

SHAMĀ'IL TRADITION: THE INFLUENCE OF ORIENTALISM ON SĪRAH WRITING

Ghulam Shams-ur-Rehman *

Abstract: This paper aims to study the development of the *Shamā'il al-Muhammadiyah* (description of the character and appearance of the Prophet Muhammad -peace be upon him-) in the larger Muslim Sirah (biographical study of the Prophet) tradition. It further explores European scholarly reception of these texts, and twentieth-century Muslim revision of the Sirah material in response to the criticism of the "Orientalist" scholars. It has been established that the Shamā'il genre gained a significant position in Sirah and *hadith* literature from the third century, especially since al-Tirmidhi (d. 279/892) composed his *magnum opus Al-Shamā'il al-Muhammadiyah*. Subsequent Muslim Sirah-writers joined traditionists (*muhadiththin*) and historians in devoting considerable space to the Shamā'il in their works. Historically, the objective of Shamā'il literature has been to establish the pre-eminence and perfection of the Prophet by portraying his physical appearance and spiritual beauties. It has been observed that the subject drew a wider attention and receptivity among scholars and believers. Moreover, various allied subjects were gradually incorporated, such as the Khasā'il (habits), Fadā'il (merits) and Akhlāq (manners). By the same token, adding Khasā'is (specialities or special attributes), Dalā'il (signs and evidences) and the debate of *Huquq* Mustafa (the obligations towards the Chosen Prophet) increased the importance of Shamā'il within the larger field of Sirah literature. However, both Orientalists and Muslim Modernists focused on the social and humanistic facets of the Prophet's life, ignoring the devotional and spiritual aspects of the Shamā'il, which had been central in medieval traditional Sirah-writings.

Key words: *Sirah-writings, Shamā'il, Orientalists, Muslim historiography and Modernists.*

* Associate Professor/Chairman Department of Islamic Studies and Arabic, GC University, Faisalabad

I- Introduction

An attentive overview of the Sirah literature reveals that the first biographies of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) were penned in the context of his battles and travels. Consequently, these themes were central in early Sirah writings.¹ The popularity of detailed accounts of the Prophet's life was emerged during the second century of higraph, and Shamā'il features began to be added soon afterwards. Comprehensive works on Sirah were being composed by eminent historians, traditionists and biographers. Al-Tirmidhi's *Al-Shamā'il al-Muhammadiyah* influenced both Sirah-writers and traditionists (Muhaddithin), who included the Shamā'il, subsequently widening its scope by adding the sub-topics of the Khasā'il, Fadā'il, Dalā'il, Khasā'is, and Huquq al-Mustafa. Why is the Prophet's physical aspect significant for Muslims? The value of the Shamā'il can only be appreciated when we understand that thinking about and visualizing the Prophet is an act of devotional love that is central to the Islamic faith. A Prophetic tradition states, "The one who has seen me has realized the divine reality."² Perhaps this powerful affirmation inspired believers to envisage the Prophet in their imagination and dreams. The eminent Urdu Sirah composer Muhammad Zakariya Kandhalwi asserts:

It is impossible to accurately describe the beauty and elegance of the Prophet (peace be upon him). To draw a pen-picture of his appearance is beyond one's capability, but the companions of the Prophet have endeavoured, according to their capabilities, to preserve what little they could, of which some is written here. Qurtubi says: "The full beauty and elegance of the Prophet has not been made manifest, otherwise it would not have been possible for man to look at him." The Sahabah have done the ummah an immense favour by conveying to them the perfect intrinsic knowledge, as well as the perfect conspicuous elegance and beauty of the Prophet. When an unfulfilled lover is deprived of meeting the beloved then he stands in front of the beloved's house remembering the features of his beloved, in an attempt to gain some solace. It is from habits and features that the heart is appeased.³

The later Muslim biographers placed greater emphasis on the Shamā'il and related topics than had their predecessors. In point of fact, most Orientalists were unable to appreciate the devotional perspective of Shamma'il in Sirah-writing. Consequently, they tended to ignore the

Shamā'il, or to confuse it with other themes in the Sirah corpus. This paper seeks to trace the development of the Shamā'il tradition in Muslim scholarship. We shall also explore the Sirah-writings of four leading Orientalists: Spencer, Muir, Margolish and Montgomery Watt, with the purpose of discovering the reasons behind their interest in the Prophet's appearance. A further objective is to determine which elements of Orientalist Sirah-writing exerted the most influence on the biographical pursuits of the Muslim Modernists.

Before embarking on our endeavour, it may be helpful to provide the reader with an illustrative example of an early Shamā'il text. Al-Tirmidhi records this tradition, which is typical of the genre in its length and detail, on the authority of Imām Hasan Ibn Ali (May Allah be pleased with them!).

Hasan b. Ali reported: "I inquired from my maternal uncle Hind bin Abi Hālah about the noble features of the Prophet. He had often described the noble features of the Prophet in detail. I felt that I should hear from him personally, some of the noble features of the Prophet, so that I could make his description a proof and testimony for myself and also memorize them, and, if possible, try to emulate and adopt them. The uncle described the noble features by saying: "He had great qualities and attributes in him, others also held him in high esteem. His face shone like the full moon. He was slightly taller than a man of middle height, but shorter than a tall person. His head was moderately large. His hair was slightly twisted. If his hair became parted naturally in the middle he left it so, otherwise he did not habitually make an effort to part his hair in the middle.

Occasionally he used to part his hair in the middle with a comb. When his hair was abundant, it used to pass over his ear-lobes. He had a very luminous complexion (colour), and a wide forehead. He had dense and fine hair on his eye brows. Both eye brows were separate and did not meet each other in the middle. There was a vein between them that used to expand when he became angry. His nose was prominent and had a nur and lustre on it. When one first looked at him, it seemed as if he had a large nose, but looking at it carefully showed that the lustre and beauty made it look large, otherwise in itself the nose was not large. His beard was full and dense. The pupil of his eye was black. His cheeks were full and full of flesh. His mouth was moderately wide. His teeth were thin and bright. The front

teeth had a slight space between them. There was a thin line of hair from the chest to the navel. His neck was beautiful and thin, like the neck of a statue shaved clean, the colour of which was clear, shining and beautiful like silver. All the parts of his body were of moderate size, and fully fleshed. His body was proportionately jointed. His chest and stomach were in line, but his chest was broad and wide. The space between his shoulders was wide. The bones of his joints were strong and large (denoting strength). When he removed his clothing, his body looked bright and had a lustre. Between the chest and navel there was a thin line of hair. Besides this line neither the chest nor the stomach had other hair on it. Both sides the shoulders and the upper portion of the chest had hair. His forearm was long and palms were wide. The palms and both feet were fully fleshed. The fingers and toes were moderately long. The soles of his feet were a bit deep. His feet were smooth; because of their cleanliness and smoothness the water did not remain there but flowed away quickly. When he walked, he lifted his legs with vigour, leaned slightly forward and placed his feet softly on the ground. He walked at a quick pace and took rather a long step. He did not take small steps. When he walked it seemed as if he was descending to a lower place. When he looked at something he turned his whole body towards it. He always looked down. His sight was focused more to the ground than towards the sky. His modest habit was to look at something with a light eye, i.e. he looked at a thing, with modesty and bashfulness, hence he did not stare at anything. While walking he asked the companions to walk in front, and he himself walked behind. He made salām to whomsoever he met”⁴

II- The Development of the Shamā’il Tradition

Shamā’il literature gradually became an essential component of Sirah treatises. Shibli Nu‘mami (d. 1332/1914) considered al-Tirmidhi’s *Al-Shamā’il al-Muhammadiyya* a book of Sirah.⁵ However, the early sources do not contain significant reports about Shamā’il or Dalā’il. For instance, ‘Urwah b. Zubayr’s *Kitāb al-Maghāzi* includes extensive accounts of battles fought during the life of the Prophet, but nowhere refers to matters that fall under the Shamā’il rubric.⁶ Similarly, Ibn Ishāq’s Sirah does not allude to the Shamā’il tradition.⁷ Ibn Sa‘d (d. 230/845), who composed the *Tabaqāt al-Kubra*, was perhaps the first author to incorporate Shamā’il material in his writing. He attempted to evoke the personality of the Prophet in the light of the Torah and Injil (New Testament or Christian Gospels), and

introduced a number of traditional reports about his physical beauty (including his shoulders, hair, beard, and seal of Nabuwah).⁸

Al-Balādhuri (d. 279/882) was the author of the *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, an important source for genealogical studies of the Arabs. In this book he traces the genealogy of the Quraysh and Banu Hāshim tribes, and writes extensively about the Prophet. He has devoted a considerable portion of his narrative to the Shamā'il, including the description of the Prophet contributed by Umm Ma'bad.⁹ He further reports a portrayal of the Prophet attributed to Hind b. Abi Hāla Tamimi.¹⁰

Al-Tirmidhi (d. 279/892) built upon the tentative beginnings outlined above, and is therefore considered the founding father of the Shamā'il literary tradition. Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi points out that Tirmidhi's volume on Shamā'il is composed entirely of *hadiths* unrelated to legal issues. Subsequent *hadith* compilers emulated the priority al-Tirmidhi had accorded portrayal, using this means to express their love and devotion.¹¹ Al-Tirmidhi had discovered numerous descriptive traditions, attributed to Hind b. Abi Hāla Tamimi, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, Anas b. Malik, and 'ā'isha bint Abu Bakr; he focused not only upon the Shamā'il, but also stressed Khasā'il (habits and ethics of the Prophet). Kitāb al-Shamā'il contains fifty-eight chapters of unequal length, with each chapter comprising from two to twenty-seven reports.

As might be expected, Muslim historiographers incorporated the life history of the Prophet when composing their treatises. In most cases, the Shamā'il was an integral part of these biographical segments. For example, the leading Muslim historian al-Tabari (d. 310/923) included it, as did the renowned geographer and historian al-Ya'qubi (d. 315/927). Al-Ya'qubi not only presented a written likeness of the Prophet, but thought it useful to record the details of those persons who had boasted a physical resemblance to him.

Ibn Hibbān Busti (d. 354/965), an eminent traditionist and expert in the *Jarh wa-Ta'dil* (the discipline that evaluates *hadith* narrators for their trustworthiness) also recorded the biography of the Prophet. His *Kitāb al-Thiqāt* devotes a chapter entitled *Bāb wasf al-Rasul to Shamā'il*; it is essentially an index of *hadith* narrators. He also reveals the report of Hind b. Abi Hāla.¹² The Andalusian litterateur Ibn Hazm (d. 343/1064) composed the *Jawāmi' al-Sirah*, one of the shortest hagiographical accounts of the

Prophet's life. This abridged Sirah contains two chapters on the Shamā'il: *Sifatuh wa-Asmauh and Akhlaquh*.¹³

The scope of Shamā'il was extended over time, and the discussion about Huquq al-Mustafa (obligations towards the chosen Prophet) was introduced. The purpose of Huquq writing is to establish the preeminence of the Prophet by presenting him as a paragon for believers to emulate. He is said to have been superior to others in every respect—physical, moral and spiritual. As the perfect man, he should be loved, respected and followed in all spheres of life.¹⁴ Al-Qādi Ayāz (d. 544/1149)'s *al-Shifā' bi-Ta'rif Huquq al-Mustafa* is the leading work in the Huquq genre. The second chapter of his book studies extensively the Shamā'il and Khasā'il tradition.¹⁵ Shahāb al-Din al-Khifāji (d. 1069/1659) wrote a commentary on *al-Shifā'* entitled *Nasim al-Riyād*, in which he clarified the intricacies of the work and added significant insights of his own.¹⁶

Hafiz Ibn Asākir (d. 571/1172) was a leading historian of Islam's medieval period. Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi maintains that Ibn Asākir employed the approach favoured by traditionists (Muhadiththin) for verifying history and Sirah.¹⁷ Ibn Asākir traced local history and the biographies of leading personalities with the purpose of highlighting Muslim civilization. The second part of second volume is devoted to the study of Sirah while the chapters 9-12 record the Shamā'il wa-Khasā'il and Dalā'il traditions.¹⁸

The *Kitāb al-Wafā bi-Ahwāl al-Mustafa* of Ibn Jawzi (d. 597/1200) is rated one of the finest biographies of the prophet. Its second volume examines the Shamā'il and Khasail traditions. The author presents a systematic depiction of the Prophet in thirty chapters. These chapters enumerate the features and physical attributes of the Prophet's person that made him ideally beautiful.¹⁹

A brief synopsis of the life of the Prophet and his ten blessed companions was composed by Hafiz 'Abd al-Ghani al-Maqdisi (d. 600/1203). The *Sirah al-Nabi wa-Ashābuh al-'Asharah* contains two sections detailing the Prophet's appearance, including his moral and ethical beauties. Al-Maqdisi derived most of the reports from al-Tirmidhi, interpreting for the reader difficult words and expressions found in the earlier work.²⁰ He was followed by Muhibb al-Din Ahmad al-Tabari (d. 694/1294), a preeminent Sirah writer of the period, whose treatise, *Khulāsāt al-Siyar fi Ahwāl Sayyid al-Bashar*. is a valuable addition to the genre. The author

succinctly presents material drawn from foundational sources. Al-Tabari devotes a long section of his book to an investigation of Shamā'il and Khasā'il.²¹

Abu al-Fidā Ismā'il (d. 732/1331) wrote the *Kitāb al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbār al-Bashar* with the intention of presenting the Prophet's biography in the context of world history. He, like other scholars, included matters falling under the rubrics of Shamā'il and Akhlāq.²² In a similar vein, the distinguished Egyptian scholar Ahmad al-Nawayri (d. 733/1332) wrote *Nihāyat al-Arab fi Funun al-Adab*. The work covers five branches of knowledge, including history. Three volumes of this comprehensive tome are related to Sirah and its subdiscipline, the Shamā'il tradition.²³

Another Egyptian author, Ibn Sayyid al-Nass (d. 734/1334), contributed the most influential treatment of Sirah of his time. *Uyun al-Athar fi Funun al-Maghāzi wa-al-Shamā'il wa-al-Siyar* broke ground in dedicating an entire chapter to Shamā'il, collecting the source materials from early works by al-Tirmidhi and Qādi Ayāz.²⁴ Al-Nass's contemporary, Hafiz Muhammad al-Dhahabi (d. 748/1348), was a noteworthy historian. He wrote extensively in the fields of *hadith*, history and Sirah. His *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, which forms a part of his work on the history of Islam, is based upon the premise that the Prophet's life is a complete source of guidance for believers, comprising all that is necessary for succeeding in this life and attaining the life hereafter. Al-Dhahabi allotted a significant portion of his book to the study of the Shamā'il and Khasā'il of the Prophet.²⁵

Ibn Qayyam al-Jawziyyah (d. 751/1350) is the foremost representative of the Ibn Taymiyya school of thought. He composed several books on various branches of Islamic Studies. His *Zād al-Ma'ād fi Hadyi Khayr al-Tbād*, a work of Sirah widely commended for its excellence, has had a remarkable impact on subsequent Sirah literature. The author advocated contemplating the life of the Prophet, which he pronounced the perfect guide for all mankind. Hafiz Ibn Hajr cited this treatise extensively in his *Fath al-Bāri*, a commentary on the *Sahih* of al-Bukhāri.²⁶

The Syrian historian and scholar Ibn Kathir (d. 774/ 1373) composed two volumes on Sirah: a brief study entitled *Al-Fusul fi Sirah al-Rasul*, and a portion of his history *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihayah*. *Al-Fusul* is divided into two parts: the first outlines the events in the life of the Prophet, while the second summarizes the Shamā'il and Khasā'is traditions. His *Sirah al-Nabawiyah*

(part of *al-Bidāyah*) presents the Shamā'il in a new and distinctive manner, in which this descriptive material is classified into four discrete branches: Shamā'il, Dalā'il, Fadā'il and Khasā'is.²⁷

Yahya b. Abu Bakr al-'āmiri al-Shāfi'i (d. 893/1488) was a traditionist (Muhaddith) hailing from Yemen. It is not surprising, therefore, that his *Sirah* (*Bahjah al-Mahāfil wa-Baghyah al-Amail fi Talkhis al-Siyar wa-al-Shamā'il*) is based primarily on the *hadith*. Al-'Amiri divides his treatise into three parts: the first portion recounts the life of the Prophet, while the second and third address ethics, Khasā'is and Shamā'il.

Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Qastalāni (d. 923/1517) is the best known of Egypt's historians and biographers of the Prophet. His book, *Al-Mawāhib al-Laduniyyah*, is accepted by most experts of *Sirah* studies. Rather than dividing the work into chapters, he follows a novel classification method, organizing the material according to aims and objectives. He identifies his third aim as the depiction of the Prophet according to the Shamā'il.²⁸ Muhammad al-Zarqāni (d. 1122/1710) composed a commentary on *Al-Mawāhib*.²⁹ Although they are much admired, a recurring criticism of both *Al-Mawāhib* and its commentary concerns their authors' inclusion of many weak and fabricated traditions.³⁰

Nur al-Din al-Halbi (d. 1044/1634) was yet another Egyptian author specialising in *Sirah* literature. His *Insan al-'Uyun fi Sirah al-Amin al-Māmun*, commonly referred to as *Al-Sirah al-Halbiyyah*, comprises extensive documentation of Shamā'il and Dalā'il. This treatise is essentially a commentary on Shams al-Din al-Shāmi's *Al-Sirah al-Shāmiyyah* (the renowned Syrian scholar died in 942/1536).³¹ Meanwhile, the learned Mughal savant 'Abd al-Haq Dihlawi (d. 1052/1642) and his descendants made significant contributions to the *Sirah*. The first part of 'Abd al-Haq Dihlawi's *Dalā'il al-Nabuwwah* sets out the Shamā'il and Fadā'il traditions. His son Nur al-Haq (d. 1073/1662) composed a commentary entitled *Shamā'il al-Tirmidhi*, and his grandson Sayf Allah wrote *Ashraf al-Wasā'il fi Sharh al-Shamā'il* in 1091/1680.³²

A constellation of modern scholars dedicated themselves to biographical and hagiographical research. Nawāb Sayyad Siddiq Hasan Khan Bhopali (d. 1307/1890) resolved to use only sound traditions when composing his *Al-Shamamah al-Anbariyah*, in which he incorporated Shamā'il derived from al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Hajr al-Makki and 'Abd al-Haq

Dihlawi. Qādi Muhammad Sulaymān Mansurpuri (d. 1349/1930) penned *Rahmat lil-'Alamin*, the third volume of which treats the Khasā'is and Shamā'il traditions. *The Wasāil ila Shamā'il al-Rasul* by Shaykh Yusuf b. Ismā'il al-Nabhāni (d. 1350/1931) is a significant twentieth-century addition to the field. Sayyad Salmān Nadwi (d. 1372/1953), the foremost Urdu Sirah writer of modern times, considers the Shamā'il and Khasā'il traditions in the third volume and the Prophet's ethics in the sixth volume of his extensive *Sirah al-Nabi*. Another book of importance for the study of Shamā'il and Khasā'is traditions is *Sirah al-Mustafa* by Mawlana Muhammad Idris Kandhalwi (d. 1394/1974). *Ziā' al-Nabi* by Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari (d. 1418/1988) encompasses Shamā'il traditions in nearly every one of its seven volumes; furthermore, an entire volume is devoted exclusively to the study of Shamā'il.

The preceding overview enables us to trace the development of the Shamā'il tradition within Sirah studies. Beginning with the ninth-century Ibn Sa'd, scholars approached the increasingly popular genre with the objective of presenting believers across the Muslim world with the example of an ideal man whose appearance and behaviour could be emulated if not replicated. The discussion that follows will address Orientalists' understandings and misapprehensions of the Shamā'il, and the uses they made of it in their Sirah-writings.

III- Orientalists and the Shamā'il Tradition

Islam captured the interest of a group of Western scholars, beginning in the nineteenth century. They laboured to produce a systematic account of the Prophet's life and achievements, using the materials they found in the Sirah literature. Employing analytical and theoretical methodology, they wrote biographies according to their own understanding. These mostly European authors, known as "Orientalists" for their focus on Asian and Middle Eastern material, tended to emphasise socio-political and economic factors in their evaluation of Sirah.³³ They admired the Prophet's views on social justice and equality under the law, whilst overlooking or even discounting his spiritual message.³⁴ The disconnect between the viewpoints of Muslim Sirah-writers and Orientalists gave rise to a flurry of new scholarship, and even attracted the attention of the public at large. Muslim researchers introduced new strategies to their Sirah-studies in response to Western publications. We shall examine the Shamā'il in the works of four

seminal Western biographies of the Prophet: Aloys Sprenger's *The Life of Muhammad from Original Sources* (1851); William Muir's *The Life of Mahomet* (1861); D. S. Margoliouth's *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* (1905); and William Montgomery Watt's *Muhammad at Mecca* (1953) and *Muhammad at Medina* (1956).³⁵ We shall then evaluate the influence these Orientalists exerted on the Muslim Modernists in their treatment of Shamā'il.

Sprenger was an Austrian scholar who served for some time in India's colonial administration. He wrote extensively on Islam, declaring his intention to present "the life of Mohammad from original sources." Significantly, however, he declares on the first page of his biography of the Prophet that Islam is a false and derivative faith. He claims that its message, borrowed from Christianity, was designed "...to [fill] the ever-young Arabs with irresistible enthusiasm."³⁶ He further argues that the victory of Islam over the then-civilised world was not due to its spiritual or ethical content, but merely the result of a socio-political climate in Arabia which could not help but generate a new religion.³⁷ Sprenger's general arguments regarding Islam and its Prophet make us question the objectivity of his Sirah-writing.

Sprenger presents succinctly the Shamā'il. He notes that the Prophet's person and habits are described in minute detail by al-Tirmidhi and al-Bukhāri, as well as by the four other authenticated *hadith* writers.³⁸ Sprenger asserts that to necessary to know who is Muhammad before discussing his message and mission. He asserts that Khadija, the wife of the Prophet, induced him to "follow the natural bent of his mind, which was to ascetic exercise and religious speculations." Thus, Khadija was actually behind his success.³⁹

Sprenger presents the appearance of the Prophet with reference to al-Tirmidhi and al-Waqidi without evaluating the relative soundness of the two traditions. Moreover, in some places, his translations are inaccurate and his interpretations faulty. For instance, describing the Prophet's head, he notes: "The immoderate size of his head was partly disguised by the long locks of hair, which in slight curls came nearly down to the lobe of his ears." The Arabic word *ضم*, which he gives as "immoderate," in fact means "moderately large." The translator's error produces a negative impression.⁴⁰ In another puzzling instance, Sprenger writes, without citing his source, that the Prophet's "gait was careless."⁴¹ This portrayal contradicts what Al-

Tirmidhi recorded on the authority of 'Ali b. Abi Tālib: that when the Prophet walked, he lifted his legs with vigour and strength(كان اذا مشى تطلع), and the same observation was documented by Hind b. Abi Hāla.⁴² It is true that, as William Muir points out, "...in the later years of his life, the formerly erect figure of Mahomet began to stoop. But his step was still firm and quick. His gait has been likened to that of one descending rapidly a hill. When he made haste, it was with difficulty that his followers kept pace with him."⁴³

Sperenger's prejudices come to the forefront in some of his renditions of traditional reports. A consideration of the Prophet's hair seems to have inspired him to embark on a tirade against polygamy. He writes, "...though he had not many grey hairs even when he died, he concealed them by dyeing or oiling them, in order to please his wives, many of whom were young and inclined to be giddy; and whose numbers he increased in proportion as he became more decrepit."⁴⁴

Under the heading "His Nervous Temperament," Sperenger improvises the following passage, which is loosely based upon a tradition of Ibn Abi Hāla:

The temperament of Mohammad was melancholic, and in the highest degree nervous. He was generally low spirited, thinking and restless; and he spoke little, and never without necessity. His eyes were mostly cast to the ground, and he seldom raised them towards heaven.⁴⁵

The actual passage by Ibn Abi Hāla reads:

When he looked at something he turned his whole body towards it. He always looked down. His sight was focused more to the ground than towards the sky. His modest habit was to look at something with a light eye, i.e. he looked at a thing with modesty and bashfulness, hence he did not stare at anything.

Juxtaposing the two texts enables readers to judge for themselves the extent to which Sprenger's interpolations have distorted the original, providing fuel for his thesis that the Prophet was of unbalanced mind and introverted nature. In a similar vein, he characterises as hysterical the state of the Prophet when he received the divine message (*wahi*), and asserts that he was unfit for normal life. He writes: "The faculties of his mind were extremely unequally developed; he was unfit for the common duties of life,

and even after his mission he was lead in all practical questions by his friends.”⁴⁶ On the whole, Sprenger’s version of the Shamā’il is polemical, rather than objective or descriptive.

The Scottish scholar and educationist William Muir, who long served in the Indian Civil Service, is perhaps the most renowned and controversial Orientalist for people of South Asia. Muir, like his predecessor Sprenger, demonstrated antipathy for Islam in his writings, claiming that it was a false religion which cobbled together Jewish and Christian traditions. The Prophet of Islam, in his view, at first adopted these earlier beliefs, but later ignored or even disowned them with the aim of establishing his own authority.⁴⁷ Muir devotes the last chapter of his biography to “The Person and Character of Mohomet”. His sketch of the appearance, habits and simple lifestyle of the Prophet is less disparaging than Sprenger’s, and he notes approvingly faithful friendships with relatives and followers. However, when he comes to the character of the Prophet, Muir adopts a censorious tone. He particularly finds fault with the Prophet’s behaviour at Medina, remarking that it was possible to “...trace from the period of Mahomet’s arrival at Medina a marked and rapid declension in the system he inculcated. Intolerance quickly took the place of freedom; force, of persuasion.” Unfortunately, Muir misinterpreted the Quranic rulings regarding the killing of enemies in the battlefield, believing that civilians were included in the category of those whom it was permissible to kill. This incorrect conclusion led him to thunder:

The name of the Almighty impiously borrowed, imparted a terrible strength to the sword of the State; and the sword of the State, in its turn, yielded a willing requital by destroying “the enemies of God,” and sacrificing them at the shrine of a false religion. “Slay the unbelievers wheresoever ye find them;” was now the watchword of Islam: - “Fight in the ways of God until opposition be crushed and the Religion becometh the Lord’s alone!” the warm and earnest devotion breathed by the Prophet and his followers at Mecca, soon became at Medina dull and vapid.⁴⁸

Under the heading “Cruelty towards his enemies,” Muir asserts that the Jewish tribes of Medina were treated with great harshness. He writes: “Sentence of exile was enforced by Mahomet with rigorous severity on two whole Jewish tribes at Medina; and of a third, likewise his neighbours, the women and children were sold into distant captivity, while the men,

amounting to several hundred, were butchered in cold blood before his eyes. And what is perhaps worst of all, the dastardly assassination of political and religious opponents, countenanced and frequently directed as they were in all their cruel and perfidious details by Mahomet himself, leaves a dark and indelible blot upon his character.”⁴⁹ It is indeed regrettable that the author did not follow his own advice that an impartial historian should present both dark and bright aspects of persons and events, for he studiously ignored the Muslims’ account of the exile of the Jewish tribes.

Muir centres his discussion of the Prophet’s domestic life on the vexed issue of polygamy. He praises the Prophet’s life at Mecca, where he had lived as ‘a faithful husband’ to his wife Khadija for twenty-five years, but finds fault with marriages entered into during his mature years, which Muir suggests were undertaken because of an unseemly passion for female companionship.⁵⁰ He observes disapprovingly that Muslims tend to adopt the marital ways of “...the Prince of Medina, rather than the Prophet of Mecca.”⁵¹ He finally asserts that as long as people believe in the Quran, three radical evils will continue to plague the world: “First: Polygamy, Divorce, and Slavery, Second: freedom of judgement in religion, Third: a barrier...against the reception of Christianity.”⁵² Muir’s condemnation reaches its climax when he states: “The sword of Mahomet, and the Coran, are the most fatal enemies of Civilization, Liberty and Truth, which the world has yet known.”⁵³

The passages quoted in the preceding paragraph reflect the Scottish biographer’s ingrained prejudice against Islam. A strong bias concerning his topic of study is a hindrance to an historian. Not only has Muir overlooked the historical context of the Prophet’s marriages and the Muslim standpoint on them, but he dismisses the undeniable contributions made by Islamic culture to civilization and human well-being. Muir has, indeed, consulted various original sources for the early history of Islam, but his evangelical Christian beliefs have tainted his writing. Even other Orientalists were dismayed by his conclusions; D. S. Margoliouth declared, “... Muir’s *Life* is written with a confessedly Christian bias, and... Sprenger’s [work] is defaced by some slipshod scholarship and untrustworthy archaeology.”⁵⁴

Twentieth-century Orientalists introduced new trends for the study of Sirah. Where Sprenger and Muir had laboured to compose biographies of the Prophet using historical sources, the new trend was to interpret the

Islam as a social movement and the Prophet of Islam as reformer or statesman. In the process, religious elements of the Prophet's message were marginalised. Two leading scholars exemplified the trend: D.S. Margoliouth and William Montgomery Watt. Margoliouth, an Oxford professor of Arabic, painted the Prophet as hero whose extraordinary personality and strength of character enabled him to accomplish his mission. Watt, a Scottish linguist and professor of Islamic studies who was also a cleric in the Anglican church, emphasised the role of the Prophet as an exemplary national leader, whose primary achievement was establishing a political state in Arabia.

Both of these men of letters undertook biographical studies of the Prophet in the context of Mecca's socio-political, economic and religious centrality in Arabia. Margoliouth argues that the rise of the Prophet Muhammad should be understood as the outcome of financial crises of his time. Paganism was the source of the material prosperity of Mecca, and replacing these old cults with Christianity or Judaism would have given outside polities an opportunity to lay claim to it. Margoliouth lauds the achievement of the Prophet in replacing paganism with a new religion and challenging the supremacy of Christianity and Judaism, all the while maintaining the economic supremacy of Mecca in the region. He writes:

The ideal solution of the problem was clearly that discovered in time by Mohammed, of superseding both the enlightened religions; retaining the old source of wealth, but in a system which, so far from being backward, was in advance of the cult of the Roman Empire.⁵⁵

Indeed, the author portrays the Prophet as a heroic character, possessed of extraordinary intellectual and leadership qualities, along with the single-minded determination needed to make a success of his mission. He commends the Prophet as "a shrewd judge of men," who assessed the calibre of those around him with the aim of making the best use of their capabilities.⁵⁶ Despite his expressions of admiration, Margoliouth does not specifically address the study of the Shamā'il.

William Montgomery Watt contends that Muhammad was a gifted statesman and clan chieftan who successfully consolidated his authority in Arabia, unifying the Arabs by encouraging contracts and peace treaties among the conflicting groups. Watt provides a detailed explanation of pre-Islamic Arab rivalries. He maintains that the Prophet himself reconciled the

mutually hostile Arab tribes under the Islamic State of Medina. He further authored the constitution of the State of Medina, clearly designating himself as head of state and clarifying the character of the *ummah*. This constitution reformed the social structure of Arabia by assuring security of life and property.

Watt illustrates briefly the appearance and manners of the Prophet. His description, unlike Muir's, takes a moderate tone.⁵⁷ Enumerating the factors that led to a distorted view of the Prophet's personality, Watt remarks, "Of all the world's great men none has been so much maligned as Muhammad. It is easy to see how this has come about. For centuries Islam was the great enemy of Christendom, for Christendom was in direct contact with no other organized states comparable in power to the Muslims."⁵⁸ Above all, the Scottish biographer admires the Prophet's role as social reformer who contributed to the betterment of humanity by introducing "...a new system of social security and a new family structure, both of which were a vast improvement on what went before. In this way he adapted for settled communities all that was best in the morality of the nomad, and established a religious and a social framework for the life of a sixth of the human race today. That is not the work of a traitor or a lecher."⁵⁹

Our consideration of two key twentieth-century European Sirah writers demonstrates that later Orientalists were more balanced and less polemical than those of the nineteenth century in their treatment of the life of the Prophet.⁶⁰ The works of Margoliouth and Watt attract the attention of Muslim readers for their portrayal of the Prophet as a hero, a successful social reformer and a statesman. However, for faithful Muslims, Muhammad –peace be upon him- is a Prophet and the beloved of Allah. His spiritual role in human development supersedes any social or political actions he may have undertaken.

IV- Muslim Scholars Respond

Muslim scholars have been unavoidably affected by the intense Orientalist interest in Islam. Some of them attempted to counter modern methodologies like positivism, objectivism and rationalism. Others, however, followed in the footsteps of Margoliouth and Watt, highlighting the Prophet's achievements as a political leader and social reformer who established an Islamic state and society on the basis of the Islamic philosophy. Taiyaba Nasrin outlines the tendencies of these modern Sirah-

writers:

In these works he is generally presented as a rare genius, as great ideologist, as matchless political leader and military general of great foresight and wisdom-and all these qualities were exhibited by him as a human being. Here a greater stress is laid down his human nature and character rather than his Prophet-Personality. Therefore, his achievements are studied and presented against the backdrop, and as such they are highlighted, so they may serve as models and example for ordinary people to follow.⁶¹

The proliferation of biographies of the Prophet written by Muslim in the twentieth century reflects the authors' sometimes conflicting motivations of imitation, apologetics, and the desire to redefine the social structure of the *ummah*. A number of these new Sirah-writers made great efforts to present the life of the Prophet within the context of modern socio-political systems like socialism, capitalism and democracy, using ideological methods to justify their conclusions.⁶² Analytical and critical approaches towards the investigation of history were utilized, at least in part, to refute Western disparagement and to demonstrate that reason and revelation are not at odds in the Islamic faith.

It may be useful to highlight briefly the central themes of those Muslim Sirah-writers of the past century who proceeded in the Orientalist pattern. Taiyaba Nasrin has analysed this propensity in the principal contemporary Egyptian Sirah-writers. She draws our attention to 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrāhīm, author of *Muhammad al-Qā'id* (1945), in which he presented the Prophet as an exemplary leader. This trend has been followed by later Egyptian scholars, such as Mahmud 'Aqqād. His *Abqariyah Muhammad* (1946) seeks to portray the Prophet as a great revolutionary leader whose radical reforms overturned the course of human history. Other works painting the Prophet as an ideal leader include: Fathi Ridwān's *Muhammad-al-Atha'ir al-A'zam* (1957), Muhammad Shabih's *Muhammad* (1957), 'Abd al-Rahman al Sharqāwi's *Muhammad Rasul al-Hurriyah*, (1962), Khalid Muhammad Khalid's *Insāniyah Muhammad* (1971), Ahmed Husayn's *Nabi al-Insāniyah*, Muhammad Shalbi's *Shakhsiyah Muhammad*.⁶³

A large number of books by Egyptian Sirah-writers feature the Prophet as a military commander. The most important are: 'Abd al-Rahman-al-Bana's *Ghazwah Badr* (1952), 'Abd al-Majid al-Hawidi's *Muhammad al-Qā'id al-'āli* (1956), Muhammad Farj's *Muhammad-al-Maharib*

(1951), 'Abd Munim Shamis' *al-Abqariyah al-Askariyah fi Ghazwat al-Rasool* (1958), *Fatah Makkah* (1962), Muhammad Jamal-ud-Din Mahfuz' *Ghazwah Badar* (1963) Ahmad Yasri's *Ghazwah Uhad* (1965), Hasan Fath Allah's *Al Qayyim Al Khulqiyah al-Rubiyya fi al-Ghazwah* (1971) and Mahmud al-Dar's *Tarikh al-Arab al-Askariyah: Harub Muhammad*.⁶⁴ On another note, a contingent of scholars has endeavoured to answer the objections Orientalists raised about polygamy, miracles, slavery, relationships with Jewish communities and the military policies of the Prophet. In all this flurry of defensive and apologetic authorship, the Shamā'il tradition, formerly at the forefront of Sirah studies, was largely neglected.

V- CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, this study finds that the Shamā'il traditions, which had been so crucial to early Muslim biographical and historical treatises, as well as to the *hadith* literature, have been pushed to the margins in contemporary Sirah-writing. Authors of the post-World War II period are mainly concerned with countering the objections of Orientalists in order to make Islam and its Prophet acceptable to today's readers, and with showcasing the admirable human aspects of the Prophet's personality. The hostile nature of nineteenth-century Orientalist biographies were supplanted in more recent times by Europeans who approved of the Prophet's social, political and military capabilities whilst expressing some reservations about his religious message. On the whole, Muslim Sirah-writers tended to adopt Western approaches for their Sirah studies. Their shift of emphasis has led to the downplaying of Shamā'il and a consequent decrease in devotional attitudes towards the Prophet.

Notes and References

Acknowledgment: I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Tryna Lyons- an American expert of History of South Asian Art, for her valuable comments, careful reading and editing of this paper.

- 1 Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi argues that Shibli Nu'mani and some other Sirah-writers have mixed up the term Sirah and Siyar. These are different terms for different disciplines. Siyar is employed for the documentation of the events of the Prophet's life. He asserts that Sirah became a term for a particular discipline combining Siyar and Maghaazi. It is not correct to argue that books of Ibn Ishaq and al-Waaqdi record only the Maghaazi traditions. The titles of the books: *Kitaab al-Mubtadaa' wa-al-Mab'ath wa-al-Maghaazi* and *Kitaab al-Taarikh wa-al-Mab'ath wa-al-Maghaazi*, also suggest that their writers linked the biography of the Prophet with universal history, rather than simply recounting his travels and battles. Shibli, 'Abd al-Ra'wf Danaapuri and Kaandhalwi were not aware of this fact while Hamid Allah and Mahmud Ahmad Ghazi have analyzed the issue. However, they could not complete the investigation because the original work of Ibn Ishaq was not available at that time and they consulted a part of Ibn Hishsham's book. Similarly, the portion of Waaqdi's work that was related to Maghaazi has survived, while the remaining two parts (Taarikh and Mab'ath) have been lost. According to Siddiqi, al-Waaqdi's text survives in the works of al-Balaadhuri, al-Kalaa'i and Ibn Sayyid al-Naas, These extant passages show that al-Waaqidi composed a consistent book of Sirah on the pattern of Ibn Ishaq; Yasin Mazher Siddiqi, "Sirat-e Nabwi kay Maakhidh par jaded Urdu tahqiqaat," in *Dawr-e Jadid main Sirat nigaari kay Rujhanaat*, ed. Mubassir Hussain and 'Abd al-Karim 'Uthmaan, (Islamabad, Idaarah Tahqiqat al-Islami, International Islamic University, 2015), pp 3-28 at pp. 24-25.
- 2 Al-Bukhaari, *Sahih*, Kitaab al-Ta'bir, (10) Baab: Man Ra'aa al-Nabi fi al-Manaam, hadith no. 6996; Muslim, *Sahih*, Kitaab al-Ru'wya, Baab: Qawl al-Nabi, Man Ra'aani fi al-Manaam faqd ra'aani, hadith no.5921.
- 3 Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalwi, *Khasaa'il Nabawi*, Trans. (Eng): Muhammad bin 'Abdul Rahman bin Ebrahim (Karachi, Zam Zam Publisher, 1395/1975), p. 5.
- 4 Al-Tirmidhi, *al-Shamaa'il al-Muhammadiyah*, Baab maa ja'a fi Khalq Rasul Allah, hadith no. 7.
The translation, with a few corrections, has been taken from: Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhalwi, *Khasaa'il Nabawi*, Trans. (Eng): Muhammad bin 'Abdul Rahman bin Ebrahim, pp. 9-10.

- 5 Shibli Numani, *Sirat al-Nabi*, (Lahore: Dini Kutub Khana, 1975), 60/1.
- 6 The present Kitaab al-Maghaazi of 'Urwa was compiled by Muhammad Mustafa A'zami who collected all reports of 'Urwah from various sources which are revealed on authority of 'Abd Allah b. Lahiyah through Abu al-Aswad. *Maghaazi Rasul Allah li-'Urwa b. Zubayr*, ed. Muhammad Mustafa Azami, Trans. (Urdu) Muhammad Saeed ur-Rahman Alawi, (Lahore: Idara Thaqaafat al-Islamiyyah, 1990).
- 7 Hamid Allah collected the report of Ibn Ishaq, which is narrated on the authority of Yunis b. Bukayr (d. 199/814-5) and Muhammad b. Salamah al-Harraani (d. 191/806).
- 8 Ibn sa'd, *al-Tabaqaat al-Kubra*, (Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, 1957), pp. 360-438.
- 9 Al-Balaadhuri, *Ansaab al-Ashraaf*, (Cairo, 1959), pp. 257-271.
- 10 Al-Baladhuri, *Ansaab al-Ashraaf*, pp. 386-96.
- 11 Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, *Masadir Sirat-e Nabawi*, (Lahore: Dar al-Nawadir, 2016), 277/1.
- 12 Ibn Hibbaan al-Busti, *Kitaab al-Thiqaat*, ed. Ibn Hajr al-Haythami, (Haider Abad Dakkan: Majlis Daar al-Maarif al-Islamiyyah, 1395/1975) 145-151/1.
- 13 Ibn Hazm, 'Jawaami' al-Sirah, pp. 21-22, 41-44.
- 14 Perhaps, Abd al-Karim al-Jili took the idea of perfect man from the Shamaa'il traditions.
- 15 Qaadi Ayaaz, *al-Shifaa bi-Ta'rif Huquq al-Mustafa*, pp. 46-126.
- 16 Muhammad Ismaa'il Kandhalwi was the first to translate *al-Shifaa* into Urdu, under the title *Shamim al-Riyaad*. It was published in 1913 by Matba' Nawal Kashur. Ahmad Ali Shah Bataalwi also contributed an Urdu translation, published by Manzil Naqshbandiyyah, Lahore, in 1341 AH / [1923].
- 17 Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, *Masadir Sirat-e Nabawi*, 491/1.
- 18 Ibn Asakir, *Taarikh Madinah Dimashq*, ed. Nishat Ghazaawi, (Dimashq, Majma' al-Lugha al-Arabiya, 1404/1984).
- 19 Ibn Jawzi, *Kitaab al-Wafaa bi-Ahwaal al-Mustafa*, ed. Mustafa 'Abd al-Wahid, (Cairo: Daar al-Kutub al-Hadithah, 1966), 387-411/2.
- 20 Al-Maqdisi, Haafiz 'Abd al-Ghani, *Sirah al-Nabi wa-Ashaabuhu al-'Asharah*, ed. Hadyaan al-Sanawi, (Beirut: Markaz al-Khidmaat wa-al-Abhaath al-Thaqaafiyah, 1406/1986), pp. 50-54.
- 21 Al-Tabari, Muhibb al-Din Ahmad, *Khulaasat al-Siyar fi Ahwaal Sayyid al-Bashar*, (Delhi: Delhi Printing Press, 1343).
- 22 Abu al-Fidaa Ismaa'il, *Kitaab al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbaar al-Bashar*, (Paris: al-Taba'ah al-Malakiyyah, 1837).

- 23 Ahmad al-Nuwayri, *Nibaayat al-Arab fi Funun al-Adab*, ed. Abu al-Fadl Ibraahim, (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, 1374/1955).
- 24 Ibn Sayyid al-Naas, *Uyun al-Athar fi Funun al-Maghaazi wa-al-Shamaa'il wa-al-Siyar*, (Cairo: Muasasah Izz al-Din lil-Taba'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1406/1986).
- 25 Al-Dhahabi, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, ed. Hussam al-Din al-Qudsi, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1401/1981), pp. 290-378.
- 26 Ibn Qayyam al-Jawziyya, *Zaad al-Ma'ad fi Hadyi Khayr al-'Ibad*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arnawt, ed. 'Abd al-Qadir al-'Arnawt (Beirut: Muasssisah al-Risalah, 1405/1985).
- 27 titled: *Kitaab Sirah Rasul Allah wa-Dhikr Ayyaamih wa-Ghazawaatih wa-Saraayaah wa-al-Wufud ilayhi wa-Shamaa'ilih wa-Dalaa'ilih al-Daalah 'alayhi*. Note: Mustafa Abd al-Wahid published *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah* of Ibn Kathir from Matbah Isa al-Baabi al-Halbi, Cairo, in 1964. He also noted that it was part of *al-Bidaayah wa-al-Nihayah*.
- 28 Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Qastalaani, *al-Mawaahib al-Laduniya*, (Cairo: 1281).
- 29 Muhammad al-Zarqaani, *Sharh al-Mawaahib al-Laduniya*, (Cairo: Maktabah al-Azhariyah al-Misriyah, 1225-29AH).
- 30 Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, *Masaadir Sirat-e Nabawi*, 379, 384/2.
- 31 Nur al-Din al-Halbi, *Insaan al-'Uyun fi Sirah al-Amin al-Mamun*, (Cairo: Matbah al-'Amirah, 1292AH).
- 32 Anwar Mahmud Khalid, *Urdu Nasr main Sirat-e Rasul*, (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1989), pp. 211-212.
- 33 Belyaev's *Arabs, Islam and the Arab Caliphate in the Early Middle Ages* addresses pre-modern Muslim history. His analysis of the early Arab conquest takes into account the geographical and socio-cultural milieu of the Arabs prior to the Prophet of Islam, and the rivalry between the Byzantine and Sassanid empires. Belyaev applies Marxist theories about class and social relationships to the history of Islam, presenting the Prophet as a successful social reformer. Belyaev, E. A., *Arabs, Islam and the Arab Caliphate in the Early Middle Ages*, tr. Adophe Gourevitch, (London: Pall Mall, 1969).
- 34 Ramakrishna Rao states that Prophet Muhammad brought a great revolution. The equality, social justice and democratic values he espoused led Sarojini Naidu, Mahatma Gandhi and George Bernard Shaw to praise him. Rao points out that women's rights, only achieved in England in 1881, were a much earlier feature of Islamic law. He adds that Louis Massignon and Thomas Carlyle believed the zakat and inheritance system of Islam to have been a far-reaching step towards emancipation and human

- equality. Ramakrishna Rao, Prof. K. S., *Mohammad: The Prophet of Islam*, (Delhi: Madhur Sandesh Sangam, 2009), p. 4
- 35 A. Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad from Original Sources*, (Allahabad: The Presbyterian Mission Press, 1851); William Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1861); D. S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*, (New York, London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1905); W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953); W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).
- 36 Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad*, p. 1 .
- 37 Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad*, p. 2.
- 38 Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad*, p. 84, in f.n.
- 39 Note: He drew this conclusion from the Qur'aanic verse: 43:31. وقالوا لولا (نزل هذا القرآن على رجل من القريتين عظيم), Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad*, p. 84.
- 40 Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (London: Macdonald & Evans LTD, 1980), p. 537.
- 41 Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad*, p. 85.
- 42 Al-Tirmidhi, *al-Shamaa'il al-Muhammadiyah*, Baab maa ja'a fi Mashyah Rasul Allah, *hadith* no. 117; Note: The complete *hadith* in the introduction of this paper.
- 43 Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, p. 303.
- 44 Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad*, p. 86.
- 45 Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad*, p. 89.
- 46 Sprenger, *The Life of Mohammad*, p. 89.
- 47 Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, p. 309.
- 48 Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, p. 319.
- 49 Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, p. 307-309.
- 50 Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, pp. 309-310 .
- 51 Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, p. 311.
- 52 Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, p. 321.
- 53 Muir, *The Life of Mahomet*, p. 322.
- 54 Margoliouth, *Mohammed*, p. Iv.
- 55 Margoliouth, *Mohammed*, p. 44.
- 56 Margoliouth, *Mohammed*, p. 84.
- 57 Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, pp. 321-324.
- 58 Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 324.
- 59 Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 332.
- 60 Watt is moderate in contrast to Sprenger and Muir, although his writing contains certain material objectionable to Muslims. For instance, he alleges

that the Prophet was afflicted with epilepsy or hysteria, condemning him with faint praise in passages like the following: “It is incredible that a person subject to epilepsy, or hysteria, or even ungovernable fits of emotion, could have been the active leader of military expeditions, or the cool far-seeing guide of city-state and a growing religious community.”

- 61 Taiyaba Nasrin, *Development of Sirah Literature in Egypt in the 20th Century*, (unpublished PhD thesis, Centre of West Asian Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, 1990), p. 5 (of abstract).
- 62 Note: There were also many Sirah-writers who rejected these trends; among them were the most prominent: Muhammad Idris Kandhalwi, Qaadi Muhammad Sulaymaan Mansurpuri, Safi-ur-Rahman Mubaarakpuri, ‘Abd al-Ra’wf Danaapuri, Mawlaanaa Ashraf ‘Ali Thaanwi, Mirza Hayrat Dihlawi, Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali al-Nadwi, and Pir Muhammad Karam Shah al-Azhari. They presented the Prophet as a messenger of Allah for the guidance of humanity.
- 63 Taiyaba Nasrin, *Development of Sirah Literature*, pp. 31-32.
- 64 Taiyaba Nasrin, *Development of Sirah Literature*, pp. 119, 153, 176, 196.

