

## **Review, *Muhadarat-e-Sîrat***

### **Reviewed by Dr. Muhammad Junaid Nadvi**

*Muhadarat-e-Sîrat*. Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi. Lahore: Al-Faisal Nashiran, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2008. 768 pages. ISBN: 969-503-514-2.

The rationale behind the emergence of the discipline of Sîrah indicates the faith, affection and compliance by the Muslims to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This institution, which started in the first century of Hijrah, has produced a rich, multicoloured literature of Sîrah in various languages, which portrays the spiritual, ethical, social, economic and political aspects of Muhammad's contribution to humanity.

*Muhadarat-e-Sîrat* is a paradigm of the aforementioned rationale. It is the product of wide-ranging, comprehensive, scholarly Urdu lectures of Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi (1950-2010) on different aspects of Sîrah, delivered during 2006, in the "Islamic Research Institute," International Islamic University, Islamabad. This volume offers an excellent overview to understand Sîrah as well as classic texts of Sîrah. The wide-ranging and eclectic collection of sources is a particular strength of this volume. Examples from Islamic and non-Islamic history, reference of books, geographical names, explanation and relevance to the subject is the quality of this volume. The observations and suggestions given in these lectures are inspirational for Sîrah-writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A unique feature of this volume is the presentation of new-modules for Sîrah-writing in the major disciplines of social sciences, i.e. Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, Political Science, and History. Sub-topics like Theology, Spirituality, Psychology, Jurisprudence, Folk, Literature and Geography, are also appealing for the researchers of Sîrah. A Question and Answer session at the end of each lecture is a motivating source for exploring new vistas of Sîrah. In fact, this volume is a valuable contribution to the discipline of Sîrah-sciences (*'Ulûm-e- Sîrat*).

The book contains a preface; twelve parts (divided into eighteen topics/lectures); questions and answers at the end of each presentation. The main

titles of the book are: Need & Importance of Sîrah-Study; Sîrah & Sîrah-Sciences: An Introduction & Study; Discipline of Sîrah: Establishment, Evolution, Compilation & Expansion; Methodological Approaches to Sîrah-writing; Eminent Sîrah-writers & their Traits; State of Madînah: Constitution & System; State of Madînah: Sociology & Economics; Kalamîyyaat of Sîrah; Juristical Sîrah; Study of Sîrah in Sub-Continent; Study of Sîrah in Modern Period; Study of Sîrah: Future Prospects (pp. i-x).

Lecture one, *The Need & Importance of Sîrah-Study*, highlights the evolution, approaches, methodology and contributions to the discipline of Sîrah. It elaborates the need and importance of Sîrah-study for Muslims and non-Muslims, based on distinct reasons. It divides Sîrah-study for Muslims into three levels: public, literate, and specialists (pp.11-52).

Lecture two, *Sîrah & Sîrah Sciences: An Introduction & Study*, presents the definition, subject matter of significant topics, sources of Sîrah, and their comprehensiveness with examples from the Prophetic period. Topics discussed are Medicational Sîrah; Folk Sîrah; Educational Sîrah; Spiritual Sîrah; Literary Sîrah; Panegyric Sîrah; Sociological Sîrah; Psychological Sîrah; Logical Sîrah; Geographical Sîrah; Sources of Sîrah (pp. 67-121).

Lecture three, *Institution of Sîrah: Establishment, Evolution, Compilation & Expansion*, provides a comprehensive picture of the evolution and preservation; contributions of personalities, Muhaddithîn, Sîrah-writers and scholars (pp. 135-180).

Lecture four, *Methodological Approaches to Sîrah-Writing*, visualizes different methodological approaches to Sîrah-writing i.e. Narrated-Sîrah, based on authentic narrations of experts; Chronological-Sîrah; Compiled-Sîrah, based on different sources; Juristic-Sîrah; Theological- Sîrah ('Ilm al-Kalām); Literary-Sîrah (prose & poetry); Dialogical-Sîrah (interfaith dialogue) (pp. 195-237).

Lecture five, *Eminent Sîrah-Writers & their Traits*, emphasizes the contributions of four classical Sîrah-writers who are the pioneers of the discipline of Sîrah i.e. Muhammad bin Ishāq (d.151 AH), Muhammad bin 'Umar Wāqidī (d.107AH), Muhammad bin Sa'd (d.130 AH), and 'Abd al-Malik bin Hishām (d.218 AH) (pp. 257-300).

Lecture six, *State of Madînah: Constitution & System*, informs about the literature which emerged in several languages from 1950 to 2000 on Sîrah to

understand the constitutional and legislative institutions, and ethics of governance in Madînah. Pre-Islamic tribal system of governance is discussed, and the need and importance of political power in Islam is stressed (pp. 319-360).

Lecture seven, *State of Madnah: Sociology & Economics*, highlights the important features of the state of Madînah from a socio-economic perspective. In this context, many examples from Sîrah are reported (pp. 393-431).

Lecture eight, *Kalāmiyyāt of Sîrah*, asserts a profound and intuitive relationship of Islamic Theology with Sîrah. Sîrah-Theology could not be comprehended without studying *‘Ilm al-Kalām* because several incidents of Sîrah hold theological perceptions. Themes by examples from Sîrah discussed under this topic are: actuality, need, and responsibilities of Prophethood; actuality, need, and types of revelation; other sources of knowledge; finality and actuality of Prophethood; attributes and blessings of the Prophet; reality of God’s word and creation of Qur’ān; miracles and ascension of the Prophet; innocence of Prophets; glad-tidings and proofs of Prophethood (pp. 465-507).

Lecture nine, *Juristical Sîrah*, underlines the deep relationship of jurisprudence (Fiqh) with Sîrah, which cannot be perceived without a profound understanding of Qur’ān and Sunnah. It informs that *‘Ilm al-Kalām* in the past was known as Fiqh. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new approach to the study of Sîrah called *Fiqh al-Sîrah* has also emerged. *Fiqh al-Sîrah* can be divided into three parts (1) principle & rules, (2) interpretation of the incidents of Sîrah relevant to jurisprudence, (3) sayings of the Prophet, divided by the jurists in three categories i.e. revelation, general talk, and words relevant to jurisprudence (pp. 531-570).

Lecture ten, *Study of Sîrah in Sub-Continent*, reports the marvelous contributions of the Muslims of the sub-continent to Sîrah, in the past two centuries. Since the dawn of Islam in this area, no significant work on Sîrah is given. The focus of the work in the past 1100 years was mostly on jurisprudence, literature, rationality, hadîth, and exegesis (pp. 585-629).

Lecture eleven, *Study of Sîrah in Modern Period*, presents a comprehensive outlook of new works on Sîrah which surfaced in the Muslim and non-Muslim world during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It reports new-dimensions of Sîrah-works done by Muslim scholars, and the constructive and distorted Sîrah-works of the orientalist (pp. 645-691).

Lecture twelve, *Study of Sîrah: Future Prospects*, gives an admirable opportunity and guideline for future research on Sîrah. The need for separate work on the new dimensions of Sîrah is stressed for the common man, literate public, subject specialists, and doubtful intellects. Conscious of liabilities to Sîrah, and response to the Western attitude towards Sîrah by Muslims, have also been stressed (pp. 707-750).

One problem with such kinds of literary work is the amount of repetition, especially about the core concepts, principles, and its history in practice. For the next edition of this book, proofreading of Urdu, English words, sentences, geographical places and historical names, page numbering, transliteration, and re-arrangement of sub-topics is recommended.

Overall, the book is well organized. It provides an insight into the subject matter of Sîrah, identifies a range of Sîrah concepts, and shows that new Sîrah concepts could coexist alongside older ones. Those seeking an overview of Sîrah terminologies, themes, and concepts as they emerged in this work will find much of value here, especially historians and Sîrah-writers.

Concluding remarks of these Lectures are: (1) Sîrah is one of the fundamental institutions of Islam and its major portion is completely secure. (2) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) created a nation (*Ummah*) and preserved it by forming the exemplary state of Madînah. (3) The Muslim nation continuously prevails to this day on its basics, with its frailty. (4) Muslims have never ignored the reserves and sources of Sîrah and Sunnah throughout their entire history (pp. 707-711).

*(Note: The Book Review editor regrets that, due to some minor software incompatibility, not all diacritical marks have appeared as the author would have liked.)*