

URWA BIN ZUBAIR'S "AL-MAGHAZI": METHODOLOGY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Urwa Bin Zubair, was a prominent Hadith Scholar as well as a learned Jurist of his age. He was one of the first and foremost biographers of the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and Ghazawat. It is too much regrettable that his writings about the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and the Ghazawat could not remain intact with the passage of time and a considerable portion of the same has been lost. However, some valuable extracts of his writings have been quoted by several distinguished scholars and historians, like Muhammad Bin Ishaque, Al-Waqidi, Al-Tabri and, especially, 'Ibn-e-Kathir' in their books. These dispersed extracts of his writings very distinctly reveal the Biographical Methodology adopted by him in writing the Biography of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Keywords: Seerat, Seera or sear. The life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Maghazi. Jihad, Ghazwat. Jihad, Hadith

INTRODUCTION

The series to record stirring deeds related to sear and Maghazi (Islamic religious wars) commonly known as Jihad, was originated in the early days of Islam.

In the primitive period where the Muslims on the one hand were prevented to augment these narratives, while on the other hand there was no hindrance to describe these occurrences of sear and Maghazi with a latitude.⁽¹⁾

The Caliphs (rulers of Islam) and those Islamic Governments, that followed them, were struggling for the Ghazawat and was felt it imperative to describe the events of holy wars, in order to keep it alive with spirit and all its soul, therefore special attention was given to educate the believers on this line.

Muhammad bin Sa'ad bin Abi Waqas (55H) says:

That while his father (Sa'ad bin Abi Waqas) was educating them on the events of Islamic holy wars and informing them, used to say: "sons" it is your ancestral honor, memorise and do not waste these."⁽²⁾

These events were as diligently lectured as like the one given to memorise the verses of the Holy Quran.

Hazrat Ali bin Hussain: Zain-ul-Abidin (67 Hijri) says:

"We were teaching Maghazi (events of those wars where in the Prophet (SWA) himself participated) like teaching of the Holy Quran".⁽³⁾

The famous institution of Maghazi at Madina was run and owned by Hazrat Abdullah bin Abbas (68 Hijri) wherein specific time and periods were fixed for teaching of Maghazi. ⁽⁴⁾

Moreover, Aamer Bin Sharahil Al-Sha'abi, a Tabiee. (disciple of the companions of the Holy Prophet) used to deliver his lectures on Maghazi in the manner, as he himself had remained present with the warriors in the battle field. So once, Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar (73 H) while passing thereby, the moment when Sahabi was lecturing on the subject, praising him said.

That "He (Sha'abi) is describing the Maghazi in such a way, as he himself was there with the Mujahideen (Muslim Warriors)". ⁽⁵⁾

Similarly, one Akrama Mola Ibne Abbas (107 H) who was also famed for his attractive and amusing lectures on Sear & Maghazi, about whom one Sufyan bin Uyayana (198 H) had remarked in these words:

"If some one hears, when Akrama describing Maghazi, will think that, as if he the (listener) is himself viewing the waring Mujahidin (the warriors of Muslim faith) present in the battle field". ⁽⁶⁾

To sum up, it is safely said, that this was the period when feeling the importance and significance to compile the events of holy wars (sear & Maghazi), gave rise to compilation of books on the subject, and resulted in the literary composition of a number of books on the same.

Though it is a fact that numerous precious writings of different authors, which were in documentary form could not be saved from the hands of dishonest, yet thorough research and investigation enabled us to trace and find out sufficient store of fundamental stock, relating to Seerat, helpful to guide us and reduce our thirst, for Sear-o-Maghazi.

In the following lines, within the light of selected sources, an evolutionary examination of writing on Seerat is held, where in, the related preliminary age, writers' names, their style and the manner of their of description (narratives) will be illustriously discussed.

Urwa bin Zubair (94 H)

His name was Urwa bin Zubair bin Al-Awam (94H). He was a great scholars of Hadith, Fiqa and Maghazi. ⁽⁷⁾

Ibn Kathir writes about him:

"He was the scholar of Fiqa, Hafiz of Hadith and argumentative and was a great scholar of the Seerat. He was the first writer in the field of Maghazi" ⁽⁸⁾

Haji Khalifa writes:

"It is said that Urwa bin Zubair was the first person who wrote a book on Maghazi." ⁽⁹⁾

Similarly, Ibne Nadeem while commenting on the books composed by Abu Hissan, Hassan bin Usman Zaydi (243 H) says:

"Among the books of Urwa bin Zubair a book exists which is called "Almaghazi". ⁽¹⁰⁾

Urwa's book "Almaghazi" is extinct and not available now, however a considerable portion of materials he had collected on the subject, have been saved in the books of Seerat by other writers. ⁽¹¹⁾

Urwa had a very close relations with the Prophet's family members. His father Zubair bin Al-Awam was one of the Ashara Mubashra companions. His mother was Asma binte Abi Bakar and Hazrat Aisha was his aunt (sister of his mother). Therefore he had opportunities to obtain precious information from them as well as from his father. ⁽¹²⁾

Urwa compiled “Almaghazi” from the extracts taken from the books on Hadith history and seerat etc,⁽¹³⁾ which give an indication that all the events in his Almaghazi had been historically classified by him.

He starts from Wahee, then in order of precedence the other connected events, like inviting the people to Islam, and migration of the believers from Macca to Habsha and Madina etc. In Madina, he at first describes the sarayas (led by someone else than the Prophet Himself) and says that the first Sariya was commanded by Abdullah bin Jahash.

Thereafter he describes the Ghazawat (wars let by the holy Prophet himself) like Badar, Khandaque, Banu Quraiza, Moota, conquer of Makka, Hunain and Taif etc. In the last he describes the letters of Prophet and the circumstances and other affairs that prevailed during his lifetime till his death.⁽¹⁴⁾

Urwa had described the events in classical orders in an interesting manner and tried his best to find out the truth and period of happening of all these events.

Urwa’s style of writing is not only free from exaggeration but simple and concordant and to enlighten his readers he informs them first about the causes responsible for the main event, as, in case of Ghazwa Badar, he tells of a row that was present in between the Muslims and Qurish of Macca.⁽¹⁵⁾

Being well versed in Quran and having a good taste of poetry, he used verses of both Quran and poetry at suitable places, and to prove his proficiency in the genealogy and in cases, where more persons of the same name were found involved in any single event, so to remove the confusion, he differentiates them by their genealogy.^(16,17)

Urwa had probably compiled “Almaghazi” in regard to answer those questions on Ghazawat received from Umavi Caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan.⁽¹⁸⁾

Hafiz Al-Zahbi (748H) had explained the particular narrator of Almaghazi, viz Abul Aswad Muhammad bin Abdur Rehman (137-H) known as Yateem Urwa as such had said:

“Abul Aswad went Egypt and imparted education of “Almaghazi” in Urwa’s narration”⁽¹⁹⁾

Besides, Muhammad bin Shahab Al-Zuhri (124H) and Saad bin Ibrahim bin Abdur Rehman bin Ouf (201H) had also narrated Urwa bin Zubair for Maghazi. Abul Aswad, is quoted saying that Urwa’s book of Almaghazi is copied and uncertified one, which no longer gives this impression that Urwa was giving no attention to the certification of events, as it is evident from his another pupil like Ibne Shahab Al-Zuhri, who says:

Ibne Shahab Al-Zuhri narrates from Urwa bin Zubair, he narrated from Marwan and Miswar bin Makhrama.

Although, Ibne Shahab Al-Zuhri is of earlier ages than Abul-Aswad but this tendency is not found in Abul-Aswad, however, Ibne Shahab Al-Zuhri is very particular about it.⁽²⁰⁾

CONCLUSION

1. ‘Urwa’ has recorded all the events relating to the life and prophetic mission of the Holy Prophet (SAW) as well as the details of Ghazawat in a very sound chronological order.
2. Solemnity, integrity and simplicity are the distinctive marks of his writings, especially in the description and narration of the relevant circumstances and events.
3. He had acquired a good deal of proficiency in genealogical learning and was an eminent genealogist.

4. He had acquired the knowledge of such invaluable details regarding the biographical writings which were quite unknown to all other Biographers (*Seerat-writers*) of his age.

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On the same lines Saib himself says, that he remained in company of Abdul Rehman bin Ouf, Talha bin Ubidullah, Saad and Megdad bin Alaswad, but had never heard them attributing any saying, description to Rasul-ullah (Prophet), except the one in which Talha bin Abidullah, described the events of Ghaza Uhad. (Holy war at Uhad)

(Sahih Bukhari, Kitab-ul-Jihad wa Sear, Bab min Hadiths bamushida Fil Harab).

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