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Research Article

A Study on Reflections of Prophetic Sīrah Discourse in Pluralistic Society: A Contextual Analysis

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Abstract. This research explores the evolving debates on Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse within pluralistic societies, addressing the critical need for a comprehensive understanding among Muslims. Recognizing the fragmented nature of previous works, which often focus on isolated aspects of the *Sīrah*, this study aims to provide an integrated analysis relevant to contemporary multicultural settings. Employing a qualitative, library-based methodology, the research utilizes primary sources such as the Qur'an, *Hadīth* collections, and classical *Sīrah* texts, alongside modern commentaries. Through thematic and contextual analyses, key concepts like interfaith relations, social justice, and ethical conduct are identified and examined. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is applied to understand

how $S\bar{r}ah$ discourse is constructed and communicated across different contexts. The study reveals significant gaps in the current understanding and application of the Prophetic $S\bar{r}ah$, particularly regarding its relevance for Muslim minorities in pluralistic societies. It emphasizes the importance of defining key terminologies and developing an interpretive framework that aligns with the minority context. The findings underscore the urgent need to reframe the Prophetic $S\bar{r}ah$ from a pluralistic perspective to foster peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. The study concludes by attempting to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic teachings and modern pluralistic principles, encouraging a more inclusive and peaceful community.

Keywords: Prophetic Sīrah, Muhammad's Biography, Da'wah, Islamic Discourse, Pluralistic Society

INTRODUCTION

Prophetic *Sīrah* Discourse

The concept of 'Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse' has earned the attention of Islamic scholars in the contemporary world. Throughout history, it has been discussed in Islamic tradition in various terms such as "al-Khitāb al-Dīnī" (Islamic discourse) and "al-Da'wah" (Invitation or Advocacy). In Islamic history, typically the term of Prophetic *Sīrah* is used exclusively for Prophetic biography although it should be included not only biography of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) but also in his mission which he successfully achieved.¹ Accordingly, the 'Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse' encompasses two parts of knowledge, the Prophet Muhammad's biography, and the Prophetic mission (*Da'wah*). Furthermore, it is important to explore the connectivity between them. So, initially, Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse needs to be defined clearly to understand how the Prophet (p,b,u,h) completed his vision and mission within merely twenty-three years and generated the great *Medinan* society including Muslims and others.

Thus, acknowledging this backdrop, the researcher intends to trace the trends of *Sīrah*'s writings from the early Islamic period to the modern era in order to comprehend the textuality of *Sīrah* and the necessity of the contemporary context's understanding. This research attempts to briefly explain how the latest debates on Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse in the pluralistic context are evolving among Islamic scholars in the contemporary world. It is imperative to understand that the current Islamic discourse can't flourish and achieve its goals in the world today without being connected with Prophetic *Sīrah* events and the analyses and reflections of its knowledgeable and moderate authors who tackle *Sīrah* with its applications that can help guide the Callers to understand Islam comprehensively and spread it to all mankind efficiently.

Literature Review

Among the previous literature related to the Prophetic *Sīrah*, most of the classical works are written on the basis of his general biography such as *Sīrah Ibnu*

¹ Shibli Nu'mani, Da'irat Ma'arif Fi Sirat al-Nabawiyyah, (Delhi: Dar al-Musannifin, 2004)

Hisham², Sīrah Ibnu Ishaq³, al-Sirat an-Nabawiyyah.⁴ These literatures are most important to understand the content of Sīrah and the incidences and their authenticity. In the modern context, Islamic scholars argue the Sīrah analysis under the topic of the Fiqh al- Sīrāh.⁵ This kind of literature helps to explore an integrated analysis relevant to contemporary multicultural settings. There is a book written by Yousuf al-Qaradawi on Hiṭābunā al-Islāmī fī 'Aṣr al-ʿAwlamah⁶ (2004) (Our Islamic Discourse in The Globalization Era) that explains the general Islamic discourse concerning contemporary issues. Although, the work covers the importance of Dawah and Dae and context, yet is is necessary to reexamine the work according to Propertic Sīrah. Apart from that, as a critique, it is possible to note that the work is another preliminary study within the prophetic narrations. However, it does not explore Islamic discourse in the light of Prophetic Sīrāh focusing on pluralistic context.

In terms of theoretical aspects of Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse in the modern world, *Fiqh al-Da'wah* '*Ila Allah*, (1996)⁷; *Al-Madhal 'Ila 'Ilm Al-Da'wah*, (1995)⁸; '*Usūl al-Da'wah*, (1990)⁹, are some important books and these works aim to provide a robust conceptual basis for *Da'wah* as a discipline with its all details such as definitions, characters, objectives, history, methodologies, approaches, preacher and his qualities, his knowledge and challenges, and so on. Although these works do not directly address the issue of prophetic *Sīrah*, yet showcase and reflect the prophet's life and his mission generally. Undoubtedly, these are comprehensive studies considered seminal works in the field of *Fiqh al-Da'wah* (discipline of the mission) and their findings formed an impact on the global Islamic religious discourse. This research greatly benefits from the above works, yet it needs critical study to contextualize prophetic *Sīrah* discourse to fix the pluralistic context.

There is a notable academic contribution to how Prophert's mission is relevant to his Sira discourse. The book of Da'wah and $S\bar{\imath}r\bar{a}h$ made by $Basy\bar{\imath}u\bar{\imath}$ $Nah\bar{\imath}lat^{10}$ is an ideal work that covers the. the ties and the relations between Da'wah and $S\bar{\imath}r\bar{a}h$ in the contemporary context through modern published books related to the particular discipline and explain the impact of those publications on the new methodologies of Islamic religious discourse. Moreover, he guides the current Da'wah organizations to

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² Ibnu Ishaq, Sirat Ibnu Ishaq, Edited by Muhammad Hamidullah, (Konya: al-Waqfi Li khidmat al-Khayryya, 1981)

³ Ibnu Hisham, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, (Thantha: Dar al-Shabab, 2007)

⁴ Ibnu Kathir, al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah, (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1976)

⁵ al-Gazzali, Figh al-Sirah, (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 1999), al-Buthi, Fiqh al-Sirah, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Mu'aasir, 1991)

⁶ Yūsuf al-Qarḍāwī, Hiṭabunā Al-ʾIslāmī fī ʿAṣr Al-ʿAwlamah, (Qāhirah; Dar Al-Shurūq, 2004)

⁷ Abdu Al-Rahmān habanakat Al-Maydānī, Fiqh al-Da'wah 'Ila Allah, (Damascus: Dar Al-Qalam, 1996)

⁸ Muhammed 'Abu al-Fatḥ al-Bayānūnī, Al-Madḥal 'Ila 'Ilm Al-Da'wah, (Beirut: Mu'ssasa al-Risāla, 1995)

⁹ ʿAbdu al-Karīm Zaydān, ʾUsūl al-Daʾwah, (Beirut: Muʾssasat al-Risāla, 1990)

¹⁰ Basyūnī Naḥīlat, ʾAṭar al-Muʾallafāt al-Hadīṭah Li al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah Fī Ṣiyāġat Manāahiǧ al-Daʿwah al-Muʿaṣirah, (Impact of modern literature related to the Prophetic Sīrāh on developing current Daʿwah methods), (Qatar: Journal of Faculty of Sharīah and Islamic Studies, 2016) no: 34, I:2, pp. 134-179

consider modern approaches in their management of religious discourse such as peaceful, educational, comprehensive, global, and planning. Finally, he recommends that the preachers of Islam should give more care to modern literature related to the $S\bar{\imath}r\bar{a}h$ and its applications that can guide them to understand Islam comprehensively and spread it to mankind efficiently. Despite, the study articulating modern theoretical aspects of Islamic Da'wah based on $S\bar{\imath}r\bar{a}h$ and the researchers benefit from it on the general ideas of Islamic religious discourse in the light of Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}r\bar{a}h$, it is not concentrated on the issues related to the pluralistic context in terms of Da'wah.

The aforementioned contributions give a greater understanding of the Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ and Islamic discourse. However, researchers discover that conventional prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ interpretation focuses on the prophet's life, whereas Islamic discourse discussion is not focused on Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$. So, there is a clear gap between Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ and his comprehensive mission, which needs to be revised from a pluralistic contextual point of view. So, to provide a more thorough knowledge of the discourse around Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$, this article attempts to reevaluate how Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ relates to the prophet's mission within a multicultural setting.

Research Methodology

This qualitative, library-based research will utilize a comprehensive analysis of both primary and secondary sources to explore the Prophetic Sīrah discourse in pluralistic contexts. The study will begin with a literature review of existing scholarly works to identify gaps and limitations. Primary sources, including the Qur'an, Hadith collections, and classical *Sīrah* texts, will be analyzed alongside contemporary *Sīrah* commentaries. Thematic analysis will categorize key concepts relevant to pluralistic settings, followed by a contextual analysis of the socio-political and cultural backgrounds influencing Sīrah interpretations. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be employed to examine how the *Sīrah* discourse is constructed and communicated. The findings will be combined to provide a comprehensive overview of the Prophetic *Sīrah*, highlighting its relevance for Muslim minorities in multicultural contexts and making recommendations for further research and practical applications.

Research Problem

The study of Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ holds significant importance within Islamic scholarship and practice. However, there exists a considerable gap in the comprehensive understanding of Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ discourse among Muslims, particularly when addressing the needs of diverse and pluralistic societies. Previous scholarly works on the Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ have often been fragmented, focusing on isolated aspects without providing an integrated and holistic view. This has resulted in a limited and sometimes misunderstanding of the $S\bar{\imath}rah's$ relevance and application in contemporary contexts.

Moreover, there is an urgent need to reframe and present the Prophetic *Sīrah* discoures from a pluralistic perspective, considering the growing number of Muslim minorities living in multicultural and multi-religious environments. Such a perspective is crucial for promoting peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and dialogue among different communities.

This research aims to fill these gaps by providing a contextual analysis of the Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse that is suitable for pluralistic settings. It seeks to address two primary issues: first, the need for a clear and precise definition of key terminologies within the *Sīrah* discourse; and second, the introduction of an interpretive framework that aligns with the realities and challenges faced by Muslim minorities in pluralistic contexts. By doing so, this study desires to contribute to a more inclusive and practical understanding of the Prophetic *Sīrah*, enhancing its relevance and application in the modern world.

DISCUSSION

Unveiling Meanings: Interpretations of Prophetic Sīrah

The Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ in Islam refers to the teachings, practices, and exemplary way of life of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). The term " $S\bar{\imath}rah$ " in Arabic derives from the verb $S\bar{a}ra$. It means route, behaviour, approach, state, conduct, tradition, morals, character, biography, and journey. When attributed to a person, it means his life journey. Therefore a person's $S\bar{\imath}rah$ includes not only his life sketch but a detailed account of it from his birth to death, the events related to it, and his conduct, behavior, personal, characters, etc. The $Qur'\bar{\imath}an$ also mentions the format of the word $S\bar{\imath}rah$ in the same meaning as 'condition' or 'form' in only one sentence in the $Sur\bar{\imath}ah$ $T\bar{\imath}ah\bar{\imath}a$. "[Allah (SWT)] said, seize it, and fear not: We shall return it at once to its former condition…" ($T\bar{\imath}ah\bar{\imath}a$ 20: 21).

In Islam, *Sīrah* specifically refers to the whole life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) from birth to death and all the persons and events related to it chronologically. The Prophetic *Sīrah* encompasses various aspects of life, including religion, ethics, economics, politics, education, family, social relationships, and more. It serves as a comprehensive guide for Muslims on how to lead a fulfilling and righteous life. It is worth mentioning that *Sīrah*, *Sīrat Rasul Allah*, *and al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah* have been the most widely used names for traditional accounts of the Prophet Muhammad's (p.b.u.h) life conduct.¹³

In the early Islamic period until the end of the first half of the second century of *hijra* the term word '*maghāzi*' was used as a synonym for Prophetic life, especially for the field of battles he participated in. Some historical scholars claim the term *Sīrah* was first used by *Ibnu Hishām* (p.833) ¹⁴ and others claim *Zuhri* (p.741) had applied to the whole biography of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). ¹⁵ As a general notion, '*Magāzi*' is the history of the armed forces of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) and the books written on this

¹¹ Ibnu Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, (Beirūt: Dār al-Ṣadr, 1990), vol.4, p. 389-390, Fakhr al-Dīn bin Muḥammad bin 'Umar al-Rāzī, *Mukthār al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, (Beirūt: Maktabah Lubnān, 1986), p. 136.

¹² al-Jawzī, Zād al-masīr fī 'Ilm al-tafsīr, (Beirūt: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1407Hij), vol.5, p.280.

¹³ W. Raven, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 'Sira', Ed. C.E. Bosworth et al., (Leiden, Brill, 1997), vol. 9, p. 660-663.

¹⁴ Martin Hinds, *In Encyclopedia of Islam*, 'Magazi', 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill. 1998), p. 1-10, Muhammad Ibrāhīm and Muhammad Waqas, "Compilation and Beginning of Sīrah's Genre and the Reason of Inauthenticity of Sīrah's Narrations," *Al-SHARQ Journal*, vol. 01, no. 2, (2020), pp. 25.

¹⁵ Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims*, (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), p.1112, *The Formation of Classical Islamic World IV: The Life of Muhammad*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), Vol. 14. footnote 84.

topic.¹⁶ As a result, from this backdrop, the field of Prophetic biography among *Sīrah* writers was limited to important events and incidents that happened in the life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h).

Notwithstanding, the *Sīrah* serves as the bedrock of Islamic history and spirituality, providing a detailed account of the life, character, and actions of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). It offers insights into the Prophet's interactions, struggles, and triumphs, serving as a source of guidance for Muslims worldwide.¹⁷ The *Sīrah*, embedded with moral and ethical teachings, becomes a reservoir of wisdom from which contemporary Muslims draw inspiration for their daily lives. It has been developed now as *ʾIlm al-Sīrah*.¹¹8 On the other hand, *Daʻwah* emerges as a dynamic genre focused on conveying the message of Islam to a global audience. In the modern context, *Daʻwah* aims to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic teachings and the diverse, evolving realities of contemporary societies. It involves articulating the universality of Islamic principles, emphasizing compassion, justice, and ethical conduct, and addressing contemporary challenges. It has been developed now as *ʾIlm al-Daʻwah*.¹¹9 Therefore, it is much more needed to explain the connectivity between *Sīrah* and *Daʻwah* in Islamic scholarship.

Connectivity between Sīrah and Da'wah

The connection between *Sīrah* and *Da'wah* (prophet's mission) lies in the narrative power of the Prophet's biography. The *Sīrah* provides *Da'wah* practitioners with a compelling narrative, offering real-life examples of how the Prophet implemented and disseminated Islamic teachings. This narrative resonance aids in making *Da'wah* more relatable and contextualized for diverse audiences.²⁰ Moreover, the *Sīrah* is a model for effective communication and community building, offering lessons in empathy, inclusivity, and understanding. *Da'wah*, in turn, leverages these lessons to create an open dialogue with individuals from various backgrounds, fostering an environment conducive to mutual respect and understanding.

It is important to understand the Prophet's *Sīrah* from the perspective of *Da'wah* to investigate, study, and develop the numerous parts of his life that include the instruction of the prophetic guidelines. The advocate must understand the conditions

¹⁶ Ibnu Manzūr, *Lisān al-Arab* (Beirūt: Dār al-Ṣadr, 1990), vol. 15, p. 124, Hinds, Martin Hinds, *In Encyclopedia of Islam*, 'Magazi', 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill. 1998), p. 1162.

¹⁷ Basyūnī Naḥīlat, ʾAṭar al-Muʾallafāt al-Hadīṭah Li al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah Fī Ṣiyāġat Manāahiǧ al-Daʿwah al-Muʿaṣirah, (Impact of modern literature related to the Prophetic Sīrāh on developing current Daʿwah methods), (Qatar: Journal of Faculty of Sharīah and Islamic Studies, 2016) no: 34, I:2, pp. 138.

¹⁸ Aḥmad al-Ghānim al-Asadī, al-Madkhal ila 'Ilm al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah, (al-Dammām: Dar Ibn al-Jawzī, 2021), Shiblī al-Nu'mānī, Fan al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah Tarīkh wa 'Usūl, Translated by Muhammad 'Alī Ghurī, (Markaz al-Jum'a al-Majīd Lī al-Thaqāfat wa al-Turāth, 2011), Fahd Aḥmad al-Baḥri, "al-Ta'sīl fī 'Ilm al-Sīrah," https://www.noor-book.com كتاب-التأصيل-لعلم-السيرة-النبوية -pdf.10.04.2024.

¹⁹ 'Abd al-Karīm Zaydān, *'Usūl al-Da'wah*, (Beirūt: Mu'ssasat al-Risālah, 1990); Muhammed 'Abu al-Fatḥ al-Bayānūnī, *Al-Madḥal Ila 'Ilm Al-Da'wah*, (Beirūt: Mu'ssasat al-Risālah, 1995); 'Abd Al-Rahmān ḥabanakat Al-Maydānī, *Fiqh al-Da'wah Ila Allāh*, (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1996).

²⁰ Ibrahim Abdullah Jaber Muhammad, "The Impact of the Prophet's Biography on Da'wah and Education: A Modernized Study", Journal of Abhath, (Yemen: Hodeidoh University, 2021), no: 24, December, pp. 293.

and attitudes of the Prophet who is the role model for all, in order to call it based on vision $-Bas\bar{\imath}ra$. The following reasons²¹ demonstrate the significance of Da'wah research in the light of Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$:

The first is to determine the advocate's moral, academic, practical, and other characteristics, as well as how it is prepared and what its boundaries, potential, and obligations are. That is the reason why Muhammad's (p.b.u.h) personality is the ideal human personality for advocacy. The second is to understand the content of *Da'wah* qualitatively and quantitatively, as well as to consider the circumstances of that content's *Da'wah* as and when necessary. Knowing the prophet's guidance before performing *Da'wah* in the changing modern world is undeniably a reason for success by the grace of Allah.

The third reason is to comprehend the preacher's methodologies and approaches, the suitable means and methods, their limits, the level of duty towards current methodology, the relevance of preparing for the understanding of the methodology, and so on. All of this contributes to the call being made with clarity. The fourth reason is to understand the different sorts of invitees and their unique characteristics. The invitation of Christians is not the same as the invitation of polytheists. The invitation of the Muslim is different from those who reject the call of the unbeliever as well as the summons of the disputant. Everything is included with actions in the prophetic *Sīrah* in detail. The fifth point is last but not least that the study of Prophetic *Sīrah* is advocacy research in which knowledge of the evolution of Islamic *Da'wah* from its creation till it spreads and how it spreads within human potential along the limitations of human capacities is gained. It also involves understanding the factors that contribute to success and failure on the Lord's scale.

According to this backdrop, 'Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse' in the modern context includes three methods or approaches of *Da'wah*: firstly, admonition, conveying, and clarification;²² secondly, reformative principles and values;²³ and thirdly, dissemination, education, and preparation.²⁴ Thus, the Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse is considered not only limited to preaching, teaching, and guidance but must also entail a commitment and comprehensive construction of a strong, conscientious society, along with the qualification and preparation of the generation to bear the divine message. It is imperative to understand that the current Islamic discourse can't flourish and achieve its goals in the world today without being connected with Prophetic *Sīrah* events and the analyses and reflections of its knowledgeable and moderate authors who tackle *Sīrah* with its applications that can help guide the Callers to understand Islam comprehensively and spread it to all mankind efficiently.

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²¹ Ibrāhīm Bin Sālih al- Ḥumaydayn, "Ittijāhāt al-kitābah wa al-Taṣnīf fi al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah wa Dirāsātuhā al-Da'awīyah," *Journal of Al-Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University*, Vol.40, 1423 Hijri. https://www.shatharat.net/vb/showthread.php?t=9324, 20.11.2023.

²² 'Alī Mahfūz, Hidāyat al-Murshidīn Ila tharīkh al-Wa'd wa al-Khitābat, (Qāhira: Dār al-I'tjisām, 1952), p17; Aḥmad Ghalūsh, al-Da'wah al-Islāmīyah Usūluha wa Wasāiluhā, (Qāhira: Dār al-Kitab al-Misrī 1987), p10.

²³ Muhammad al-Rāvi, *al-Da'wah al-Islamīyah Da'wah 'A ālamīyah*, (Qāhira: al-Dār al-Qawmīyah, 1965)

²⁴ al-Bahī al-Khūlī, *Tazkirah al-Duʻāt*, (Qāhira: Dar al-Turāth, 1987), p35.

A Glance on the Context of Pluralistic Society in Prophetic Sīrah

It is obvious that human beings not only exist alone without any assistance from others but also, must rely on others. Allah (SWT) says, "O mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other [not that ye may despise [each other]. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is [he who is] the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted [with all things]." (al-Hujarat 49: 13)

The history of humanity demonstrates that humanitarian society encompasses various families, tribes, religions, races, languages, and so on. Throughout history, not only most of them but also mostly they have been diverse and multicultural. As a result, individuals of all ethnicities and religions had to coexist in one land under a single ruler. Therefore, for determining how the Prophet (p.b.u.h) managed Islamic discourse, the context of his pluralistic society is considered in the following topics.

Makkah Phase of Prophetic Sīrah

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) was born in 570 CE in Makkah, on the Arabian Peninsula, where there were several ethnic, tribal, religious, and other communities. His blessed life is the ideal model provided by Allah (SWT) to be evaluated by humanity for peace and blessing in this world and salvation in the hereafter. Though the Prophet (p.b.u.h) lived only for 63 years, he had a profound impact on his environment and redirected the course of the globe to a new dimension.²⁵ Allah (SWT) selected him as a Prophet at forty, and he started inviting people to Islam in *Makkah* for 13 years, before migrating to *Madinah* around the age of fifty-three. Further, he lived for approximately 10 years in *Madinah*. Throughout his 23 years of *Da'wah* life, he dealt with various individuals and societies until he completed his mission.²⁶ In brief, it is mentioned that Islam began as a minority tradition in a non-Muslim setting²⁷ amid a pluralistic context.

Makkah society at the time of the Prophet's (p.b.u.h) birth had enjoyed different faiths and ethnicities of people. The *Quraysh* constituted the majority of them. They were leading society and dominated its business and trade. However, they were divided among themselves into political, social, economic, religious, and cultural groups beset with enmity. The *Quraysh* families and other Arab tribes were essentially the adherents of the Abrahamic faith.²⁸ However, their faith had been corrupted by accretions. They had combined many innovations in their original faith.

²⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī, Madhā khasira al-ʿālam bi-inhitāt al-Muslimīn, (al-Mansura: Maktabat al-Iman, 1981), p. 102.

²⁶ Ibnu Hisham, *Sīrāt Ibnu Hisham Biography of The Prophet*, Abridged by: Abdus-Salam M. harun, (Egypt: Al-Falah Foundation for Translation and Distribution, 2000) Ibnu Ishaq, *The life of Muhammed*, Tr. A Guillaume, (Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1967).

²⁷ Amir Hussain, *Islam, Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue, Progressive Muslims: on Justice, gender and Pluralism,* (England: One World Publications, 2008), p. 251.

²⁸ Safiyur Rahmān_Mubārakfūrī, *Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtum* [*The Sealed Nectar*] (Riyadh: Dār alsalām Publishers, 1996), p. 18-22.

They had diverged much from the original path. Polytheism had become the main article of their faith.

All the tribes in *Makkah* worshipped their various idols, and the idol called *Hubul* was the national idol among the idols installed in the *Kaʻbah*, which included 360 idols. The other most important idols mentioned in the Quran are *al-Lāt*, *al-Manāt*, *and al-'Uzza*. It is clear from this that polytheism was rooted deep in the *Makkan* atmosphere. At the same time, there was a group of people known as the 'Hanīf', 'Ahnaf', or 'Hunafā' gave left their ancestral faith because they were dissatisfied with it in this generalized polytheistic religious environment.²⁹ They abandoned idolatry and believed in monotheism. The most famous of them were *Zaid Bin 'Amr Bin Nufail*, *Waraqa Bin Naufal*, and *Uthman Bin Huwayrith*.³⁰

Moreover, there were some individual Christians who lived in or near Makkah at that time. Most of the ' $Hunaf\bar{a}$ ' also followed Christianity. Regarding the Christians, Karen Amstrong says, 'They had little impact on their contemporaries because they were mostly concerned with their self-salvation. They had no desire to reform the social or moral life of Arabia, and their theology was essentially negative. Instead of creating something new, they simply withdraw from the mainstream.' However, Christians were few in Makkah as well as the majority of the ruling position in Abyssinia where the first migration of Makkah Muslims was held in the beginning period of Islam.

As for the Jews who were in the time of *Makkah*, historians differ regarding their presence. Some³² claim that they did not exist in *Makkah* and some³³ claim that they did exist. However, according to Islamic sources, there is no record of the Jewish community living in the *Makkan* period. Amir Hussain says, "When the Prophet (p.b.u.h) received first revelations in *Makkah*, the people around him were largely tribal and polytheistic. Even though the people of *Makkah* knew of Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and other religious traditions, large concentrations of Christians and Jews were only to be found in other cities in Arabia."³⁴

Apart from the above mentioned, in another way, it is identified that *Makkah* was better known as a religious site than as a commercial hub. Non-Arabs, mainly Persians, Abyssinians, Iraqis, and Syrians visited *Makkah* for pilgrimage. Some of them had settled there, and some were slaves and therefore became members of the community. Although they were limited in number and were given a distinct color in that pluralistic and multicultural society, their existence did have its bearing on the

²⁹ Tariq Ramadan, *In The Footsteps of The Prophet: Lessons From The Life of The Prophet,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.9.

³⁰ Ibnu Hisham, *Sīrāt Ibnu Hisham Biography of The Prophet*, Abridged by: Abdus-Salam M. harun, (Egypt: Al-Falah Foundation for Translation and Distribution, 2000), V.2, p. 242-243.

³¹ Karen Amstrong, *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time,* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007), p. 44.

 ³² Barakat Ahmad, Muhammad, and Jews: A Re-Examination, (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), p. 32, William Montgomery Watt, Muhammad At Mecca, (Great Britain: OUP, 1953), p. 5
³³ Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, The Prophet Muhammad: A Role Model for Muslim

Minorities, (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), p. 18.

³⁴ Amir Hussain, *Islam, Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue, Progressive Muslims: on Justice, Gender and Pluralism, Edited by Omid Safi, (England: One World Publications, 2008), p.252.*

local traditions, culture, and religious life.³⁵ So, it is confirmed here that the context of Prophetic *Sīrah* in the *Makkan* Phase was a pluralistic and multi-faith society.

Madinah Phase of Prophetic Sīrah

The second phase of Prophetic time is the *Madinah* period which started from the *Hijrah* in 622 CE. The Prophet's vision for diversity and pluralism could only be fully implemented after *Hijrah* when he was able to organize the social order according to Islamic principles. *Madinah* society was primarily split into three groups: the *Aws*, the *Khazraj*, and the *Jews*, as well as others who arrived in *Madinah* and temporarily settled there for social or business reasons. The Jews who lived in *Madinah* were divided into three major tribes, *Banu Nadir*, *Banu Qurayzah*, and *Banu Qaynuqah*. Regarding religion, the Arabs of *Madinah* before *Hijrah* were subject to the dominant paganism in the region, which saw the rise of different expressions of polytheism, including the worship and praise of idols.

In *Madinah*, the pre-Islamic Arab society including tribes of *Aws* and *Hazraj* was highly violent. They had great hostility with each other. They had been fighting each other for more than four decades a war. When they became Muslims after the migration of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) to *Madinah* they were called '*Ansāri*' which means helpers to *Makkah* migrants those were called '*Muhājirin*'. The first population census counted by Prophet (p.b.u.h.), once he migrated to *Madinah*, showed that 10,000 people lived in *Madinah*, of which 1500 were Muslims, 4000 Jews and 4500 were polytheist Arabs.³⁷

However, the early Islamic society in *Madinah* comprised diverse religious sects and ethnic groups such as Persians, Abyssinians, and others who lived in the town. Divergent religious faiths such as Jews and Christians also lived in *Madinah*.³⁸ The number of Christians who were inside the *Madinah* was almost insignificant.³⁹ Nonetheless, they were a minority society in *Najrān* and surrounding areas in South Arabia during the time. Scholars argue that in the years of Islam was born, there were 15 million Christians among Eastern Arabs.⁴⁰ However, the main social groups in *Madinah* were Muslims, Jews, and polytheist Arabs.

It is clear here that the Arabian Peninsula during the time of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) in *Makkah* and *Madinah* was a region in which various faiths were present. There were Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, polytheists, and others not affiliated with any religion. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) who founded the classless and universal society of

³⁵ Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, *The Prophet Muhammad: A Role Model for Muslim Minorities*, (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), p. 12.

³⁶ Safvet Halilovic, Sirah- A Biography of Muhammad The Last Messenger of Allah, (Sarajevo: Publishing House: 2014), p. 246.

³⁷ Ali Bulac, The Medina Document, *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, Edited by Charles Kurzuman, (New York: OUP, 1998), p.169.

³⁸ Fazlur Rahman Faridi, *Living as a Muslim in a plural society*, (Chennai: Islamic Foundation Trust, 1998), p.2.

³⁹ Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Life and Work of the Prophet of Islam*, (New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, 2004), p. 142

⁴⁰ Seyfettin Ersahin, Prophet Muhammad's Relations with Christians (an Islamic Perspective). *The Journal of Sirah Studies*, Special Issue. 11, p. 108.

Islam brought various nations together and removed their tribal prejudices.⁴¹ The following topics discuss how the Prophet (p.b.u.h) managed Islamic discourse with the people of differences in the pluralistic society.

General Features of 'Prophetic Sīrah Discourse' in the Pluralistic Context

Over the twenty-three years, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) established an exemplary and peaceful community that included people of all ethnicities and religions in *Madinah*. The Muslims in *Makkah* were a minority, but in *Madinah*, they governed the people in different pluralistic backgrounds. So, by studying the Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse from the point of minority and pluralism, a role model can be gained for the Muslim minorities, scattered in all parts of the world. It might serve as a mirror for them and for deriving guidance from the Prophet's example, which would enable them to maintain their identity as Muslims.⁴² Therefore, it is worth noting to explore some general features of Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse from the point of the Muslim minority amid the pluralistic context.

Behind this backdrop, under the two sub-topics, this chapter tries to explain some general reflections of Prophetic *Sīrah* from the perspective of a pluralistic context as follows: The inter and intra-relationships between Muslims and others and contributions to the nation building. The inter and intra relationships require the introduction message of Islam among all kinds of people and not stagnate in that way. Further, Muslims should maintain unity and brotherhood with intra-societies and showcase Islamic ethics and morals in their day-to-day life. In addition, they should be educated continuously and prepared for the future of Islam and the Islamic atmosphere including empowering women in every way.

The contributions to the nation building in the pluralistic context of Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ discourse, require active participation in social and common issues, being an economically powered society, following the harmonies relations with all citizens of the country, and not confronting animes by force, rather than satisfying the mutual dialogues and deliberations. Finally living as a good citizen of the nation also is considered a great contribution to nation-building from the perspective of Prophetic $S\bar{\imath}rah$ discourse.

Inter and Intra Relationships

The most important feature of Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse is its concentration on **imparting the message of Islam and spreading** it to all, beginning with the closest and progressing to the closest, in order to save people from misguidance and lead them to guidance. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) did not neglect the introduction of Islam in the *Makkan* period or the *Madinan* period whatever difficulties he faced. Muslims even if they are a minority or majority, must convey the message of Islam to mankind. Especially, whether they were a minority requires the obligation that

⁴¹ Farooq Hassan, Acceptance of Pluralism in Islam (A Myth or Truth). *European Journal of Scientific Research*, Vol. 69, No. 3, 2012, p. 476.

⁴² Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, *The Prophet Muhammad: A Role Model for Muslim Minorities*, (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), p. 24.

Muslim residents among non-Muslim majority countries would reflect the message of Islam in their words, deeds, and exemplary life.⁴³

Furthermore, it is important to pay attention to conveying the Islamic message **perseverance and not stagnate** in where it is. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) headed towards *Taif* and then migrated to *Madinah* when it was difficult for him to stay in *Makkah*. Before the Messenger (p.b.u.h) found the land of *Madinah*, he sent the companions to *Abyssinia*, where there was a just king who did not oppress anyone. He had a strong relationship with him and his family, and even letters and gifts were exchanged between them.⁴⁴ So, To manage the continuity of advocacy of Islam in the community, a strong relationship with all kinds of people takes attention.

Another important reflection of Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse is to be concentrated on establishing **unity and brotherhood** among the Muslims especially those who are living as a scattered minority amid pluralistic societies. When the Prophet (p.b.u.h) migrated to *Madinah* he united between the tribes *Aws* and *Khazraj*. This was the first thing he organized when he migrated and made a brotherhood between *Muhajir* and *Ansaris* as well. The history says in that community there was an Arab named *Ja'far*, a Persian named *Salmān*, a *gifāri* named *Abu Dar*, a *Habashi* named *Bilal*, and a *Yamani* named *Huzaifah*. Though there were people from different regions, different races, different tribes, and different languages the Prophet (p.b.u.h) established a brotherhood among them that lasted long.⁴⁵

Moreover, the Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse identifies the necessity of establishing **excellent morals and ethics** in those who practice Islam and those who invite the people to it. As for morals, it is the only door through which the Islamic message can enter the hearts of others. The Muslim in general and the caller to Allah (SWT) in particular must take with him three pieces of equipment: faith, morals, and knowledge. After faith, the first thing Islam cares about is ethics because it is one of the fruits of faith. As for knowledge, it is after ethics, as Yusuf Al-Qaradawi says.⁴⁶ Faith is the spiritual equipment, ethics is the moral equipment, and knowledge is the intellectual equipment. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) was the most perfect of believers in faith and character during the time of *Makkah* and *Madinah*. Therefore, the morals of Muslims should be so extraordinary that their non-Muslim neighbors or fellow citizens should see the noble teachings of Islam from their attitude.

Thus, it is to be concerned with **educating** those who responded to the mission of Islam and working to recommend them to the guidance of Islam. This is completed by teaching them the religion of Islam, applying it in their lives, deepening the meanings of brotherhood among them, and mutually communicating truth and

⁴³ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Shurūṭ al-Iqamah fi Bilad Ghayr al-Muslimīn*, https://www.al-qaradawi.net/node/4160 Retrieved on 18.03.2024 01.45pm.

⁴⁴ <u>'Alī</u> Jum'ah, al-Namādhij al-arba'ah min hady al-Nabī ṣallá Allāh 'alayhi wa-sallam fi alta'āyush ma'a al-ākhar: al-usus wa-al-maqāṣid, (al-Jīzah: Dār al-Fārūq lil-Istithmārāt al-Thaqāfīyah, 2013), p. 15-23.

⁴⁵ <u>'Alī</u> Jum'ah, al-Namādhij al-arba'ah min hady al-Nabī ṣallá Allāh 'alayhi wa-sallam fī al-ta'āyush ma'a al-ākhar: al-usus wa-al-maqāṣid, (al-Jīzah : Dār al-Fārūq lil-Istithmārāt al-Thaqāfīyah, 2013), p. 35.

⁴⁶ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Thaqāfat al-Dā* 'īyah, (al-Qāhirah : Maktabat Wahbah, 1996), p. 4.

patience among themselves. For this, it is essential for the Muslim minority living amid a pluralistic milieu to set up centers of education like *Dār al-Arqam*.⁴⁷ These centers may be affiliated with mosques and other institutions like *al-Masjid al-Nabawi* played a role in the *Madinan* phase of Prophetic *Sīrah*. This opportunity should be utilized for religious training and introduction to Islam among others.⁴⁸

Considering the future of Islam and Muslims' existence in the pluralistic countries Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse focuses on **the continuity of Islamic work**, and provides an acceptable atmosphere for Muslims to practice Islamic life, such as prayer and fasting. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) set a glowing example during his *Makkan* phase on how to live in a non-Muslim majority society while adhering to Islam and observing all Islamic guidelines related to its moral, religious, and legal system. Muslims are entitled to profess their faith notwithstanding the opposition and hostility against them.⁴⁹

Additionally, considering that half of society women should be focused and **empowered** according to the guidelines of the Prophetic *Sīrah* Discourse. Women had a great role in the Prophetic era by spreading the message of Islam. Among them were those who converted to Islam at the beginning, such as *Khadīja*. Moreover, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) used to allocate one or two days a week to teach women religious matters. They participated in the Pledge of '*Aqaba* and in expressing their opinion on the matter of *Shūra*, as Ummu Salamah expressed in *Hudaybiyyah*. In addition, they too joined with men and participated in *Jihad* for the sake of Allah (SWT).⁵⁰

Contributions to the Nation building

It is imperative to explore the necessity of contributions to nation-building from the reflections of the Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse. The Muslims who are living in multi-cultural societies should be involved as **active participants in social common issues** such as injustice, corruption, child abuse, alcoholism, environmental pollution, and so on. The religious differences should be no barrier to Muslims living in a multi-religious society to join hands with the believers of other faiths to protect the rights of humanity at large. Extending a helping hand in this kind of endeavor is the minimum moral obligation of a Muslim.⁵¹

The reflection from the Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse which is deeply connected to **resource possession**, **states** that for the survival and expansion of the Muslim minority, **educational quality**, **religious authority**, **collectivity**, **a strong economy**, **and a good financial situation** are required. Rather, it is their religious

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⁴⁷ Mohammad Muslim, "Pluralistic Trends in Islamic Studies: A study of Prof. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui", *Aliqarh Journal of Interfaith Studies*, 2023, Vol. 4, Issue: 1, pp. 45.

⁴⁸ Akram Diyā' al-'Umarī, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyah al-ṣaḥīḥah*, (al-Madīnah: Maktabat al-'Ulūm wa-al-Ḥikam, 1992), Vol. 1, p. 227-272.

⁴⁹ Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, *The Prophet Muhammad: A Role Model for Muslim Minorities*, (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), p. 35.

⁵⁰ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Taḥrīr al-mar'ah fi al-Islām*, (al-Ṣafāt, al-Kuwayt : Dār al-Qalam, 2004), p. 45. Abd al-Halīm Muhammad Abu Shuqqah, Taḥrīr al-mar'ah fi 'Asr al-Rislah, (Kuwait, Dār al-Qalam, 1999), Vol.1.

⁵¹ Fazlur Rahman Faridi, *Living as a Muslim in a plural society,* (Chennai: Islamic Foundation Trust, 1998), p. 82.

duty to achieve all this.⁵² Economic power or economic resources were the most important thing that helped in the way of Allah (SWT) build the Muslim society in *Makkah* and *Medinah*. For the Muslim minority living in pluralistic societies, a better economy, stable finances, and wealth are essential not only for performing many religious duties such as *Zakat*, building mosques, and running Islamic schools but also for contributing to the economic welfare of the whole community and country and become an undeniable community in the country.⁵³

The reflection which is particularly drawn from the *Madinah* era of Prophetic *Sīrah* discourse, whether Muslims are majority or minority could be concerned with **harmonious relations** with multi-religious and multi-ethnic groups, as well as strong social bonds based on Islamic principles that avoid assimilation. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) lived in *Madinah* with people of different religions. The people of *Madinah* signed an agreement in the form of 'citizens of *Madinah*'. This peaceful agreement was made with the Jews to lead a peaceful life. This is called the Charter of Madinah or Madinah Constitution.⁵⁴ 'Ali Jum'ah analyzed this constitution and stated that it has been written based on four basic foundations:⁵⁵

- (a) Guarantee of security for all citizens of *Madinah* and live in harmony between everyone.
- (b) Freedom to follow the religion of their own choice
- (c) Every citizen can equally contribute to social, political, and military affairs.
- (d) Affirmation of the doctrine of individual accountability.

As a result of this, there was interfaith friendship in *Madinah*, humanity prevailed, and equality and brotherhood were maintained. The religious freedom and freedom to worship were approved. Discrimination had been abolished. If an individual commits a crime, he only will be responsible for the crime, but not his community. From the point of view of Muslim minorities living in pluralistic societies, They should follow coexistence and harmony with the majority people and respect their religious freedom and freedom to worship.

At the same time, Muslims should be careful **not to confront enemies** with force and be satisfied with confronting them through **dialogue and mutual deliberations.** The Prophet (p.b.u.h) and his companions were humiliated by *Makkan* polytheists and faced physical torture. Even though the Prophet (p.b.u.h) generally disliked war, preferring peace and harmony, he was unwilling to dare or encourage Muslims to clash with others and set battle with competitors of Islam. Because he understood that war never gives a solution. Despite conducting war throughout *Madinah*, he preferred peace and truce, such as the *Hudaybiyyah*

⁵² Mohammad Muslim, "Pluralistic Trends in Islamic Studies: A study of Prof. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui", *Aligarh Journal of Interfaith Studies*, 2023, Vol. 4, Issue: 1, pp. 47.

⁵³ Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, *The Prophet Muhammad: A Role Model for Muslim Minorities*, (Markfield: The Islamic Foundation, 2006), p. 190.

⁵⁴ Muḥammad Ḥamīdulláh, Majmūʻat al-wathāʾiq al-siyāsīya li al-ʻahd al-nabawīyah wa al-Khilafah al-Rāshidah, (Beirut: Dar al-Nafayis, 1985), p. 59-62.

⁵⁵ <u>'Alī</u> Jum'ah, *al-Namādhij al-arba'ah min hady al-Nabī ṣallá Allāh 'alayhi wa-sallam fī al-ta'āyush ma'a al-ākhar: al-usus wa-al-maqāṣid*, (al-Jīzah: Dār al-Fārūq lil-Istithmārāt al-Thaqāfīyah, 2013), p. 15-23.

treaty.⁵⁶ Asghar Ali Engineer writes, that there will always be a struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed, the powerful and the weak, but it need not to be violent. It depends much on the situation. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) himself preferred peace at *Hudaybiyyah* more than war even at the cost of the pride of Muslims. The peace conditions were far from favorable to Muslims but the Prophet (p.b.u.h) accepted them in order to avoid bloodshed.⁵⁷

Therefore, a Muslim living in a non-Islamic country must **love his country as a good citizen**, respect it, and contribute to its development. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) did not desire to leave *Makkah*, but stated, "If they had not expelled me from you, I would not have left."⁵⁸ When the Prophet (p.b.u.h) moved to *Madinah*, he embarked on numerous initiatives to develop the city of *Madinah* economically, socially, politically, and in other aspects⁵⁹. This indicates that a Muslim must love his country, respect its laws, and work to develop his country even if it is a non-Muslim country.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study of Prophetic Sīrah discourse within a pluralistic society provides invaluable insights into the profound and enduring impact of the Prophet Muhammad's (p.b.u.h) life and mission. By examining the interconnectedness of his biography and his mission (Da'wah), this research underscores the significance of understanding the holistic nature of the Sīrah. It becomes evident that the Prophetic Sīrah discourse is not merely a recounting of historical events but a rich, multifaceted narrative that offers guidance on effectively navigating the complexities of contemporary pluralistic societies.

The evolution of Sīrah writings from the early Islamic period to the present demonstrates a dynamic engagement with the text, reflecting changing contexts and the continuous relevance of the Prophet's teachings. This evolution highlights the adaptability and timelessness of the Sīrah, which remains a critical source of inspiration and direction for Muslims today. Modern interpretations and analyses by knowledgeable scholars have further enriched the discourse, ensuring its applicability in addressing contemporary challenges and promoting a comprehensive understanding of Islam.

Moreover, the current debates among Islamic scholars about the Prophetic Sīrah discourse emphasize the necessity of contextual understanding. In a pluralistic world, where diverse cultures and beliefs coexist, the principles derived from the Sīrah can foster mutual respect, coexistence, and effective communication. The reflections and applications of the Sīrah by moderate and knowledgeable authors provide

⁵⁶ Suleyman Sertkaya, "What Changed in Medina: The Place of Peace and War in the Life of Prophet Muhammad", *Journal of Religions*, 2023, 14, 193, pp. 2, Suleyman Sertkaya and Zuleyha Keskin, "A Prophetic Stance against Violence: An Analysis of the Peaceful Attitude of Prophet Muhammad during the Medinan Period", *Journal of Religions*, 2020, 11, 587, pp. 1-13.

⁵⁷ Asghar Ali Engineer, *On Developing Theology of Peace*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Pvt. Ltd, 2003), p. 95.

⁵⁸ Sunan al-Thirmithi, Vol. 5/722, No. 3925, Sunan al-Nasayi, Vol. 4/284, No. 4238, Ibnu Hibban, Vol. 9/22, No. 3708, al-Hakim, Vol. 3/8, No. 4270

⁵⁹ 'Abdul 'Aziz Bin Ibrahim, Binā' al- al-Mujtama' al-Madanī wa Tanmiyatuhu fi al-sīrah al-Nabawīyah, (Riyad: Dar al-Kunuz, 2015), p. 100.

practical frameworks for contemporary Islamic discourse, helping to achieve its goals in a manner that resonates with modern sensibilities and realities.

Ultimately, this research affirms that the Prophetic Sīrah discourse is indispensable for the flourishing of Islamic thought and practice in today's globalized world. By connecting contemporary Islamic discourse with the enduring lessons of the Sīrah, Muslims can navigate the complexities of the modern era with wisdom and foresight, ensuring that the Prophetic mission continues to guide and inspire humanity toward a harmonious and just society.

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