

## Compilation and Beginning of Seerah's Genre and the Reason of Inauthenticity of Seerah's Narrations

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### Abstract

Every moment of Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ Seerah is right path and complete model for ummat-e-muslima. To spend individual and social life the best way is to obey the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The madini period of Prophet's ﷺ life was spend confronting non-believers, idolaters, Jews, Christians, hypocrites and enemies of Islam. These expeditions were golden era of Islamic history which made familiar to Ummah with jihad. The state and government is not only the purpose but hallmark of Islam, therefore the Prophet created the state of Madina a model for the states as the Prophet's life is model for the whole humanity, similarly the laws established due to efforts of Holy Prophet ﷺ were the source, model and standard for all the laws. The seerat writers with their efforts and devotion presented before ummah such a standard and methodology of refinement and research-a distinction and hallmark of composition and compilation of seerah-which was followed by the seerat writers from time to time. Below we will talk about the introduction of Sira and the influence of previous books on Sira books in modern times.

**Keywords:** beginning, seerah genre, compilation, reason, inauthenticity, seerah narrations

### Literal Meaning of Seerah:

Seerah "سيرة" (life and biography of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him) is Arabic word and its plural is "سير". This word is extracted from "سار يسير سيرا" "مسيراً و تسياراً و مسيرة". There are different meanings of seerah literally.

In Lisan-al-Arab the meaning of seerah is mentioned "سير، الذهاب، السير" i.e. to walk, to go, to pass and "سار القوم يسيرون سيراً ومسيراً إذا امتد بهم السير في جهة توجهوا لها", is said on that occasion when someone's long journey is towards the intended destination. Similarly it is said "بارك الله في مسيرك اي سيرك" "may Allah blesses you in your journey". The word seerah "سيرة" is used for distance and meaning of السيرة is caravan. The meaning of al-seerah "السيرة" is method and shape as well.

In the Holy Quran this word is used in its literal meaning. Allah says in Quran:

"سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَىٰ"

"and we shall return it to its original shape."

The meaning of seerah is to tell the condition and events of past people as well, for instance "حدث احاديث الاوائل" "he told the event of past people".<sup>2</sup>

In Another famous Arabic dictionary *Taj-ul-Uroos*, the word *alseerah* "السيرة" is "الضرب من السير" "a type of character", it is said about the people of good character "انه لحسن السيرة" "he is of good character". The meaning of "seerah" "السيرة" is behavior, it is said "سار الوالي رعيته سيرة حسنة" "the ruler behaved well with his subjects". Similarly the meaning of "احسن السير" is good behavior, and the meaning of "هذا في سيرة الاولين" is "this is in the behavior of past people". The meaning of *alseerah* "السيرة" is condition and shape as well, in "سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَىٰ"<sup>3</sup>

meaning of *seerah* is interpreted as condition and shape. And "سيرة السيرة" (with kasra of *seen* "س") means sunnah and method, and word "السراء" "*alsairaah*" is extraction of it which means gold, "هو الذهب الصافي" means pure gold. The author of *taj-ul-uroos* writes that our teacher says : "السيرة النبوية وكتب السير ماخوذ من السيرة بمعنى طريقة" the word "seerah" in *seerahnabvia* and in books of *seerah* are extracted from "السيرة" which means method, *ghazwaat* and other events were included in it due to collaboration and interpretation.

Meaning of *seerat* includes way of life, code of conduct, character, manner, this word in this sense is synonym to "سنة"<sup>5</sup>. In Dr. Syed Abdullah's opinion the meaning of *seerat* is not confined to method, religion, sunnat, shape, condition and manner but its means internal personality, important achievements and biography of noble people.<sup>6</sup>

The word "سير" "seear" is also used in sense of movement, to search, to pursuit, for instance in Quran:

"فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ"<sup>7</sup>

"So travel through the earth, and see what the fate of the deniers was".

Here the meaning of *seear* "سير" means to go in search of solid and positive facts, to ponder, to be provident and to build character with good deeds. And Quran-al-kareem completed the meaning of *seear* "سير" with virtuous movement and factors, thus *seerat* is complete standard collection of movements and principles from a man of good deeds.<sup>8</sup>

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### Terminological Meaning of Seerah:

Though the literal meaning of *seerah* is individual character, mood, way of life and biography of a righteous person.<sup>9</sup> But in terminology it means *maghazis*, biography, manners, habits of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.<sup>10</sup> This word is used to express the conditions of common people but after Islam it was applied on the events, thoughts and teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.<sup>11</sup>

Though the word *seerah* was implemented on the life of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) earlier in same sense and its special meaning is still this. Hazrat Shah Abdul Aziz Muhadithdehvi (1239AH) writes defining the *seerah*:

"آنچه متعلق بوجود باجود پیغمبر ما صلی الله ﷺ و صحابه کرام و آل عظام اوست از ابتدائی تولد آنجناب تا غایت وفات آن را سیرت نامند"<sup>12</sup>

"Such *ahadith* which are related to Holy Prophet (ﷺ), *Sahaaba* (companions of Holy Prophet ﷺ) and events from life of Holy Prophet ﷺ from birth to death, they are all named as *seerat*."

### The First Use of Word "Seerat":

First of all the word "*seerat*" is used by Ibn Hashaam for the life of Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Hashaam named his book as *seerah* which was valuable addition of ibn Ishaq's book *maghazi*, but the word *seerat* is found earlier before this for the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the word *seerat* also commonly used in that era for biography, for instance *Seerat Ibn Mauvia*.<sup>14</sup>

G. Levi Della Vida tells the reason for using the word *seerah* for the biography of Holy Prophet (ﷺ). First of all, the biography of Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was written on the style of *seer-ul-malook* "سیر الملوك", and for the life of Holy Prophet (ﷺ) specific word *seer* "سیر" was used.<sup>15</sup> In contrary, Abdul-Qadoos writes, in Urdu rather before this in Arabic the word "*seerat*" سیرت although not specific but mainly was used for the biography of *anbiyaa* (peace be upon them) and religious people. It was taken in this sense to Hebrew, Aramaic, Syria from Arabic and in these languages the word *seerah* is used for the same meaning.<sup>16</sup>

The fact is that the muslims did not imitate "سیر الملوك" but by obeying the saying of Allah, they gathered the details of their prophet's life. Allah says in Quran:

"لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ" <sup>17</sup>

"Indeed in the life of the messenger of (Muhammad SAW) you have a good example to follow"

Trying to save one side of the life of Holy prophet (ﷺ) a huge stock of books of *seer* and *ahadith* came into being.

### Composition And Beginning Of Art Of Seerah:

The content related to *seerah* was present from time to time orally and in

written form Like hadith but in the beginning due to lack of interest in writing, the capital of *seerah* lacked compilation and composition for long period of time. Banuummaya forced ulamaas to write books on *seerah*. Ibn Abdul Bar quoted Iman Zuhri in "جامع بيان العلم" "جامع بيان العلم".

"كنا نكره كتاب العلم حتى اكرهنا عليه هؤلاء الامراء"<sup>18</sup>

*we don't like to ink knowledge,even the officials forced us to do this".*

So first of all Ameer Mavia(RA) called Ubaid bin Shareeh from yamen to write biography of past people and named it as "*Akbaar-Al-Mazeyeen*"<sup>19</sup>. After that Abdul Malik bin Marvan have got wrote *tafseer* of Quran by Hazrat Saeed Ibn Jubair which was kept in royal library, *tafseer* which is famous with the name of Ata Ibn dinar is *tafseer* of him.<sup>20</sup>When Umar Bin Abdul Aziz became caliph, he saw that number of the companions of Holy Prophet(pbuh)who have the stock of ahadith and historical narrations in their hearts were gradually reducing. They were afraid that the knowledge of *Sunna* of Holy Prophet(ﷺ) should not be erased by obliteration of islamic narrations and ahadith. So he sent order in all countries that ahadith should be compiled and written. <sup>21</sup>

Therefore, numerous books were written on ahadith by order of Amir-al-muminin. Therefore Qazi Abu Bakar Ibn Hazam,Ibn Shahab Azuhri and several other mauhadithin(people who remember and compile ahadith) played important role in collecting and compiling ahadith.

Regular beginning of books of *seerah* and *maghazi* started from the era of Umar Bin Abdul Aziz. Allama Shibli Naumani says that, it was not taken care of *seerah* and *maghazi* till now. Hazrat Umer ibn 'Abd al-Aziz gave special attention to this art and ordered Asim bin Umar ibn Qutada al-Ansari (121 AH), who had special perfection in this art,to teach maghazi and manaqib to the people in *jamia* mosque Damascus. Therefore on motivation of Umar Bin Abdul Aziz tendency towards study of *seerah* and *maghazi* developed in scholars and ulamaas and therefore muhadditin started writing and compiling this art.

Regular authors of the primary seerat books for instance, Ibn Ishaq (151 AH) and before his contemporaries, we find names of scholars in *tabeen* and *tabatabeen*, who wrote collection of books on *maghazi* and *seerah*. Although many of these collections vanished during long span of time, but their references seems here and there, in the books after them. Among them are Urwah bin Zubair (94 AH), Abban bin Usman ibn Afan (105AH), Wahib ibn Munbah (114 AH), Asim ibn Umar ibn Qatada (121 AH),Sharjeel ibn Saad (123 AH), Ibn Shahab Zuhri (124 AH), Abdullah bin Abi Bakr (130AH), Abu al-Aswad Muhammad ibn AbdurRehman (131-137AH), Musa bin Uqbbah (141AH), Muammar bin Rashid (153AH) etc.

There is contradiction between the researchers that, who wrote first book on *maghazi*and *seerah*? Haji Khalifa says that who wrote first book on *maghazi*was Imam Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Yasaar(151AH), therefore he was called head of *maghazi* writers ,he says in another place that the first who collected *maghazi* was Muhammad bin Ishaq.<sup>22</sup>And it is said that Urwa bin Zubair wrote first book on this topic.<sup>23</sup>

The opinion of Abu Qasim Abdur Rehman Suhili (581AH) is, that Imam

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Zuhri is the first who wrote on this subject.<sup>24</sup> Allama Shibli Naumani also supported his statements.<sup>25</sup> In the opinion of Shiekh-al-Islam Mustafa Sabri, well known researcher, that Aban bin Usman bin Afan(105AH) is first among *seerat* writers, he says that:

ان المؤلفين كيثرون وليس ابن هشام اقدمهم فالتاليف يبتدىء من ابان بن عثمان رضى الله عنه المولود 50 ثم عروة بن الزبير المولود بعد ابان بقليل ثم شرحبيل بن سعد ثم الزهرى المولود 50 وهو استاذ البخارى وامام كبير فى الحديث لقى عبد الملك بن مروان وعمر بن عبد العزيز ويحتمل ان يكون تاليفه فى المغازى باشارة  
الاخير<sup>26</sup>

*“There are many seat writers, Ibn Ishaq is not first among all of them. Seerat writing began with Aban bin Usman, who was born on 20<sup>th</sup> Hijra. Then Urwa bin Zubair, who was born short after Aban bin Usman, then Sharjeel bin Saad and Imam Zuhri ,who was teacher of Imam Bukhari and included among great scholars of hadith, his meeting with Abdul Malik bin Marvan and Umer bin Abdul Aziz is proved, worked on seerah. It may be possible that he wrote on maghazi on indication of Umar bin Abdul Aziz.”*

The fact is that ,in the first round of compilation of collection of *ahadith*, the narrations and *ahadith* were collected by muhadithen without any specific topic. These collections did not have any specific layout, but only *ahadiths* were collected.

In these collections where there were narrations related to the *ahkamaat* (orders) and other subjects, there were *ahadith* regarding life of the Prophet (pbuh) as well.<sup>27</sup> The name of Aban ibn Usman is also among the muhadithen of this era.He collected narrations related to *maghazi* besides other topics. Which do not have status of separate publication but he have the privilege of collecting narrations in earlier era .That's why, one has absolutely right to say him as, the first *seerat* writer.

In second round ,muhadithen gathered *ahadith* separately on different subjects and took care of sequence. *Maghazi* and *seear* were also given attention and many scholars have done written work. Among these scholars Abu Bakar ibn Hazam al Ansari,Asim bin Umar bin Qatada Al Ansari and Ibn Shahab Azuhri are top on the list.<sup>28</sup> However Ibn Shahab Zuhri can be considered forefront in art of *seerah* and *maghazi* because he not only wrote book on maghazi but also setup *halakaat* (circles of students for teaching *maghazi* )and his personal interest developed the study of *maghaziinulamas*(religious scholars).He created a group of talented students in which Musa bin Uqba and Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Yasaar are well known, they gave maghazi a permanent status of art.

#### **Reasons For Inauthentic Narrations:**

When *seerah* of Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) is studied, the readers find so many narrations, which muhadithin and researchers regarded as inauthentic or *mauzu*(self -created, self-produced, self-drafted).In this situation, question arises in mind that, how these inauthentic narrations ,in such a large number, find their way in *seerah* writing? Reasons are described below.

#### **Aquairing Negligence And Tolerance:**

former *seerah* writers used to describe inauthentic *ahadith*- related to

*seerah*, *fazail*(lessons extracted from *seerah*)and *manaqib*(virtues)-frankly in such perspective that *ahadith* not related to *sharia*(not related to Quran and life of the Holy Prophet pbuh) *ahkaams*(rules) require caution and strictness. Other than these narrations there is no need of research and criticism, for instance Khateeb Baghdadi quotes Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal.

إذا روينا عن رسول الله ﷺ في الحلال والحرام والسنن والاحكام تشددنا في الاسانيد وإذا روينا عن النبي

ﷺ في فضائل الاعمال وما لا يضع حكماً ولا يرفع تساهلنا في الاسانيد.<sup>29</sup>

*"When we quotes from Rasool Allah(saw) about halal, haram, sunan and ahkaams we acquire strictness in asaaneed (certificates), but when we quotes from Rasool Allah ﷺ about fazail-e-amaal (lessons from deeds) and in which no order is given or withdrawn ,we tolerate these asaneed."*

AllamaZarqani says:

"لان عادة المحدثين التساهل في غير الاحكام والعقائد"<sup>30</sup>

*"It is habit of muhadithen to tolerate narrations, without aqaaid(fundamentals) and ahkaam."*

With acknowledgement from muhadithen it is clear that in accepting the narrations, apart from *fiqhi ahkams* (jurisprudence orders) , tolerance and softness was shown. That is why different *fazaail* (virtues)-relating to verses of holy Quran, *manaqib* (ethics) of caliphs, *fazaail* of cities and places, reward and punishment about the human deeds, predictions of Arab diviners, Arab poetry, strange and peculiar incorrect *fazaail*, huge composition of miracles and blessings-is present in narrations and compiled in books.

#### **Following Old Seerat Books:**

Series of books on *seerah* ends on four books only, for instance *Seerat* ibn Ishaq, *Maghazi* al Waqdi, *Tabaqaat* ibn Saad and *Tareekh* Tabri. Same books are sources and references of latters, certificate credentials and degree of narrations of authors of stated books has been discussed.(Reference required) the summary of which is that ,Allama Waqdi is abandonee near several muhadithen.<sup>31</sup> Imam Malik and some other muhadithen criticized Ibn Ishaq, except Imam Bukahri.<sup>32</sup>

The latter's did not found the *seerah* of Ibn Ishaq, but the people benefited from it in a way that he composed and configured it. Ibn Hashaam quoted Ibn Ishaq through Ziyad al Bukaa(183AH)and Younas bin Bukir (199AH). Bukaa(183AH) though is authentic but below the high status of muhadithen.

Imam tarimzi says that Ziyad al Bukai narrates denied narrations frequently. Ali bin Madeeni ,teacher of Imam Bukhari, says that he is poor(person who narrates inauthentic narrations) and I left him, and Imam Nasaii also stated him poor.<sup>33</sup> Huge part of maghazi is quoted by Imam Zuhri but his several narrations, which were in *Seerat* Ibn Hishaam and *Tabaqaat* ibn Saad etc., are discontinued.<sup>34</sup>Allama ibn Saad and AllamaTabriis regarded authentic among several ulamas but half of the narrations of Ibn Saad is quoted through Waqdi, therefore the status of these narrations is same as of Waqdi's. Some remaining narrators of Ibn Saad are authentic and some are inauthentic. Similarly the great teachers of AllamaTabri-from which he quoted narrations-like Salma al Abrish(191AH)and Ibn Salma-are poor narrators.<sup>35</sup> Imam Zahabi writes about

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Salma al Abrish that:

ضعفه ابن راهويه، وقال البخارى فى حديثه بعض المناكير وقال النسائى، ضعيف<sup>36</sup> -

*Ibn Rahvia declared Salma al Abrish as poor, Imam Bukahri says there are munkiraat (denied ahadith) in his narrations, and Imam Nasaii declared him poor.*

However, letters quoted narrations from what the formers (mutaqademin) have written on *seerah*. Therefore the people considered all these narrations as authentic and since original books were not available to anyone therefore the people remained unaware of knowledge of *asmaa-ul-rijaal* (names and character of the people who narrated ahadith) and gradually these narrations entered all books. The result of this mergence came in a way that the people consider the narrations which were present in Waqdi's book as wrong. But, same narrations were considered as authentic if narrated by Ibn Saad, Although reviewing Ibn Saad's original book, it seems that he has taken maximum narrations from Waqdi.<sup>37</sup>

### **Collecting Miracles and Fazaail (Virtues) Frequently:**

Rasool Allah ﷺ is blessing upon all humanity, *iman* (faith) is incomplete without being love and affection for him.<sup>38</sup> According to authentic narrations his *fazaail* (virtues) and miracles are not less, but some people eagerly collected mauzu (self-drafted) narrations frequently. Therefore, the books of *dalail* (evidences) are full of *maujzaat* (miracles) and *fazaail* (virtues). According to famous Urdu book "Seerat-un-Nabi" the aim of the authors of *kutub dalail* (books of evidences) is not to collect the authentic narrations of *maujzaat* (miracles) but to frequently provide astonishing and damndest content in order to increase the topics related to *fazaail* (virtues) and *manaqib* (qualities) of holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore these narrations spread vastly and became a part of Islamic literature, people accepted it whole heartedly, as actual and authentic narrations also became hidden in this maze.<sup>39</sup>

### **Necessity and Importance of Research on Seerah's Narrations:**

The narrations of seerah's books are inferior to the narrations of hadith in terms of authenticity because it contains irrelevant material very frequently. Therefore refinement and criticism of their narrations is needed because it is essential what is attributed to the holy Prophet ﷺ must be without doubt.

The research on seerah is necessary in such a way that to oppose the exaggerated, self-drafted narrations of enemies of islam and orientalis and to brought forth the real *uswa-e-hasana* (life of holy Prophet ﷺ) so that all humanity follow the *seerah* in the light of authentic events of *seerah*. *Muhadithin* (writers of ahadith) and critics wrote several books on self-drafted narrations and they layed the principles by identifying *rawaya*, *daraya*, *mauzu* (self-drafted) ahadith which will benefit readers.

To recognize these narrations different books were written, for instance book of Abdul Rehman Ibn Jozi's "*Almauzuaat*", Shamas-ud-Deen Sakhawi's book "*Al Maqasid Al Hasana Fe Kaseer Min Alahadith Al Mashoora Alal Alsina*", Muhammad Bin Ali Shokani's book "*Al Fawa'id Al Majmooa Fe Alahadith Al*

*Mauzuwa*”, Mullah Ali Qari’s book “*Al Mauzuat Al Qubra*”, Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlvi’s book “*Ujaala Naafia*” in the end of this book a short topic-on self-drafted ahadith and its reasons, eleven principles to recognize such type of ahadith- are also mentioned). Similarly Muhammad Bin Iraq Kanani’s book “*Tanzia Alsharia Almarfoowa an Akhbaar Al shaneeya Al mauzoowa*”, Muhammad Bin Tahir Alhindi’s book “*Tazkira tul Mauzuat*” and Nasir ud Din Albani’s book “*Silsila tul Ahadith Al zaefaa*”.



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- <sup>3</sup> Surah Taha, 21
- <sup>4</sup> al Zubaidi, Muhammad Murtaza, Taaj ul Uroos, (Beruit: Maktaba tul Ihyaa), 3: 287, 288
- <sup>5</sup> The meaning of word sunnah is habit, character rather bad or good. *Lisan al Arab*, 13: 226, 225
- <sup>6</sup>Dr. Syed Abdullah, *Funn-e-Seerat Nigari par ek Nazar*, (Islamabad: Idara Tehqeeqaat-e-Islami), p:826
- <sup>7</sup> Surah Al Nahal, 36
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- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Ahmad bin Ali Al Baghdadi, *Al Kifaya fi Ilm al Riwaya*, (Hyderabad: Daairatul Maarif), p:134.
- <sup>30</sup> Muhammad bin Abdul Baqi Al Zarqani, *Sharh-ul-Mawahib Al-Ludniya*, (Beirut: Daar al



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Marifah), 1:172.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad bin Ahmad Al Dhahabi, *Meezan ul I'tadaal*, (Beirut: Daar al Marifah), 3:666,663.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:475,469.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:153.

<sup>34</sup> Allama Shibli Naumani, *Muqadima Seerat al Nabi*, 1:55.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:50.

<sup>36</sup> Al Dhahabi, *Meezan al I'tadaal*, 2:192.

<sup>37</sup> Allama Shibli Naumani, *Muqadima Seerat al Nabi*, 1:56.

<sup>38</sup> Sahih al Bukhari, [Hadith # 14](#)

<sup>39</sup> Allama Shibli Naumani, *Muqadima Seerat al Nabi*, 3:397.