

The Method of the Prophets

There is a well-known hadith of the Prophet (S) which has been preserved in the book al-Kafi and in these last few days, through some of our friends who have the books of the Ahlus Sunnah at their disposal and have done research through these books, it is clear that this hadith also exists in their books. The Noble Prophet (S) has said:

إِنَّا مَعَاشِرَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ أُمِرْنَا أَنْ نَكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ

“We, the assembly of Prophets have been commanded to speak to the people according to their level of intelligence”¹.

Whenever the Prophets wished to speak to people, they spoke to them according to their individual level of intelligence and also took into account the level of their aptitude and spoke to them in the way that best suited the people’s intelligence. We must keep in mind that the intelligence of the Prophets E is much higher than all other people and the people around them have a lower level of understanding. Thus, the Prophets would not speak high nor use grand concepts to the ‘common people’ as this would only make the people more confused. Similarly, the Prophets would not answer the questions of a wise person in the same method which they would answer an old, inerudite person.

Mawlawi alludes to the concept mentioned in the above hadith in his poem which states:

پست می گویم به اندازه عقل

عیب نبودی این، بود کار رسول

“They say it is bad to speak to the intelligence of the people. This is a not a shortcoming, rather, it is the job of the Messenger.”

The one difference that lies between the method of the Prophets and that of the philosophers is that the philosophers employ one frame of logic and one style of speech at all times. The philosophers only have one type of merchandise ‘for sale’ in their proverbial shop. Those who come to them to ‘buy things’ are only one class of people – and this is the shortcoming of the philosopher as they do not see their aim and purpose in life except to cover themselves with a series of (philosophical) terminologies. Thus, philosophers are forced to only go to one particular segment of the society who are aware of the way that they speak and who understand their words.

It has been mentioned that above the door of the well-known school of Plato – which was actually a garden outside the city of Athens whose name was the “Academy” and which even today, due to the scientific gatherings that took place there, is still known by the name, Academy, that there was a poem written which states, *“Whoever has not studied geometry must not enter into this school.”*

In the school and methodology that the Prophets used, all types of students would be able to benefit from that which was being said. It is here that all sorts of people could be found – from the highest of the (academically) high whom even the likes of Plato would need to study under, to the lowest of the low such that not even an elderly, simple person would have any use for such a person! It was not written in any of the schools of the Prophets that if anyone wanted to come and make use of their teachings, that they must have studied to such and such a level.

Rather, the more that they have studied, the more talented and ready they would have been – thus enabling them to make more use of the teachings of the Prophets. If they were less mentally prepared, then they would only be able to make use of the teachings to their own capability, as it is stated:

إِنَّا مَعَاشِرَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ أُمِرْنَا أَنْ نَكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ عَلَى قَدْرِ عُقُولِهِمْ

“We, the assembly of Prophets have been commanded to speak to the people according to their level of intelligence.”²

1. al-Kafi, Volume 1, Page 23

2. Ibid.

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