

INTRODUCTION

The current work is an analysis of the views and works of Western scholars (Orientalists) on the *sīrah* of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It contains the contributions and criticism of Orientalists on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), since the John of Damascus till the present time Orientalists' depiction of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) as whose beliefs are incompatible with Democratic form of government. John of Damascus was a Christian priest and the first person who criticized Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). The work is focussing on some important works of Orientalists regarding the *sīrah* of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), which are mile stone works in the history of Orientalism and maker of the perception of masses especially in the West.

Sīrah is a widely used Islamic terminology stands for the biography of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It includes each and every aspect of the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

Literature Review

In this area of study, till date, a number of works have been carried out at academic level all over the world to remove or eradicate all misconceptions made by Orientalists about the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). Some of them are as follow:

The first and foremost book used as a source for later works is Sir Syed Ahmad Kḥan's "*Khutbāt e Ahmadiya*" published in 1870. This book is a rebuttal of William Muir's wild allegation on Islam and Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) in his book "*The life of Mahomet*".

Shibli Nu'mani's "*Sīrat al-Nabi*" published in 1914 from Azamgarh, is a biography of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It critically analyzed the views of European scholars on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). This book examined Western writers' general trend, common errors, sources of information used by them and the reason for the common mistakes, which they committed while carrying into the study of *sīrah*.

Zafar 'Alī Qureshi's "*Prophet Muḥammad and His Western Critics*" published in 1992 from Lahore. It mainly deals with the Orientalists' critical approach regarding

the battles and wars of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) mainly of William Montgomery Watt.

Jabal Muḥammad Buaben's book "*Image of Muhammad in the West: A Study of Muir, Margoliouth and Watt*" which published in 1996 from Britain is also a good work. This work also critically deals with some chief Orientalists' view on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

Muḥammad Mohar 'Alī's "*Sīrat al Nabi and the Orientalists*" into two volumes, which published in 1997 from Madinah, clarify the misconceptions made by William Muir, D. S. Margoliouth and William Montgomery Watt.

Apart from books, some research works are also contributed in this area such as, "*Contemporary Orientalism on Muhammad's (PBUH) Life at Makkah (An analytical study)*" composed by Sajid Iqbal from the University of Punjab in 2004. Another research work is "*Contemporary Orientalists on Muhammad's (PBUH) Life at Madina (A Critical analysis)*" made by Ghulam Hussain from the same University in the same year 2004.

Over the past decades, a number of articles were produced on different topics related to this issue like Mazheruddin Şiddiqi's 'The Holy Prophet and the Orientalists', in *Islamic Studies: Quarterly journal of the Islamic Research Institute*, from Islamabad, Pakistan. Another is Ghulam Hussain Babar's 'Attentive Muslim Reflections on Orientalists' Conception of *sīrah*' in *Jihāt al Islam*, from Lahore, Pakistan.

Significance of Work

The current work endeavours to highlight the positive and bring a critical review of the negative approach of Orientalist studies regarding the *sīrah* of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It is not an analysis of any particular aspect, a particular period of Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) life, or a study of any particular work of any Western scholar on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) but it is a detailed account of Orientalists' contribution on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). In addition, this work deeply examines the Westerners' persistent efforts towards the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

Moreover, the approaches adopted by Orientalists from time to time for the study of Islam and the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is also has been examined.

Methodology

With an unbiased approach, the current work mainly employs a critical as well as analytical methodology. Moreover it also adopts historical and descriptive methods. This work primarily relies on primary sources, beside the consultation of secondary sources, as well.

Structure of Thesis

In addition to an introduction and conclusion, this work is comprised of five main chapters.

The first chapter deals with “*Sīrah: A literature Review*”, discusses the significance, sources and contents of *sīrah*, including early *sīrah* writings and it is divided into three periods, first period: is on Abān bin ‘Uthmān and important Muḥaddithūn up to Wahb bin Munabbih. Second period: focuses on ‘Abdullah bin Abi Bakr and contains scholars such as Ibn Shihab al Zuhri and many others. Third period: highlights Muḥaddithūn from Mūsa bin ‘Uqba to al Ṭabri. The most significant part of this chapter is a critical examination of the detailed account of modern literature reviews on *sīrah*.

Second chapter examines the “*Historical Development of Orientalism*” defines Orientalism in the light of various different scholars, such as Edward Said, who says, “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and “the Occident”.

Orientalism as a field of scholarship emerged and flourished very later in the eighteenth century, when the European scholars of the enlightenment period consciously studied Asian languages and cultures to gain a deep and rich understanding of Eastern literature and history. Nevertheless, from the very beginning, before the emergence of Orientalism as an academic discipline, Western scholars have been interested in the study of emergence of Islam its culture and civilization as well as the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). John of Damascus of eighth century and Peter the Venerable of twelfth century were

belonging to the Christian missionaries who have taken initiative in this direction. This chapter further discusses the area of Orientalism, its significance and its historical development.

Third chapter evaluates examines “*Critical Approach of Orientalists to Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad* (peace be upon him)” and it discusses with the biased and unjust writings of orientalists about the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). With a critical approach, it has been demonstrated here that the knowledge and intelligence of the majority of Orientalists has been passed to offer a minute and superficial examination of different incidents of the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) with the objective of stretching insignificant events for casting a shade on him. It further examines the heinous allegations of Orientalists on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

The negative views of Orientalist towards *sīrah* start with the theory that the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) was a “false Prophet” and the rest of the allegations are built on this assumption. For a long time Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) had been misnamed as “Mahomet” “Behomet” and “Bafum”. All of which are laden with negative meanings. They say, *Qur’ān* is Prophet Muḥammad’s own composition, which was predominantly dependent upon Jewish and Christian sources. Another allegation charged by Orientalists is, their claim that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) suffered from epilepsy, he was not physically fit and revelation upon him was a result of psychological phenomenon not divine. William Muir, Maxime Rodinson and Sprenger have supported this grave allegation. Apart from these allegations, the chapter deals with many other accusations are raised by Orientalists to reject the divine inspiration and defame the image of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him).

Fourth chapter highlights “*Appreciation of Sīrah by the Orientalists*”. The Orientalists’ work on the life of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is divided into two categories “biased” and “appreciative”. Although from the very beginning the Orientalists have been expressing biased and negative approach towards Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) to undermine the message of Islam in contrast to their respective faiths especially Christianity. In this long course, the image of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) has been made to pass through a thorny path of

inveterate prejudice. Even until the early modern period, the medieval image of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) continued to be promoted by a variety of Western writers. The general hostility towards Islam formed a part of Martin Luther's polemics against the Roman Catholic Church, and the image of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), as the antichrist, appeared in Alexander Ross's introduction to his translation of the *Qur'ān* in 1649.

Following the Enlightenment period and the eighteenth century as Edward Said stated Europe came to know the Orient better and with a more scientific, wider scope and with greater refinement given to the techniques for receiving the Orient, a new approach to re-reading the East which he called "modern Orientalism". Though, the presentation of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) has changed accordingly in modern era, late nineteenth and twentieth century British writings tend to take a positive and lenient approach towards the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him), personality and views.

In this period, an age of religious tolerance and freedom of thought has started, a new era of research and insight has dawned upon the world, engendering a keen desire to appreciate all that is right and good in whatever quarter of the human experience and conscience.

In this regard the first fair and constructive biography of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) not based on Christian "ideology" of the medieval period was a French writer Henri de Boulainvilliers's "*The Life of Mohammad*". This book originally published in French language in 1730 and later followed by Edward Gibbon, Godfrey Higgins, John Davenport, Sir Thomas Carlyle and Reverend Bosworth Smith. Among them the most influential work is Carlyle's work "*On Heroes, Hero worship and the Heroic in History*" a collection of six lectures on "heroes" included under broad headings such as "The Hero as Divinity", "The Hero as Poet", "The Hero as Priest", and so forth, under the heading "The Hero as Prophet" Carlyle selected Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) and proceeds in the best tradition of European Romantic historiography, to an analysis of the "Great Man" to be detected in his person and his mission. Carlyle's portrait of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is found widely referred in Modern Muslim *sīrah* writings,

where it is cited as an example of a “fair” or “honest” Western voice amidst the prevailing Western anti-Muhammad and anti-Islamic onslaught.

Fifth chapter titled as “*Muslim Response to the Critical Approach of Orientalists to Sīrah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)*” focuses the responses for the allegations raised by Orientalists on the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) from the different parts of the Islamic world. Among them first sincere and valuable initiative has been taken by Sir Syed Ahmad Kahn, who wrote ‘*Khutbāt e Ahmadiya*’. This work has become an inspiration for the later writers, whom it gave strength to resist the biased perceptions of Western scholars and make correction their misrepresented portray of the last messenger and seal of the prophets, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The conclusive phase of the work finally investigates some findings regarding the religious, political as well as economic objectives of the Orientalists till date and their continuous attempts to defame Islam. Their writings on *sīrah* and Islam affect the true spirit of *sīrah* and Islam as they tried to portray the bad image of *sīrah* and Islam.

Since the Orientalists’ writings of biography (*sīrah*) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sometimes biased and honest approach which provoked the honest living Muslim scholars to represent the correct and true picture of *sīrah* and they have given appropriate response to the Orientalists.