

Introduction to Seerah

Al Sirat al Nabawiyah (seerah) is the the life history or the biography of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. It is the narration of the earliest formative period of Islam. It is the whole of the life history of the Prophet from birth until his return to the Lord. The significance of the *seerah* is that it constitutes the all important historical framework against which the particulars of the Sunnah may be seen in their proper perspective. The study of the *seerah* is essential for a critical understanding of the Sunnah.

The life history of the Prophet is unique and is beyond comparison in history. The information concerning the Prophet s.a.w. is vast and complete in all aspects. He is the only person with a complete biography and history including his prayers, supplications and *dhikr* (acts in remembrance of Allah) as well his exemplary characteristics as described by the Companions.

Muslims love and adore the Prophet s.a.w. and in order to emulate, to know the Prophet is to learn about him from the smallest and simplest of matters to the major aspects.

Life Perfected By Allah

The Prophet's life can be seen as a perfection from Allah s.w.t.:

- From childhood which contains its many uniqueness.
- At the time of youth until maturity when he was known for honesty and trustworthiness, hence he was called and recognised by all as *al amin* – the man of trust, a man of his word.
- The time of revelations and prophethood , trials and tribulations, *Hijrah* – the Migration, establishing the proper State and Community of Islam, and returning victoriously to Makkah until the end .

Muhammad Rasulullah s.a.w. is called *al insan al kamil* meaning the perfected man. His personality was not a mere coincidence nor a matter of natural development but by divine will and guidance of Allah s.w.t.

The significance of Seerah:

- In order to know history, the legacies, traditions and cultures of pre Islamic Arabia and the consequences of the progress of Islam.
- The lessons from the Qur'an which contains many life stories from the past and the lessons of history.
- As a reference to the context, events and conditions for the Sunnah.
- As a legacy of the struggles of the Prophet s.a.w. and his companions in establishing Islam.

Islamic Concept of History:

History is history from the Islamic perspective. History is read from its lessons learnt. The Qur'an is not a history book but contains events and happenings meant to be lessons for the intelligent and the knowledgeable. History in Islam is the history of the Prophets, the Messengers of God.

Human history is not based on evolution but the faith in *tawhid* – the Unity of God. Man is reminded of the message of God delivered through His Messengers throughout history.

Man is reminded:

- To worship none but Allah, the one and only God
- Not to commit *syirk*, not to associate partners to God
- Not to commit *kufir*, not to deny God's favours to humanity and not to be in disobedience
- To follow His religion – in peace and submission to Him
- To lead a moral life according to divine guidance
- To prepare for the Day of Judgement

Human history is a series of events beginning with the Messengers of Allah (peace be upon them). Human decline and downfall begins and is when man deviates from the spiritual principles taught by the Messengers of God, when man is distracted and strayed due to worldly temptations.

The history of the Messengers is based on the revelations and the coming of Muhammad s.a.w. is a reinstatement, to complete and to renew and rejuvenate the message and the mission of the Messengers before him.

References:

One of the most prominent early sources of *seerah* is the Seerah of Ibn Hisham. It is a revision of the Seerah of Ibn Ishaq. This *seerah* became acceptable to the majority of *ulama'* – scholars of Islam.

The guiding principle in studying the *seerah* is the fundamental guidance and reference to the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

There are many and various recommended modern works and some are given below:

The Life of Muhammad s.a.w. from the Earliest Sources by Martin Lings.

The Life of Muhammad, Hayat Muhammad by Dr Muhammad Husayn Haykal, translated by Isma'il R Faruqi

Muhammad: Aspects of His Biography by Ziauddin Sardar

The Meccan Crucible and Sunshine at Madinah by Dr Zakaria Bashier

The Encyclopedia of Seerah by Afzalur Rahman

Al Sirah Al Nabawiyah by Abul Hasan Ali al Hasany al Nadwy