (SAW)?

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