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The impact of Dr. Mahmud Ahmad Ghazi on Contemporary Styles and Practices in Sirah Writing: A Research Based Study

Abstract:

This research has primarily focused on the modern approaches and methodologies in *Sīrah* writing highlighting the valuable contributions of late Dr. *Mahmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī*. The study contains various old and modern approaches and methodologies of *Sīrah* writing explained in connection with diverse innovative issues. It is now more than fourteen hundred years that *Sīrah* is being written. Various ages and varying political conditions had its effects on different approaches and methodologies of *Sīrah* writings. The life of the Prophet has been discussed in the perspective of the upcoming challenges as well. Like other fields of Islamic studies, the *Sīrah* writing has also been expanded to great extent in terms of its trends. New approaches and methodologies are introduced in *Sīrah* writing which are more in line with the needs of the time. The study has also focused on various approaches and methodologies in *Sīrah* studies developed and evolved mainly in twentieth century.

Introduction

Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) lived an unprecedented life and each and every minor and major details of his life are recorded. His life was the ideal life because it fulfilled all those conditions which were mandatory to become an ideal life for all the human beings. Each and every detail of his life was preserved by the *Sīrah* writers. It is now more than fourteen hundred years that *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is being written. Various ages and varying political conditions had its effects of the various styles and trends of *Sīrah* writings. And the life of the Prophet was discussed in the perspective of the

upcoming challenges. One of the most important of these trends and approaches in *Sīrah* writing is the modern approach or contemporary trend. *Dr. Mahmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī* has not only elaborated the ancient styles but introduced various modern trends and methodologies in *Sīrah* writings and a few of them are as follow;

Style of *Muḥaddithīn*

The very first style and trend in *Sīrah* writings is the style of *Muḥaddithīn*. The method adopted by the early *Sīrah* writers was to write *Sīrah* with the name of *Sīyar*¹ or *Maghāzī* and they used to inscribe various events through different chains of narrators and they were very particular about these narrators. They used to bring other conditions of *Muḥaddithīn* into consideration. The people who adopted this method in *Sīrah* writing were the specialists in the collection of *Ḥadīth*. They followed the rules and the principles of the compilation of *Ḥadīth* for *Sīrah* as well. They used the standards of *Ḥadīth* for collection of data for *Sīrah* and put that in writing according to the events and topics. The most important thing in this regard for *Muḥaddithīn* was to make sure that whatever they were compiling must be authentic. Whatever they used to write, they considered it mandatory to hear directly from the narrators. Their focus was on the authenticity of the events instead of the complete picture of the event.² *Abdul Raūf Dānāpūrī* elaborates this by saying, ‘there was not much difference between the scholars of *Sīrah* and *Ḥadīth* before *Imām Zuhrī*. Some scholars were known by *Almaghāzī* because they knew *Maghāzī* more than others or because they described *Maghāzī* more than their contemporaries. There were four very prominent scholars in the time of *Imām Zuhrī*, *Ibn Al Musyab* in *Madīnah*, *Sha’bī* in *Kufa*, *Ḥasan Baṣrī* in *Baṣrā* and *Makhūl* in Syria. All of them were the specialists in both *Sīrah* and *Ḥadīth*. *Imām Zuhrī* benefited from all of them and the students of *Imām Zuhrī* divided *Sīrah* and *Ḥadīth* into two separate spheres. *Imām Mālik* and *Imām Sufyān* were the students of *Imām Zuhrī* who strengthened the foundations of the sciences of *Ḥadīth* while the writings of *Muḥammad ibn Ishaq* and *Mūsā ibn ‘uqba* laid the base of *Sīrah* writing as a separate science.³

Historical/Traditional Style

The style of *Muḥaddithīn* for *Sīrah* writing did not last for

very long and it was replaced by the historical style of *Sīrah* writing which was the second style created after the style of *Muḥaddithīn*. *Ibn Ishāq*, *Ibn Hishām*, *Muḥammad Ibn ‘Umar Al Wāqidī*, *Mūsā Ibn ‘Uqbah* and others used the same pattern. *Muḥaddithīn* criticized the writing styles of *Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq* and *Muḥammad Ibn ‘Umar Al Al Wāqidī* for their swing to the historical or traditional style of *Sīrah* writing. For instance, when *Imām Aḥmad* was asked about *Ibn Ishāq* he replied that his way of narrating *Ḥadith* is not right.⁴

Compiling Style

After the acceptance and the recognition of the style of *Muḥaddithīn* for *Sīrah* writing, *Sīrah* writing became very popular and many books were written on the *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). And a lot of writing in *Sīrah* gave birth to a new style in *Sīrah* writing and that is called the compiling style of *Sīrah*. The compiling style of *Sīrah* writing is to compile the events of *Sīrah* from different sources and books of *Sīrah* in a very orderly, consistent and comprehensive manner. This style of *Sīrah* writing started in the end of the third century after *Hijra* or in the beginning of fourth century after *Hijrah*. Almost all the books of *Sīrah* written after that until today followed the same compiling style of *Sīrah* writing.⁵

Juristical Style

Juristical style of *Sīrah* writing is to highlight the events of *Sīrah* in a way that issues relating to Islamic jurisprudence are also explained. Everyone after having looked at Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) doing his *Ḥajj* formed his own understanding of the *Ḥajj* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). This is obvious that no one was always with the Prophet. Everyone figured his opinion on what he saw. When all this information was transferred to the next generation, they derived various commandments according to their own way. There are three kinds of *Ḥajj*, *Īfrād*, *Qirān* and *Tamatt‘u*. Jurists formed their own opinions about the *Ḥajj* of the Prophet in regard with these three kinds. The *Ḥajj* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is a matter of *Sīrah* as it denotes the events from his life but simultaneously it’s an issue of Islamic jurisprudence and various rulings were derived from it. Elaborating the *Sīrah* of the Prophet in this mode is called the juristical style of *Sīrah* writing.⁶

Style of *Mutakallimīn*

‘Ilm Al Kalām is the science to elaborate Islamic doctrines with logic and reasoning. It is also meant to analyze and criticize the beliefs of other religions with reasoning and to prove the legitimacy of Islamic convictions in comparison of others. This was for the first time practiced by *Muḥaddithīn* and they raised the questions in regard with the issues of *‘Ilm Al Kalām*. Dr. Mahmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī has highlighted the significant features of this style of *Sīrah* writing as well.

Style of *Dirāyah*

*Dirāyah*⁷ is the study of the texts and the subject matter of *Ḥadith* and it determines the adequacy of a *Ḥadith*. The *Sīrah* of the Prophet has been written in this mode as well and this is called the style of *Dirāyah* in *Sīrah* writing. This style of *Sīrah* writing is not very popular as mostly *Sīrah* writers adopt the style of *Riwāyah*⁸ in *Sīrah* writing. In this style of *Sīrah* writing, the *Sīrah* writers prefer principles of *Dirāyah* on the principles of *Riwāyah*. While preferring the principles of *Dirāyah*, the *Sīrah* writers try to bring compatibility in the events of *Sīrah*. This style of *Sīrah* writing does not mean that the principles of *Riwāyah* are not taken into the consideration in the writing of *Sīrah*. This style of *Sīrah* writing can be seen in many books such as *Khutabāt Aḥmadīyah* by Sir Sayyad Aḥmad Khān, *Sīrah al Nabī by Shiblī Nu’mānī*, *Sīrat Sarware ‘Alam* by Maulānā Maudūdī and many others.

Analytical or Research Based Style

One of the most important styles in *Sīrah* writing is analytical style and many books have been written on this pattern. This style is called research based study of *Sīrah* as well. Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullah is considered the pioneer of this style of *Sīrah* writing. He conducted research based and analytical studies on *Mushkilāte*⁹ *Sīrah*.

The analytical style of *Sīrah* writing was also meant to remove the differences in the events of *Sīrah* in terms of time and dates and to bring compatibility in these events. Early writers of *Sīrah* used lunar calendars to mention the dates of different events of *Sīrah* and when these dates were compared with the solar calendar and thus a lot of perplexities were found. Christian missionaries were of the opinion that Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was a mere idol who was worshipped by the Muslims.

Some of their writers thought Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) urged people to worship him and after his death Muslims made an idol of him. All this gave way to a new style of *Sīrah* writing and Muslim scholars gave very comprehensive replies to all these hostilities in an analytic mode found.¹⁰

Comparative Style

In this style of *Sīrah* writing the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is compared with the lives and teachings of the prophets and teachings of other religions. This style of *Sīrah* writing was introduced in twentieth century when Islam spread widely and it affected those parts of the world where non Muslim inhabited in majority.¹¹ Early scholars did not prevent the describing of the preference among the prophets. He further says that this preference does exist in the light of the Holy *Qur'ān* and if *Qur'ān* describes the preference of any prophet, this will not be choosing among the prophets by humans. This will be an interpretation of the Holy *Qur'ān* and this is allowed by the consent of the scholars.¹² *Raḥmatullil'ālamīn* by *Qāḍī Muḥammad Sulymān Manṣūrpūrī* and *Khutbāte Madrās* by *Sayyed Salmān Nadvī* are major examples of this very style.

Literary Style

Describing the events of *Sīrah* in pure literary style is called the literary style of *Sīrah* writing. This style has two important aspects; poems and prose. Literary style of *Sīrah* writing can be perceived in Arabic and Persian. This style of *Sīrah* writing is a novel method. As a matter of fact *Muḥaddithīn* and other reliable writers of *Sīrah* writing did not like this style of lettering in *Sīrah*. Persian was the first language which opted for this style of *Sīrah* writing and then from Persian literature it came to *Urdu* literature as well. Majority of the books in this style can be found in Persian and *Urdu*. This style of *Sīrah* writing took a long time to get space in Arabic language. Some of the books of this style of *Sīrah* writing are in poetry while others are in prose and initially books were written in poetry and then in prose. Many authors of Arabic presented the events of *Sīrah* in the form of poems. Some poems had more than thousand verses while others were having three to four thousand verses. Some authors wrote their poems about the miracles of the Prophet while some others focused on the wars fought by Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم).¹³

Ṣūfī Style

Ṣūfī¹⁴ style is a separate and permanent style of *Sīrah* writing and this can be named as the spiritual aspect of *Sīrah* writing. According to the *Hadīth* of *Jibrāīl* spiritual factor of our lives has great significance and this factor has great emphasis in the teachings of Prophets. The companions of the Holy Prophet were greatly inspired by the spiritual teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The Holy *Qur'ān* has elaborated this vital aspect at various occasions. For instance Allah Almighty says in *Sūrah Al 'Ankabūt*;

"وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ"¹⁵

“And those who strive in our (cause), We will certainly guide them to Our path, verily Allah is with those who do right.” This spirit always prevailed in the minds of mystics from very beginning. Their lives were dominated by this important spiritual factor and this was seen in their writings as well. Same was the case with the writing about the life of the Prophet. Majority of the *Muḥaddithīn* had *Kitāb Al Akhlāq*, *Kitāb Al Adāb* and *Kitāb Al Zuhd* in their collections of *Hadīth*. There were separate books with the titles *Akhlāq Al Nabī* and *Akhlāq Al Rasūl*, for example *Akhlāq Al Nabī Wa Adābihi* by ‘Abdullah Bin Muhammad Al *Iṣfahānī*, *Mūsū‘ah Nazrah Al Na‘īm Fi Akhlāq Al Rasūl* by Ṣāleḥ Ibn *Ḥumyḍ* and ‘Abdul Raḥmān Ibn *Malūḥ*.

Thematic Style

Thematic style is yet another novel style of writing in *Sīrah*. This style can be seen in the interpretations of the Holy *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth*. The style of writing has changed the trend of commentary of the full text of *Qur'ān* to some extent. One subject or issue from the Holy *Qur'ān* is selected and all the verses of the Holy *Qur'ān* relating to this particular subject are collected and explained. A few examples of these subjects are the foretelling of *Qur'ān*, the examples of *Qur'ān*, the *Qur'ān* and modern times etc. Likewise in *Hadīth* the trend of thematic study has become very popular, for instance the signs of the last day in the sayings of Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the political or economic teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The same style of writing has exactly developed in *Sīrah* studies.

Style of Approbation

Style of approbation or tolerance is yet another style of *Sīrah* writing which developed in twentieth century especially in Indian subcontinent. This style of *Sīrah* writing was an outcome of the religious and political conflict which initiated between Muslims and Hindus soon after the arrival of the former in the subcontinent. Pessimistic approaches of religious leaders, intolerance, prejudice, insularism and other such factors were the main elements of most of the writings and the speeches of that period of time which were aimed at the defamation of Muslims and Hindus. They started to praise the religious personalities of both the religions in political and religious meetings.¹⁶ The works of Hindu and Sikh writers about the *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was quoted in the books of *Sīrah*, and in the books written about the founders of religions, poetic books of *Sīrah* and in books of history as well.¹⁷

***Sīrah* Writing for Children**

It is to write the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) for children in an easy and simple language and it is one of the novel styles of *Sīrah* writing which started in the end of the nineteenth century. This style of *Sīrah* writing is mainly found in sub-continent but Arabic books have also been written in this approach.¹⁸ Those who wrote in this style of *Sīrah* writing include *Qādī Muḥammad Sulymān Maṣūrpūrī* and his book is '*Muhr-e-Nabuwat*'. It is a small book comprising of about forty pages and has been published so many times. '*Sarkār Ka Darbār*' was written by *Ilyās Aḥmad* and it was published in 1928AD in Hyderabad in India. '*Sarkār-e-Do 'ālam*' was written by *Muhammad Husyn Nadvī*. It was first published in 1932AD and it is comprised of 148 pages and was included in the curriculum of various schools. '*Rasūl-e-Pāk*' was written by '*Abdul Wāhid Sindhī* comprising of eighty pages. *Khawajah 'Abdul Ḥa'ī* wrote '*Hamāre Rasūl*' and there were twenty two editions of this by 1975AD. '*Piyāre Rasūl*' was written by *Sultānah Aṣif* and it was first published in 1947AD. *Khalīl Aḥmad* wrote '*Rasūl-e-Pāk kay Akhlāq*' and there were few other books of *Sīrah* specifically written for children to understand and know the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Few of these books are; '*Hamāre Nabī*' by Professor *Nawāb 'Alī, Aamnah Ka Lāl* by *Rāshid Al Khyrī*, '*Raḥmat-e-'Alam*' by *Salmān Nadvī* etc.¹⁹

Battles of Prophet Muḥammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم)

Battles of Prophet Muḥammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) have always remained the centre of attention of *Sīrah* writers. The very early books of *Sīrah* were even known by the names of *Maghāzī* and throughout the writing history of *Sīrah* battles of the prophet remained a vital subject for example the book *Ghazawāt Al Rasūl Wa Sarāyāhu* by *Ibn Sa'd*. The same happened in the twentieth century and many books were written on this subject.

Wives of Prophet Muḥammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم)

Books written on the subject matter of the wives of Prophet Muḥammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) is another example of the Thematic style of *Sīrah* writing. For example *Nisā' Al Rasūl* by *Sayīd Ibrāhīm Aḥmad*, *Nisā' Al Nabī* by *'Ā'ishah 'Abdul Rahmān*, *Ummahāt Al Mu'mnīn* by *Maḥmūd Al Maṣrī*, *Zūjāt Al Rasūl* by *Uymah Muhammad 'Alī*, *Zūjāt Al Rasūl* by *Sa'īd Ayūb*. The English books include the philosophy of the marriages of the Prophet by *Aḥmad Sharīf*, *Women around the Messenger* by *Muhammad 'Alī. Khawātīn Ehle Byt* written by *Aḥmad Khalīl* and *Rasūllah Kay Nikāḥ* by *Muhammad Rafī' Muftī* are the examples of Urdu books.

Conduct of Prophet Muḥammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم)

Many books have been written on the manners and the conduct of the Prophet is another example of the Thematic style of *Sīrah* writing. For instance *Akhlāq Al Nabī Wa Adābihi* by *'Abdullah Bin Muhammad Al Iṣfahānī*, *Mūsū'ah Nazrah Al Na'im Fi Akhlāq Al Rasūl* by *Ṣāleḥ Ibn Ḥumyid* and *'Abdul Rahmān Ibn Malūḥ*. In Urdu *Khalīl Aḥmad* wrote *'Rasūl-e-Pāk kay Akhlāq*.

Sīrah Studies and Human Rights

The discussions of human rights are one of the most vital issues of the twentieth century. These issues were debated by the *Sīrah* writers of modern days as well and they tried to address these issues in the light of the *Sīrah* of Prophet Muḥammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم).

There is no doubt that Prophet Muḥammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) was the biggest advocator of human rights and he taught the same to his companions as well. His life is full of the teachings of brotherhood, sympathy, protection for the properties and honor, justice etc. He treated Muslims and non-Muslims alike on humanitarian grounds. The treaty of *Madīnah* and his Last Sermon

are the ideal documents in connection with issues related to human rights.²⁰

Philosophical Style

Philosophy is an integral part of human nature and it has many branches and dimensions like human nature has many dimensions. Most of the people do not find it easy when it comes to the comprehension of the true nature of philosophy and very few like to write in philosophical approaches. Same is the case with the *Sīrah* of the Prophet and the philosophical style of *Sīrah* writing is not very common. The philosophical style of *Sīrah* writing means to discuss the logic of different issues and to elaborate philosophical aspects of various events from the life of the Prophet.

Style of *Da‘wah*

It is not that easy to have a classification of the books of *Sīrah* in terms of their styles of writings and these books cannot be confined to a specific style of *Sīrah*. Most of the books have more than one styles of *Sīrah* writing. Style of *Da‘wah* is one of those styles which can be seen in the writings of many authors. This kind of writings started in very early days of *Sīrah* writing. The letters of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to various kings and rulers were in fact *Da‘wah* towards Islam. The companions of the Prophet collected these letters. *Muḥaddithīn* have also made a mention of these letters.

Style of Application in *Sīrah*

Man is always in need of guidance and this guidance must be in practical form because theories may not work for long. The authors of *Sīrah* have always been aware of this fact and it is because of this that style of application was introduced in *Sīrah* writing. Many aspects from the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) were highlighted in a way that practical solutions for various problems were provided. For example the leadership of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the revolution brought by the Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the love and the humanity in the teachings of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and the social life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

Addressing Style of *Sīrah* (خطبات، دروس و محاضرات سیرت)

Addressing style of *Sīrah* writing is to compile the addresses and the speeches of different scholars on the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). This is not a new style in *Sīrah*

writing, in fact it is in practice for quite some time. The very important use of this style of *Sīrah* writing is that the addresses and the sermons in regard with *Sīrah* are brought into the writing after slight changes. The speeches are preserved in a very appealing manner and so that people can benefit from them.

Dr. *Maḥmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī* has got a chain of these addresses which were compiled as well. His addresses are titled with *Muḥādrāti Sīrat* and *Khuṭbāte Bahāwalpūr II. Muḥādrāti Sīrat* is comprised of twelve addresses namely the need and the importance of the study of *Sīrah*, an introduction to *Sīrah* and its sciences, *Sīrah* writing and its inception and evolution, Methodologies and trends in *Sīrah* writing, famous *Sīrah* writers and their attributes, State of *Madīnah* its governance and its economy, Theological Study of *Sīrah*, Jurisprudential Study of *Sīrah*, *Sīrah* studies in sub continent, modern approaches in *Sīrah* writings and lastly *Sīrah* studies and its possible future dimensions.

***Sīrah* Conferences**

Another addition to *Sīrah* studies in twentieth century is the trend of conducting *Sīrah* conferences and establishing *Sīrah* chairs in various institutions and universities. Such an international *Sīrah* conference was held in Pakistan in 1974 AD in which the secretary general of Muslim World league announced a writing competition of *Sīrah* books. A very handsome amount was given to the winners of first three positions. The first prize was won by the book *Al Raḥīq Al Makhtūm* written by *Ṣafī Al Raḥmān* from 'Azamgher, India, the second prize was taken by the book, *Muḥammad the Final Messenger* authored by Dr. *Mājid 'Alī Khān* from 'Alīgher, India and the third position was obtained by the book *Peghambar 'Azam* written by Dr. *Naṣīr Aḥmad Naṣīr* of Punjab university, Lahore. The ministry of religious affairs in Pakistan started a chain of prizes for *Sīrah* writings after that and handsome prizes are given every year for the books and articles written on the life and the teachings of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). This has resulted in the form of many valuable books and research articles on the *Sīrah* of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).²¹

Sermons of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم)

To collect and compile the sermons of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is another style of *Sīrah* writing. The sermons of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) have great significance in

Islamic teachings. Besides his usual sermons, whenever he felt the need he used to speak to his companions. For instance when he received a complain about lengthy prayers, he got angry and climbed on the pulpit and addressed his companions in the following words;

"فَمَنْ صَلَّى بِالنَّاسِ فَلْيُخَفِّفْ فَإِنَّ فِيهِمُ الْمَرِيضَ وَالضَّعِيفَ وَذَا الْحَاجَةَ"²²

“Whoever leads the congregation, should reduce (his prayer), because there are sick, weak and needy.”

Encountering Style

Sīrah of the Prophet is one of those Islamic sciences where orientalist have written a lot and their writings in *Sīrah* are very significant. This is where encountering style of *Sīrah* writing comes into play and intensity of this style depends upon the writing behaviors of orientalist who were very active in writing about the life of the Prophet.

Encountering style is meant to encounter or respond to the objections made on the life of Prophet *Muhammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). And this style of *Sīrah* writing can also be seen in the book of ‘*Abdul Raūf Dānāpūrī*; regarding which Dr. *Maḥmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī* says that ‘*Abdul Raūf Dānāpūrī* tried to respond to the objections of orientalist on the sources of *Sīrah* with the help of the most authentic sources of *Sīrah*. He further says that *Dānāpūrī* has specifically replied to those objections of orientalist which they made on the subject of *Maghāzī*.²³

1.3. Different Methodologies and Approaches of *Sīrah* Writings in Twentieth Century

In comparison to its past the twentieth century is not a big difference in terms of general writing methodologies of *Sīrah*. *Sīrah* writers have discussed all the topics and aspects of the life of Prophet *Muhammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as they were discussed in the past. *Sīrah* books of various styles can easily be found in twentieth century i.e. the general books of *Sīrah* which are known as *Al Jawāmi* ‘*Al Sīrah* and the books of *Maghāzī*. Various style of *Sīrah* writing was adopted namely historical, compiling, analytical etc.

Though the twentieth century was a continuation of its past in connection with *Sīrah* writing, it does not mean that there was nothing new or unchanged in this century in terms of *Sīrah* writing. Muslim world had to go through many ups and downs in twentieth

century and it had to face many new challenges. The rapidly happened changes influenced the methodologies and approaches of writing as well. In literature the methodologies and approaches have got great significance and it has great influence on the readers. The relation of the methodologies and approaches with the contemporary literature is always observed. All kinds of writings are judged in the light of contemporary literature. It is observed that whether these writings have considered the needs of their times or not. The evolution of a writer is judged in the light of his approach towards a certain subject.

The *Sīrah* writers of twentieth century did realize the requirements of their times and accordingly molded their scripts. Various new methodologies and approaches were introduced in *Sīrah* studies. For instance, Jurisprudential study of *Sīrah*, political study of *Sīrah*, socialistic study of *Sīrah*, theological study of *Sīrah*, literary study of *Sīrah*, spiritual study of *Sīrah*, psychological study of *Sīrah*, geographical study of *Sīrah*, study of the evidences of *Sīrah* and many more.

***Sīrah* Studies in the Light of *Qur'ān* مطالعہ سیرت اور قرآن**

The bond between *Qur'ān* and *Sīrah* is indissoluble. The *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) is the practical explanation of the Holy *Qur'ān*. *Qur'ān* contains the historical details of the events from the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم)²⁴ and his attributes and characteristics as well.²⁵ There are verses in *Qur'ān* that contain consolation for Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) against the non-believers.²⁶ There are verses which carry warnings as well²⁷ and verse which emphasize on the obedience to the Prophet of Islam.²⁸ It is, because of this that prominent *Sīrah* writer have declared *Qur'ān* as the basic source of the *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم).²⁹ This led to this trend of studying *Sīrah* of the Prophet in the light of *Qur'ān*. A lot has been done in this regard in the past. The hints of this methodology to some extent can be seen in the books of *Abū Muḥammad Ibn Ḥīshām* and *Muḥammad Ibn 'Umar Al Wāqidī*. For instance *Al Wāqidī* refers to *Sūrah Al Anfāl* in the description of the battle of *Badr*.³⁰ He refers to *Sūrah Al 'Imrān* while discussing the battle of *'Uḥad*³¹ and to *Sūrah Al Ḥashr* in the explanation of the expulsion of *Banū Naẓīr*.³² Likewise *Ibn Ḥīshām* also refers to the Holy *Qur'ān* at very few occasions is his

book. For example he refers to *Sūrah Al Baqarah* in the discussion of the inception of the revelation of *Qur'ān* and the month of *Ramaḍān*.³³ *Ibn Hīshām* quotes *Sūrah Al Kahaf*³⁴ and *Sūrah Al Lahab*³⁵ as well in an effort to understand *Sīrah* in the light of *Qur'ān*. This methodology had remained in practice throughout the history of *Sīrah* writing but this methodology has been specifically focused in twentieth century and dozens of books have been written in this approach of *Sīrah* writing to comprehend *Sīrah* in the light of *Qur'ānic* teachings.³⁶

Jurisprudential Study of *Sīrah* فقهيّات سيرت

The *Sīrah* Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) provides comprehensive guidance in shaping the various aspects of human life. (فقه السيرة) is a subject in *Sīrah* studies which is generally focused on deriving legal injunctions from this guidance. Islamic jurisprudence and *Sīrah* are considered two separate subject matters. Islamic jurisprudence deals with Islamic law and its principles while *Sīrah* is meant to discuss the history and the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). As the matter of fact there is a sound relation between Islamic jurisprudence and *Sīrah*. Islamic jurisprudence means a deep and profound understanding of the injunctions and teachings of *Qur'ān*, *Sunnah* and *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). In order to comprehend Islamic law in its true spirit it is mandatory to have a complete understanding of *Qur'ān*, *Sunnah* and *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). It is because of this there is a firm bond between Islamic jurisprudence and *Sīrah*. This is very important to study the life of the Prophet in order to understand Islamic law and this is likewise important to study Islamic law to have a real understanding of *Sīrah*. In other words Islamic jurisprudence is the true comprehension and application of *Sīrah*.³⁷

Theological Study of *Sīrah* كلاميات سيرت

Theological Study of *Sīrah* is in fact a study of those topics and subject matters of theology (علم الكلام) which have a close relation with the events from the *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). These events of *Sīrah* cannot be comprehended in their true spirit without the help of theology. The subjects which are linked to both *Sīrah* and theology are discussed under the title of theological study of *Sīrah*. Following is a list of those issues which are equally related to *Sīrah* and theology.

- Reality and compulsion of prophethood and messengership
- Duties and responsibilities of a prophet
- Reality, compulsion and kinds of revelation
- The seal of prophethood and reality of *Muḥammad*
- Characteristics and attributes of prophethood
- Reality of *Qur'ān* and the issue of the creation of *Qur'ān*
- Miracles of the Prophet
- The ascension and the night journey of the Prophet
- Infallibility of prophets
- Tidings of prophets and testimonies of Prophethood³⁸

Social Aspect of *Sīrah* Studies اجتماعيات سيرت

To study *Sīrah* while focusing on its social aspects is called the sociological study of *Sīrah*. It is also called the sociology of *Sīrah*. *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) cannot be comprehended in its true sense without considering the society and social aspect of the time of the Prophet. The time and the society of those times are different from other societies and from our time of today's modern and complex world.

Sociology has become a very vital subject among its contemporary subjects. Sociology is meant to discuss human behavior, mutual relations, structure of various social institutions and their role. Muslims scholars have discussed these vital issues of the formation of societies and their stability and instability.³⁹ *Ibn Khaldūn* was the first to use the term of علم العمران translated in English as urbanism. *Ibn Khaldūn* disclosed the factors for the rise and falls of the nations and gave the idea of group solidarity.⁴⁰

It is because of the dispersal of sociology a new trend has emerged in *Sīrah* writing and Dr. *Maḥmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī* has called it the socialistic study of *Sīrah*. He is of the opinion that social aspects of the *Sīrah* should be highlighted and this can be declared as the sociology of *Sīrah*. This is the need of the time to study the *Sīrah* in this new and latest style. He further says that after the arrival of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) at *Madīnah* he took many measures and decisions which had their own sociological background and background is always important to understand the foreground and reality of the matters. What was the concept of community in *Madīnah*? Which families and tribes inhabited the

city at that time and what was the nature of their mutual relations? What were the main elements of the life and society of *Madīnah*? What was the nature of the civil state in *Makkah*? What were the type of the mutual relations and the transactions of various tribes? This is an important aspect of *Sīrah* and this is so important that without its understanding it would not be easy to comprehend many issues of *Sīrah*.⁴¹

Political Study of *Sīrah* سياسيات سيرت

Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was sent with the blessings of this life and for the life hereafter. He gave the tidings of the heavenly sovereignty and explained the rules for the worldly kingdom and established it by setting examples. To study these political rules set by the Prophet is called the political study of *Sīrah*. The purpose of the arrival of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) is very clearly mentioned in the Holy *Qur'ān* in the following words;

"هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ"⁴²

“It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered a messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them Scripture and Wisdom.”

These were the basic responsibilities of the Prophet and no one was to come after the Prophet to perform these prophetic responsibilities. There was no book to be sent after the last book of Allah and therefore the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was made a comprehensive and beautiful pattern. He was not a role model merely for common people but in fact his life was a model for the rulers, conquerors, commanders and for heads of states. Allah Almighty has bestowed him the attributes of Prophethood and qualities of a best ruler.⁴³

Literary Study of *Sīrah* ادبيات سيرت

Another significant aspect of *Sīrah* studies is the literary study of *Sīrah*. This is meant to analyze the sermons and letters of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in literary style. The authors and experts of literature evaluated the impacts of the sayings of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) on Arabic language and on the methodologies of Arabic language. The effects of the sayings

of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) on the structure, diction and pronunciation of Arabic language were analyzed by the experts of literature. What were the new methodologies in terms of linguistics which Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) rendered to Arabic language? What changes did Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) bring into Arabic language? All such issues are the subject matter of the literary study of *Sīrah*. The very first work in this context can be found in the book *Al Bayān Wal Tabyīn* written by *Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr Ibn Baḥr Al Jāḥiẓ*. *Imām Jāḥiẓ* has dedicated a complete and detailed chapter to the literature, glossology and eloquence of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم).⁴⁴

Martial Study of *Sīrah* عسكریات سيرت

Martial study of *Sīrah* is the study of the military aspects of the life of Prophet *Muḥammad*'s (صلى الله عليه وسلم). It includes the wisdom of the wars and various means adopted by Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in his wars. It is one of the modern trends of *Sīrah* writing and such a diverse and detailed study of on the military aspects of the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was not conducted in past. People who have conducted research in this field are the experts of this field and have spent their whole lives studying military. The vision and insight which they employed in such research was not easy to employ for others.⁴⁵

Administrative Study of *Sīrah* اداریات سيرت

Administrative study of *Sīrah* means the study of the executive and organizational aspects of the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The early writers of *Sīrah* have contributed a great deal of authentic work to this type of study in *Sīrah*. The two most important books on this subject theme of *Sīrah* are *Takhrīj Al Dalālāt* by *Imām 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad Al Khuẓa'ī* and *Al Tarātīb Al Idāriyah* by *Imām Muḥammad 'Abdul Kattānī*. Both the authors have analyzed and compiled all the scattered information about the administration of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) from *Tafsīr*, *Ḥadīth*, *Sīrah* and Islamic history. For instance what were the administrative judgments of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and what administrative measures were adopted by Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم). The

information on this subject matter were scattered in various sources and both the authors collected these facts and figures.⁴⁶

روحانيات سيرت *Sīrah* Spiritual Study of *Sīrah*

The spiritual study of *Sīrah* is about the teachings of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in connection with the purifying of one's self. What measures Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) adopted regarding this purification, the way he educated morals to his people and how he eliminated the incorrect and immoral habits and customs from the society are the main subject matters of the spiritual study of *Sīrah*. The Companions used to learn the prayers of the Prophet and he himself used to teach them. For instance the following prayer of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) in which he corrected even one word of his Companion who said prophet in place of messenger;

"فَقُلْتُ أَمَنْتُ بِرَسُولِكَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلْتَ قَالَ قُلْ أَمَنْتُ بِنَبِيِّكَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلْتَ"⁴⁷

"I said I believe in the Messenger that You (Allah) have sent, He (*Muḥammad* صلى الله عليه وسلم) said; say I believe in the Prophet that You (Allah) have sent."

Another important aspect of the spiritual study of *Sīrah* is the chains of Sufism and many *Sīrah* writers have written on this issue including the writers of subcontinent. The personality of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was describes in the term of Sufism and the spirituality of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was compared to other prophets as well.⁴⁸

نفسيات سيرت *Sīrah* Psychological Study of *Sīrah*

Early interpreters of *Qur'ān*, *Muḥaddithīn* and *Sīrah* writers did not use the psychological approach in their writings to great extent but they did highlight the philosophy and wisdom of the sayings of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and what he took into the consideration in terms of the mindset and the mental temperament of the people when he was presenting the message of Allah. He gradually changed the minds of people and did not ask them to leave everything at once because this may not have worked and this is an important point in psychology. Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) minded the psychology of his opponents in order to reduce their opposition and took such steps which indeed minimized their opposition. The attitude of Prophet *Muḥammad*

(صلى الله عليه وسلم) at the time of the treaty of *Hūdybīyah* is another very good example of the psychological approach of the Prophet. The Prophet upon watching the head of the *Ahābīsh* tribe, *Halīs Ibn ‘Alqamah*, coming, asked his companion to drive the animals of sacrifice in front of him. After seeing this he was very impressed and he told *Quraysh* that they did not sign treaty with them to stop the pilgrims.⁴⁹

جغرافیہء سیرت *Geographical Study of Sīrah*

Geographical study of *Sīrah* means to analyze the geographical atmosphere of the time and the region of the arrival of Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). It is the study of the geography of that region and other cities which existed in that era. The very first book about the geographical study of *Sīrah* was written in third century after *Hijrah*. *Şifat Jazīrah Al ‘Arab* is the book authored by *Ibn Hāi’k Hamdānī* and it was published in Leyden, Netherlands in 1819 AD. This book discusses the region of Arabia, its geography, nations, tribes, thoroughfares, mountains, ponds etc. This book contains precise descriptions of those areas where the wars of Islam were fought or treaties were signed with various tribes. This trend has prevailed in modern ages as well and *Sīrah* has been studies on the basis of geography and it is called Geo-politics.⁵⁰

أحيائي تحريكات اور سیرت *Reviving Movement and Sīrah*

Twentieth century was the era of reviving movements in Muslim world. There were many Islamic and religious movements in Arab and non-Arab Muslims world in the east and the west. The objective of these movements was the instauration of the Muslim world through Islamic values. These movements were meant to restore the Islamic societies and states and to reform the individual and collective lives of Muslims according to the ancient Islamic idealism. Pakistan itself came into being as a result of a reviving movement and one of the basic element of this movement was Islam and Islamic values and traditions and this is very obvious in the statements of *Muḥammad ‘Alī Jināḥ* and Dr. *Muḥammad Iqbāl*. In the context of the reviving movements the *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was pondered and studies in a new approach. The *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلى الله عليه وسلم) as a role model was highlighted and this purpose added a new intellectuality in *Sīrah* studies.⁵¹

Western Inference and *Sīrah* مغربی اسلوب استدلال اور سیرت

Another approach of modern times in *Sīrah* writing is the approach of western style inference and deduction. Many writers of *Sīrah* studied in the west and were brought up in western universities and some others who graduated from eastern universities but studied in western styles, adopted this modern approach in *Sīrah* writing especially those who wrote *Sīrah* in English, French and German languages. Their writings are according to the western standards and styles of inference. Sir *Sayīd Aḥmad Khān* and *Sayīd Ameer Ali* are the pioneers in the sphere of *Sīrah* writing. Another prominent example of such writers in *Sīrah* is Dr. *Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh*. There are many Arab *Sīrah* writers as well who studies in western universities and wrote the *Sīrah* of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) in western style of writing.⁵²

Summary

Sīrah writers of twentieth century have discussed all the topics and aspects of the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم). The world had seen many major events throughout the twentieth century for instance World War I and World War II, and these events had far reaching effects of Muslim *Ummah* as well. This century was a reflection of the political downfall of the Muslims. The needs of the time and time to time developments gave birth to new styles, approaches and subjects in *Sīrah* writings. Dr. *Mahmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī* analyzed and comprehended these styles and methodologies adopted by various *Sīrah* writers and introduced novel terminologies of *Sīrah* writing. While doing this Dr. *Ghāzī* served twofold purpose; the first aim was to promote the true message and the teachings of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) and secondly he provided guidelines in regard with the new challenges of twentieth century which *Sīrah* writers are facing now and in future as well.

Findings and Recommendations

Sīrah writers of twentieth century have discussed all the topics and aspects of the life of Prophet *Muḥammad* (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم). While writing the *Sīrah*, the *Sīrah* writers utilized ancient and modern approaches and methodologies. The ancient approaches such as the approaches of *Muḥaddithīn*, historical or traditional styles and compiling approaches were also into

consideration by the *Sīrah* writers of twentieth century. But as the matter of fact the needs of the time and change gave birth to new styles, approaches and subjects in *Sīrah* writings such as analytical style, comparative style, argumentative style, literal style, *sūfī* style, subjective style, style of approbation, *Sīrah* writing for children, philosophical style, style of *Da 'wah*, style of application in *Sīrah*, addressing style of *Sīrah*, legalist and theological study of *Sīrah*, political, martial, administrative, psychological and geographical study of *Sīrah*. *Fiqh Al Sīrah* was one of the most important areas of study of few of these authors and they have inferred various injunctions from the *Sīrah*. Many lessons and new teachings were deduced from the *Sīrah*. Though there cannot be two opinions regarding the significance of the ancient approaches of *Sīrah* writing, there is a need to highlight the modern approaches which are more in line with needs of the time. The subjective style of *Sīrah* writing is needed to be promoted more and more. *Mushkilāt Al Sīrah* and *Fiqh Al Sīrah* needs to be addressed more in terms of the research of the topics of *Sīrah*. Research projects and thesis promoting the style of application in *Sīrah* may be supported and encouraged. In this regard the contributions of Late Dr. *Mahmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī* are undeniable and unmatched. Research scholars from various universities across the county may be assigned research topics related to the work of Dr. *Mahmūd Aḥmad Ghāzī*.

References:

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- 1 The term *Al Sīyar* is used for Muslim international law in Islamic jurisprudence. The word *Al Sīyar* is the plural of the word "سيرة" which is used for biographies in Islamic literature and history and especially for the life of Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم).
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 - 3 Dānāpūrī, AbdulRaūf, *Aṣaḥ Alsīyar*, (Karachi; *Idāra Islāmīyāt*, 2009), 42.
 - 4 Ghāzī, Maḥmūd Aḥmad, *op.cit.*, p. 202.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, p. 202.
 - 6 Ghāzī, Maḥmūd Aḥmad, *op.cit.*, p. 204.
 - 7 The act of assessing or verifying a narration or reported fact.
 - 8 *Riwāyah* is the study of the chains and the narratives of *Ḥadith*.

- 9 The issues and problems faced by *Sirah* writers and readers. There are not ambiguities or uncertainties.
- 10 Jatūī, Zafar Aḥmad, *Bīsvīn Ṣadī 'Īsvī Mīn Muṭāl'e Sīrat*, (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2011), p. 632.
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- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 205.
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- 19 Nadvī, Raḍī Al Islām, "Barre Saghīr Men Bachōn Ka Sīratī Adab," *Tehqīqāt-e-Islāmī* 36 (2013): p. 35.
- 20 Zafar Al Islām, *Sīrat-e-Nabvī Or Ḥuqūq-e-Insānī*, (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2011), p. 244.
- 21 Ghāzī, Maḥmūd Aḥmad, *op.cit.*, p. 688.
- 22 *Saḥīḥ Al Bukhārī, Kitāb Al 'ilm, Ḥadīth* No. 90, vol. 1, p. 94.
- 23 Ghāzī, Maḥmūd Aḥmad, *op.cit.*, p. 680.
- 24 See: *Sūrah Al 'Imrān* (3:121-123), *Sūrah Al Tūbah* (9:86-110), *Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl* (17:1), *Sūrah Al Mujādalah* (58:1), *Sūrah Al Quraysh* (106:1-5).
- 25 See: *Sūrah Al 'Imrān* (3:159), *Sūrah Al Nisā* (4:174), *Sūrah Al Aḥzāb* (33:45,46).
- 26 See: *Sūrah Al 'Imrān* (3:76), *Sūrah Al Shūrā* (26:52), *Sūrah Al Ḥujurāt* (49:4), *Sūrah Al Ṭūr* (52:48).
- 27 See: *Sūrah Al Anfāl* (8:68), *Sūrah Al Tūbah* (9:43), *Sūrah Al 'Abas* (80:1)
- 28 See: *Sūrah Al 'Imrān* (3:32), *Sūrah Al Nisā* (4:59,64), *Sūrah Al Aḥzāb* (33:21).
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- 33 Ibn Ḥīshām, Abū Muḥammad 'Abdul Malik, *Sīrat Al Nabī*, (Lahore: Al Mīzān, 2010), Sec 1, p. 216.

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35 *Ibid.*, p. 314.
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38 *Ibid.*, p. 466.
39 Abdullah Muḥammad, *Mu'āshirate Nabwī*, (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2011), p. 221.
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42 *Sūrah Al Jum'ah* (62:2).
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44 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
45 *Ibid.*, p. 646.
46 *Ibid.*, p. 646.
47 *Saḥīḥ Al Muslim, Kitāb Al Dhikr, Ḥadith* No. 4884, vol. 13, p. 235.
48 Ghāzī, Maḥmūd Aḥmad, *op.cit.*, p. 94.
49 Shāh, Pīr Muḥammad Karam, *Ḍīā al Nabī*, (Lahore: *Ḍīā al Qur'ān Publications*, 1999), Sec. 4, p. 136.
50 Ghāzī, Maḥmūd Aḥmad, *op.cit.*, p. 104.
51 *Ibid.*, p. 650.
52 *Ibid.*, p. 651.