# Anwar al-Sirah: International Research Journal for the Study of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s Biography

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## Biographical Writing (Seerat Nigari) in the Period 1526–1857: A Research Study on Non-Muslim Writers of the Prophet's Life

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#### **Abstract**

The Mughal era, spanning from 1526 to 1857, was a golden age of intellectual and literary achievement in the Indian subcontinent. This period witnessed a remarkable confluence of cultures, where not only Muslim scholars but also non-Muslim writers contributed significantly to the intellectual landscape. Among these contributions, the biographical writings on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) by non-Muslim authors stand out. These authors, including Hindus, Sikhs, and others, transcended religious biases to study and document the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) and the teachings of Islam. Their works, such as those by Lal Chand Amar Din Jagtiani, Amar Lal Wassan Mal Hangorani, Jethmal Parsram Guljarani, Shrad Seh Prakash, J.S. Dara, Lakshan Prashad, Sundar Lal, Gobind Ram Sethi Shad, and Lajpat Rai, highlight the rich cultural and religious diversity of the Mughal era. These writings not only reflect the ethos of mutual respect and intellectual dialogue but also serve as important historical records. By celebrating the Prophet's virtues and Islamic teachings, these authors demonstrated fairness and openness, leaving a legacy of interfaith understanding that is relevant even today.

**Keywords:** Prophet Muhammad , non-Muslim Writers, Interfaith Understanding, Biographical Writing, Islamic Teachings

#### Introduction

The Mughal era was a magnificent and significant period in the history of the Indian subcontinent, spanning from 1526 to 1857. This era was unparalleled in terms of intellectual, cultural, and artistic advancement. The Mughal emperors not only solidified their rule but also played a pivotal role in promoting knowledge and literature. Their courts served as hubs for scholarly debates, translations of works from various languages, and the development of diverse fields of knowledge and arts. Particularly in the early Mughal period, Persian was adopted as the official language, which further boosted scholarly and literary activities. The books written during this era encompassed various subjects such as biography, history, philosophy, literature, religion, and more, which are still considered part of the intellectual legacy of the Mughal period.

Allah Almighty sent His beloved Prophet Muhammad (\*\*) as a mercy for all worlds. The scope of this mercy is not limited to Muslims alone; even non-Muslims have sought refuge under the shade of His benevolence. This universal mercy is evident from the fact that a significant number of non-Muslims have had the honor of composing praise in the form of Na'at (poetry in praise of the Prophet).

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In addition to Na'at-writing, non-Muslims have also authored works on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*). Historical records reveal not only Jewish and Christian writers but also a considerable number of Hindu biographers who enhanced the sanctity of their writings by penning accounts of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) in their works.

### Books on the Life of the Prophet (\*) in the Subcontinent

From the Mughal Emperor Akbar's court, Makhdoom-ul-Mulk Abdullah Sultanpuri (900 AH) wrote a book on the life of the Prophet (\*) titled Sharh Ala Ash-Shama'il An-Nabi, which is a commentary on Imam Tirmidhi's Shama'il An-Nabi. Similarly, there are mentions of a poetic treatise on the life of the Prophet (\*) titled Maghazi An-Nubuwwah by Sheikh Yaqub bin Hasan Sarfi, the teacher of Mujaddid Alf Sani.

In the 11th century AH, Sheikh Muhammad bin Fazlullah Burhanpuri wrote At-Tuhfa Al-Mursalah Ila An-Nabi. Mujaddid Alf Sani (971–1034 AH) also authored two Arabic treatises, Isbat An-Nubuwwah and Tahleelah. These works discuss the proof of prophethood, the nature of miracles, and interpret the Kalima Tayyiba in the light of Sufism.

The most significant book from the 11th century AH is Madarij An-Nubuwwah, authored by Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlavi (985–1052 AH). This Persian work spans over 1,200 pages and comprehensively covers every aspect of the blessed life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*).

Shah Waliullah also wrote a brief treatise on the life of the Prophet (\*\*) in Persian titled Sarwar Al-Makhzoon, which has been translated into Urdu multiple times under titles such as Gohar Makhzoon, Seerat-e-Rasool, and Sayyid Al-Mursaleen. From the 8th century AH, the notable work on the life of the Prophet (\*\*) is Risala Seerat An-Nabi by Hazrat Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz (721–825 AH). It is said that Khwaja Banda Nawaz authored approximately 105 books, including this one.

## 1. Lal Chand Amar Din Jagtiani - A Sindhi Hindu Biographer of the Prophet

Lal Chand Amar Din Jagtiani was born on January 25, 1560, in Hyderabad, Sindh. He completed his matriculation from Hiranand Academy.<sup>1</sup>

Jagtiani originally hailed from Punjab and later migrated to Sindh, which is why they are referred to as Sindhi Punjabis. They derive their surname, Jagtiani, from their ancestor Seth Jagtarai. During the rule of the Talpur dynasty in Sindh, a member of this lineage, Seth Chandumal, gained fame. He was known for selling diamonds and gemstones to the Talpurs and earned the title "Jeweler of the Talpurs."

In modern Sindhi literature, three Sindhi Hindu writers can never be forgotten: Jethmal Parsaram Guljarani, Bherumal Mehrchand Advani, and Lal Chand Amar Din Jagtiani.<sup>3</sup>

It can be attributed to divine wisdom or the beauty of fate that Lal Chand Amar Dinomal, a Hindu writer, became the first Sindhi Hindu author to write and publish a book on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) in prose. When Orientalists established intellectual gatherings in Sindh and Dr. Annie Besant arrived in the region, Lal Chand Amar Dinomal achieved the honor of being the first biographer in Sindhi by authoring the book "Muhammad Ji Hayati" (The Life of Muhammad). Lal Chand began his career as a teacher and remained closely associated with the intellectual world throughout his life. He is recognized as a distinguished writer and a master prose stylist, earning his place among the benefactors of the Sindhi language. The Theosophical Society of Dr. Annie Besant played a vital role in promoting his scholarly attributes.

Lal Chand was an expert in simple and fluent language, particularly excelling in Sindhi. He had a strong command of clear and easy-to-understand Sindhi prose. In the preface to his biography of the Prophet Muhammad (\*), while recalling some personal memories, he wrote: "After writing a book on the life of Prophet Muhammad (\*), my friends began calling me 'Lal Muhammad'." Lal Chand had a refined literary

taste, though he was particularly inclined toward fictional literature. He gained fame for 30 of his books, including notable works such as Son Wariyun Diliyoon, Sach Tan Sadati, Sada Aghlab, Chaudhvin Jo Chand, Shahano Shah, Sachal Sonharo, Phulan Mith, Umar Marvi, Sohni Mehar, Kishni Ja Kasht, Bairangi Bagh Jagal, Dukhan Bhari Zindagi, and Shairana Gul.Son Wariyun Diliyoon is a translation, while Phulan Mith is a collection of his essays.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1940s, Lal Chand also served as Assistant Secretary for the Central Advisory Board for Sindhi Literature. After assuming this position, he became an active member of the committee formed for lexicographical work. During the Congress agitation movement in 1922, he was imprisoned. From 1946 to 1951, he was also associated with the Mehrān magazine.

The most bitter decision of Lal Chand's life, which left him mentally distressed and filled with sorrow, was leaving Sindh for India after the partition of the subcontinent. Despite this, he always wished for Sindhis in both countries to remain connected in the fields of knowledge, literature, and culture. Lal Chand's book "Muhammad Rasool Allah" was first published in 1911. It was republished in 2004 by the Sindhi Sahat Academy in Hyderabad. Since the book was originally written in archaic Sindhi with obsolete words, Manwar Ali Butt re-transcribed it into modern script. This remarkable son of Sindh moved to India during the partition. Lal Chand Amar Dinomal's renowned works include Sar Kidaro, Shahano Shah, Shairana Gul, Sada Gulab, Phulan Mith, Musafri Jo Mazd, Hindustan Ji Tareekh, Manak Moti Lal, Sach Tan Sadati, and Ram Badshah, among others.<sup>6</sup>

However, his true distinction lies in being the first writer from the Sindhi Hindu community to author a book on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) titled Muhammad Rasul Allah (\*). This book was first published in 1911. Lalchand himself explains the motivation behind writing this book, stating that when he would ask Muslim children at school about the life of their Prophet, none of them could provide a satisfactory answer. This inspired him to write a book on the life of Prophet Muhammad (\*). He also mentions that during that time, he had the opportunity to consult some books written by Orientalists. However, he found that most of these books were infused with prejudice and hostility. Consequently, he decided to write the book himself. He received guidance in writing this book from Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, and Muhammad Ali Shah, a Persian teacher at Sindh Madrasa-tul-Islam, as well as from individuals in Pir Jhundo and Saeedabad, in the Hala district (which was then part of Nawabshah district).

This book was written during a time when a publication titled The Foundation of the Quran was released by the Christian Society. This biased book caused great sorrow and anger among the Muslims of Sindh. In India, both Christian and Hindu writers authored works against the honor of the Prophet Muhammad (\*). The first person to ignite the flames of prejudice and hostility against the Prophet (\*) in a written form was Reverend Imaduddin Panipati. His book, Tawareekh Muhammadi, was published in 1870. Following this, Pandit Dayanand Saraswati's book Satyarth Prakash, published in 1883, also exemplified such venomous sentiments. Subsequently, Pandit Lekh Ram's numerous books, written in 1897, displayed similar hostility and animosity.

However, responses to these obscene works had already begun. The credit for this goes to Maulana Sanaullah Amritsari, who wrote a rebuttal to Pandit Dayanand Saraswati's book. Maulana's book was titled Haq Prakash. He also responded to the offensive book Rangeela Rasool (authored in 1924) with his work Muqaddas Rasool. Although the author of Rangeela Rasool was not definitively known, it was widely believed to have been written by Suhas Chandra Krishna, the editor of Partab. This 96-page book caused an uproar among Muslims across the subcontinent. Ultimately, Ghazi Ilm-ud-Din killed Suhas Chandra Krishna.It is important to note that not all non-Muslim authors of that era produced such hateful

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works. On the contrary, some moderate individuals, either out of reverence or pragmatism, paid remarkable tributes to the Prophet (\*\*). This began with the 1892 translation of Washington Irving's book Life of Muhammad, which Lala Daya Ram Ghulani translated as Sawanah-e-Muhammad.

This was a period spanning the late 19th century and early 20th century, during which a trend emerged among fair-minded non-Muslims in India to write authentic biographies of the Prophet of Islam. A prominent early example of this trend is the book Hazrat Muhammad Sahib, Founder of Islam, written by Shrad Seh Prakash in 1907. Following this was J.S. Dara's book Rasool-e-Arabi, written during World War I in 1914. Other notable works include Arab Ka Chand (1932) by Lakshan Prashad, Hazrat Muhammad (\*\*) aur Islam by Pandit Sundar Lal, Hazrat Muhammad Islam by Babu Kunj Lal, Paighambar-e-Islam by Raghunath Sahai, Char Minar (1944) by Gobind Ram Sethi Shad, and Hazrat Muhammad Sahib ki Sawanah-e-Umri by Professor Lajpat Rai.

In addition to these books, articles written by Hindu and Sikh individuals in various magazines and newspapers also hold significant importance. These articles were compiled by Syed Bashir Ahmed in the book Sarwar-e-Kainat – Aghyar Ki Nazar. This collection includes essays written by prominent Hindu and Sikh scholars of the subcontinent, such as Malik Ram, Pandit Gopal Krishan, Master Shankar Das Gyani, Dr. Budh Veer Singh, Lala Ram Lal Verma, B.S. Randhawa, Ram Singh Gyani, Moti Lal Mathur, Swami Braj Narayan Sanyasi, Pandit Sundar Lal, Bhagwan Das Bhagwan, and Lala Desh Bandhu Ji, among others.

Similarly, Paighambar-e-Islam Ghair Musalmanon Ki Nazar Mein by Zil Abbas Abbasi and Muhammad Rasool Allah – Ghair Musalmanon Ki Nazar Mein by Muhammad Hanif Yazdani are also significant works. While some shortcomings and inaccuracies can be observed in the writings of these non-Muslim individuals, which fail to fully represent Islamic beliefs, their intent was not malicious. Their writings reflected differences of opinion without hostility, which is why overlooking such shortcomings was considered appropriate, as their intentions appeared sincere.

Interestingly, some of these moderate authors also wrote in rebuttal to their own co-religionists, exposing those who unfairly and indecently accused the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*). Their writings stand as shining examples of truthfulness and serve as a strong counter to fabricated stories and baseless accusations against the Prophet (\*\*).

One such extraordinary example of divine will is seen in the response to the biased and historically inaccurate book The History of the Quran. A non-Muslim Hindu author provided a healing balm for Muslims by writing the book Muhammad Rasul. While commenting on this book, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi remarked that it was written with great effort and fairness.<sup>8</sup>

Lalchand himself has detailed the books from which he benefited in his work. These include:

- 1. Sawanah Umri Hazrat Muhammad (\*\*) by Babu Parkash Dev
- 2. Sahih al-Bukhari (Urdu translation by Imam Muhammad bin Ismail)
- 3. Mussadas-e-Abu Jahl (Sindhi poetic translation of Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali's poem) In addition, the English books he referenced are:
  - 4. Sayings of Muhammad by Dr. Suharwardy
  - 5. Spirit of Islam by Syed Ameer Ali
  - 6. Four Great Religions by Annie Besant
  - 7. Life of Muhomet by Washington Irving
  - 8. Hero and Hero-Worship by Thomas Carlyle (which had already been translated into Urdu).

The book, originally published in 1911, was republished in January 2007 by Sindhi Sahat Ghar in Hyderabad in 72 pages. In his book, Lalchand Amar Denomal Jagatiani discussed several topics, including:

Ancient religions of the world, Religions of Arabia, The lineage and childhood of the Prophet Muhammad (\*), His youth and marriage to Lady Khadija ,The children of the Prophet...,The entire Arabian Peninsula embracing Islam,The Farewell Pilgrimage (Hajjatul Wida), The appearance of two false prophets (Musaylimah and Aswad Ansi),The Prophet's passing (Wafat).

By writing on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*), Lalchand, already a prominent name in Sindhi literature, elevated his stature further.

#### 2. Amar Lal Wassan Mal Hangorani

Amar Lal Wassan Mal Hangorani was born in Khahi Nawabshah, a region in the district of Naushahro Feroze, Sindh. He received his early education in Nawabshah, Sindh. His father's name was Wassan Mal Hangorani. After completing a B.A. from D.J. College in 1650, he also obtained an LL.B. degree and soon began practicing law. Amar Lal Hangorani is among the non-Muslim writers who authored works on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) in Sindhi prose. His biography of the Prophet is titled Meer Muhammad Arabi. Amar Lal is considered the founder of realism in Sindhi literature. Before the partition of India, his stories were published in prominent Sindhi publications such as Phulwari, Asafir, Mehrano, and Aasha.

In addition to being a storyteller, he was also an excellent essayist. Amar's most acclaimed story, Adu Abdul Rehman, has been translated into several languages.<sup>9</sup>

#### 3. Meer Muhammad Arabi

Meer Muhammad Arabi was first published in 1947, after the establishment of Pakistan, as the preface by Maulana Deen Muhammad Wafai is dated September 16, 1947. In his commentary on the book, Maulana Deen Muhammad Wafai not only congratulated the author on this work but also praised his command of the Sindhi language. Additionally, he commended the author for his impartiality and sincerity, stating:

"From a Hindu scholar and writer of this caliber, one could expect nothing less than such an eloquent and graceful use of language." <sup>10</sup>

#### 4. Jethmal Parsram Guljarani

Jethmal Parsram Guljarani, a Hindu writer and scholar with extensive knowledge of Islam, Brahmo Samaj, Sanatan Dharma, and Sufism, is highly regarded in Sindh. In addition to writing numerous books, he translated a work on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) into Sindhi under the title Islam Jo Paighambar (The Prophet of Islam) from English.

His other works include Om Ki Kahani, Sindhiyon Ain Chakar, Falsafani Chha Aahe, Shah Joon Kahaniyon, the 21-volume Rooh Rahan, as well as numerous articles and essays in Sindhi on the history, culture, and civilization of Sindh.<sup>11</sup>

In 1914, Jethmal Parsram Guljarani began writing the biography of Bhai Kala Chand. His essays, famously known as Rooh Rahan, delve into the intricate aspects of Sufism and Theosophical philosophy. He wrote these essays between 1923 and 1944. Guljarani also started delivering lectures on Sufism and Theosophical philosophy in 1923, which continued until 1944. These lectures skillfully explored the finer points of various religions, particularly the Quran, the Gita, and Vedanta.

Jethmal's life reflects the ethos of Sindhi society. He possessed a deep understanding of Sufism and Vedanta, and it would not be an exaggeration to say he was a university on Sufism. His love for Sindh was so profound that, following his death, as per his will, his ashes were immersed not only in the

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Ganges, following Hindu customs, but also in the Indus River. He believed that there was no difference between Sindh and the Ganges.

He had a close relationship with the late Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgri. His numerous essays on Hindu-Muslim unity were exemplary and were published in various Sindhi and English newspapers. Jethmal also played an active role in politics and even went to jail alongside Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

He was deeply influenced by the works of Muslim Sufi poets, which later led him to align with Annie Besant and become an active member of the Theosophical movement. He delivered numerous lectures on this movement and its philosophies, leaving a lasting impact on his audiences.<sup>12</sup>

Jethmal Parsram Guljarani was born in 1885 in Hyderabad. During his youth, he was associated with the Hindu Kumar Mandli led by Wadhumal Chainani, where lectures on truth, beauty, and goodness were delivered. Jethmal had extensively studied Shah Abdul Latif, Sami, Dukhpat, Chal Bakesh, Rohal Murad Faqir, and prominent figures of India like Guru Nanak, Bhagat Kabir, Meerabai, and Kalidas. He was also deeply influenced by Western writers like Shakespeare, Shelley, and Goethe, as well as Persian poets such as Hafiz, Rumi, and Khwaja Fariduddin Attar. Comparative religion was his favorite subject, and he had a profound understanding of the Quran, the Vedas, the Gita, and the Bible.

Guljarani wrote a book on prison life titled Tarang Jo Teerath. After aligning with Annie Besant, he withdrew from active politics. Among his many contributions were the establishment of newspapers such as Wasi Sindh Wasi, the monthly Rooh Rahan, and the weekly Sindh. Another notable achievement was founding a literary organization named the Sindh Sahat Society. This great son of Sindh passed away on July 7, 1948, in Mumbai. As per his wishes, his ashes were immersed in the Indus River. <sup>13</sup>

#### 5.Shrad Seh Prakash

Shrad Seh Prakash is a beautiful book written in 1607 that provides insights into the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*) and the early teachings of Islam. Not much is known about the author's biography.

#### 6.J.S. Dara

J.S. Dara authored the book Rasool-e-Arabi during the Akbarian era in 1654. Unfortunately, not much is known about his life or background.

#### 7.Lakshan Prashad

Lakshan Prashad's book Arab Ka Chand (The Moon of Arabia) was published in 1622.

#### 8.Sundar Lal

Sundar Lal also authored a book on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*) titled Muhammad aur Islam (Muhammad and Islam).

#### 9.Gobind Ram Sethi Shad

Gobind Ram Sethi Shad wrote a book on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) titled Char Minar.

#### 10.LajIt Rai

LajIt Rai also authored a book on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*) titled Hazrat Muhammad Sahib Ki Sawanah Umri (The Biography of Hazrat Muhammad).

## Perspectives of Subcontinent Non-Muslim Scholars on the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*)

The impressions and sentiments expressed by Indian non-Muslim scholars about the Prophet Muhammad(\*\*), the Seal of Prophets, demonstrate that they studied the teachings of Islam and the life of the Prophet (\*\*) beyond religious biases. They did not hesitate to highlight the virtues of Islam and praise the luminous aspects of the Prophet's (\*\*) life. Whatever inspiration they derived from this, they expressed openly, without concern for the criticism or reproach they might face from their own communities for their honesty and truthfulness.

This raises a question: If these individuals regarded Islam as such a commendable religion and the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*) as an exemplary, charismatic, and morally elevated personality, why did they not accept Islam? The answer lies in the fact that accepting Islam is entirely dependent on Allah's guidance, not on a person's desire or effort. Allah addressed His Prophet in the Quran:

"Indeed, [O Prophet], you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills" 14

There is a pressing need in Pakistan's current circumstances to widely disseminate the writings of these scholars to foster mutual understanding and eliminate the atmosphere of hostility between Hindus and Muslims. This can promote coexistence based on the principle of mutual respect.

In Urdu, the systematic composition of works on the life of the Prophet (\*\*) began as early as the 11th century AH. However, significant literary contributions on the Seerah emerged during the 13th century AH, when Muhammad Baqir Aghah (1220 AH) and Qazi Badaruddin (1280 AH) authored Riyaz-us-Seer and Fawaid-e-Badriyyah, respectively. These works marked the evolution of Urdu prose in the domain of Seerah literature.

#### Conclusion

The writings of non-Muslim authors on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) during the Mughal era illustrate a unique aspect of intellectual harmony and cultural integration in the Indian subcontinent. These works, ranging from comprehensive biographies to insightful essays, highlight the authors' efforts to transcend religious boundaries and engage with the universal values of Islam. Despite occasional inaccuracies and limitations in their interpretations, the sincerity of these authors in presenting the virtues of the Prophet Muhammad (\*) and Islamic teachings is evident. Their contributions serve as a testament to the era's tradition of scholarly dialogue and mutual respect.

The significance of these works lies not only in their literary merit but also in their potential to foster interfaith understanding and harmony. By countering biased narratives and presenting an authentic portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*), these authors laid the groundwork for a tradition of fairness and truthfulness in historical writing.

In today's context, where religious divisions continue to pose challenges, the dissemination of such works can serve as a bridge to promote coexistence and mutual respect. Their legacy underscores the importance of dialogue, understanding, and collaboration in building a more harmonious society. The intellectual efforts of these non-Muslim scholars remain a valuable part of the shared cultural and historical heritage of the subcontinent.

#### Recommendations

- 1. **Preservation and Translation of Historical Texts:** Efforts should be made to preserve and translate the biographical works of non-Muslim writers on the life of the Prophet Muhammad (\*\*) into multiple languages to ensure their accessibility to a broader audience.
- 2. **Inclusion in Academic Curricula:** These writings should be incorporated into school and university curricula to promote interfaith understanding and awareness of the intellectual harmony of the Mughal era.
- 3. **Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue:** The legacy of these non-Muslim authors can be leveraged to organize interfaith seminars and discussions aimed at fostering mutual respect and understanding between diverse religious communities.
- Publication and Dissemination: Scholarly and popular editions of these works should be published and widely disseminated to reach readers across various platforms, including print and digital media.

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- 5. **Recognition of Contributions:** Non-Muslim authors who contributed to the understanding of the Prophet Muhammad's (\*\*) life and Islamic teachings should be recognized through literary awards and academic conferences.
- 6. **Study and Research:** Further academic research should be encouraged to explore the historical, cultural, and literary significance of these works and their role in fostering interfaith harmony during the Mughal era.
- 7. **Promotion of Cultural Heritage:** Efforts should be made to celebrate the shared cultural heritage of the Indian subcontinent by highlighting the contributions of non-Muslim writers to Islamic literature and history.
- 8. **Countering Religious Bias:** These writings can serve as a counter-narrative to religious bias and prejudice, promoting a more inclusive and harmonious societal outlook.

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